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EXPLORING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) SAUDI ARABIAN  
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS VIS-A-VIS THE ENGLISH EDUCATION CONTEXT IN  
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is given a great deal of attention by the government as it is keen to provide an educational system that caters to teacher and student needs. Because English has the potential to provide access to resources that may facilitate advancement in science and technology, it is difficult to deny or underestimate the importance of the English language in Saudi Arabia. Despite the history of EFL teaching and resources allocated to the teaching of English in Arabia, the quality of Saudi students' English language skills has raised many concerns. Saudi students currently study English as a foreign language for 12 years and yet reach high school with limited English proficiency, unable to write a passage or carry a simple conversation in English. Shedding light on the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in the context of English education in primary and secondary schools has become crucial. Three Saudi EFL teachers' perspectives of English language instruction in Saudi Arabian primary and secondary schools were examined using a case study methodology. Using Zoom semi-structured interviews, respondents provided a comprehensive image of English classrooms and curriculum in Saudi Arabian schools, as well as the challenges associated with the classes.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession is competitive and demands in-depth subject matter expertise (Shulman, 1986). English's widespread appeal as a global language has resulted in its inclusion as a mandated academic subject in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The (GCC) framework was established when the leaders of the United Arab Emirates, the State of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, and the State of Kuwait convened in Abu Dhabi on May 25, 1981, to establish a cooperative framework. They sought to establish unity by coordinating and integrating all member states across all areas by growing and strengthening linkages, connections, and areas of collaboration between the residents of the GCC nations. The premise was made clear in the preamble to the Basic Statute, which emphasized the special relationships between the six countries, their shared characteristics, and similar systems based on Islamic faith, belief in a common destiny, and unity of purpose, and that cooperation among them serves the goals of the Arab nation (GCC, 2021). As a result, Saudi Arabia has upgraded the status of English language teaching in all of the country's educational institutions. While this creates numerous challenges for English language teachers in Saudi Arabia working in a highly professional industry, it has also created a plethora of research opportunities for TESOL/EFL scholars and policymakers.

According to Al-Seghayer (2011), the English language has occupied a prominent place among the languages of the whole world. Moreover, it is the most learned and used language as a second or foreign language (FL) and it has become the language of science, business, hospitality, economy, and technology (Erling, 2014). It is the mother tongue of more than 400 million native speakers and it is also the official language of the air and maritime transport sector, science,

technology, and economics. It is the language broker for education, publishing, and international relations. Therefore, some L2 scholars and practitioners consider it to be the lingua franca of today's world. Consequently, the importance of the English language plays a great role in the realm of education in Saudi Arabia, and its instruction is required for the transfer of experiences and knowledge and the pursuit of scientific excellence (Faruk, 2013).

The education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is given a great deal of attention by the government as it is keen to provide an educational system that caters to teacher and student needs. Because English can provide access to resources that may facilitate advancement in science and technology, it is difficult to deny or underestimate the importance of the English language in Saudi Arabia.

According to Al-Seghayer (2011), English was first taught as a foreign language in Saudi Arabian schools in 1928, after the Ministry of Education was created in 1923. English instruction nowadays entails a variety of ways that had not existed in the past. In contemporary Saudi Arabia, English serves a variety of purposes and has a prominent position in a vast array of sectors and at all social and professional levels. Recent rapid societal changes and the emergence of brand-new social organizations have unquestionably contributed to English's seeming ascent in Saudi Arabia. The economy, industrial base, and commercial infrastructure are all expanding fast, and the level of education is also increasing. The Saudi government has harnessed all its capabilities and enormous financial support, as it has provided the Saudi teachers and students in the primary, intermediate and secondary stages with an updated ELT curriculum and materials.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the history of EFL teaching and resources allocated to the teaching of English in Arabia, the quality of Saudi students' English language skills has raised many concerns. Saudi students study English as a foreign language for 12 years and yet reach high school with limited English proficiency, unable to write a passage or carry a simple conversation in English (Al-Seghayer, 2014). There may be several influencing factors that could explain this outcome, such as Saudi students studying English for only 45 minutes for 4 or 5 days a week, the large EFL Saudi class size, and limited exposure to English outside the classroom.

The educational consequences of this limited EFL proficiency of primary and secondary Saudi EFL learners are important. Currently, in Saudi universities, during students' preparatory year, English is taught intensively, and the GPA of that year greatly influences the students' ability to enter the major they desire. When Saudi college students have a low GPA after completing their preparatory year, they have a limited number of majors to choose from. Conversely, when Saudi college students have a high GPA after completing their preparatory year, their options for a major are broader. Therefore, even when Saudi college students excel at mathematics, chemistry, and all of the preparatory year subjects, they may be denied the major they desire due to the low English language subject grades in their preparatory year's GPA.

It is important to recognize that primary and secondary teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) encounter a special set of challenges within the larger area of language instruction that may have an impact on both student outcomes and teacher efficacy. Large classes with students of varying abilities, different developmental needs, high parent and student expectations, a shortage of resources, unsatisfactory textbook materials, students' low

proficiency, inconsistent contact hours, and insufficiency of effective and efficient assessment instruments are all possible obstacles (Drew et al., 2007; Wu, 2001; Yu, 2001).

As previously mentioned, inadequate resources for teachers, obsolete texts, and an unsuitable learning environment are just a few of the challenges Saudi Arabia's EFL educators confront. EFL teachers may find it more challenging to establish a productive classroom atmosphere and achieve the intended learning outcomes if their attempts to implement the essential curriculum are impeded by these obstacles. The fact that the EFL instructors in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia face a variety of challenges is reflected in the student's ability to acquire the English language; as a result, EFL education in Saudi Arabia is not as effective as it could be (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the existing body of literature by exploring EFL Saudi Arabian teachers' perceptions of the English education context in primary and secondary schools. Despite its importance, vital significance, and enormous efforts of the Saudi Ministry of Education, English language teaching in Saudi Arabia continues to underperform (Maherzi, 2011). The English proficiency of EFL students continues to be mediocre and unexpectedly low. In this study, EFL instructors' perceptions were investigated regarding primary and secondary schools' English education context. The findings of this study could potentially improve English language instruction in Saudi Arabia by addressing some of the instructional gaps that contribute to the low English proficiency level of Saudi students.

### **The Importance of the Study**

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where English is the second language after the mother tongue, the strong demand for its use in all fields, such as the educational and industrial sectors, demonstrates the necessity to teach English with great efficiency. English has become one of the most crucial aspects of becoming an outstanding student. It is widely acknowledged that the ability to speak and write English is one of the most essential talents in today's work market in Saudi Arabia (Faruk, 2013). In addition, the Saudi Ministry of Education offers a variety of tools to improve the quality of English language instruction. Nevertheless, the academic performance of Saudi pupils continues to fall short of expectations. Further research must be conducted in order to explore and define the characteristics and challenges of the context of English language instruction in Saudi Arabia with the potential of enhancing the quality of the EFL curriculum of the Saudi Ministry of Education, the effectiveness of EFL instructors, the growth of inter-institutional collaboration perspectives as well as to assist the students in increasing their English proficiency.

### **Research Question**

The research question was as follows:

What are EFL Saudi Arabian teachers' perceptions regarding the primary, elementary, and secondary EFL education context?

### **Methods**

As for the study's method, semi-structured interviews were used for data collection that addressed the research question of the study. The researcher analyzed the data by transcribing the interviews and looking for categories and major themes. For the participants of this study, three teachers representing each stage, primary, elementary, and secondary in Saudi Arabia classes were selected. The language used for the interviews was Arabic and the interviews were conducted through Zoom.

### **Limitations**

This study sought to identify EFL Saudi Arabian teachers' perceptions of primary and secondary schools' education context by utilizing a qualitative design. This study included some limitations. The first limitation was the participants. The participants in this study were teachers, so this study did not include the students' and administrators' perceptions as well. In addition, there were no male participants in this research. As a consequence, the study lacked Saudi male instructors' perspectives on English instruction in Saudi Arabia. Including male teachers in this research might have enhanced its findings.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **K-12 Education in KSA**

#### **Historical Overview of the Teaching English in Saudi Arabia**

The year when the Directorate of Education in Saudi Arabia was established is unknown (Alshahrani, 2016); however, many experts believe it to have been in the middle or late 1920s (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Faruk, 2013; Niblock, 2006). At the time when Saudi Arabia was just starting out as a country, English language teaching (ELT) as a new pedagogical subject received little attention and a cautious welcome. This was because people thought that English would pose a threat to the country's culture, mother tongue, and religion (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

Many significant ELT laws were made by the Saudi government once the country was established. The implementation of governmental legislation in 1943 formally established English as a required subject for all students from the first year of the intermediate level (grades 7-9) through college (AlGhamdi & Al-Saddat, 2002). Before 2020, (EFL) was a required subject for Saudi students starting in the seventh grade and going through the senior year of high school. Now, Saudi students study English from 1<sup>st</sup> grade through the end of high school (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Historically, since 1929, when formal schooling was introduced, there have been a lot of changes in the way English is taught in Saudi Arabia (Alhajailan, 2009). After the introduction of the 1943 law that mandated English as a necessary subject for all students beginning in the first year of the intermediate level, English became a required subject (grades 7-9). For some time, English was only taught at the intermediate and secondary levels in Saudi Arabia, which meant that Saudi students did not study English until they were at least 13 years old. The subsequent government decision and most significant alteration was the implementation of

English instruction beginning in the fourth grade. In 2020, the Saudi Ministry of Education agreed to introduce the English language subject to the first-grade curriculum, and since that year, the English language has officially been taught beginning with the first grade (Ministry of Education, 2022)

According to Mahboob and Elyas (2014), the significance of English as the language of contracts, negotiations, and agreements has increased in the Saudi economy as the country has grown more dependent on foreign corporations, particularly oil and infrastructure companies. Moreover, according to Cordesman (2003), the Saudi military's strength, training, and expansion has played a significant role in the rising popularity of ELT. The presence of English-speaking trainers and technicians in KSA beginning in 1948 unquestionably contributed to ELT's growing popularity (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

When it comes to ELT in higher education, English was initially established as a topic for study at the university level in the late 1940s. According to Faruk (2013), the Islamic Law College in Makkah was the first Saudi institution to offer English classes to its students in 1949. Two hours per week were assigned to those college-level English courses. The King Saud University in Riyadh's English Department was Saudi Arabia's first of its type when it opened in 1957 (Al-Abed & Smadi, 1996). The last Saudi institution to create a separate English department specifically for male students was Umm Al Qura University in Makkah in 1980. The first teaching college in Saudi Arabia to create an English department for women was the Girls' College of Education in Makkah in 1972. Eleven more teaching colleges around the kingdom rapidly followed. In 2015, 33 English as a foreign language (EFL) training programs were offered by English departments. Moskovsky and Picard (2018) have predicted that this number will go up in the years to come.



## **The Single-gender Education System in Saudi Arabia**

Single-gender education is prevalent in many parts of the world, including the Middle East (Al-Sindi, 2013), as well as in developing and developed nations such as Saudi Arabia (Baki, 2004), Malaysia (Jelas et al., 2014), Italy (Contini, Di Tommaso, & Mendolia, 2017), Ireland (Doris, O'Neill, & Sweetman, 2013), and the United States (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2013; Pahlke & Hyde, 2016; Patterson, 2012). In Saudi culture, gender segregation (beginning at puberty) is the rule or default in all public settings, not just schools (Van-Geel, 2016). Each gender has its own set of schools in which all students and teachers are of the same gender (male- or female-only schools or sections for universities). Educational policymaking is divided into two groups: one for general male education (which is the responsibility of male administrators) and one for general female education (which is the responsibility of female administrators). It is important to note that in recent years, women and men have been able to mix, but only in certain areas. For example, at conferences, workshops, and general meetings, each gender has its own space.

As previously mentioned, one of the characteristics of classes in schools in Saudi Arabia is the separation of gender; hence, there are schools allocated for girls and schools intended for boys, as well as in terms of teaching staff. In girls' schools, all employees are female, whereas, in boys' schools, all employees are male. In Saudi Arabia, single-gender classes are one of the most controversial topics. A high number of people in Saudi Arabia believe that when females and males are separated in education, a gap develops in dealing with each other and communicating in their daily lives. Conversely, there are people who are strongly opposed to mixed-gender classes due to their religious implications (Al-Mukhallafi, 2019). Saudi Arabian society respects religion, and as a result, the Ministry of Education has not yet reached a resolution or decision on this issue.

In fact, this decision is generally considered too difficult to make because it could cause social conflict. However, the most important question is whether mixed or single-gender classes are more motivating for students. In the conservative culture of the Kingdom, which is influenced by both Islam and Arabic heritage, traditional gender roles are upheld. In this culture, both genders are expected to attend separate schools. As a result, segregated, distant, and restricted contact between the sexes is the rule, not the exception. Because of this cultural norm, Saudi Arabia has a system of single-gender education, which means that boys and girls go to school in different places.

Because the participants in this study are Saudi teachers in a country with a single-gender school system, it is critically important to be aware of any differences in performance between the genders that may arise as a consequence of this policy. Researchers have shown that men and women approach language acquisition with quite different motivations and perspectives for example, Clark and Trafford (1995), Dörnyei and Clement (2001), Kissau (2006), Mihaljevi Djigunovi (1993), Mori and Gobel (2006). Researchers found that female students had more favorable sentiments regarding the language and its community and greater levels of integrative drive. (Dörnyei & Clement, 2001; Kissau, 2006; Mori & Gobel, 2006).

### **Teaching English Languages Classes in Saudi Arabia**

The Saudi vision 2030 is an explicit strategic strategy to change Saudi Arabia's educational system and empower the nation's youth. One of the objectives of this vision is to enhance the level of English taught at all institutions (Alghamdi, 2019; Al-Mukhallafi, 2019). In the current global economic climate, the ability to speak and write in English is vital, and there is a growing need for individuals from Saudi Arabia to gain these abilities. Khan (2021) has discussed the importance of English and the role of EFL instructors in the context of the Saudi

2030 vision, emphasizing the fact that effective language instruction tactics will arise from well-designed modules.

There are educational institutions at various levels in Saudi Arabia where English is employed as the medium of instruction (Yusuf, 2017). Therefore, the need for educating students in a variety of disciplines (science, industry, technology, commerce, health, and tourism), as well as global innovations and communications technologies is intertwined with the necessity of teaching English effectively in Saudi Arabia (Al-Mukhallafi, 2019). Furthermore, the present Saudi Vision 2030 for education encourages undergraduate and graduate students to learn and develop into efficient nationwide vision partners (Alghamdi, 2019; Al-Mukhallafi, 2019). Because Saudi Arabia is connected to many of the world's largest oil companies, English is used for most international, economic, and government businesses (Al-Kahtany & Faruk, 2016; Alrabai, 2018; Al-Seghayer, 2014).

Regarding EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia, there have been several changes and modifications. Presently, English has a prominent position in a variety of fields and at all levels in Saudi Arabia. This apparent strengthening of English is a response to Saudi Arabia's success in a number of ways, including the proliferation of newly created social institutions and the rapid restructuring of the social fabric over the last several years. All levels of education are being strengthened, and the country's economy, industrial sector, and commercial sector are developing substantially. To present a complete picture of the current situation of English in Saudi Arabia, it is vital to include not only the steady inflow of new foreign employees but also the changing attitudes of the local populace toward the English language. Numerous factors have contributed to the English language's integration into the Saudi educational system. The English language is taught as an official subject in all Saudi Arabian public and private schools. In addition to public

institutions and universities, a number of companies and government entities provide English language training.

The success or failure of the English teaching-learning process is heavily dependent on underlying assumptions about the acquisition of a foreign language. Students' fundamental worldviews, attitudes, and mentalities substantially influence their English learning. Numerous internal and external factors influence the attitudes and motivations of Saudi students studying English as a foreign language (EFL), with a negative attitude and a lack of desire being two that have the most negative influence on the Saudi students' ideas about English, their own experiences with learning English, and their plans for studying English in the future.

Understanding the importance of English as a lingua franca and a language of science and technology has revolutionized the global landscape of English language teaching and learning in the past, as it was articulated by Al-Abedalhaq and Samdi (1996). In Saudi Arabia, where it has been accepted as one of the primary languages for educational planning, English is presently an obligatory subject from the elementary to university levels. The establishment of English language centers (ELCs) at universities has sparked a positive academic shift toward learner-centered pedagogy as opposed to the usual teacher-centered teaching method (Alharbi, 2015)

### **The English Language Textbooks in Saudi Arabia**

In Saudi Arabia, both the pedagogy and the English textbooks have undergone significant adjustments during the last four years. Historically, one objective of English instruction in Saudi Arabia was to provide students with the language abilities they would need to properly convey their country's culture to foreigners. In the past, Saudi Arabian English textbooks were quite simple and centered on Saudi culture. Old textbooks also attempt to teach students the fundamental English skills they will need in everyday situations, such as making small talk,

placing restaurant orders, and so on. Even though language and culture are inextricably linked, the cultural aspects of the target language were not emphasized in these textbooks (Aslam, 2014). In addition, it has been shown that those textbooks' use of basic language has been ineffective in challenging students and enhancing their language skills. Therefore, it has been crucial to update the textbooks (Aslam, 2014).

In 2009, the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adopted different English language curricula as a nationwide initiative to generate new series of English textbooks with the assistance of specialist publishers from the United Kingdom and the United States, such as MM Publishing, Macmillan, and Pearson Edu, as part of its ongoing effort to modernize the language curriculum there. Several companies, including Fly High, Get Ready, and Traveler, have compiled a collection of English textbooks for use in Saudi Arabian government-run schools. The new textbooks are more effective than their predecessors and incorporate a variety of cultural topics that may aid students in learning the English language and the culture of English-speaking areas. Each lesson in the new textbooks aims to cover the four English skills, reading, listening, writing, and speaking. The grammar section is integrated into the skills sections; for these reasons, the new textbooks are considered to be more effective.

### **Teaching EFL Methods in Saudi Arabia**

In English language classes in Saudi schools, there is a discussion about using the most appropriate method for teaching students in EFL classes. The two most popular methods used in English language classes in Saudi Arabia are communicative language teaching and grammar-translation. The dominant method in English language classes in Saudi schools is grammar translation. However, there is a great tendency by the Ministry of Education to motivate teachers to use CLT (Alhajailan, 2009). According to Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education's educational

policy, communicative competency among EFL students is prioritized as the major goal of English language instruction (Alhajailan, 2009). Additionally, English is employed as a medium of education across a broad variety of academic subjects (Yusuf, 2017).

According to Celce-Murcia (1991), the grammar-translation approach is based on the standard approach to teaching classical languages like Greek and Latin. In grammar-translation classes, students study and practice essential grammatical concepts by translating phrases from their native language into the target language. It is possible that students at a higher level will be expected to literally translate whole texts. The method's main goal is to help students become better thinkers by pushing them to examine and translate real, target-language-written materials. The prevalence of such tactics in Saudi Arabia's English-language classrooms impedes the implementation of a student-centered approach to teaching English in which the instructor works as an entire classroom manager rather than a facilitator (Alharbi, 2015).

CLT, which is based on a set of principles that reflect a communicative viewpoint on language learning, has been generally acknowledged as an effective language teaching approach in EFL educational settings and institutions across the world (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

CLT has also grown and changed to better understand and meet the unique communication needs of students (Richards, 2006). In comparison to other teaching methods, it is widely held that CLT is better since it improves students' motivation, performance, and sense of ownership over their education (Tomlinson, 2003). Richards and Rodgers (2014) say that another benefit of CLT is that it encourages teachers to make classes that put equal weight on both active and passive ways of communicating. In the 1960s, British linguists developed communicative language teaching (CLT) as an alternative to the audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods. CLT had overtaken all other methods of teaching a second language by the

1970s in nations where English instructors have supported a proficiency-based, exploratory, and cooperative approach (Holliday, 1994).

Based on his study done at a Chinese language school, Wang (1990) has concluded that, despite certain challenges, CLT is helping students and instructors improve their proficiency in all areas of language acquisition. He also said that educators have seen success with more communicative methods of instruction. Fang (1996) has suggested that instructors' pedagogical methods may be influenced by environmental variables such as the atmosphere of the classroom. The customary technique of teaching English as a second/foreign language should be updated, according to another study conducted in Korea by Li (1998) on the issues found by English teachers while applying CLT. Due to the prominence of text-centered and grammar-centered practices in Korea, he claims that CLT integration is challenging in classrooms. Results from Gorsuch's (2000) model suggest that school and classroom environments shape teachers' perspectives on using CLT. Taguchi (2002) discovered that high school educators wished they could help students with communication skills but felt constrained by the heavy focus on testing that characterizes education. After seeing teachers in Japanese high schools interact with students engaged in CLT activities, Gorsuch (2001) concluded that teachers had a mixed attitude toward them despite the challenges they presented.

Despite CLT's widespread adoption, research suggests that it may be challenging to implement in a variety of EFL contexts (Bax, 2003 & Kumaravadivelu, 2006). As is well documented in the research, deploying CLT in ESL/EFL contexts has been difficult for a variety of reasons. Cultural and conceptual differences have been criticized by Richards & Rodgers (2014) for CLT's inability to extend outside the Western world, where it was invented and considered the gold standard in education (Holliday, 1994).

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on grammatical rules and neglecting to build students' communication skills. Alseghayer (2014) has shown that a combination of factors inhibits students' capacity to learn and utilize English. Traditional techniques for teaching English often include a teacher-centered approach, with the instructor assuming the position of the dominant person in the classroom. In addition, a vast amount of academic data suggests that grammar-translation training is inadequate for teaching students to generate words and phrases that may be used for successful communication in daily life (Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rogers, 2001). The grammar-translation method disregards, in essence, the benefits of learning a language via peer interaction and teamwork. To paraphrase Lindsay and Knight's (2006) argument on the translation of grammar, tasks are undertaken solely on an individual basis, with team and pair efforts overlooked. Even though GTM has obvious flaws, it is nonetheless utilized in Saudi Arabia to teach English. This is because of students' poor language skills and the lack of natural settings that help students improve their English skills outside of school (Alharbi, 2015).

On the other hand, numerous academics have provided diverse descriptions of CLT. According to Savignon (2002), the central theoretical concept in communicative language teaching is communicative competence; hence, CLT incorporates both the techniques and consequences of language learning. To promote the CLT technique and improve the teaching abilities of EFL educators, instructors must also have a thorough grasp of CLT. The academic literature has a significant amount of data supporting CLT and its impact on language learning. CLT has been internationally recognized and valued as an effective technique of EFL language instruction in educational settings and institutions around the world (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It is based on a set of principles that reflect a communicative approach to language learning and



teaching. In addition, CLT has gained popularity as a method for evaluating and meeting students' communication needs (Richards, 2006). There is an agreement that communicative language teaching (CLT) is a better way to improve teaching and learning than other methods (Tomlinson, 2003).

### **Issues in English Language Classes in Saudi Arabia**

Insufficient time for instruction, a lack of learning material resources, the transmission of knowledge, and the limitations of the teaching style are just some of the issues revealed by a thorough evaluation of the Saudi EFL curriculum (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Since students primarily interact with the language during class time, there is insufficient reinforcement outside of school to meet the high standards of the English curriculum. In addition, students do not have sufficient opportunities to practice the English they have learned in class (Shah, Hussain, & Nassef, 2013).

The lack of exposure to real-world contexts for communicating means that current approaches to teaching and learning English in Saudi Arabia are not as efficient as they could be. Given the vast number of students and the short amount of time allotted for each class, it is difficult for teachers to adequately cover the course material and properly teach language skills. Each unit in the textbook for the three intermediate levels consists of four lessons, for a total of seven units plus a review unit.

Students of English in Saudi Arabia learn the basics of the language, like grammar, vocabulary, and how to read, but they do not get to practice their skills in real-life communication situations that would help them do a variety of tasks in different situations. Rehmand and Alhaisoni point out that students are not encouraged to make considerable use of English in the classroom or, even better, for communicative contact with each other in English (2013). Even while participating in language activities like drills, dialogues, and role-playing,

students are only encouraged to use the language that is presented in the textbooks, which is often held back for instructional reasons.

In English as foreign language classrooms in Saudi Arabian schools, the preponderance of communication is conducted by the teacher, and students seldom have a substantial opportunity to engage in class discussions. Therefore, the class style is designed to render the instructor the primary English resource for the students. Few opportunities for student input are provided during English class since the instructor takes the lead in presenting and explaining new vocabulary and grammar points. Therefore, in Saudi Arabia, EFL instructors are seen as topic presenters and demonstrators rather than language learning environment facilitators.

Motivation is often regarded as the driving force behind successful second and foreign language acquisition. The study of what motivates people to acquire a second or foreign language is a growing area of study. Even so, scholars have not been able to agree on a single definition of motivation because it has so many different parts (Dornyei, 1998).

Many studies have been conducted to explore the relationship between motivating factors and L2 achievement. Basic motivational conditions must be created to promote a cohesive learner group by adopting appropriate teacher behaviors, having a good relationship with students, maintaining a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom, and providing group norms. Students of English as a foreign language (EFL) who are not native English speakers must improve their English proficiency due to English's increasing importance for global communication and widespread use in contemporary society (Richards & Renandya 2002; Graves 2008). It is generally accepted that being able to communicate effectively in English is essential for success in any endeavor.

According to Garcia and Manzano (2015), students sometimes ignore the need to develop their language proficiency skills because doing so is so difficult in an (EFL) context. Certainly, classroom observations in language classrooms have highlighted various obstacles that teachers and students generally experience in the EFL context, including classes where all students speak the same first language, unwillingness to participate freely and spontaneously in oral activities, restricted possibilities for oral interaction due to the number of students, content limits, and a lack of motivation, the latter of which is one of the keys (Oroujlou & Vahedi 2011; Iwaniec, 2014). Motivation is critical for language acquisition and has a significant impact on the development of EFL communicative skills. According to Guilloteaux and Dornyei, motivation is the main power behind a positive attitude toward the development of oral language competence (2008). Numerous scholars recognize only two types of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. The idea of intrinsic motivation in an EFL setting is related to factors such as enjoyment, while extrinsic motivation is related to goals.

Intrinsically motivated language students are driven by a strong need to interact with the speakers of the target language's culture and society. Conversely, those who are "extrinsically oriented" are motivated to study a foreign language in order to advance professionally or otherwise benefit from doing so. Individuals with an integrative orientation are more likely to achieve success in language learning than those with an instrumental orientation, while both are necessary for demonstrating strong motivational levels and predicting good language accomplishment (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

The views of 176 Saudi undergraduates on several aspects of the English language and English-speaking society were investigated by Al Asmari (2013). Those involved were students at Taif University in Saudi Arabia, particularly at the university's English Language Center. The

results of this study strongly support the idea that students have positive feelings about English and its culture. The majority of pupils, the findings showed, were motivated to study English for both internal and external reasons. Students had a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for learning English.

Alfawzan (2012) polled 200 postgraduate and undergraduate students at Yarmouk University in Jordan to find out what they thought. In sum, the findings showed that the vast majority of Jordanian students viewed their English-language education with optimism. It was anticipated that gender would play a major role in this research; however, researchers discovered no evidence of substantive variations in outlook between the men and women who took part. However, educational level was also a major determinant, with different results for different groups. The results showed that graduate students had a more upbeat perspective on English learning than their undergraduate counterparts.

Based on the Garcia& Manzano (2015) quantitative research findings, in certain situations, students looked disinterested in their EFL courses owing to situational factors such as an overemphasis on grammar and repetitive and uninspired sessions. Moreover, students of English as a foreign language (EFL) responded positively to increased opportunities for classroom discussion and interaction. However, students were not given the opportunity to improve their English proficiency through classroom instruction. Based on their perspectives, students in that study reported that classroom practice frequently falls short of their expectations.

## **EFL Teachers in Saudi Arabia**

### **EFL Teachers Preparation Programs in Saudi Arabia: Trends and Challenge**

Education systems equip students with the materials they need to study and enhance and facilitate the environment in which they may do so. This process begins with the student's school experience, which serves as the student's main introduction to the greater world. Education is a dynamic and complicated process based on scientific and technical knowledge. This includes the teachers, the course materials, and the activities and methods of learning that accompany them. Due to the prominent position of the teachers in the educational process, they must be willing to learn and adapt in order to fulfill the needs of their pupils, as opposed to depending on inherent ability or a great desire to work in the area. As a result, it is crucial that educators get enough training and teaching experience as part of their preparation programs. Since improving teacher preparation programs makes the education system work better, it is a key part of most countries' plans and programs to improve education (AlShukri, 2018).

Saudi Arabian EFL education has been blamed of having inadequate and unsystematic training programs (Al Hazmi, 2003). Students in these training EFL programs spend approximately four years learning English within the English departments of the College of Science and Arts, the College of Foreign Languages, or other colleges. These colleges have traditionally been the primary training grounds for EFL teachers, and students who graduate from these colleges are guaranteed teaching positions in their respective fields.

Existing (EFL) teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia has been criticized for inadequately preparing prospective EFL instructors. Courses in EFL programs seldom address modern educational approaches or standardized testing, nor are they usually relevant to student's physical and mental growth (Al-Seghayer, 2014). It has been noticed that the existing EFL

teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia suffer from a severe dearth of native or near-native English-speaking academics. The majority, and in some instances the whole, of the faculty originates from nearby Arab nations such as Egypt, Sudan, and Jordan. Consequently, Arabic is the predominant language of education. Teaching English as the target language (TL) by Arab speakers in Saudi Arabia, according to Moskovsky and Picard (2018), could result in a number of issues because it could potentially incorporate linguistic elements resulting from negative transfer from Arabic to English.

The study by Al-Muzeini and Al Kahtani (2020) was designed to analyze and provide a vision for the future expansion of English language teacher preparation and training programs. The outcomes of the study led to the conclusion that the field training length for these programs should be increased. This study also recommended that English language teacher training programs be routinely reevaluated and adjusted to match the requirements of rapidly advancing technologies all around the globe.

Due to a lack of highly prepared and proficient English-speaking teachers and adequate training, EFL graduates from these programs are unable to use research-based solutions and creative teaching strategies in their everyday lessons (Hokka & Etelapelto, 2013). Numerous EFL graduates lack the analytical and practical abilities essential to conduct significant action research that might assist them in resolving classroom challenges.

In order to improve its primary and secondary Saudi students' command of the English language, the Saudi government has introduced a number of reforms to the English language curriculum currently being used across the Kingdom. Students in Saudi Arabia are now given additional opportunities to learn English as part of their day-to-day school activities, and their

English textbooks have been updated through a partnership with a variety of specialized publishers from the United States and the United Kingdom (Moskovsky & Picard, 2018).

### **Saudi Teacher Perceptions**

Research has shown issues in the English curricula of a number of universities, which may guide the practices of prospective EFL instructors. Alshuaifan (2009) conducted a qualitative study based on interviews with 96 Saudi language instructors and came to the conclusion that EFL preparation programs in the kingdom lacked cultural sensitivity training, syllabus construction, and even certain fundamental linguistic disciplines. Zohairy (2012) conducted research on the topic of the professional development of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia and discovered that only two of the eleven institutions in the study's sample provide adequate training for EFL teachers. Notable is the fact that research participants voiced apprehension about present development alternatives.

Reading and spelling issues among EFL students in Saudi Arabia may be examined from a variety of perspectives, including the students' backgrounds and the teachers' effectiveness. Given these facts, it is essential to investigate the techniques utilized to teach EFL instructors in Saudi Arabia. According to Al-Seghayer (2014), English programs at Saudi Arabian colleges stress different aspects of the language according to the scope of their study. In the first two years of college, students take a range of courses geared to strengthen their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. In reality, pupils are exposed to more than grammatical construction principles and vocabulary requirements throughout the first two years of school. However, greater emphasis is placed on the latter two components of the language in advanced linguistic elements and techniques for teaching English. The last semester is devoted to experiential learning. In this phase of teacher training, students in the English language

department teach a class in an elementary, middle, or high school under the supervision of a more experienced educator.

Previous research has shown a worrying lack of in-service training opportunities for EFL instructors in Saudi Arabia. This tendency is especially worrisome due to the fact that many EFL teachers in public schools have remained in their positions for years with no in-service training. It seems that beginner instructors get insufficient guidance, which limits their professional growth (Alhamad, 2018). Alnefaie (2016) also found that most Saudi EFL teachers do not feel like they were a part of the process of making the curriculum, which may hurt their ability to teach.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, developing English language instruction in schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has become an essential need for a number of reasons. Given the economic, political, and military position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in addition to attracting foreign investments, it is crucial for its citizens to master English, as it is classified as the second language after Arabic and is considered the language of communication, business, and negotiation. With the Kingdom's 2030 vision, one of whose priorities are the growth of education, the urgent need to enhance English language instruction in Saudi schools has arisen. Throughout its history, the teaching of English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has undergone several adjustments aimed at advancing English language instruction. However, the level of English language competency among Saudi students is still below what is anticipated, and this issue creates several problems. The causes are related to several sectors, including the curriculum and teaching techniques, the English language teacher training programs at Saudi universities, and the English teaching methodology utilized in the classrooms of the schools in the Kingdom



of Saudi Arabia. The debate persists, and the Ministry of Education continues to seek a solution by giving financial and administrative assistance.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Design**

This study employed a case study approach with the purpose of exploring (EFL) Saudi Arabian teachers' perceptions vis-a-vis English education context in primary and secondary schools. The population of the study consisted of three English instructors who were teaching English in primary, middle, and secondary school and were experienced in teaching English in Saudi Arabian schools. This section presented the study design, the population, and the data analysis method. According to Dornyei (2007), the two main types of research designs used are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research often gathers and analyzes numerical data, whereas qualitative research focuses on non-numerical data.

According to Dornyei (2007), the processes for categorizing or coding data vary between qualitative and quantitative research. Before undertaking quantitative research, researchers must construct a set of categories or codes for decoding data. In contrast to quantitative studies, qualitative research seldom needs established coding or labeling procedures. Given the need for a sufficiently large sample size in quantitative research, it is common practice to disregard individual differences. In contrast to broad generalizations, qualitative research examines unique cases. Thus, quantitative research is highly regimented and offers a broad viewpoint, but qualitative research is adaptable and context-sensitive. Due to the nature of the research questions, the researcher determined that the case study methodology was most suitable for this research. Rowley (2002) asserts that the nature of the research questions given is the most important aspect in deciding the methodological approach.

The participants were teachers of (EFL) in Saudi Arabian schools. There were a few advantages to qualitative research that cannot be found in quantitative studies. To start, a

qualitative research study is an excellent method for unearthing hidden data. For instance, when researchers do not have a good enough grasp of phenomena, a qualitative inquiry may help since it removes the need for them to rely on preconceptions (Eisenhardt, 1989). In addition, a qualitative research study might be useful in making sense of conflicting data. Researchers in a qualitative study are not compelled to reduce and simplify their analyses as they are in a quantitative study (Dornyei, 2007). Qualitative studies are particularly useful for answering "why?" questions.

Given their flexibility and emergent nature, qualitative research methods may help researchers get a more comprehensive knowledge of a topic. In addition, Merriam (1988) argues that qualitative research is more focused on methods than findings. According to Dornyei (2007), qualitative research is conducted to shed light on a perplexing social phenomenon by gathering unstructured data and analyzing it using methodologies other than statistics. In conclusion, qualitative research contributes to academic advancement by providing a deep analysis grounded in the participants' actual experiences (Dornyei, 2007).

### **Data Collection**

This study used semi-structured interviews to collect data. Pan and Tan (2011) assert that interviews constitute the backbone of case study data collection because they uncover realities about the participants that go beyond their questionnaire replies. In this study, when participants agreed to do the interview, the researcher scheduled a time for each interview. Since the researcher was located in a different state in the U.S. throughout the duration of the study, the interviews were conducted through Zoom. The interviews were conducted using the Arabic language.

In March 2023, three English language instructors from elementary, middle, and high schools in Saudi Arabia were interviewed through Zoom for three semi-structured interviews. There were potential follow-ups in case there is any missing information. Every instructor had more than five years of instructing Saudi Arabian students. Each interview took more than four hours and consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions. The duration of the interview with participant one was five hours, with participant two was four hours, and the with participant three was four and a half hours. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. The data were transcribed and analyzed.

Participants' demographic information was collected, and they were also asked about their experiences teaching in Saudi Arabian schools, the difficulties they encountered, the new methods and curricula they used, their ideas for improving English instruction, and their overall level of satisfaction as a Saudi educator. All participants received the same information about the study, and the researcher made small alterations to the interview questions as necessary. After collecting each response, the data were transcribed and analyzed.

**Interview Questions:**

Question 1	Tell me about yourself.
Question 2	How is your experience as an elementary, middle, or high school teacher in Saudi Arabian schools?
Question 3	What difficulties, if any, are you as a Saudi K-12 teacher facing in the classroom?
Question 4	What methods and strategies do you use to teach English?

Question 5	What is your opinion about the English curricula that are used in schools these days?
Question 6	Do you think the EFL curriculum is used effectively?
Question 7	Do you feel satisfied with your performance in the classroom? What are the reasons behind this feeling, whether it is negative or positive?
Question 8	Since most of the university departments in Saudi Arabia nowadays are using the English language as the language of instruction, do you think the primary and secondary schools' English instruction is preparing the students for college English levels? Will the students be able to write, read, present, and take part in class using English effectively?
Question 9	What actions can be taken to improve English language instruction in Saudi Arabian schools?

**Participants**

This study included three English instructors from Saudi Arabian elementary, middle, and high schools. Participants in the research were three Saudi female EFL teachers with years of experience teaching English in Saudi Arabian classrooms. All three participants had substantial teaching experiences and a comprehensive understanding of the Saudi Arabian education system.

According to Dörnyei, using the snowball sampling technique, the researcher recruits additional study participants from among those who are already enrolled in the study (2007). In qualitative research, the non-probability sampling method known as snowball sampling is utilized. It involves identifying a small group of participants who meet the study's inclusion

criteria and then asking them to suggest additional participants. One advantage of snowball sampling is that it enables researchers to conduct in-depth research on hard-to-reach populations. In this study, the snowball sampling technique was utilized.

Three instructors participated in the research, and to protect their identities and comply with ethical standards, The participants were given pseudonyms (Aisha, Basma, and Calah). The background information, gender, age ranges, titles, and years of experience teaching English as a foreign language of the participants were collected. The participants worked in 3 different institutions.

### **Demographics**

#### **Aisha**

Aisha was a 45-year-old female English teacher. She had a bachelor's degree in English literature with a specialization in teaching English as a foreign language. She had taught for twelve years before taking a vacation and relocating to Tampa with her family in 2020; she will continue her teaching career in Saudi Arabia in 2025. Moreover, throughout her twelve years of teaching experience, she taught solely in primary schools. She described her students as those whose ages usually range from about eight to 12 years.

#### **Basma**

Basma was a 38-year-old female English teacher who had a master's degree in English teaching methods and a TEFL graduate certificate from the University of South Florida. She has been teaching English as a foreign language since 2011 in primary, middle, and secondary schools. She described her students as those whose ages usually ranged from about 10 to 18

years. All her teaching experience years were spent at small village schools. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of South Florida, majoring in applied linguistics.

### **Calah**

Calah was a 35-year-old female English teacher who had a master's in TESOL from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. She has been teaching English for seven years. Currently, she is pursuing her Ph.D. at New York University. For about seven of her years of experience, she mainly worked with high school students. She described her students as those whose ages usually ranged from about 16 to 18 years.

### **Institutions**

All the participants spent their teaching experience in public schools in Saudi Arabia; Aisha spent all her years of teaching in the city of Riyadh, the capital of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the largest city in Saudi. For Basma, all her years of teaching experience were spent moving among small villages in the north of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Calah spent all her years teaching in the city of Jeddah, the second largest city in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia located in western Saudi Arabia.

*Table 1: Participants Demographic/Informational Table*

Participant	Age	Gender	Title	Education	Experiences	Institution
Aisha	45	F	Instructor	Bachelor	14	City school
Basma	38	F	Instructor	Master	9	Village school
Calah	39	F	Instructor	Master	10	City school

*Note.* All participants had taught English as a foreign language and they earned their bachelor's degrees in Saudi Arabia.

### **Data Analysis**

In this case study, I conducted language-based analysis, also known as word-based analysis (Dornyei, 2007). The initial step in assessing the interview data employed in this study was to convert the audio recordings into written data. The researcher was meticulously transcribing each conversation by computer. The researcher examined the interview transcripts many times and took notes in a research journal. The researcher then undertook a preliminary review of the materials in order to build a working lexicon, identify essential phrases, and identify overarching themes. All of the materials were categorized and organized into folders with the names of the areas of interest and research questions that prompted the interviews. The researcher compiled a list of overarching ideas based on the patterns and themes identified while analyzing the data and jotted them down in field notes.

In conclusion, the study employed a case study approach to examine how Saudi Arabian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers perceive the English teaching context in elementary and secondary schools. The population of the research consisted of three experienced



elementary, middle, and high school English instructors in Saudi Arabia. The ample teaching experiences of the participants helped to provide an in-depth understanding of this particular research inquiry. This study relied on semi-structured interviews, and data analysis involved categorizing responses into overarching themes related to research questions and interview topics.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This research investigated the perspectives of Saudi Arabian instructors of English as a foreign language (EFL) regarding the English teaching context in elementary and secondary schools. The data for this research was collected using a case study methodology and semi-structured interviews. In this study, when participants agreed to do the interview, the researcher scheduled a time for each interview. Since the researcher was located in a different state in the U.S. throughout the duration of the study, the interviews were conducted through Zoom. The interviews were conducted using the Arabic language.

This study revealed the perspectives of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in elementary and secondary schools in Saudi Arabia toward the English teaching context. The themes revealed after data analysis were: the duration of the class time, the number of weekly classes, the quality of the new curriculum, challenges faced by the EFL teachers inside the classrooms, assessments in the primary schools, family attitudes towards English class, teachers' preparation programs at Saudi Arabian universities, teachers' preparation programs at Saudi Arabian universities, the delay in including English classes in the primary schools, the annual change of the curriculum during the selection of the English language curriculum and teachers' satisfaction level with their teaching experience in Saudi Arabian schools. These themes were further grouped under three overarching themes: classes and curriculum in Saudi Arabian schools, challenges faced by EFL teachers in the classrooms, and external influences on the EFL teachers' experiences in Saudi Arabian schools.

## Classes and Curriculum in Saudi Arabian Schools

### **The Duration of Class Time**

All participants in this research expressed dissatisfaction with the 45-minute lesson duration. Aisha explained that, particularly with primary students, teaching English required more time, as 10 minutes at the beginning of each class were spent trying to concentrate, avoid distractions, and stop playing, leaving 35 minutes to check the homework of the previous class and do it together, followed by a new lesson. Aisha said that the majority of primary students tended to interrupt the lesson with unrelated or irrelevant questions, wasting instructional time. She added that if class time had been longer, it would have been able to offer students sufficient time for questions and discussion.

Basma noted that class time was never sufficient for high school students since the subject was more challenging and took more time to be delivered, as well as more time to construct activities that helped students absorb the lesson. Basma stated, "Whenever I begin a lesson for high school students, I feel like I'm in a race against time, where I try to use the time as efficiently as possible to deliver the lesson, but I don't feel like I give the students enough time for activities and questions if any".

Calah clarified that due to time restrictions, she often had to reduce a lot of classroom activities. Even when there was an activity, she did not provide adequate time and flexibility for students to conduct conversations and participate, and she continuously interrupted them or speeded up the task, forcing students to feel pressured. According to Calah, time was a significant drawback in the classroom. Calah stated, " I often contemplate providing my students with learning-enhancing activities, but their time demands drive me to select a quick activity, which causes me to feel uncomfortable, I often think that if I had more time, my class could be

better, as a teacher who is required to cover the whole textbook before the end of the academic year, time plays a crucial role in my classroom."

### **The Number of Weekly Classes**

The number of English language classes for primary students was a concern among some of the participants, since primary students took two English classes each week, while middle school students took four, and high school students took five. This was a problem for Aisha, since she had mostly taught in primary schools.

Aisha noted that primary students needed daily exposure to the English language since they were in a crucial and foundational stage. Aisha noted that since there were fewer English language classes in primary school, students did not concentrate as much on the material and kept forgetting the lessons. Therefore, Aisha needed to review the previous week's lessons each week. Aisha stated that because of the reduced number of English language classes, students did not value English and saw it as a supplemental subject. Aisha clarified that the number of primary total grades in Saudi Arabia is 6 grades and the introduction of the English language subject was gradual in primary school classes. As previously reported, English was not taught at all in primary school classes in the past, but the Saudi Ministry of Education began to add it to the sixth-grade classes. Then after several years, they added it from the fourth grade, and it continued for a long time, then it was recently officially added to the first grade in the primary school.

Aisha said that "the idea of adding the English language class in first and second-grade classes in the primary school is a great idea which was applied close to 2020, but it was not applied effectively and systematically. As the fewer classes and the short duration of the class

don't help in presenting the curriculum as required." Aisha continued by saying, "Because it is my responsibility as a teacher to cover the syllabus by the end of the semester, but since I only have twice a week to meet my students, I always have to ask the drawing teacher if she is able to give me a class so that I can cover the syllabus, the drawing teacher meets her students twice a week, like me, but the drawing curriculum is more flexible than the English language, so I always have to ask her, I really feel embarrassed for constantly asking for her classes, but I have no other solution; otherwise, I will reach the end of the academic term and I will not have covered the curriculum"

The number of weekly classes did not constitute a problem for Participants Basma and Calah, as they teach at middle and high school schools, so the number of weekly classes is more than 2 classes, but their problem was the duration of the class.

### **The Quality of the New Curriculum**

As Participants Aisha, Basma, and Calah highlighted, there had been a movement of reform and development of the English language curriculum at all stages in Saudi Arabia's schools in the past years. As a result, instructors were compelled to adopt a new curriculum each year. The testing period was about 5 years long. Two years ago, one specific curriculum that had previously been utilized during the testing phase was chosen for each stage and officially utilized without any modifications.

Participants were mostly in agreement with the quality of the current curriculum. Participants Aisha, Basma, and Calah said that the new English curriculum was excellent. Participant 1 said that the primary school curriculum included visual aids that kept kids' attention throughout the lesson and that the lesson sequence was ideal for primary school pupils.

Basma said that the middle-stage English language curricula included topics that were successfully suitable for the students' ages. Calah appreciated the new secondary curriculum for being varied in topics and order of lessons and for moving among skills, which was extremely important for the student's educational journey in the English language, in addition to the book's design being highly colorful, interesting, and appealing to students.

The participants expressed complete satisfaction with the quality of the chosen curricula, but they also noted that, due to the challenges they experience in the classroom, they had challenges utilizing the curriculum effectively and presenting it in an appropriate way. The challenges that the teachers faced in the classrooms were discussed in the next section.

### **Challenges Faced by the EFL Teachers in the Classrooms**

#### **A Large Number of Students**

Aisha indicated that she was teaching in schools in Saudi Arabia's capital, where the class size was very high. The classrooms were crammed with many students, as the students ranged between 35 and 40, and the number could increase. Aisha stated that having a large number of students in her class was a major challenge in her lesson delivery; there were students who needed more support and students whose English proficiency level was low. She added that “they need me to ask them if they need help”, but she often could not do that because she taught four classes, each of which had more than 35 students, and the lesson lasted 45 minutes.

Basma explained that since she taught in villages, the number of students was much lower than the number of students in cities. Basma stated that the number of students in her classes was appropriate and that she did not face a problem with the number of students. Basma

explained that city teachers were the ones who suffered from a very large number of students, which affected the teaching process. Calah, who taught in the second largest city in Saudi Arabia, explained that the number of students in her classes was very large, exceeding 40 students per class. Calah said that the number of students greatly affected the flow of the lesson. Calah said that because of the number of students, she lost focus on students with low levels of English proficiency.

### **Using the Arabic Language Extensively**

In some EFL classes, teachers have difficulty encouraging students to use English in the classroom. EFL students do not have many opportunities to practice English outside of class, so using, speaking, and interacting with English in EFL classes is essential. Participants Aisha, Basma, and Calah explained that primary, middle, and secondary students used the Arabic language frequently in English language classes.

Aisha explained that she had difficulty getting students to use and practice English in class. Aisha explained that students used the English language when doing an assignment, participating in an activity, or answering a question in the book; otherwise, they used the Arabic language. Aisha explained that she was always trying to strongly encourage students to use English in the classroom. Specifically, she had the rule to use only English in the classroom and to avoid the random use of the Arabic language. Because students had only two lessons for the English language during the week, they often forgot the rule of using English and interacted in Arabic. Aisha explained that she was trying to remind and encourage them, but it always took time to comply with the English-only rule.

Basma and Calah showed that middle and high school students tried to use the English language during English language classes, however, the Arabic language still prevailed over English in the English language classes. Participant Basma explained that the reason may be due to the fact that the use of the English language in their daily lives was much less than the use of the Arabic language. Therefore, it was possible that it become difficult to get used to using English in the classroom due to their lack of use of the English language outside the classroom and only using it inside the classroom.

### **Students' Proficiency Level in English**

The level of students in the English language class plays a very important role in their learning journey, as one of the basics of a successful English language learning experience is that the students be in a class that suits their level and meets their educational needs. Undoubtedly, if we put beginner students in an advanced-level English language class and introduce an advanced curriculum language, it will not help them, as the students will suffer from the lack of prior knowledge about what they will learn in the advanced-level classes. Therefore, placing the students in a class that suits their level is a very important concept when it comes to teaching English.

Aisha explained that the English level of proficiency of students in primary school was much lower than expected, so they needed additional effort as a result of their low level. Aisha added that at the beginning of each semester, she encountered students who raised many questions in her mind, such as "How did these students pass the last class?" But she added, "It is not surprising as the primary school system makes it easy for students to pass as the primary school system does not fail any student even if the student's level is weak". Aisha continued by



saying that the primary curriculum was simple and uncomplicated, but the level of students was low.

Participants Basma and Calah said that the level of students in middle school and high school was lower than what was needed. Basma explained that her students in middle school struggled with writing. When asked to write paragraphs, it became impossible for them. Even when they wrote something in English, the students used very simple vocabulary and simple structure. Basma said that before any writing test, the students asked her to specify two or three topics, and their reason was that they needed to practice at home. Basma continued by saying that “I knew that they would memorize some sentences and write them in the test.” She continued saying that the level of students' understanding of reading was declining. Basma said that before the reading tests, students got anxious because of the test. Basma stated that “many students come to my office asking to select two reading pieces that they study at home, and in the test, they find one of these two pieces.” Calah explained that the level of high school students' reading and writing skills was weaker than required. Calah explained that students performed well in grammar tests but poorly in reading, writing, and speaking tests.

There was agreement among the participants that students tended to memorize rather than understand and master language skills. All participants agreed that students tended to memorize the curriculum instead of understanding it before reading and writing tests. Participants faced pressure from the students before the tests, as they asked the teacher to specify the pieces of writing or reading for the tests to memorize them. The participants agreed that the way students studied was wrong and needed correction.

### **Lack of Electronic Equipment in Villages Schools**

With the development of the curricula, teachers began to use projectors and speakers, and in every school, there was an English language laboratory equipped with the necessary electronic devices. Based on what the participants explained, the new curricula contained audio clips, educational videos, and e-books that had to be presented to students through electronic devices. In addition to that, the teacher's book contained many online materials that were presented to students through a projector and speaker. Therefore, the presence of electronic devices was very important in presenting the curriculum in English classes.

Basma, who was teaching in village schools, said that village schools were not fully prepared for the new curricula. Schools in villages did not have projectors, speakers, or computers to access e-books. Basma continued, saying that she went from class to class carrying her personal portable speakers, and a portable projector and used her own computer to present the lesson materials. Basma explained that she spent 10 minutes in each class operating and preparing electronic devices, which wasted time. Basma explained that carrying the devices became tiring, in addition to that she sometimes carried other educational materials for the activities. Basma explained that it was not appropriate for the teacher to go through this experience and carry a lot of things and move them from class to class. Basma said that since the Ministry of Education added this new curriculum, knowing its requirements, it was better for the teacher and in the interest of the students to make sure that the classrooms were ready and equipped with the necessary tools.

## **Assessments in Primary Schools**

The methods of evaluating students are among the most important points in the teaching process, as the evaluation must be clear and valid, and there must be skills and goals that the students reach at the end of the term so that the teacher allows them to move on to the next grade. The students should never be allowed to pass the class as long as they have not reached the requirements to pass to the next stage. Allowing the student to pass while they have not mastered the skills of the current stage puts the teacher of the next stage in a difficult position pedagogically speaking.

Aisha explained that student assessment systems in the primary stage were a major obstacle to their learning of the English language. She explained that the evaluation system in primary schools was very lenient with students. Aisha explained that the primary teacher evaluated the students throughout the term through oral and written tests every week until the end of the term, and then the evaluation result was (excellent / very good/acceptable/weak) without any grades or explanation of the student's level. Aisha explained that in primary schools, there was no concept of failure, and all students must pass. Aisha explained that part of the evaluation system in primary schools was to repeat the exams more than once until the student passed. Aisha explained that the primary school evaluation system aimed to teach the student the concept of learning from error, but in reality, the students and their parents received the evaluation system in a completely different way, as sometimes the students came completely unprepared for the test because they knew that the test would be repeated. Aisha explained that she heard from some students after the test, "It is okay if I did not do well in this test, you will make me retake the test." Aisha added, saying that she also heard from some students, "My mother said it is okay if you do not do well in the test, the teacher will allow you to retake it until

you pass at the end of the semester.” Aisha explained that even if she wanted to make the assessment a challenge for the students in order to encourage them to study before the test, as she wanted to change the questions when the student retested, her supervisor refused that and said, "Give them the same questions that are in the first test; we don't want to spend the whole semester struggling with the students; a student must pass the test."

Aisha explained that it was very important for the students to learn the concept of passing and failing; in addition, they must learn that there was no room for repetition and that they must prepare well for the test and take it seriously. Aisha explained that students must be taught seriousness and discipline from an early age. Aisha said that the evaluation system in primary schools should be reviewed as soon as possible, as it did not teach students discipline and seriousness. The student did not get used to the concept of exams, grades, failing, passing, and challenges. Aisha explained that the students had the idea that if “I was going to pass the class anyway, why should I study?”

Basma explained that students who moved from primary to middle school were not accustomed to exams, grades, and challenges in learning, and they believed that exams would be repeated for them, and they would pass classes easily. Basma continued, saying that the concept of tests was a very important one in education and that it must be introduced to the students from the beginning of primary school so that they did not face difficulties in other stages. This does not mean that tests are the only tools to evaluate the level of the student, but no one denies that tests add to the ranks of seriousness and discipline, especially for younger students.

Aisha and Basma agreed that assessment was very important in education, so it must be serious, clear, and valid, as it should assess the level of the student and show their actual level.

When we instilled in students that they could retake the test more than once and that they would pass at the end of the semester, we teach them to be unmotivated to learn a new language.

## **External Influences on the EFL Teachers' Experiences in the Saudi Arabian Schools**

### **Family Attitudes Towards English Classes**

Parents' attitudes toward English language classes had a negative impact on Participants Aisha and Basma. The attitudes of parents toward the English language class had a detrimental effect on their students' English language acquisition. Parents contributed to instilling negative views toward English lessons in their children.

Aisha was a primary school teacher for the whole of her teaching career and had extensive expertise with primary school kids. Aisha indicated that she was subject to intense pressure from the parents of her students, as several mothers visited the school to request that she eased the difficulty of examinations, lowered the number of assignments, or spoke Arabic in the English classrooms. Aisha noted that the mothers who made these requests assumed that their children were too young to learn English. Aisha explained that she heard from her students, "The English language is not important, the teacher will help us anyway." Aisha explained that these phrases increased the pressure on her as a teacher and made her feel frustrated, as she knew that the students learned these phrases from their families. Aisha explained that mothers sometimes sent many emails before any assessments, asking her, as a teacher, to give the students a brief summary of the units that were studied in the classroom, to make it easier and shorter for the students when they studied for the test.

Aisha explained that mothers believed that they helped their children learn English, but in reality, they made it complicated. Mothers instilled in their children that the English language

was not important and the teacher should make the lessons easier. Instead, they should have realized that English teachers wanted to give the students a good foundation in the English language that would help them progress to the appropriate level of English proficiency and move to middle and high school without facing any difficulties in these future stages.

Aisha summarized that there were many influencing factors at the level of primary students, the first of which was the number of weekly classes, as two classes per week were never sufficient for students; the duration of the class was short and primary students needed a longer period; students were not exposed to the English language sufficiently, and mothers constantly asked the teacher to use the Arabic language. Parents interfered a lot in the work of the English language teacher for primary students, which put the teacher under great pressure. Primary school students do not know the meaning of failing in classes, as the evaluation system in primary schools allows them to pass classes easily by re-testing until they pass the test, which puts students under great pressure and difficulty when they move to middle school, as the middle school system differs from the primary school system. In middle schools, the test is not repeated more than once, and students are counted for what they obtained without allowing a retake. This is a significant change for primary students, which leads to difficulties during their learning in middle school.

Basma explained that one of the most difficult students to teach was the one who moved from the primary stage to the first year of middle school, Students who moved from the primary stage suffered a lot in exams, as they had their first experience with midterm and final exams and quizzes. Basma explained that first-year middle school students demanded a lot of work and effort as their level was lower than expected. She added, “Some of my students in the first year

of middle school sometimes do not know some letters or how to introduce themselves in English.” Basma suggested that primary school students should study English daily and be given more opportunities to practice the English language and get used to the test system, passing and failing, and not getting used to the fact that it was okay “if you do not do well in this test, you have the opportunity to repeat it.”

Basma suggested that families should enhance the importance of the English language class for their children and give this class its importance and value. Mastering the English language plays an important role in the future of their children, especially in light of the development of Saudi Arabia and its openness towards other countries, and the promotion of external communication. Citizens need to master the language of international communication, which is English. Basma explained that the family was the basis for encouraging their children to learn and progress. Parents must not cultivate any negative attitude in their children towards the English language class. Basma explained that no matter how hard the teacher tried to educate the children, the home side and the parents remained very strong and influential in the educational process.

Aisha and Basma summarized that there must be unity between teachers' and family's demands and aims in order to attain the goal of superior English proficiency.

### **Teachers' Preparation Programs at Saudi Arabian Universities**

According to all participants, in the last semester of their undergraduate years in Saudi universities, students specializing in teaching English were sent to a school to gain experience in teaching under the supervision of their university, where a group of six students or more was sent to a school under the supervision of a faculty member from the Department of Teaching English at the university. The university typically sent more than 70 students to 15 different schools, or

more according to the number of students, with each group being under the supervision of one supervisor who was a faculty member from the university. When undergraduate students went to a school for a practical experience, on the first day they met the main English language teachers in the school, and the English language teacher assigned a class to each student. The student was responsible for one class for a semester. During the semester, the English language teacher observed one class for evaluation, and the faculty member from the university observed two to three classes to evaluate the student.

Participants agreed that the training period should be longer than one semester, as teaching was not easy and required more time to get used to and acquire skills. The English language teacher needed to supervise students more intensively and attend more classes to supervise students and provide the students with feedback. The participants reported that the English language teachers did not supervise the lesson plans and did not follow up more on what was happening in the classrooms. Aisha explained that, without a doubt, being a student, "I do not have prior experience and, for sure, I will make a lot of mistakes and need more supervision by the main English language teacher." Aisha continued by saying that "when I go back and look at the lesson plans that I was designing during the training period, I found that they are very weak and lack logicality in terms of time distribution."

Basma and Calah explained that they needed a longer training period and intensive supervision by the faculty member, as the faculty member used to attend only 2 to 3 classes during the semester and then gave a final evaluation. Basma and Calah indicated that the supervision of a faculty member was very weak and almost absent. Aisha, Basma, and Calah explained that during the training period, they had many questions and made a lot of mistakes, but because the main teachers were busy with other classes and there was an absence of the



supervision of a faculty member, it was not easy for them to reach the correct guidance in order to avoid mistakes. Basma explained that her supervisor was a faculty member who had a lot of responsibilities from teaching at the university, including correcting students' homework and evaluating them, in addition to supervising a group of undergrad students during the training period. Therefore, the task became difficult for the faculty member, and his supervision became ineffective or absent.

### **The Delay in Including English Classes in Primary Schools**

The decision to introduce the English language class to primary schools was gradual. Only recently English language classes started in Grade 1 at the primary stage. Aisha made it clear that she strongly supported the decision to introduce English language classes from Grade 1 in primary schools. Aisha explained that the delay in including the English language class in primary school caused many negative effects.

Aisha explained that because the parents were not used to the English language class, there was a lack of awareness of the importance of teaching the English language among the parents. Aisha explained that mothers always questioned the decision of including the English language class and believed that it was not the right decision, as they believe the English language should be taught at an older age. Aisha believed that due to the delay in including the English language class and the fact that families were not accustomed to the English language class in their children's primary schools, parents had become resistant to the idea of learning the English language at a young age. Aisha explained that some parents believed that teaching English was supposed to start at the middle stage, where students had higher abilities.

Basma said that the decision to include the English language class in primary school from Grade 1 was helpful for primary students. Basma believed that students should learn English at a younger age. Basma said that students should get used to the English language at a young age, as mastering it would be easier if they started at a young age.

### **The Annual Change of Curriculum During the Selection of the English Language Curriculum**

Before choosing the current curriculum for the English language subject, there was a total of 5 to 6 years of testing a different English language curriculum each year, as the teacher had to teach a new curriculum every year. The participants had different opinions regarding the period of experimentation with the curricula and the annual change of the English language curriculum. Some opinions were positive, and some were negative.

Aisha explained that the period of annual curriculum change was not comfortable for her, as she said, "Every year I have to get used to a new curriculum and change completely my lesson plans". Aisha explained that she received the new curriculum on the first day of the school year, so she was in a hurry to design lesson plans and prepare lessons according to the new curriculum. Aisha explained that she wished she had received the new curriculum earlier than the beginning of the school year so that she could have familiarized herself with the curriculum and spent enough time preparing lesson plans.

Basma and Calah explained that the period of changing the curricula was positive for them, as they were able to learn about and teach different curricula and gain experience in teaching different curricula every year. Basma explained that she was very enthusiastic about receiving the new and different curriculum, getting acquainted with its contents, and reviewing it every year.

Calah explained that the period of changing the curriculum helped her to be more flexible and change lesson plans based on the new curriculum. Calah explained that sometimes the difference is fundamental between every year's curricula. However, sometimes the curricula did not have a fundamental difference, as sometimes the differences were related to topics of reading skills, writing skills, pictures, and design,

### **Teachers' Satisfaction Level with Their Teaching Experience in Saudi Arabian Schools**

Aisha expressed her dissatisfaction with her performance in the classroom. Aisha explained that there were many obstacles in the primary school classes that "I cannot solve as an English language teacher", and teachers needed the assistance of the Ministry of Education in this, such as the duration of the class, the number of English language classes, and the number of students in the class. Aisha explained that she needed the cooperation of the parents of primary school students, as students at a young age were greatly influenced by the opinions of their parents. Aisha explained that parents needed to instill positive feelings in their children toward English language classes, as it was important for students to love and accept the English language before starting to learn it. Aisha stated that "I do not agree with how we as primary school teachers evaluate primary school students at all, and I hope that it will change as soon as possible. As a teacher, I do not feel satisfied with making students pass the class without learning what they are supposed to learn before moving on to the next class".

Basma explained her dissatisfaction with her performance in the English language classes and said that her experience could have been much better if she had not faced some obstacles. The duration of the classes was considered an obstacle on the way to presenting a wonderful

lesson. Basma explained that " during my teaching experience, I did not leave the class, not even once, and I feel satisfied with my performance in the class." Basma explained that moving between the classrooms while carrying electronic devices such as projectors and speakers every day was not easy for her.

Basma said that as "a middle and high school teacher, I do not feel that I am preparing my students to the level of the English language that is taught in colleges". Participant 2 said "I know that the level of English used in Saudi universities is currently advanced and academic, so I feel that my students will suffer in their first year in university.", Basma explained that her students at the high school were not ready for the level of English used in universities, Basma explained this by saying, "I do not feel that I give my students enough opportunities to practice because of the length of the classes." Basma added by saying, "I always wish I could focus more on low-level students. There are many things that I want to do with my students, but I encountered many obstacles that I cannot solve as a teacher, and that requires the intervention of Ministry of Education officials in this situation."

Calah explained that her teaching experience was not easy, as there were many obstacles inside and outside the classroom. Calah said that "The lack of time is one of the biggest obstacles that I encountered in the classroom, I always feel the uncomfortable feeling when I see that my students need more practice opportunities in order to develop, but unfortunately I cannot because of the lack of time." Calah explained that the number of students in classes should be taken into consideration by the Ministry of Education, as it was a major obstacle in teaching, due to a large number of students that affected the activities and the choice of the type of activity. Calah stated that " I tend as a teacher to choose a quick activity that large classes can do, and therefore the

quality of my presenting the lesson decreases. Calah explained that she felt uncomfortable by not providing interesting activities due to the time and the large number of students. Calah said that "My teaching performance would have been much better had it not been for these obstacles in my path as a teacher".

### **Summary of Findings**

Rehmand and Alhaisoni point out that students in Saudi schools are not encouraged to make extensive use of English in the classroom for interpersonal communication in English (2013). One of the findings of this study showed that due to the short time, the teacher did not give the necessary attention to the students with low levels of English proficiency.

The results of this study showed that primary students in Saudi schools needed more exposure to English lessons, as two classes per week are considered very few. The teachers in this study encouraged primary students to attend an English class every day, as exposure to the English language at a young age made the acquisition of the language easier and faster.

This study revealed that there were positive reactions from the teachers towards the modern English language curricula, where the teachers were impressed by the diversity of the lessons' topics, the sequence of the lessons, the design and the colors, and the fit of the topics with the ages of the students. The results of this study showed that there was satisfaction among the teachers with the new selected curricula.

The participants reported that there was a concern and a lack of acceptance by the parents of elementary students toward the English language class. This was due to the delay in including the English language class in primary schools, which made the parents unaccustomed to the

English language class in the school schedule. The lack of acceptance by the parents lead to another problem, which was that the parents instilled in their children a lack of acceptance of the English language, which made the work of the primary teacher much more difficult.

This study showed that the system for assessing the students' skills in primary schools in Saudi Arabia lacked credibility and validity. Rather, the assessment system in primary schools instilled in students a lack of discipline, which greatly affected the process of learning English. The teachers in this study explained that the student evaluation system in primary schools was one of the most important and strongest obstacles in the student's path to success and development in the English language class, as the evaluation did not show the real level of language proficiency of the student. In the evaluation system in primary schools, students were allowed to repeat exams until they passed the current class and moved on to the next grade. The study showed that there was leniency in the evaluation of primary students, as everyone could pass the English language subject easily because the teacher was required to allow the student to retake the test in order to pass the test.

This study also showed that students depended on memorization for reading and writing tests instead of understanding and mastering the skill. The teachers in this study explained that the students constantly demanded that the teachers gave them summaries of the lessons before the exams, selected specific paragraphs from the book to study for their reading skills tests, and selected topics for their writing skills tests, thus showing that the students approach learning was to memorize

This study also revealed that the number of students in the classes, the use of the Arabic language, the student's level of proficiency in the English language, and the availability of the

necessary electronic equipment were classified as challenges facing English language teachers in Saudi schools. The teachers in this study explained that the classrooms in Saudi schools had a large number of students between 35 and 45—and that the class, and therefore the number of students, hindered the flow of the lesson, in addition to causing the teacher to lose focus on students with a low level who needed additional assistance. The teachers in this study explained that the students used the Arabic language a lot in the English language classes, which reduced the chances of practicing the target language. Consequently, the process of teaching and learning English became slower. The teachers in this study reported that the proficiency level of the students in the primary, middle, and secondary levels was lower than expected and required, which made it difficult for the teachers to teach the students effectively. According to the teachers in this study, the reason behind the students' low level in the English language was the lack of adequate opportunities for students to practice English due to a large number of students and the short duration of the class. In Saudi schools, there are insufficient chances for students to practice the English they have learned in class (Shah, Hussain, & Nassef, 2013).

Another finding of the study revealed that village schools in Saudi Arabia were not equipped with the necessary tools for the teacher compared to city schools. Village schools lacked a projector, speakers, and computer, which made it difficult for the teacher to present the lesson in the required manner. The teacher in village schools in Saudi Arabia was forced to bring these electronic tools at her own expense. In city schools, there was an English language laboratory equipped with the necessary tools.

The participants also noted that the training programs for future English language teachers in the universities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, taking place during the last semester

of the undergraduate years, did not provide the required training for the students who specialized in teaching English and did not train or teach the basics of the teaching profession. The teachers in this study stated that the training period for bachelor's students should be longer than a semester, and in addition to that, there should be intensive supervision by the main English language teacher in the school and the faculty member sent by the university with the students. It has been said that EFL education in Saudi Arabia has insufficient and unsystematic training programs (Al Hazmi, 2003).

According to the participants in this study teaching English in primary, middle, and secondary schools in Saudi Arabia did not prepare students for the level of academic English in the preparatory year in Saudi colleges. The teachers in this study said that the proficiency level of English of students who graduated from secondary school was weak or below the required level. Therefore, there was a gap between the level of language education in schools and universities, as school English education did not prepare students for the level of English language education in universities. According to Garcia and Manzano (2015), since developing language competency abilities in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment is so challenging, students may disregard the necessity to do so.

The primary, middle, and secondary teachers in this study reported that they did not feel fully satisfied with their performance in the English language classes and felt a sense of neglect toward their students, which negatively affected their experience as teachers. The teachers in this study explained that the reason for not feeling satisfied with their performance was due to the difficulties they face as teachers within the English language classes, such as the number of weekly English language classes, the duration of the English language class, which did not



exceed 45 minutes, and their inability as teachers to give opportunities to their students to interact and practice, not provide the required assistance to students with a low level, not to evaluate their students as required, and having to reduce the number of activities due to a large number of students in the class. The teachers in this study explained that they could have felt satisfied and improved their sense of their performance if they had not faced these difficulties that they could not solve as teachers and that required intervention and assistance from officials of the Ministry of Education.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the participants are currently in the United States and some of them are enrolled in a Ph.D. program that focuses on teaching English as a second or foreign language. It is important to recognize that their experiences as a teacher are likely to be influenced or mediated by their new educational experiences in the United States. The exposure to different teaching methodologies and pedagogies, as well as cultural differences, may shape their perceptions of teaching and impact the way they approach their role as a teacher.

Moreover, studying in a new environment provides a unique perspective on teaching that the participants may not have had before. The new educational experiences in the United States may have exposed them to new approaches to teaching and learning, different classroom dynamics, and diverse student populations. This might have helped broaden their understanding of the challenges and opportunities that come with teaching English as a second or foreign language and might have enabled them to better tailor their teaching strategies to meet the needs of their students. At the same time, it is important to recognize that their perceptions and experiences may have been influenced by the cultural norms and values of the United States, which may differ from those of their home country.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Improving English language teaching in Saudi Arabian schools is vital for a number of reasons. Owing to the economic, political, and military importance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the world today, its citizens should be fluent in English to attract and facilitate foreign investments in the country. The English language is classified as the second language after Arabic and is used for communication and business. One of the objectives of the 2030 plan of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the growth of education. Therefore, there is an urgent need to strengthen English language instruction in Saudi schools. Throughout its history, the teaching of English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been modified in an effort to promote English language education. Sadly, the level of English proficiency among Saudi students continues to fall short of expectations, posing a variety of problems. The variables relate to several sectors, such as the curriculum and teaching techniques, the English language teacher training programs at Saudi universities, and the English teaching style used in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The conversation continues, and the Ministry of Education continues to seek solutions by giving financial and administrative assistance to Saudi Arabian education entities and stakeholders.

This research aimed to explore English as a foreign language (EFL) Saudi Arabian teachers' perceptions vis-a-vis the English education context in primary and secondary schools. The themes revealed were the duration of the class time, the number of weekly classes, the quality of the new curriculum, challenges faced by the EFL teachers inside the classrooms, assessments in the primary schools, family attitudes towards English class, teachers' preparation programs at Saudi Arabian universities, teachers' preparation programs at Saudi Arabian universities, the delay in including English classes in the primary schools, the annual change of

the curriculum during the selection of the English language curriculum and teachers' satisfaction level with their teaching experience in Saudi Arabian schools. This case study examined the perceptions of three English teachers at Saudi primary, middle, and secondary schools. As a result of the fact that the teaching English profession is influenced by a variety of challenges, obstacles, and difficulties related to the teacher, learning environment, students' English proficiency levels, and Ministry of Education efforts, the topic of English education and schools is not immune to challenges and controversy.

Through the results of the study, we can say that the field of teaching English in the schools of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia faces difficulties in many respects. The Ministry of Education should support English teachers in Saudi schools by listening to their concerns and taking them into account. Everything that the teacher goes through in and out of classrooms directly affects the quality of education and performance, and therefore the Saudi students do not always receive an effective education.

The teachers are considered the foundation of education, so providing an appropriate environment equipped with what they need helps greatly in teacher satisfaction and improving their performance. Through the results of the study, the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the teaching experience in Saudi schools, so looking at the challenges they faced in schools should become obligatory for the Ministry of Education staff. Teaching English in Saudi Arabia does not only need financial support from the Ministry of Education but also the development of strategic plans that help address the obstacles faced by English language teachers in Saudi Arabia. The development of curricula is not the only tool for the development of English language education, but the obstacles that lead to the failure to provide these modern curricula must be considered, such as class time, number of students, and method of assessment.

Parents' attitudes toward teaching English are very important, as parents play an important role in the lives of their children. Therefore, it is important to educate parents about the importance of the English language by hosting parents in schools and providing lectures and seminars on the importance of the English language. In addition, it would be beneficial if the parents of the students participated in some activities related to teaching the English language. It is possible for the schools to put on an activity (English Language Day) where the school hosts the parents and provides activities that bring together the participation of students and their parents. There are many ways in which schools can involve parents in activities related to English language classes, as from my point of view, it will contribute to raising the level of their acceptance of the English language, which will reflect positively on students' performance.

In the preparatory year in the universities of Saudi Arabia, the English language is taught very intensively and plays an important role in the GPA of students. Even after the preparatory year, the English language is used very intensively in the universities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and in some departments, it may be the main language of teaching. But looking at the results of this study, it will be very difficult for students to meet the colleges and universities English language requirements. There is a gap between K-12 schools and universities, so it is necessary to look closely at the level of K-12 students and prepare them for intensive English language classes in universities so that K-12 students do not experience difficulties and challenges in the first year at the university, which will undoubtedly create a difficult relationship between the student and education in universities.

The programs for preparing English language teachers lack intensive supervision by those responsible for the programs. According to the findings of this study, English language

teacher training programs in Saudi Arabia require a radical change in order to provide teachers with an integrated teaching experience under the intense supervision of officials, so that upon completion of the program in training, there will be an imprint on the level of the teacher's performance and the teachers will feel satisfied with what they have accomplished. These programs need to extend their time to more than one academic term. The teaching profession is very important, as the teachers teach the future generation that bears the development of countries on its shoulders. Therefore, teachers must be given intensive and sufficient training in order to be ready to teach students.

There are many obstacles in the field of teaching English in Saudi Arabia that must be considered by the Ministry of Education. Decisions and strategic plans are needed to solve them. The role of school administrations and teachers is not sufficient to solve these obstacles, so decision-makers must listen more to the teachers' self-reported difficulties, as the teachers' satisfaction and feeling of support greatly affect the level of their performance. Therefore, teachers' satisfaction must be taken into consideration, and obstacles affecting their satisfaction must be resolved.

### **Impact of Study**

As this study aimed to investigate the experiences and perceptions of EFL teachers regarding the English education context in primary and secondary schools, it contributed to the existing literature that examines and evaluates the English education context in primary and secondary schools. Despite its importance, vital significance, and enormous efforts of the Saudi Ministry of Education, English language teaching in Saudi Arabia continues to underperform (Maherzi, 2011). Understanding what the teachers have been through such as their experiences, challenges, and obstacles during teaching experiences time will help prepare institutions,

teachers, and students for better future scenarios. Additionally, as this study shed light on English education in Saudi Arabia, it assists to understand the English language classes' dynamic and how unprepared they are to provide an excellent English learning journey for the student more many challenges. Understanding these challenges that teachers encountered will help address issues that we have in the Saudi education system.

### **Limitations**

This qualitative research aims to determine the perspectives of EFL Saudi Arabian instructors on the primary and secondary education context. This research has some limitations. The participants are the first limitation. The participants in this research are teachers, thus, the perspectives of students and administrators are not included. In addition, there are no male participants in this research. As a consequence, the study lacks Saudi male instructors' perspectives on English instruction in Saudi Arabia. Including male teachers in this research might enhance its findings.

### **Future Research**

This study revealed several issues related to investigating the experiences and perceptions of EFL teachers regarding the English education context in primary and secondary schools. Consequently, future research must focus on addressing the challenges faced by teachers, such as the duration of classes, the number of students, the use of the Arabic language, and the lack of readiness of the classrooms in the villages of Saudi Arabia with the necessary tools. Further research should address the assessment policies in primary schools in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it is important to study the family's perspective on teaching English in Saudi Arabian schools. More research should study the viewpoints of school principals in the context of the English

language in Saudi schools, in addition to studying the difficulties in English language classes from the point of view of students. Further research should address the challenges teachers encounter when assessing primary students in English language classes in Saudi schools. This current study examined the perspectives of female teachers, so further research should include the perspectives of male English language teachers. Additionally, more research should be conducted on English-language teacher training programs in Saudi universities.

**APPENDIX A**  
**IRB APPROVAL LETTER**





UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

**Institutional Review Board**  
FWA0000351  
IRB0001138, IRB00012110  
Office of Research  
12201 Research Parkway  
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

March 8, 2023

Dear Mona Abdullah A Al Mogeerah:

On 3/8/2023, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Exploring English as a foreign language (EFL) Saudi Arabian teachers' perceptions vis-a-vis English education context in primary and secondary schools
Investigator:	Mona Abdullah A Al Mogeerah
IRB ID:	STUDY00005152
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRP 251 Florin Mihai.pdf, Category: Faculty Research Approval;</li> <li>• HRP-254 - FORM - Explanation of Research 1.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• HRP-256 - FORM - Translation Verification .pdf, Category: Translation Verification;</li> <li>• Interview questions in English.docx, Category: Interview / Focus Questions;</li> <li>• Interview questions with Arabic translation., Category: Translation Verification;</li> <li>• Recruitment Email.docx, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li> <li>• Study 5152 HRP-255 - FORM - Request for Exemption track changes (3).docx, Category: IRB Protocol;</li> <li>• Verification of the Arabic translation .docx, Category: Translation Verification;</li> </ul>

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please submit a modification request to the IRB. Guidance on

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submitting Modifications and Administrative Check-in are detailed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or [irb@ucf.edu](mailto:irb@ucf.edu). Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Kristin Badillo  
Designated Reviewer

**APPENDIX B**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Interview questions:**

Question 1	1. Tell me about yourself.
Question 2	How is your experience as an elementary, middle, or high school teacher in Saudi Arabian schools?
Question 3	What difficulties, if any, are you as a Saudi K-12 teacher facing in the classroom?
Question 4	What methods and strategies do you use to teach English?
Question 5	What is your opinion about the English curricula that are used in schools these days?
Question 6	Do you think the EFL curriculum is used effectively?
Question 7	Do you feel satisfied with your performance in the classroom? What are the reasons behind this feeling, whether it is negative or positive?
Question 8	Since most of the university departments in Saudi Arabia nowadays are using the English language as the language of instruction, do you think the primary and secondary schools' English instruction is preparing the students for college English levels? Will the students be able to write, read, present, and take part in class using English effectively?
Question 9	What actions can be taken to improve English language instruction in Saudi Arabian schools?

**APPENDIX C  
RECRUITING EMAIL**

Subject line: Participation in a Study Conducted in the US  
Hello

I hope you are well.

My name is Mona Abdullah Al Mogeerah. I am a master's student at the University of Central Florida majoring in TESOL. I am working on my master's thesis, which is entitled:

Exploring English as a foreign language (EFL) Saudi Arabian teachers' perceptions vis-a-vis English education context in primary and secondary schools

You are invited to take part in this research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

Despite the history of EFL instruction and the resources dedicated to the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia, concerns have been expressed about the English language proficiency of Saudi students. Saudi students presently study English as a foreign language for 12 years, yet many graduate from high school with low English ability, incapable of writing a paragraph or carrying on a basic discussion. There may be a number of variables that contribute to this issue, including the fact that Saudi students learn English for just 45 minutes per day, four or five days per week, the enormous size of EFL Saudi classes, and the little exposure to English outside the classroom. To improve the quality of the EFL curriculum of the Saudi Ministry of Education, the effectiveness of EFL instructors, the growth of inter-institutional collaboration perspectives, and to assist students in improving their English proficiency, additional research must be conducted to explore and define the characteristics and challenges of the context of English language instruction in Saudi Arabia.

The purpose of this study is to investigate, among EFL Saudi Arabian instructors, the English educational atmosphere in elementary and secondary schools. The interview questions focus on three major aspects of education: teaching experience, students' English proficiency levels, and the English curriculum. You will be interviewed for about one hour and it will be conducted online via Zoom in a location of your choosing. During this research, your audio will be recorded and your camera will be turned off. If you do not consent to be audio recorded, you cannot participate in the research. The interview will be recorded on the researcher's phone. After conducting and recording interviews, the researcher will transfer the audio file to a password-protected computer file and transcribe the interview using the computer. The recording will then be deleted from the researcher's device.

To participate in this study you must be:

- 18 and older

- An English language instructor or have a minimum of five years of teaching experience at one of the Saudi Arabian schools.

Before starting the interview, you will be given enough time to ask questions in case you have any questions. If you are interested in being one of the participants, please reply to this e-mail.

Best regards.

*Mona Abdullah A Al Mogeerah*

Principle Investigator

Phone: 3218309492

Email: [monaabdullaha.almogeerah@ucf.edu](mailto:monaabdullaha.almogeerah@ucf.edu)

University of Central Florida

*Florin Mihai*

Faculty Advisor

Phone: 4078232472

Email: [Florin.Mihai@ucf.edu](mailto:Florin.Mihai@ucf.edu)

University of Central Florida

**APPENDIX D**  
**EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH**



## **EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH**

**Title of Study:** Exploring English as a foreign language (EFL) Saudi Arabian teachers' perceptions vis-a-vis English education context in primary and secondary schools

**Principal Investigator:** Mona Abdullah Ali Almogeerah

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Florin Mihai

You are invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

The purpose of this study is to investigate, among EFL Saudi Arabian instructors, the English educational atmosphere in elementary and secondary schools. The interview questions focus on three major aspects of education: teaching experience, students' English proficiency levels, and the English curriculum.

You will be interviewed for about one hour and it will be conducted online via Zoom in a location of your choosing.

During this research, your audio will be recorded and your camera will be turned off. If you do not consent to be audio recorded, you cannot participate in the research. The interview will be recorded on the researcher's phone. After conducting and recording interviews, the researcher will transfer the audio file to a password-protected computer file and delete the recording from the phone. Then, transcribe the interview using the computer. The researcher will not request personal information from the participant.

The recording will be uploaded to a password-protected file on the researcher's computer. Identifiers will be eliminated and kept separately from the de-identified data. The data will be saved in a password-protected file in OneDrive; only the researcher will have access to the data. The transcription of your audio recording will be completed in Microsoft Word. Please note that the researcher will utilize the recording in accordance with UCF's privacy policy. Please note that the recording will be used by Microsoft Word based on their privacy policy. All data will be stored for 5 years after the study closure.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time.

Your information that are collected as part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if all of your identifiers are removed.

You must be 18 and older and

you must be an English language instructor or have a minimum of five years of teaching experience at one of the Saudi Arabian schools.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints: *Mona Almogeerah, Graduate Student, TESOL Program, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, (321) 830-9492 or Dr. Florin Mihai, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at (407) 823-2472 or by email at [florin.mihai@ucf.edu](mailto:florin.mihai@ucf.edu).*

**IRB contact about your rights in this study or to report a complaint:** If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or have concerns about the conduct of this study, please contact Institutional

UCF HRP-254 Form v.1/31/2023



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