

The Challenges of Effective English Language Teaching in Saudi Schools

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Abstract

Teaching English language effectively is crucial for helping English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners communicate in the target language. Effective EFL teaching can lead to rich production and use of the language. In this study the researcher aim to explore the difficulties that EFL teachers encounter, difficulties that limit their application of effective teaching methods in Saudi schools. The researcher collected data using a questionnaire that included challenges related to various factors: the learning environment, the textbook, EFL learners, EFL teachers, and the use of technology. The participants of this study included 112 English language teachers from different cities in Saudi Arabia. The main results indicated that EFL teachers in Saudi schools face numerous challenges related to the classroom environment, the EFL textbook, the EFL learners, and technology tools in the classroom. Because the researcher explored the difficulties of using effective methods based on EFL teachers' perceptions, the findings could assist the Ministry of Education and policymakers in investigating and overcoming the challenges EFL teachers face to enhance their application of effective methods in Saudi schools.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language teaching, Saudi teachers, challenges, effective methods

1. Introduction

Teaching English effectively in Saudi schools has become essential for achieving the Saudi Vision 2030. The effectiveness of the learning process in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum significantly impacts learners' performance. The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia aims to improve the curriculum and the teaching methods teachers employ to help students graduate with mastery of the English language. In this study the researcher aim to explore the difficulties that EFL teachers perceive in applying effective teaching methods in teaching English in schools.

In Saudi policy, the Ministry of Education has emphasized the importance of teaching and learning EFL in public schools due to the global significance of English as the language of science, technology, and medicine (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014; Alraishid & Phan, 2015; Elyas & Picard, 2010). Given the international status of the English language, Saudi Arabia aims to prepare students to master EFL and become global citizens who can contribute to the country's development. To achieve this aim, EFL teachers should focus more on practical application than theoretical focus (Al-Saadi, 2011; Ellis, 1999; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Therefore, EFL teachers need to provide opportunities for learners to practice the language independently in the classroom so they can use it for communication in external environments.

In Saudi Arabia, learning English amounts to learning a foreign language. However, the use of English in communication has increased among the new generation due to the widespread use of technology (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Consequently, learners' motivation to learn English may be higher now than in the past. To maintain high motivation among learners, teachers must enhance their teaching methods to be more effective, enabling learners to communicate in English and prepare them to interact with foreigners (Zuhur, 2011).

Saudi EFL teaching policies have evolved over the years since the introduction of English in intermediate and secondary schools. Teachers currently teach English at all stages in public schools, starting from the first grade. However, students graduate from high school with limited English proficiency (Arabai, 2016). Despite the Ministry of Education's significant efforts to develop EFL teaching in public schools, various issues continue to hinder some plans. These challenges may reflect difficulties in EFL learners' learning, resulting in limited

English language proficiency. Therefore, this study sheds light on the challenges of applying effective teaching methods to EFL classrooms in Saudi Context.

Previous researchers have claimed that implementing the goals of the Saudi Ministry of Education is key to achieving a successful curriculum (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Furthermore, Al-Seghayer (2014) asserted that EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia must align with the Ministry of Education's goals, requiring collaboration between teachers and students to achieve these objectives. Saudi learners generally face various challenges in learning English, particularly in productive skills such as writing and speaking (Benhania, 2016; Hawari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013; Rababah, 2005), emphasizing the obstacles in teaching and learning EFL in Saudi public schools. Therefore, exploring teachers' challenges and addressing their needs in teaching EFL effectively could lead to proficient practices that meet the required goals.

Previous researchers in Saudi Arabia have examined EFL teaching policies and the way these policies adapt to the EFL curriculum (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Al-Tamimi, 2019). Al-Tamimi (2019) explored numerous challenges that hinder the implementation of EFL policies and teaching regulations. He recommended applying these policies and rules to facilitate natural language learning. Additionally, Alrashidi and Phan (2015) reported various challenges related to learners' motivation, achievements, and lack of practice, which affect EFL education, thus recommending enhancements to the methods applied in EFL to address these challenges. In a similar study, Al-Seghayer (2014) investigated the challenges of EFL education in Saudi Arabia, identifying issues related to learners' beliefs, curriculum, and administration of EFL teaching. In a recent related study, Aldossary (2024) examined the challenges of writing in EFL in secondary schools, finding challenges related to linguistic and sociocultural factors.

Furthermore, Alrabai (2016) explored the negative factors affecting learners' achievement in Saudi EFL, revealing that crowded classes, lack of technology, and inadequate teacher training were the most significant factors. Alnasser (2013) identified issues leading to weak language proficiency among Saudi learners in public schools. He investigated various challenges teachers face in teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia, noting that students were often unprepared to use English in EFL classrooms (Khan, 2011). Thus, learners may struggle to apply the knowledge they receive without appropriate preparation from EFL teachers. Utilizing effective teaching methods could help EFL learners practice their English and prepare them for real-world use. Therefore, in this study the researcher will explore the difficulties EFL teachers face in applying effective teaching methods in Saudi EFL public schools.

Despite the importance for Saudi learners in public schools to master the English language, their proficiency levels still fall short of the Ministry of Education's targets (Alnasser, 2013; Alrabai, 2016; Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013). Most previous researchers have explored the challenges of learning and teaching EFL in general. In this study the researcher aim to address the issue by investigating the challenges EFL teachers face in implementing effective methods that reflect learning production.

This study is significant because the researcher could assist policymakers in Saudi Arabia by exploring the difficulties EFL teachers face in applying effective methods. Providing policymakers with an overview of the common challenges could facilitate the development of suitable solutions to enhance EFL teaching in Saudi public schools. Additionally, this study could contribute valuable data to the literature by presenting the challenges Saudi EFL teachers encounter in effectively applying teaching methods. Thus, the researcher seek to answer the following research question:

1. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the difficulties in applying effective methods in Saudi public schools?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Challenges of Teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia

Previous researchers have explored significant issues related to teaching EFL in the Saudi context (Al-Khairi, 2013; Al-Tamimi, 2019; Ashraf, 2018; Benhania, 2016; Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013; Rababah, 2005). Some of these issues pertain to the learning environment and the textbook used, whereas others relate to EFL learners and teachers' motivation. Al-Tamimi (2019) investigated environmental issues affecting EFL teaching in the Saudi Arabia, recommending that learners be given time to utilize language resources, such as language labs and libraries, to enhance autonomous learning and EFL learning.

Additionally, previous researchers (Al-Khairi, 2013; Ashraf, 2018; Benhania, 2016; Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013; Rababah, 2005) have identified challenges related to the teaching and learning environment. They reported that overcrowded classrooms pose the most significant challenge for EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. A large

number of students in EFL classrooms limits opportunities for learners to engage in practice because it is not feasible to involve all learners in activities within a limited class time. Therefore, it is crucial to establish an appropriate class size for EFL instruction because language learning requires sufficient time for each learner to practice in classroom settings. Al-Tamimi (2019) suggested that the ideal number in language classes should be no more than 25 students.

Another challenge related to the EFL learning environment is the limited class hours. It is challenging for EFL teachers to teach a large number of students (35 to 40) within a restricted time frame. Researchers (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Al-Tamimi, 2019) have recommended increasing class time because 40 minutes in four classes per week is insufficient for EFL learners to use the language practically and communicatively. Consequently, these researchers have suggested adapting the content to the limited class time because Saudi EFL teachers often rush to cover all materials and content, focusing on quantity rather than quality. To help EFL learners apply what they have learned in a practical manner, it is essential to allocate adequate time for practice before they use it outside the classroom. The number of learners should inform the determination of class hours because this will enable teachers to implement effective teaching.

Another challenge for teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia is the reliance on exams to evaluate language learners (Al-Tamimi, 2019; Ashraf, 2018). Testing and exams can increase learners' stress during the language learning process. Continuous evaluation may be less stressful for learners because it assesses the entire learning process. Furthermore, exams and testing often focus more on evaluating receptive skills, whereas continuous evaluation can encompass both receptive and productive skills. A comprehensive evaluation of learners throughout the learning process may be more effective than relying solely on mid-term and final exams. Continuous evaluation can enhance learners' engagement, thereby achieving the aim of language learning. Al-Tamimi (2019) recommended using assessment methods that do not rely on exams for EFL because language learning should prioritize the quality of what learners have learned.

Moreover, the prescribed textbook can pose challenges for Saudi EFL teachers (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Ashraf, 2018). Previous researchers (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Al-Tamimi, 2019) have reported that textbooks should be designed to reflect Saudi culture and meet social needs because it is challenging for EFL teachers to utilize course syllabi that primarily discuss Western culture. Another related issue is that some researchers have claimed teachers need to be more flexible in using diverse materials for EFL instruction. Flexible use of materials can encourage EFL teachers to incorporate various activities that align with learners' interests and abilities. Furthermore, flexibility in material usage can foster creativity in the learning environment. Based on the materials prepared for EFL learners, teachers can be innovative and better understand their students' interests and abilities. Teacher creativity can facilitate the use of effective methods in EFL. Additionally, teachers should present materials with high flexibility, allowing them to utilize supplementary and diverse resources that cater to learners' needs (Al-Tamimi, 2019).

Additionally, some Saudi EFL teachers have reported difficulties related to learners' motivation to learn English. Learners' motivation significantly influences learning outcomes (Alrabai, 2016; Ashraf, 2018). Highly motivated learners engage more actively in communicative contexts than their less motivated peers do (Alrabai, 2016; Ashraf, 2018; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Harmer, 1991). Consequently, EFL teachers face challenges in encouraging unmotivated learners to participate in the learning process. Therefore, they must employ effective teaching methods that enhance learners' motivation. Various strategies can boost learners' motivation, with the most effective being the use of technology to create an engaging learning context.

In contrast, Saudi researchers have reported that EFL teachers lack training in using effective technologies that facilitate language practice (Alrabai, 2016; Al-Tamimi, 2019). Furthermore, Al-Tamimi (2019) noted that essential technologies are unavailable in some schools, making it impossible for teachers to access them for their students. Researchers (Alrabai, 2016; Al-Tamimi, 2019) have recommended the appropriate use of technology because it plays a crucial role in helping and encouraging learners to engage in classroom communication. Al-Tamimi (2019) argued that audio-visual tools could enhance learners' learning in more efficient and practical ways. Incorporating technology into EFL classrooms can provide learners with opportunities to practice in a more natural environment (Alrabai, 2016; Al-Tamimi, 2019).

2.2 Effective Methods in EFL

In this research, effective methods refer to the strategies and techniques that enable learners to use the language independently in the classroom. Figure 1 presents the cycle for EFL learners that they should undergo to achieve effective learning. Watkins et al. (2002) stated that employing effective methods could lead to effective learning through a cyclical process that results in knowledge production. They emphasized the importance of social

processes in helping learners generate knowledge. Furthermore, they suggested that effective learning can be enhanced when teachers assign responsibility to learners, encourage cooperation among them, and promote learning how to learn. They also argued that these processes foster and enhance active learning in the classroom. To achieve the effective learning cycle illustrated in Figure 1, it is recommended that teachers divide class time into three parts: one for instruction and two for learner engagement.

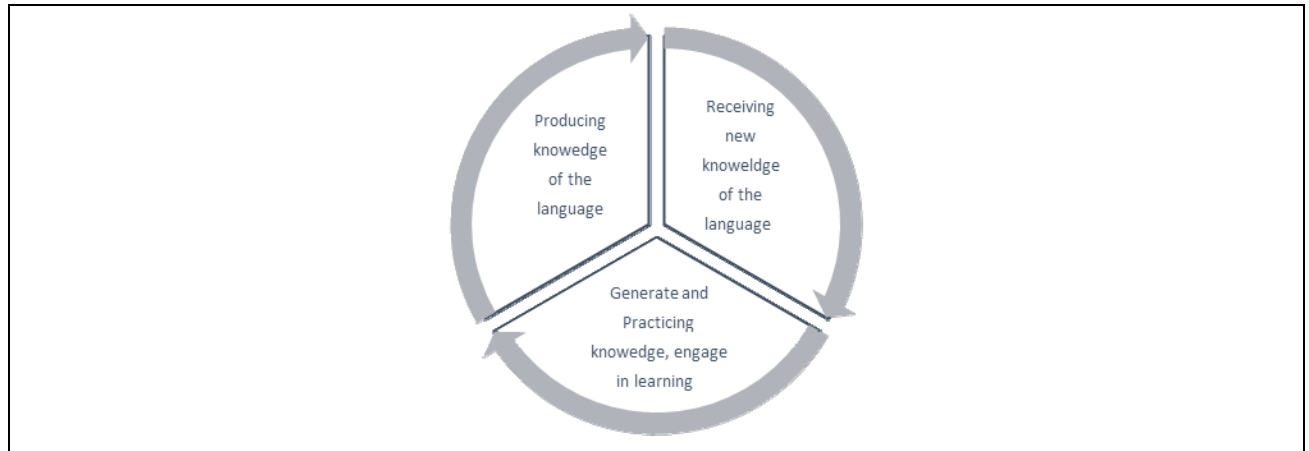


Figure 1. Effective learning cycle in English language class

Martin and Jeffrey (2003) reported that employing constructive teaching methods could help learners succeed in the learning process of learning. Constructivism reflects active learning because learners need to engage with teachers or peers to achieve educational goals. Alfassi (2004) stated that applying constructivist theory allows teachers to create a learner-centred environment, where the learner plays a central role in the classroom. Additionally, Carnell (2000) suggested that providing opportunities for learners to practice their learning could positively impact their achievements. A learner-centred environment makes learning more meaningful and productive (Alfassi, 2004; Carnell, 2000; Martin & Jeffrey, 2003).

Active learning requires engaging materials and activities because this is how EFL can facilitate reflection. Participation alone may not suffice for effective learning; learners must reflect on their learning process and apply new knowledge to be well prepared for independent use outside the classroom (Watkins et al., 2002). Therefore, teachers need to create an effective environment and employ effective methods to achieve successful learning outcomes. Moreover, teachers should facilitate and support learning rather than merely present knowledge (Reeve, 2006). Teachers' facilitation of learning can positively impact learners' autonomy (Reeve, 2006).

Teaching methods can be effective when they embody characteristics that promote active learning, collaboration, independent learning, and metacognitive learning (Carnell & Lodge, 2002). EFL teachers should incorporate these characteristics into their classrooms to help learners produce language independently. Teachers must assume the role of facilitators, allowing learners to navigate the classroom and monitor their progress in learning (Watkins et al., 2002).

3. Methods

In this study the researcher aim to explore Saudi EFL teachers' perceptions of the difficulties in applying effective methods. The researcher employed a quantitative research design to achieve our objectives. The questionnaire included five sections: difficulties related to the learning environment, the textbook, EFL learners, EFL teachers, and the use of technology. The researcher deemed the quantitative questionnaire the most suitable for identifying the factors that present the highest difficulties (Creswell, 2012).

3.1 Participants

The demographic data presented in Table 1 provide insights into the qualifications, experiences, teaching stages, and residences of the participated EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Of the teachers, 86 hold bachelor's degrees (45 men and 41 women), 24 hold master's degrees (16 men and eight women), and two have doctorates (both men). The largest group in terms of experience consists of those with 10 to 15 years (28 total, 11 women, 17 men), followed by those with 15 to 20 years (52 total, 27 women, 25 men). The majority of teachers (44 total, 22 women, 22 men) work at the secondary level, with a significant number also teaching at the primary (38 total, 23 women, 15 men) and intermediate (30 total, 12 women, 18 men) levels. Geographically, the West area has the

highest concentration of teachers (51 total, 38 women, 13 men), followed by the Central area (10 women, 18 men).

Table 1. Demographic data for the participants

Qualification	Women	Men	Total
Bachelor	41	45	86
Doctorate		2	2
Master	16	8	24
Experience (years)	Women	Men	Total
From 1 to 5	13	5	18
From 10 to 15	11	17	28
From 15 to 20	27	25	52
From 5 to 10	6	8	14
The stage you are teaching EFL in	Women	Men	Total
Intermediate stage	12	18	30
Primary stage	23	15	38
Secondary stage	22	22	44
The area you live in Saudi Arabia	Women	Men	Total
Central area	10	18	28
East area	7	2	9
North area	1	9	10
South area	1	13	14
West area	38	13	51

3.2 Instrument

The researcher designed a questionnaire for Saudi English language teachers to collect quantitative data for the proposed study. The researcher based the questionnaire on literature related to the challenges of teaching EFL in various contexts (Al-Khairi, 2013; Al-Tamimi, 2019; Benhania, 2016; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Harmer, 2007; Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013; Rababah, 2005). It consisted of 25 items divided into six sections: the first section gathered demographic information about the participants; the second addressed challenges related to the classroom environment, size, and timing; the third focused on the textbook; the fourth on learners; the fifth on EFL teachers; and the last section related to the technological issues in EFL teaching. The questionnaire featured a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*.

3.2.1 Reliability of the Questionnaire

Table 2. Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.924	25

With Cronbach's alpha of 0.924, the reliability data indicate that the 25 items in the scale exhibit a good degree of internal consistency. This suggests that the scale is trustworthy for measuring the desired variable and that the items assess the same underlying concept. The scale utilized in this study is highly reliable because Cronbach's alpha score above 0.7 is generally satisfactory and a value above 0.9 exceptional.

3.3 Procedures

After designing the questionnaire, the researcher validated and reviewed it with experts in the field of EFL education. The research committee at Umm Al-Qura University subsequently approved the research instrument. Following approval, the researcher distributed the questionnaire link via Google Forms to a large number of EFL teachers through social media, with assistance from administrators in the Ministry of Education, who shared the link with Saudi EFL teachers via email. The data collection process took 6 months to complete.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of the Challenges of teaching and learning EFL

4.1.1 Challenges related to the learning environment, size, and timing

Table 3 shows the difficulties EFL teachers face in implementing effective teaching methods due to various classroom limitations. With a mean of 2.22 and a standard deviation of 1.121, the challenge of overcrowded classrooms received the highest percentage of agreement (67.9%), indicating that most EFL teachers find it difficult to use effective teaching methods in such settings. Similarly, 61.6% of EFL teachers agreed that the classroom size is inappropriate (mean = 2.38, $SD = 1.187$), and 59.8% concurred that the seating arrangement hinders cooperation (mean = 2.38, $SD = 1.066$). Furthermore, 44.6% of EFL teachers perceived that class time only allows for the explanation of new lessons (mean = 2.83, $SD = 1.287$), while 58.9% felt that the class time is inadequate for language practice (mean = 2.47, $SD = 1.185$). These difficulties highlight significant obstacles to successful EFL instruction and underscore the need for improved time management and classroom organization to enable teachers to use effective methods.

Table 3. Challenges related to the learning environment, size, and timing

Challenges related to the learning environment, size, and timing	Mean	SD	% Agreement	% Neutral	% Disagreement
1- I cannot use effective teaching methods in teaching EFL because of overcrowding in the classroom.	2.22	1.121	67.9	14.3	17.9
2- I cannot use effective methods because the size of the classroom is not suitable.	2.38	1.187	61.6	13.4	25
3- I cannot use effective methods because the seating arrangement is not suitable for learners' sharing and cooperation	2.38	1.066	59.8	25.9	14.3
4- I cannot use effective methods because the time of the class is enough only to explain the new lesson.	2.83	1.287	44.6	16.1	39.3
5. I cannot use effective methods because helping learners practice language needs more than the class time.	2.47	1.185	58.9	13.4	27.7

4.1.2 Challenges related to the textbook

Table 4 lists the difficulties teachers face while attempting to teach EFL effectively due to textbook-related limitations. With a mean of 2.36 and a standard deviation of 1.229, the challenge of covering the textbook content received the highest percentage of agreement (60.7%). Similarly, 59.8% of EFL teachers agreed that the textbook's extensive content limits their use of supplementary materials (mean = 2.51, $SD = 1.238$). With 51.8% agreement, the difficulty of lesson plans based on textbooks had a mean of 2.6 and a standard deviation of 1.197. Additionally, 46.4% of teachers agreed that the textbook activities emphasize theoretical knowledge and lack relevance to learners' interests, with a mean of 2.68 and a standard deviation of 1.109. These results emphasize the need for more adaptable and engaging textbooks that provide suitable content to guide teachers and enable them to incorporate diverse resources.

Table 4. Challenges related to the textbook

Challenges related to the textbook	Mean	SD	% Agreement	% Neutral	% Disagreement
6- I cannot use effective methods because the lesson plan is based on the textbook.	2.6	1.197	51.8	22.3	25.9
7- I cannot use effective methods because they require me to cover the content of the textbook.	2.36	1.229	60.7	16.1	23.2
8- I cannot use effective methods because the content of the textbook is so extensive that it does not allow me to use more supported materials.	2.51	1.238	59.8	12.5	27.7
9- I cannot use effective methods because the activities in the textbook focus more on theoretical knowledge.	2.68	1.109	46.4	29.5	24.1
10- I cannot use effective methods because the topics of the lessons do not relate to learners' interests.	2.68	1.109	46.4	29.5	24.1

4.1.3 Challenges related to EFL learners

Table 5 illustrates the difficulties teachers face while implementing effective EFL teaching methods due to learner-related challenges. With a mean of 2.91 and a standard deviation of 1.174, the challenge of students not participating in class received the highest percentage of agreement (66.1%). Furthermore, 63.4% of EFL teachers agreed that varying student abilities create difficulties in applying effective methods (mean = 2.4, SD = 1.111). Another significant issue is that learners' linguistic skills are low, with 57.1% in agreement (mean = 2.26, SD = 1.221). Additionally, 48.2% of learners use their native language (mean = 2.35, SD = 1.129). Finally, 32.1% of EFL teachers indicated that poor student behaviour interferes with the use of effective teaching strategies (mean = 2.71, SD = 1.213). These factors highlight the need for effective methods that increase student engagement, accommodate diverse skill levels, and strengthen classroom management.

Table 5. Challenges related to EFL learners

Challenges related to EFL learners	Mean	SD	% Agreement	% Neutral	% Disagreement
11- I cannot use effective methods because learners do not participate in my class.	2.91	1.174	66.1	12.5	21.4
12- I cannot use effective methods because learners have a low level of language proficiency.	2.26	1.221	57.1	22.3	20.5
13- I cannot use effective methods because there is a challenge in learners' varying abilities.	2.4	1.111	63.4	17	19.6
14- I cannot use effective methods because learners use their native language.	2.35	1.129	48.2	20.5	31.3
15- I cannot use effective methods because learners need more discipline during class.	2.71	1.213	32.1	20.5	47.3

4.1.4 Challenges related to EFL teachers

Table 6 illustrates that EFL teachers encounter difficulties in implementing effective teaching approaches due to various personal and professional limitations. With a mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 1.164, the belief among EFL teachers that it is more important for learners to understand theoretical information than practical knowledge received the highest percentage of agreement (60.7%). This finding suggests that Saudi EFL teachers prioritize teaching theoretical knowledge over practical application, which may hinder their ability to use more effective methods that provide learners with ample opportunities to practice the language.

However, 57.1% of EFL teachers disagreed that their inability to select appropriate techniques (mean = 3.48, SD = 1.237) and lack of training (mean = 3.38, SD = 1.309) impede their capacity to employ effective methods. With a mean of 3.25 and a standard deviation of 1.166, along with 54.5% disagreement, many teachers do not consider the difficulty of becoming accustomed to traditional methods a significant hurdle. Finally, 47.3% of EFL teachers disagreed that they lack the motivation to assist students in producing language (mean = 3.51, SD = 1.185). These results indicate that EFL teachers perceive themselves as well trained, motivated, and applying recent and suitable strategies in learning. Additionally, they highlight the need for increased awareness among EFL teachers regarding the importance of practical knowledge to improve the efficacy of EFL instruction.

Table 6. Challenges related to EFL teachers

Challenges related to EFL teachers	Mean	SD	% Agreement	% Neutral	% Disagreement
16- I cannot use effective methods because I am accustomed to traditional teaching methods.	3.25	1.166	30.4	15.2	54.5
17- I cannot use effective methods because I have not received adequate training in teaching.	3.38	1.309	26.8	16.1	57.1
18- I cannot use effective methods because I lack the knowledge to choose suitable methods.	3.48	1.237	22.3	20.5	57.1
19- I cannot use effective methods because I am not motivated to help learners produce language.	3.51	1.185	32.1	20.5	47.3
20- I cannot use effective methods because it is more important for learners to understand theoretical knowledge than practical knowledge.	3.21	1.164	60.7	15.2	24.1

4.1.5 Challenges related to technological issues

Table 7 lists several difficulties related to technology in schools. The highest mean score (3.45) indicates that 56.3% of EFL teachers disagreed that they are untrained in utilizing current technologies. Conversely, EFL teachers expressed strong agreement on other items related to the lack of new technologies (mean = 2.42, 57.1% agreement) and the insufficient amount of technology relative to the number of students (mean = 2.31, 61.6% agreement). Additionally, issues with malfunctioning technology (mean = 2.47, 63.4% agreement) and inadequate internet access (mean 2.44, 26.8% agreement) are noteworthy obstacles. These results underscore the necessity of ensuring the availability and functionality of technological tools to establish an effective infrastructure in classrooms.

Table 7. Challenges related to technological issues

Challenges related to technological issues	Mean	SD	% Agreement	% Neutral	% Disagreement
21- I cannot use effective methods because new technologies are not available in the schools.	2.42	1.264	57.1	17	25.9
22- I cannot use effective methods because the available technologies in schools are not functioning.	2.47	1.237	63.4	17	19.6
23- I cannot use effective methods because the available technologies are insufficient for the number of learners.	2.31	1.155	61.6	8	30.4
24- I cannot use effective methods because the internet connection is unreliable at school.	2.44	1.3	26.8	17	56.3
25- I cannot use effective methods because I am untrained in using the available technology.	3.45	1.3	26.8	17	56.3

5. Discussion

The results of this study revealed numerous significant difficulties that hinder teachers' application of effective methods. Overcrowding in the classroom is the most prominent challenge related to the learning environment, size, and timing in the classroom. This finding aligns with previous studies (Al-Khairy, 2013; Benhania, 2016; Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013), in which researchers investigated the reasons for low achievements in writing. They reported that overcrowded classrooms were among the most common challenges affecting achievement. A large number of students in the class limits opportunities for learners to practice EFL. EFL learning requires sufficient time for each learner to engage in practice, which is constrained in overcrowded settings. Utilizing effective methods that enable learners to maximize their language use necessitates an appropriate number of students in EFL classes, allowing teachers to provide opportunities for language production.

Other challenges highlighted in relation to the learning environment, size, and timing are that helping learners practice the language requires more than is available in class. This concern explains why EFL teachers are apprehensive about class time limits, which they view as a negative factor in applying effective methods that facilitate communication and language use. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Al-Tamimi, 2019), which recommended that EFL teachers provide more time for learners to use the language in various contexts and utilize different resources. EFL teachers need to engage with all learners, so establishing an appropriate class size can help them implement effective methods and promote communication (Al-Tamimi, 2019).

Furthermore, EFL teachers identified other challenges related to the textbook. They expressed that the textbook's extensive nature and the requirement to cover its content limited their ability to use supplementary materials. This finding aligns with Al-Tamimi's (2019) investigation of adaptable regulations and policies in EFL education, in which he found that Saudi EFL teachers often rush to complete the content, leading them to rely solely on methods that help them cover all topics. Therefore, he recommended greater flexibility for Saudi EFL teachers to utilize diverse resources rather than depend exclusively on the prescribed textbook.

Another challenge related to the textbook that EFL teachers highlighted were its extensive content, which limited their ability to use supplementary materials. This seems to be in line with Alwehebi and Ghareeb (2021), who analyzed the six secondary textbooks for the English language proficiency of learners' strategies that encourage learning communication.

EFL teachers also highlighted challenges related to learners' low level of language and their tendency to use their native language. These findings are consistent with previous researchers' (Alrabai, 2014; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015) findings of low achievement levels among Saudi EFL learners in public schools. Other researchers have investigated the reasons behind this low achievement (John et al., 2006), identifying common factors that negatively impact learners' performance, such as motivation, anxiety, stress, and teacher control. High motivation among EFL learners can foster a positive and active environment (Harmer, 2007). Conversely, low-motivated learners may exhibit low participation in EFL classrooms (Harmer, 2007). Crookes and Schmidt (1991) emphasized that motivation is essential for learning because it serves as a driving force behind learners' achievements.

In contrast, the findings related to teachers' training, motivation, and knowledge received a high percentage of disagreement. This indicates that EFL teachers perceive themselves as well trained, motivated, and able to use effective methods, but other issues related to the classroom environment, textbooks, learners, and technology hinder their implementation. Only one item received high agreement, indicating that EFL teachers tend to focus more on theoretical knowledge than practical knowledge when teaching language. This finding suggests that EFL teachers need to enhance their awareness of the importance of learners' practice and language production over merely receiving new knowledge. Previous researchers have recommended continuous updates to teacher training programs and courses (Al-Hazmi, 2003). EFL teachers require training in effective methods and in preparing learners to use the language independently in their social lives. Adequate training necessitates high motivation from EFL teachers to apply effective methods that help learners improve their language.

Most EFL teachers expressed agreement with the majority of items related to technological challenges. This indicates that technological issues can pose challenges for EFL teachers in applying effective methods. This finding aligns with previous research (Al-Qahtani, 2019; Bakadama & Asiria, 2012). However, the last item received a higher disagreement rate, indicating that EFL teachers do not feel untrained in using technology. This finding appears to contradict Bakadama and Asiria's (2012) results, which suggested that teachers require more training in using interactive whiteboards to maximize their features. Ultimately, previous researchers (Aljameel, 2022; Al-Tamimi, 2019; Bakadama & Asiria, 2012) have advocated for increased use of technological resources as tools to help learners practice and communicate in the language. Specifically, Al-Tamimi (2019) recommended promoting technology use in EFL classrooms because it could provide learners with opportunities to practice in a more natural environment.

6. Limitation and Future Implication

A significant limitation of this study is its reliance solely on quantitative data, which may not adequately explain the difficulties encountered. Therefore, future qualitative studies are necessary to explore in greater depth the challenges of EFL teaching and learning in Saudi schools. It is also crucial to engage with EFL teachers to investigate these issues in real-world settings, which will provide insights into their impressions and perspectives regarding the difficulties and obstacles that hinder effective EFL instruction. Research that addresses teachers' challenges is vital for enhancing and developing EFL teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia.

Based on the findings of this study, we make several recommendations. The researcher advocate for the continuous evaluation of EFL teaching practices to ensure professionalism in teachers' work. Schools should regularly implement ongoing training courses that focus on updated effective strategies. Additionally, creating a suitable EFL environment—considering factors such as classroom size, student numbers, and scheduling—is essential for fostering a positive atmosphere conducive to the application of effective teaching methods. Finally, schools should provide updated technological aids for EFL learning and ensure their effective integration to help EFL learners communicate in the language.

7. Conclusion

In this study the researcher explored the difficulties that English language teachers perceive in using effective teaching methods in EFL classrooms. The literature review indicated that the Ministry of Education has made significant efforts to enhance EFL teaching in public schools; however, several issues continue to concern EFL teachers in achieving a positive EFL environment.

The results of this study revealed that EFL teachers in Saudi schools face numerous challenges related to the classroom environment, the textbook, the learners, and the application of technology in the classroom. Most EFL teachers identified common challenges across all factors that negatively impact their teaching practices, highlighting important issues that need to be addressed to reduce teachers' challenges. Given the importance of English language proficiency for learners in their social lives, teachers should develop their teaching practices to enable learners to succeed in learning the language.

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