I Want but I Can't: The Dilemma of EFL Learners in Practising English in the Saudi Context

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Abstract

The current literature suggests that learners in foreign English language learning contexts may suffer from the lack of opportunities to practise English. Language practice is regarded as fundamental for mastery of English. This study aimed to investigate Saudi EFL learners' English language use outside the domain of the classroom. A mixed-method approach was adopted for data collection by employing an online survey with an open-ended section and conducting semi-structured interviews. The study participants were male and female students undertaking BA English programs at Saudi universities across the main five regions in the country. The study adopted a convenience sampling technique, and a total of 627 students responded to the survey (M = 291; F = 336), and eight students were interviewed (M = 5; F = 3). The data collection process went through two phases to obtain deeper insights into the investigated phenomenon: first, administering the online survey and conducting the analysis to extract the main themes of inquiry; and second, using these themes as a guide for conducting the interviews. The study's main findings include learners finding themselves in a dilemma where they desire more practice of English outside the domain of the classroom and, at the same time, lack proper opportunities for practice. Implications of the study are also discussed.

Keywords: anxiety, EFL, language use, learner centred, learning environment, motivation, Saudi

1. Introduction

Regulated learning of second and foreign languages involves complex processes that require careful treatment to reach positive outcomes (Chen & Law, 2016). This complex nature involves balancing different aspects such as motivation, anxiety, and language use and exposure (Ahmed et al., 2022). English as a second language (ESL) contexts may have the advantage over English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts in different aspects, but mainly in relation to the number of existing opportunities for learners to be exposed to and use the target language (Dinh, 2021). Such opportunities are linked to encouraging and enticing learners to utter different linguistic constructs in different situations (Dimitroff, Dimitroff, & Alhashimi, 2018). It is argued that the more use of the language, the more learning will occur, which reflects the importance of language practice for learners (e.g., Illes & Akcan, 2017; Khezrlou, 2021). EFL learners in their contexts, such as learners in Saudi Arabia, are likely to struggle through their classes, requiring more attention than ESL learners (Alsuhaibani, 2015). The opportunities for language practice and exposure for Saudi EFL learners can be described as limited (Almohaimeed & Alnasser, 2022) to the extent that part of them may only use English in the classroom. Some authors have argued that educators in Saudi higher education institutions should become vigilant of such shortcomings and work on creating rich learning environments that fulfil learners' needs and help them excel in their learning (e.g., Aljohani, 2021; Alzamil, 2022).

The current study investigated the Saudi higher education English departments. It primarily aimed to explore Saudi EFL students' English language use in and out of the academic setting. Studies on Saudi EFL students' English language use outside the domain of the classroom are limited, with only one study addressing this area, namely, that of Almohaimeed and Alnasser (2022). Nevertheless, the participants in their study were post-graduate and undergraduate female students. Because male students were not included in their study, the current study involved both male and female students undertaking their undergraduate BA programs. The study also investigated the current status of activities offered to the learners during their studies. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the current research has not yet addressed this scope. Therefore, this study attempted to answer the following

research questions:

1) *What are the Saudi EFL learners' views regarding English language use in the Saudi context?*

2) *What are the theoretical underpinnings behind their English language use?*

2. Literature Review

Attitudes towards the English language in Saudi Arabia have shifted over the years to become more positive, owing to the rapid development in the country (Alenezi & Kebble, 2018; Alzamil, 2022; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). The country has launched programs to send students and employees to Western and English-speaking countries to pursue their professional and academic studies, which require English language preparation and exposure to English on a daily basis (Alsuhaibani, 2015; Campbell, 2021). Most of those sent to study abroad went there with their families and were likely to acquire a good deal of English and form positive attitudes towards the language. Consequently, their beliefs about English language use could have been positively influenced by the need to use more English. It is argued that individuals' beliefs in certain contexts can indirectly influence others within a community, leading to forming a common conception of a specific aspect (Yaseen, Shakir, & Mansor, 2016). Such common conception may influence individuals' linguistic practices within a community (Isaacs, Trofimovich, & Foote, 2018) and, therefore, may impact learning contexts as a whole (Seidlhofer, 2005). It is argued that there is an association between attitudes towards a language and the level of learning that may occur (Lozanov, 1988). In the Saudi context, attitudes towards English seem to be positive and therefore, individuals are expected to show more interest in learning the language (e.g., Alkhalaf, 2021).

The Saudi higher education institutions dedicate a great deal of their attention to English language instruction. For example, they commonly establish English language academic departments, language centres, and EFL preparation programs, all of which aim to fulfil the country's educational as well as job market needs (Almohaimeed & Alnasser, 2022; Alnasser, 2022; Alsuhaibani, 2015). Moreover, English is employed as the language of instruction in many disciplines, such as engineering, computer sciences, English language, and medicine (Peng, 2019). The country tends to internationalise its higher education system through the adoption of English as the language of instruction (Alnasser, 2022; Alnasser & Almoaily, 2022; Spira, 2013). Such trends increase the demand and need for better environments for language learning.

This context is accepted as an EFL one. According to Dinh (2021) and Dimitroff et al. (2018), these contexts are commonly known for the lack of sufficient exposure to English on a daily basis, and therefore, learners lack sufficient practice in English. More specifically, EFL learners are likely to learn less than ESL learners, owing to the nature of the two contexts. Consequently, EFL learners are argued to need more exposure to English by providing opportunities where interaction with others is promoted (Almohaimeed & Alnasser, 2022; Alshammari, 2011). Additionally, it is critical to work on stimulating learner motivation throughout the learning stage (Alshammari, 2011; Dinh, 2021). It is commonly accepted that the learning environment in Saudi higher education is dominated by teacher-centred approaches, where unidirectional discourse from the teacher to the learners is commonly observed (Alshammari, 2022; Chan, 2018; Yaseen et al., 2016). Such discourse may not allow for sufficient needed interaction and language practice for the learners where they appear to be rather passive and, therefore, are likely to be demotivated to engage actively in the learning process. Moreover, research has suggested that discourse in Saudi EFL classrooms is not limited to English, where it has been reported commonly that Arabic (L1) is used for instruction and communication purposes (Almoaily & Alnasser, 2019; Alnasser, 2022; Alnasser & Almoaily, 2022). The findings reported in the literature suggest that less exposure and practice of English in the Saudi EFL context (Dmitrieva, 2019) needs to be compensated simply because language practice is integral to linguistic development (Khezrlou, 2021; Illes & Akcan, 2017; Lee & Du, 2020).

We established that learning English in the Saudi EFL context requires more practice. In this regard, Illes and Akcan (2017) reported that providing learners with additional activities that promote practising the language had a more significant impact on their linguistic proficiency compared with the activity promoting spontaneity. They argue that spontaneous use of English stimulates students to become creative in their language performance that may exceed what they have learnt in the classroom. This is because they have opportunities to experiment with various language constructs and, therefore, provoke their schemata knowledge (Illes & Akcan, 2017; Waring, 2013). In support of stressing the importance of frequent language use for learners, Larsen-Freeman (2007, p. 783) holds that 'it is not that you learn something and then you use it, nor is it that you use something and learn it. Instead, it is in using that you learn—they are inseparable'. Researchers, such as Markee (2005), call for creating real-life interactional opportunities. Learners need more practice in English outside the domain of the classroom to be involved in interactions that prompt the unplanned use of metalinguistic skills and already acquired linguistic features (Maybin & Swann, 2007). Cook (2000, p. 199) argues that ungoverned use of language can 'broaden the

range of permitted interactional patterns'. Additionally, even more encouragement of language use and learning can occur when learners are in an enjoyable environment (Downie, Gao, Bedford, Bell, & Kuit, 2021), which can further increase 'metalinguistic awareness' (Pomerantz & Bell, 2007, p. 556).

Opportunities offered to learners need to carefully consider their influence on motivation and anxiety. In this regard, recent studies have addressed motivation, anxiety, and the relation between them (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2022; Namaziandost, Razmi, Tilwani, & Gilakjani, 2022; Sudina, 2021). Motivation in second and foreign language learning is considered integral for success in learning. More precisely, the more motivated the learners are, the better learners they are likely to become (Nunan, 2015). Motivation can influence decision-making, the willingness and degree of involvement in a certain activity, and the sustainability of doing that activity (Dornyei & Skehan, 2003; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2021; Ozguzel, 2020; Wang, 2019). Eysenck, Derakshan, Santos and Calvo (2007) define anxiety as an effective aversive state an individual feels when encountering a threatening situation. Chen and Law (2016, p. 1203) hold that it can allude to 'the subjective feeling of tensions, apprehensions, nervousness, and worries related to an excitement of the autonomic nervous system'. It, therefore, can impact how tasks are performed, especially when they require high cognition (Derakshan & Eysenck, 2009). Ahmed et al. (2022) argue that individuals can be terrified to speak in front of others, influencing their communicative apprehensions. Some researchers have assumed that there is an association between motivation and anxiety—in that the more anxious the individual is, the more likely they will be motivated to perform a certain task (Eysenck, 1979; Eysenck & Calvo, 1992; Eysenck et al., 2007). Nonetheless, researchers' interests in EFL contexts have mainly focused on exploring ways to positively impact learners' motivation and mitigate their anxiety, and the reported results were mostly positive (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2022; Ali & Bin-Hady, 2019). Such findings indicate that EFL learners require further attention to become more successful in language development.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted in the Saudi higher education context. It targeted undergraduate students undertaking EFL programs. A mixed-method design was adopted for data collection. The study design was approved by the appropriate ethics review board at King Saud University. The participants indicated their consent to participate in the study by agreeing to complete the online survey and volunteer to join the interviews. All participants were assured that the obtained data would only be used for research purposes.

An online survey comprising an introductory part, five survey items, and an open-ended section with one question was administered. The overall number of items in the survey was kept to a minimum (n = 5) to obtain a higher response rate. The survey was mainly created by the author and partly inspired by the survey used by Almohaimeed and Alnasser (2022). It was revised by experts in the field and then distributed electronically to Saudi undergraduate EFL students undertaking EFL programs at university English departments located in the five main Saudi regions. The study adopted a convenience sampling technique, and the number of students who completed the survey was 627 (Males = 291; Females = 336). All participants were undertaking the four-year BA programs relevant to the English language and were at different levels in their studies. Before joining their BA programs, they studied the English language for nine years in elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools. Distributing the electronic survey was the first stage of the data collection.

The second stage of the data collection was initiated after receiving and analysing the responses from the survey (n = 627). The researcher analysed all the data, and three main themes were classified as necessary for further investigation. Namely, these themes revolve around the language skills important to the participants, the English language practice opportunities, and the self-confidence and fear of difficulties in speaking English. These themes were utilised for conducting semi-structured interviews (stage 2 of the data collection). Eight students were interviewed (Males = 5; Females = 3) and responded to questions emerging from the three themes. The interviews were recorded, and the privacy of the recordings and information were assured to the interviewees. Their participation was voluntary, and they were informed that they could withdraw from the interviews at any time and could ask for their recordings to be deleted. The survey and interviews were conducted in Arabic (learners' L1) to ensure the validity of the responses.

4. Results & Findings

4.1 Stage One: The Online Survey

In response to item 1 (Table 1), the largest proportion of the participants (70.49%) reported their motivation to use English in their daily life as either high (39.07%) or just motivated (31.42%), whereas a considerable proportion reported that they are relatively motivated (25.68%). Interestingly, only 3.83% reported not being motivated. These results suggest that Saudi EFL learners have a great deal of motivation to learn English. When the participants were asked whether they tend to seize every available opportunity to practice English, the vast majority (83.58%)

either agreed (38.92%) or strongly agreed (44.66%) with this notion (Table 1, item 2). Small proportions were neutral (13.88%), disagreed (2.23%), and strongly disagreed (0.32%) with the notion. The results here are clear indications of participants' motivation to use English in every possible situation, which concurs with the findings related to the previous item.

In terms of frequency of using English in participants' daily life, slightly over half of the sample (56.46%) reported occasional use, whereas a considerable proportion (18.82%) reported either rare (16.43%) or no use of English (2.39%) (Table 1, item 3). Only 24.72% of the participants reported using English on a frequent basis. Furthermore, the participants reported the frequency of their colleagues' use of English in their daily life (Table 1, item 4), and slightly over half of the sample (51.04%) reported occasional use, whereas a considerable proportion (30.07%) reported either rare (30.78%) or no use of English (8.29%). The results of items 3 and 4 are similar and indicate that Saudi EFL learners lack sufficient practice with English in their daily life. This can be linked to the nature of the Saudi context not offering proper situations for English practice. In support of this assumption, it is found that the majority of participants are motivated to use English and seize every possible situation to practise it (items 1 and 2), yet they reported infrequent use of the language (items 2 and 3).

The final item (no. 5) in this section inquired about participants' rationale for using English (Table 1), and in responding to this item, they were allowed to select more than one choice. The analysis reveals two main points that have the highest frequencies. First, 70.49% reported using English to improve their speaking skills, compared with a smaller percentage (64.27%) of those who reported using English to improve their English language in general. This implies that for participants, improving speaking skills has a higher priority than improving other language aspects. The second point is concerned with participants' self-confidence (65.55%) and overcoming the fear of making mistakes when using English (51.04%). These two issues are considerable concerns for the participants. It is interesting to have participants who prioritise improving language proficiency and report the importance of dealing with fear and confidence issues. It can be speculated that most participants believe that frequent use of English can help in raising their self-confidence and courage to speak in front of others. Looking at this item from a different angle, it can be said that not using/speaking English frequently may lead to discouragement and lack of self-confidence in language use. Consequently, this creates a barrier to language learning. Finally, less than half of the participants (45.77%) reported using English for academic purposes. The overall results indicate that success in English is more important to Saudi EFL learners than success in academic studies. Another speculation could be that learners acknowledge mastery of English as an initial stage for success in their academic studies.

Table 1. Participants' general use of the English language

Item 1: *How motivated are you to use English in your life?*	Scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Not motivated	24	3.83%
	Relatively motivated	161	25.68%
	Motivated	197	31.42%
	Highly Motivated	245	39.07%
	Total	627	100%
Item 2: *Seizing every opportunity to practice English*	*Scale*	*Freq.*	*%*
	Strongly disagree	2	0.32%
	Disagree	14	2.23%
	Neutral	87	13.88%
	Agree	244	38.92%
	Strongly agree	280	44.66%
	Total	627	100%
Item 3: *Frequency of using English in your daily life*	*Scale*	*Freq.*	*%*
	Never	15	2.39%
	Rarely	103	16.43%
	Sometimes	354	56.46%
	Always	155	24.72%
	Total	627	100%
Item 4: *Other Students' frequency of using English in their daily life*	*Scale*	*Freq.*	*%*
	Never	52	8.29%
	Rarely	193	30.78%
	Sometimes	320	51.04%
	Always	62	9.89%
	Total	627	100%
Item 5: *Reasons for using English in your daily life.*	*Scale*	*Freq.*	*%*
	Improving speaking skills	442	70.49%
	Academic purposes	287	45.77%
	Overcome fear of making mistakes	320	51.04%
	Self-confidence	411	65.55%
	Improve English in general	403	64.27%
	Total	627*	100%

Note. * All respondents completed this item, and they were allowed to select more than one choice.

Open-ended question:

- *Describe any activity you would like to have while undertaking your academic program.*

Although the response to this question was optional, 439 respondents provided their opinions. All responses expressed their needs concerning having English language activities in their learning environment, except for 10 responses which stated not needing any activities. A thematic analysis of the responses revealed participants' main interest in one theme. More specifically, the vast majority reflected their needs for activities that can promote their speaking skills (reported by 396 respondents). For example, some of the provided responses suggest a need to 'have extra speaking classes', 'extracurricular speaking activities' and 'speaking centres/clubs'. This implies that students recognise the importance of improving their English language, with a particular interest in improving speaking skills. Very few responses indicated their interest in having activities related to grammar, reading, and writing skills (17 responses). Therefore, it can be assumed that Saudi EFL students prioritise mastery of speaking skills over other language skills. The following findings support this speculation.

An in-depth analysis of the provided comments revealed three patterns related to the above-identified theme. First, the majority of the responses reflected needing activities that promote speaking in a group setting (337 responses). For example, it was reported that students must have 'weekly meetings to talk about different general topics', 'meetings and more meetings', and 'workshops and training sessions in English'. Such expressions indicate a need for group interactions, that students lack interactive situations that facilitate their learning, and that they are aware of the integral role of language practice in speaking development. Second, the provided comments indicate that students need their out-of-class activities to be enjoyable (reported by 231 respondents). For example, the word 'competition' was mentioned 96 times in the responses. Here, competitions can promote developing speaking

skills in a highly enjoyable manner. Although the majority expressed their need to have competitions, part of them were very specific and suggested the nature of competitions in need, such as Spelling Bee Contest, Student Debates and Public Speaking, Weekly Questions (on a specific topic), Games, and Stage Performing.

Third, a considerable proportion of the participants (n = 43) expressed their concerns regarding the fear and lack of self-confidence when speaking in English, as well as the need to have activities that help them overcome these two difficulties. For example, it is suggested that there is a need to:

> 'dedicate time to improving students' speaking skills. An instructor can provide individual sessions for speaking with students to help them overcome their fear of speaking in public which can, in turn, encourage them to become more involved in any given activity'.

This participant believes that fear of openly speaking English is a barrier to learning English. Another mentioned example is a need for 'training to raise self-confidence and overcome fear when speaking in English'. Although the majority did not report these concerns, there is a possibility that many other participants have similar or different degrees of fear and self-confidence when speaking English (which is linked to language anxiety) but did not report it. Nonetheless, this study did not investigate this phenomenon further because it was beyond its scope.

Finally, an overall view of all the participants indicates that students in the Saudi higher education context are not likely to have sufficient out-of-class activities that promote learning of English, although they undertake academic English language programs. More precisely, some participants expressed dissatisfaction with their learning environments for lacking any sort of encouragement to practice English. Moreover, students clearly expressed their need for enjoyable, friendly situations that promote learning. In this regard, one participant suggests that:

> 'Maybe involving the students in a room where they can feel totally free to make mistakes and help each other indirectly. Sometimes having a teacher in the room look into your eyes, wondering why you are making this simple mistake, makes you want to die! So, we all just want to be away from feeling nervous and not to be discombobulated'.

Here, this participant is calling for an environment free of criticism where students can practice English without any sort of monitoring, which can make learners hesitant to practice English. Possibly, such a request can be met by offering enjoyable activities.

4.2 Stage Two: Follow-up Semi-Structured Interviews

After analysing the survey data, the current study employed semi-structured interviews to obtain deeper insights. As explained earlier, eight interviewees were interviewed and asked about three main themes (emerging from the survey findings): the most important language skill to learn and why; existing opportunities for language practice; and their self-confidence and fear in terms of using the English language. The researcher asked follow-up questions to obtain accurate information. Below are the main findings that explain and concur to a considerable extent with findings from the survey.

All interviewees deemed speaking skills as the most important among all language skills and therefore have priority to be developed. The justification for this conception is that speaking in English facilitates communication with others, conveys meaning, helps in seeking information, and helps in expressing oneself to others in particular situations. Five interviewees explained that speaking fluently in English reflects high social and educational status. More specifically, the more fluent the speaker is, the higher others will think of them. Additionally, three interviewees reported that the more fluent they speak, the more self-confident they become. This finding indicates a positive correlation between the level of speaking and self-confidence, which is remarkable.

Considering the opportunities interviewees have to practice English, six reported rarely having opportunities to practice English in their daily life. More precisely, most of them reported infrequent use of English inside their classrooms, where they seemed to be passive learners. Only two interviewees reported that their colleges offered opportunities to practise English outside the domain of the classroom in the form of competitions and extracurricular activities. In general, the reported opportunities to practice English in their daily lives (off campus) mainly occur when going to restaurants and hospitals. However, going to these locations is not frequent, and the use of language (according to the interviewees) when going there is very limited and does not allow for long-lasting dialogues. Furthermore, five interviewees criticised the Saudi context for not offering authentic situations to practice English. They desire to speak with individuals who are natives/native-like on a daily basis to overcome several barriers and improve their linguistic proficiency.

Finally, six interviewees expressed different levels of fear and self-confidence when speaking in English. Four of them reported that their fear and self-confidence increase when they speak around fluent speakers, leading them to become hesitant to say anything in English or even tend to speak using simple short sentences to avoid making

mistakes. When inquiring about the reason behind such behaviour, it was explained that making mistakes in front of others made them feel embarrassed or ashamed. This stems from the fact that they major in the English language and are not expected to make linguistic mistakes. The researcher was interested in asking a follow-up question on what actions were done to overcome such difficulties. Three interviewees explained that they did not do anything while hoping to overcome them over time. However, three other interviewees discussed that they had made attempts to address these difficulties by trying to benefit from any available resources during their free time (e.g., registering on online conversation applications), which indicates their enthusiasm to become better speakers of English. A final question was asked to all interviewees on whether their instructors considered investigating and taking action regarding students' fear and low self-confidence. Interestingly, seven interviewees explained that their instructors mainly followed a traditional method of teaching (the lecture-based approach where there are very few opportunities for interactions) and rarely paid attention to such student difficulties.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The nature of EFL contexts has attracted numerous researchers to explore various methods for improving learning environments. With regard to the Saudi context, a quick survey of the literature revealed a large number of studies addressing English learning at the undergraduate level. Yet, the current study's findings suggest that innovation and proper attention to learners are missing in this context. It is found that English language educators in Saudi higher institutions neglect to a significant degree to address students' needs to become successful English learners, which concurs with the findings of Aljohani (2021). Despite such negligence, learners vividly reflected their awareness of their weaknesses and needs. It is found that Saudi students demand frequent opportunities that enable and encourage them to practice English inside and outside the domain of the classroom. This may be a reaction emerging from the lack of practice in the Saudi context and the determinant desire to improve their speaking skills, which is in line with this study and Akcan's (2017) findings.

The literature suggests that Arab learners commonly encounter difficulties that hinder them from becoming fluent speakers of English (e.g., Zrekat & Al-Sohbani, 2022), one of which is insufficient language practice. Participants of the study provided solutions to their dilemma of not being facilitated to practice the target language sufficiently by repeatedly requesting various activities throughout their studies. In this regard, the findings of this study indicate that learners are rarely offered out-of-class activities, which are considered supportive to and continuation of class learning (Zrekat & Al-Sohbani, 2022). Activities can resemble real-life situations for language application and therefore can lead to better learning, which is critical for learners (Illes & Akcan, 2017). Activities can actively engage learners in interactions that influence their communicative skills, given that mastery of such skills may lead to success in academic life. Notably, although the participants of the study are adult male and female students, they prefer enjoyment in their college life learning. Several experimental studies (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2022; Chen & Law, 2016) have addressed the impact of bringing the enjoyment factor (e.g., gamification) to the learning environment in tertiary schools, which may bear the assumption that learning and enjoyment are not suitable for adults. Nonetheless, learners themselves overtly expressed their desires for having enjoyable activities that can further engage them in fruitful interactions.

The findings of this study hold pedagogical implications. Most importantly, when Saudi EFL learners were provided with a small window of opportunity to express themselves and describe some of their needs, significant results were obtained. Thus, it is assumed that Saudi learners are not nurtured as needed and crave for anyone to address their needs. Exploring students' needs on a regular basis is a common international practice for ensuring the sustainable quality of educational services. The national programmatic academic accreditation (offered by the Saudi national Education and Training Evaluation Commission) has approved six standards for BA programmatic accreditation, and one is related to students (Standard 4). The criteria under these standards address aspects such as surveying student satisfaction and needs, which can create better and more active learning environments and shift the learning environment to become centred around the students rather than the instructor. Furthermore, national accreditation assumes continuous development in all educational processes to achieve excellence in education (Ulker & Bakioglu, 2019). So far, very few language programs in Saudi Arabia have obtained national academic accreditation, which may indicate that program managements are either not interested or unable to exert efforts to bring about change to the quality of their programs. Consequently, to improve the outcomes of English language programs in Saudi Arabia, it is necessary for decision-makers to intervene and set policies that go beyond the classroom domain. For instance, English language policies can be enforced to promote more use of English (e.g., Alnasser & Almoaily, 2022), and failing to achieve program accreditation should be penalised by suspending the program from admitting new students.

The literature has explored various ways in which EFL learners can be motivated to learn English, and interestingly, this study found that Saudi learners were already motivated to practice English and had the desire to overcome

their difficulties (e.g., fear of speaking in English and raising self-confidence). More precisely, learners seem ready for language development but require the means to develop. This gives no excuse for educators in various Saudi institutions if their students suffer from linguistic impairment simply because exerting slight efforts may result in huge differences. Additionally, learners reached a level of maturity that led them to become aware of their needs and merely need the facilitator to facilitate. In a nutshell, their need includes offering them continuous extracurricular activities that promote free speaking with others in an enjoyable atmosphere and away from any sort of criticism or assessment. Arguably, if such activities are offered, learner participation is expected to be high. Fulfilling this need is simple because it may not require financial costs or a large number of personal and faculty members to participate in delivering them. This poses the question of why establishing such an environment is not yet accepted as a common practice in Saudi higher education.

This study investigated the pedagogical underpinning of Saudi EFL learners' English language use outside the domain of the classroom. The main findings suggest that learners are enthusiastic about practising English outside the domain of the classroom but find themselves in a situation where there are no opportunities to practice English. Making a positive change to their learning environment and fulfilling their needs require exerting minor efforts by the educators. Sadly, this may not occur on a large scale without the interference of decision-makers to balance learners' needs and the quality of the provided educational services. The study has the limitation of analysing samples of learners' overall achievement (Grade Point Averages) and linking them to the frequency of language use as reported in this study; nevertheless, this can be addressed in future research. Moreover, future research can consider addressing the perspectives of the educators as to why EFL activities beyond the domain of the classroom in the Saudi context are very limited. Additionally, comparing male and female student perspectives on language use can be an interesting area of investigation. As practitioners in the field of EFL teaching, we can learn a great deal of knowledge by exploring learners' behaviours and rationale on language use beyond the territory of the classroom. We should always involve our learners when making decisions concerning their learning experiences.

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