

Challenges to Effective English Teaching in Primary Schools in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia: Perspectives of English Teachers

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Abstract

Despite extensive efforts to improve the quality of English language teaching, Saudi students in the local primary schools have a poor level of proficiency in English. Hence, this study aims to examine the barriers to effective English teaching from the perspectives of teachers in the primary schools in Burydah primary schools in Saudi Arabia.

50 teachers in primary schools in Saudi Arabia were recruited through convenience sampling. The study recruited teachers from Burydah, a city in Saudi Arabia. Self-reported questionnaires with close- and open-ended questions were used to collect rich data.

Several teacher-related, student-related, classroom-related, and school-related challenges were reported. Teachers believed that the key barriers to effective English teaching in descending order were the limited ability to use technology, limited technical support to use technology, irrelevant curriculum, lack of training in immersive learning, lack of student motivation, cultural differences among students, overcrowded curriculum, malfunctioning air conditioners, limited engagement at the class, impaired communication skills, limited use of interactive teaching methods, limited teacher training, dull curriculum or unengaging content, limited students' ability to use technology, large class size, and limited flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the interests and needs of students. There is a need for cooperation among teachers, school headmasters, students, policymakers, and parents to address these barriers.

Keywords: effective English teaching, teacher-related barriers, student-related barriers, school-related barriers, curriculum

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Prince Suleiman announced Vision 2030 in 2016, which sought to improve the standards of education because getting a good education gives Saudis the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to help achieve the goals of Vision 2030, such as the growth of their economy and the prosperity of their society (Khan & Khan, 2020). Hence, Saudi Arabia allocated \$254.6 billion in 2022, which accounted for approximately 19.37% of the national budget, towards improving the quality of education (Arabnews, 2023). Despite this generous spending, Saudi students in the primary stage exhibit limited proficiency in the English language (Al-Nasser, 2015).

The English language education provided in Saudi primary schools is not up to the recommended standards (Moskovsky & Picard, 2018). Enhancing the English language abilities of primary school students holds significant importance, as the early introduction of English language education establishes a robust foundation for future language instruction (Dressman et al., 2023). It is important to understand the barriers to the effectiveness of English teaching in primary schools within the context of Saudi Arabia.

Understanding the potential barriers to the effectiveness of English teaching in primary schools within the Saudi Arabian context holds significant importance. However, there are a limited number of studies relating to this specific domain within the Saudi Arabian educational setting. For example, Alqahtani (2021) shed light on the primary barriers to effective English teaching, namely the shortage of competent teachers, the use of Arabic as the medium of instruction, the reliance on conventional pedagogical approaches, and the absence of adequate training opportunities. Due to the scarcity of research conducted in Saudi Arabia on the barriers to effective English teaching, it would be valuable to infer the potential barriers in the Saudi context from relevant studies worldwide.

At a global level, one notable barrier to the successful implementation of English language teaching in Japan pertains to the absence of appropriate teacher qualifications and training programmes for immersive training in the English language (Sakamoto, 2012). The methodology of immersive English language teaching emphasises the complete immersion of learners within an English-speaking atmosphere to learn the language (Lyster, 2007). The implementation of immersive language teaching methodologies has a positive impact on learners' motivation, as it fosters a conducive and engaging learning environment (Sung & Tsai, 2019). Therefore, educational institutions across the globe conduct assessments on the efficacy of immersive education and subsequently integrate it into their respective national educational frameworks. This is primarily because immersive education can significantly enhance the effectiveness of English language teaching (Sakamoto, 2012).

Understanding the potential barriers to the effectiveness of English instruction in the primary stage in Saudi Arabia holds significant importance, as this can improve the effectiveness of English teaching. However, there is an absence of local studies about this subject matter in the Saudi Arabian context. Alqahtani (2021) discussed the primary barriers encountered in the pursuit of effective English teaching, namely a shortage of adequately trained teachers, the utilisation of Arabic as the medium of instruction, the reliance on conventional pedagogical approaches, and the absence of comprehensive training initiatives (Alqahtani, 2021). The scarcity of research conducted in Saudi Arabia necessitates a reliance on global studies to enhance comprehension of the potential barriers.

Moreover, several challenges for teachers have been reported, including limited knowledge and experience (Klassen & Tze, 2014), inadequate training (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005), the struggle to establish an engaging classroom atmosphere (Sliwa et al., 2017), and a deficiency in motivating students to teach English language (Kimura et al., 2022).

Multiple scholars have emphasised the various challenges encountered by students. Concerning the potential challenges related to the classroom setting, several factors were highlighted, including a deficiency in disruptive behaviours and obedience exhibited by students. Additionally, a lack of cooperation among students further exacerbates the difficulties faced in the classroom environment (Fansury et al., 2020; Kacetl & Klímová, 2019). Moreover, Kacetl and Klímová (2019) have drawn attention to the limited interest displayed by students in English. Furthermore, the limited ability to use technology for English language learning purposes is a key challenge (Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020).

Several studies have highlighted different barriers relating to the curriculum in educational settings. These challenges encompass issues such as an overcrowded curriculum (Anyiendah, 2017), an outdated curriculum (Hussein et al., 2016), and a lack of flexibility in tailoring the curriculum to meet the specific needs and interests of students (Hanna, 2019).

1.2 Gap in Literature

Although numerous studies have been conducted to explore the various barriers encountered in the realm of English language instruction on a global scale, limited studies exist about the specific challenges encountered in the context of primary school English teaching within the context of Buraydah City, Saudi Arabia. Studies conducted in other countries can provide valuable insights into the potential barriers. However, it is crucial to be cautious when generalising these findings to the Saudi Arabian context. This caution is warranted due to possible disparities in curriculum design, cultural values, financial resources, structural disparities, teacher attributes, and student/classroom dynamics that may exist between Saudi Arabia and the countries under investigation (Reiff & Ofiesh, 2015).

The effectiveness of English language instruction in low-income countries may be impeded by the scarcity of resources. However, this concern may not apply to Saudi Arabia, where substantial financial resources allocated to primary schools stem from the considerable revenues derived from the oil industry (Aarts & Roelants, 2015). Hence, it is imperative to elucidate this gap through a comprehensive analysis of the potential barriers that may impede the efficacy of English instruction in primary educational institutions within the context of Buraydah City.

An additional reason for the difficulty in generalising conclusions across different cultures is the significant influence of cultural values and norms on group dynamics and behaviour (Cox et al., 2017). According to Cox et al. (2017), individuals from collectivistic cultures, such as Arab countries and Saudi Arabia, exhibit a propensity for engaging in harmonious and collaborative relationships within the context of their academic pursuits. In contrast, students from individualistic cultures, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, tend to prioritise their self-interests (Cox et al., 2017). Consequently, this tendency may lead to competitive and autonomous behaviour among the members of the group (Cox et al., 2017). According to Dellner (2014), collectivist cultures place an increased emphasis on the collective entity, whereas individualistic cultures prioritise the individuals'

interests. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that studies conducted in various countries cannot be universally applied to the context of Saudi Arabia. Consequently, there exists an urgent need to address this research gap, as the insights gained from such studies can provide valuable guidance to policymakers within the Saudi Ministry of Education. This can help policymakers gain a comprehensive understanding of the potential barriers that may hinder the efficacy of English language instruction in Saudi Arabia.

1.3 Aims

This study aims to examine the perspectives of English teachers working in primary schools in Buryadah, Saudi Arabia, about the key teacher-related, student-related, curriculum-related, as well as classroom- and school-related barriers to effective English teaching.

1.4 Research Questions

What are the perspectives of English teachers working in primary schools in Buryadah, Saudi Arabia, about the key teacher-related, student-related, curriculum-related, as well as classroom- and school-related barriers to effective English teaching?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, this study hypothesises that several challenges exist in the realm of effective English teaching, including teacher-related, student-related, classroom- and school-related challenges, and curriculum-related barriers. The present study hypothesises that teacher-related barriers to effective English teaching in the primary schools in Buraydah include various aspects including limited experience, disqualified teachers, limited knowledge (Klassen & Tze, 2014), constrained cultural competency, not adequate planning for lessons (Weston & Clay, 2018), a limited motivation to teach English language (Kimura et al., 2022), insufficient training (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005), difficulties in establishing an engaging classroom environment (Sliwa et al., 2017), limited classroom management abilities, impaired communication skills, limited proficiency in utilising technology (Thieman, 2008), and a scarcity of training on immersive education (Sakamoto, 2012).

Student-related barriers include disruptive behaviours exhibited within the classroom setting, a dearth of cooperation among students, a lack of motivation among students, disinterest in the English language, limited proficiency in utilising technology for English language learning, restricted access to technological resources, limited English language proficiency, cultural disparities that hinder collaboration, limited attention spans, learning disabilities, and a deficiency in student attentiveness (Fansury et al., 2020; Kacetl & Klímová, 2019; Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020; Zou, Li, & Jin, 2021; Reber & Mesta, 2019).

Large class sizes were reported to be another barrier to effective English teaching (Malik et al., 2021). This can limit the effectiveness of learning and teaching due to decreased individual attention and increased difficulty in the management of the learning environment in the classroom (Malik et al., 2021). Moreover, another class-related barrier can be physical classroom space, because it can restrict the capacity to establish an effective, optimal learning environment for students (Famularsih, 2020). Non-functioning or outdated computers can limit the integration of technology into the teaching process (Famularsih, 2020). Further, poor internet connectivity can be a key problem as it can exacerbate the integration of technology in the learning process, impeding access to educational platforms and online resources (Famularsih, 2020). Limited classroom resources, such as textbooks, workbooks, and other educational materials, can be another common challenge (Putri et al., 2020). This barrier can limit the implementation of diverse teaching strategies as well as impede the engagement of students and learning outcomes. Further, distractions in the classroom, particularly noise originating from outside the classroom, can have a negative effect on the learning environment and limit levels of concentration (Lang, 2020), negatively affecting the ability of students to concentrate.

The curriculum-related challenges encompass barriers such as irrelevant or outdated curricula (Hussein et al., 2016). Additionally, overcrowded curricula were identified as another significant challenge, as highlighted by Anyiendah (2017). Furthermore, the limited adaptability of the curriculum to cater to the diverse interests and needs of students emerged as a prominent concern (Hanna, 2019).

2. Methods

2.1 Research Philosophy

The present study used the positivist research philosophy and employed a quantitative approach. Positivism is often associated with a quantitative approach that emphasises objectivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The use of interpretivism was not employed in this study, primarily due to the inherent subjectivity associated with the process of interpretation and understanding. This subjectivity introduces potential challenges to maintaining the research

findings' reliability since distinct investigators might interpret the same set of data in varying ways (Denzin, 2017). The potential for limited generalisability of positivist studies to real-world contexts arises from disparities in historical, social, and cultural contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Positivism, as a theoretical framework, posits that research findings have the potential to be generalised and applied to various populations and contexts. However, the practical application of these findings to real-life scenarios that deviate from the original context may present certain challenges (Bryman, 2016). Nevertheless, this constraint shall not pose a significant barrier, as the objective of this investigation does not entail extrapolating the results to alternative settings. Rather, the main goal of this study is to offer initial insights into the viewpoints of teachers regarding the barriers encountered in the pursuit of proficient English instruction within Saudi Arabian primary schools.

According to Johnson and Christensen (2019), the utilisation of positivism as a research paradigm may prove to be inadequate when investigating research inquiries that necessitate a comprehensive comprehension of complex social phenomena. The positivist approach emphasises the prioritisation of phenomena that are measurable and observable, limiting the ability for generalisation of the nuances and complexity of social phenomena (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the aforementioned circumstances may impose constraints on the study's capacity to acquire a comprehensive comprehension of the social phenomenon under examination. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the present study does not seek to comprehensively unravel the complicated issues associated with the barriers to effective instruction in English classrooms. Rather, its objective is to obtain an initial comprehension of the potential challenges that may arise. Hence, the limited ability of the current study to get an in-depth understanding of the barriers to effective English teaching is not an issue.

2.2 Settings

The setting encompasses primary schools located in Buraidah City, situated in the central region of Saudi Arabia (McFee, 2017). Buraydah City, located in the central region of Saudi Arabia, houses a population of approximately 600,000 inhabitants. This urban centre is home to a substantial educational infrastructure, comprising around 150 schools.

2.3 Sampling

Based on the adoption of a 14% margin of error, a confidence interval of 95%, and an overall population size of one thousand teachers (with six teachers employed in each of the 150 primary schools within the city of Buraidah), a sample size of 47 participants is deemed necessary. Consequently, a total of 50 participants were enlisted as subjects for this investigation. The sample size was determined by employing the equation for the finite population, as depicted in Figure 1 (Fuller, 2011). The use of random sampling was employed as a means to mitigate the potential influence of selection bias (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019).

$$\text{Unlimited population: } n = \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2}$$

$$\text{Finite population: } n' = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2 N}}$$

where

z is the z score

ε is the margin of error

N is the population size

\hat{p} is the population proportion

Figure 1. The equation of finite population is employed in the calculation of the size of the sample (Fuller, 2011)

The recruitment of participants for this study was made based on a variety of methods, including direct invitations and the placement of posters at the entrances of local primary schools in Buraidah. The research is conducted within a primary school located in Buraidah, thereby enabling convenient and personal invitations to be distributed directly.

To meet the criteria for participation, individuals must be English teachers working in primary schools in Buraidah City, Saudi Arabia. To enhance the generalisability of the findings, the study adopted a non-restrictive approach towards age, ethnicity, and gender.

2.4 Measures

Data were collected through paper-based questionnaires. Paper-based questionnaires were used as the teachers' supervisor at the local schools suggested that paper-based questionnaires should be used as they could increase teachers' engagement. Teachers were busy during this time of the year. Further, the Saudi teachers at local schools in Saudi Arabia had limited knowledge of using the internet and technology, and therefore, the teachers' supervisors stressed that they preferred paper-based questionnaires.

The survey instrument comprised two sections: the demographic self-reported survey and the examination of the potential barriers encountered in the realm of effective teaching of the English language. The demographic questionnaire encompassed inquiries regarding participants' age, gender, type of educational institution attended (including private, public, and international schools), as well as their years of experience (refer to Appendix A).

The next part of the self-reported survey prompts subjects to assess the degree to which they agree with a series of potential barriers to the effectiveness of English language teaching in the classrooms of the primary school in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia (see Appendix B). The scale encompasses a continuum of responses, ranging from 1, indicating a strong disagreement, to 10, indicating a strong agreement. The possible barriers identified in this study are derived from challenges that have been reported and documented in the relevant academic literature. The potential challenges were classified into four distinct categories, namely student-related barriers, teacher-related barriers, class-related barriers, and curriculum-related barriers.

The barriers to teachers in the educational context encompass a range of issues, including limited experience in teaching English (Klassen & Tze, 2014), the lack of qualified teachers (Alqahtani, 2021), limited teacher training (Sakamoto, 2012), lack of motivation to teach English (Kimura et al., 2022), challenges in engaging the students (Sliwa et al., 2017), low cultural competence (Weston & Clay, 2018), lack of adequate classes' planning (Weston & Clay, 2018), impaired communication skills (Thieman, 2008), limited ability in using technology (Zou, Li, & Jin, 2021), poor classroom management skills (Thieman, 2008), limited adoption of interactive teaching methods (e.g., collaborative learning, discussion-based learning, flipped classrooms, game-based learning, interactive technology, role-playing, problem-based learning), and lack of training in immersive learning (Sakamoto, 2012).

For the classroom challenges, several challenges were included in the self-reported questionnaire including Disruptive Behaviors in the Classroom (Fansury et al., 2020), minimum cooperation in students (Kacetyl & Klímová, 2019), limited student motivation (Sung & Tsai, 2019), lack of motivation in English among students (Kacetyl & Klímová, 2019), minimal students' capacity to employ technology in learning English, inferior access to technology among students, Limited proficiency in English in pupils (Reber & Mesta, 2019), differences in culture among students limit the chances for cooperation (Reber & Mesta, 2019), Limited student attention span, Learning disabilities (Reber & Mesta, 2019), and the limited student attention.

The class-related challenges involve several issues, such as the large class size (Copland et al., 2014), limited classroom space, non-functioning or outdated computers (Hussein et al., 2016), limited internet connectivity at the school (Famularsih, 2020), limited resources at the classroom (e.g., other educational materials, textbooks, and limited workbooks) (Aarts & Roelants, 2015), classroom distractions (noise from outside the class) (Lang, 2020), malfunctioning air conditioners, resulting in inappropriate humidity and temperature, poor lighting, a lack of comfortable seats., and a lack of technical support to use technology.

Concerning the curriculum-related challenges, Irrelevant curriculum (Hussein et al., 2016), overcrowded curriculum (Anyiendah, 2017), outdated curriculum (Anyiendah, 2017), inflexibility in adapting the curriculum to the student's interests (Hanna, 2019), and dull curriculum or not-engaging content.

2.5 Procedures

Following receiving approval on the ethical from the ethical committee at Bangor University, the investigator formally requested approval from the Education Department in the Qassim Area of Saudi Arabia to proceed with the proposed study within the primary schools situated in Burdyah (see Appendix E). Upon obtaining the necessary consent, the researcher contacted the supervisors of teachers working at different local schools in Burdyah to invite English teachers working at the schools to take part in the study by responding to the paper-based questionnaires. Paper-based questionnaires were used due to the advice of the supervisors of English teachers at the local schools, who stressed that teachers were busy and had limited skills in using the Internet to respond to online questionnaires. The supervisors were asked to give the consent form, information sheet, debrief form, and self-administered questionnaires to English teachers who expressed their interest in taking part in the study. Then, they are required to carefully read the consent form, information sheet, debrief form, and self-administered questionnaires. After careful reading, they can confirm that they would like to take part in the study. Following the filling out of the paper-based questionnaires by participants, the supervisors collected the questionnaires. Then, they were handed to the researcher.

2.6 Statistical Analysis

For the descriptive statistics, the analysis focused on the calculation of the standard deviations and average means of the level of agreement expressed towards the various statements. The present study employed the analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess the presence of statistically significant differences between various demographic groups. Further, it employed a Pearson correlational analysis to measure the direction as well as the magnitude of the correlation between individuals' experience and age and their level of agreement with various statements.

2.7 Ethics

The subjects were given comprehensive information regarding the essential aspects of the research. Furthermore, participants received explicit notification regarding their right to voluntarily discontinue their involvement in the research endeavour at any given point. The collection of personal data, such as names, was not solicited from participants. The data remained confidential and was not disclosed to any external entity. Confidentiality was maintained by giving codes to participants instead of their names. Moreover, they were not asked to give any personal details (e.g., addresses, their identities). Furthermore, the data was securely stored within a folder protected by a password. The investigator took appropriate measures to safeguard the well-being of participants, ensuring that no physical or psychological harm was inflicted upon them. If they experience any negative feelings, they can withdraw from the study.

3. Results

3.1 Characteristics of the Sample

50 participants were recruited in this study. The study included 27 female participants and 23 male participants. The age of participants ranged from 24 to 43 years (Mean (M) = 35.7, Median (Mdn) = 36). The years of experience ranged from 3 years to 16 years (Mean (M) = 9.36, Median (Mdn) = 9).

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

From the perspectives of teachers, there were several barriers towards effective English teaching. They were ranked in descending order as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Ranking of the different barriers

Ranking	Barrier
1	Limited ability in using technology (Teach-related challenges)
2	Lack of technical support to use technology (Classroom- and school-related challenges)
3	Irrelevant curriculum (Curriculum-related challenges)
4	Lack of training in immersive learning. (Teacher-related challenges)
5	Lack of student motivation. (Student-related challenges)
6	Cultural differences among students limit cooperation. (Student-related challenges)
7	Overcrowded curriculum (Curriculum-related challenges)
8	Malfunctioning air conditioners, lead to inappropriate temperature and humidity. (Classroom- and school-related challenges)
9	Difficulty in creating an engaging classroom environment. (Teacher-related challenges)
10	Impaired communication skills. (Teacher-related challenges)
11	Limited use of interactive teaching methods (e.g., discussion-based learning, collaborative learning, game-based learning, flipped classroom, problem-based learning, role-playing, or interactive technology). (Teacher-related challenges).
12	Limited teacher training. (Teacher-related challenges)
13	Dull curriculum or un-engaging content (Curriculum -related challenges)
14	Limited students' ability to use technology in learning English among students. (Student-related challenges)
15	Large class size (Classroom- and school-related challenges)
16	Limited flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the interests and needs of students (Curriculum-related challenges)
17	Students have limited access to technology (Student-related challenges)
18	Non-functioning or outdated computers (Classroom- and school-related challenges)
19	Outdated curriculum (Curriculum -related challenges)
20	Limited cooperation among students. (Student-related challenges)
21	Slow internet connections at the school. (Classroom- and school-related challenges)
22	Disruptive behaviours in the classroom (Student-related challenges)
23	Limited classroom resources (e.g., limited workbooks, textbooks, and other educational materials). (Classroom- and school-related challenges)
24	Limited English proficiency among students (Student-related challenges)
25	Disinterest in English among students (Student-related challenges)
26	Classroom distractions (noise from outside the classroom). (Classroom- and school-related challenges)

27	Learning disabilities (Student-related challenges)
28	Limited classroom space. (Classroom- and school-related challenges)
29	Lack of student attention. (Student-related challenges)
30	Limited experience in teaching English (Teacher-related challenges)
31	Lack of qualified teachers (Teacher-related challenges)
32	Limited cultural competence (Teacher-related challenges)
33	Inadequate planning of the classes (Teacher-related challenges)
34	Lack of motivation to teach English. (Teacher-related challenges)
35	Lack of comfortable seats (Classroom- and school-related challenges)
36	Poor classroom management skills (Teacher-related challenges)
37	Poor lighting (Classroom- and school-related challenges)
38	Limited student attention span. (Student-related challenges)

As shown in Appendix I, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed no significant differences between the mean values of males and females regarding the different perceived barriers. However, ANOVA showed significant differences between males and females regarding their ratings on the difficulty of creating an engaging classroom environment ($F(1, 48) = 5.242, p = .026$). Females ($M = 9.222, SD = 9.222$) had higher ratings on the perception that difficulty in creating an engaging classroom environment is a barrier to effective English teaching compared to males ($M = 8.696, SD = .169$). Likewise, ANOVA showed significant differences between males and females regarding their ratings of Dull curriculum or unengaging content ($F(1, 48) = 9.321, p = .004$). Females ($M = 9.111, SD = .112$) had higher ratings on the perception that a dull curriculum or unengaging content is a barrier to effective English teaching compared to males ($M = 8.609, SD = .121$).

2) Impact of the type of school on the perspectives of teachers towards the different barriers

As shown in Appendix H, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed no significant differences between the mean values of teachers working in the international school. Private schools or public schools regarding their ratings on the majority of the different barriers. However, ANOVA showed significant differences between males and females regarding their ratings on the lack of qualified teachers ($F(2, 48) = 3.555, p = .037$). Teachers working in private schools ($M = 3.188, SD = .385$) had higher ratings on the perception that the lack of qualified teachers is a barrier to effective English teaching compared to public schools ($M = 2.250, SD = .169$) and international schools ($M = 1.600, SD = .487$).

3.3 Correlational Analysis

Pearson's correlational analysis showed no significant correlation between the years of experience in teaching English and the majority of their ratings on the different barriers (Appendix J). The lack of significant correlation implies that there are no associations. However, findings showed positive correlations between the years of experience and both impaired communication skills ($r = .302, p = .033$) and a negative correlation between the years of experience and the cultural differences among students that limit cooperation ($r = .266, p = .062$).

4. Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This study aimed to examine the barriers to effective English teaching from the perspective of English teachers in primary schools in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia. This chapter seeks to outline and discuss the findings of the current study, compare them with relevant literature, and offer valuable implications.

4.2 Discussion

1) Key challenges to effective English teaching

Teachers believed they had limited ability to use technology (teacher-related challenges) (Ranking 1) ($M = 9.20, SD = .808$). This is in line with Khatoony and Nezhadmehr (2020), who stressed that the limited ability to use technology and limited skills were key barriers to effective English teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, Zou et al. (2021) argued that limited access to technology can increase the negative impact of the limited ability to use technology among teachers, as the limited use of technology reduces their skills and prevents them from taking advantage of any opportunities to improve their skills in using technology in the class. Further, Thieman (2008) concluded that limited skills in using technology can impair the effectiveness of teaching.

The significant impact of the limited ability to use technology on the effectiveness of English teaching can be explained by several justifications. First, technology can offer access to digital resources (Van der Sanden & De Vries, 2016). Technology equips teachers with access to several digital resources (e.g., multimedia materials such

as Microsoft PowerPoint, language learning apps, and learning platforms) (Morel & Spector, 2022). Teachers who cannot effectively use technology have limited access to these resources, reducing their capacity to improve English teaching methods and materials.

Limited skills in using technology can limit engaging and interactive learning experiences. In other words, technology can enhance engaging and interactive learning experiences, which are important for effective English teaching. For instance, language online platforms as well as language learning apps can provide multimedia content, interactive exercises, and communication tools that can allow students to practice their English skills in an immersive and dynamic environment (El-Henawy, 2023). Teachers with limited ability to use technology may find it challenging to create an interactive learning experience for their students, leading to limited engagement among students (El-Henawy, 2023).

A third explanation for the importance of proficiency and skills in using technology among teachers is that technology can offer various collaboration and communication tools that can improve English language learning (Simon, 2021). For example, the use of videoconferencing apps (e.g., Zoom and Team) can allow teachers to organise virtual learning exchanges, connect with native speakers, and create global classrooms (Simon, 2021). Teachers who lack technology skills may not be able to use videoconferencing apps with students, limiting their ability to effectively communicate with their students. Hence, the ability to use technology is a key requirement for effective English teaching.

A lack of technical support to use technology (classroom- and school-related challenges) is a key barrier to effective English teaching in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia. This finding is consistent with the important role of technology in providing effective English teaching to students. This finding is in line with a wide range of previous studies (Hashemi & Kew, 2021; Lee, 2002; Wood et al., 2005).

Limited technical support can be a barrier to effective English teaching for several reasons. First, troubleshooting technical issues will be challenging. Technical issues may occur when using technology in the classroom. With limited technical support, teachers may find it difficult to troubleshoot these technical problems on their own. This may result in wasted instructional time and a loss of confidence in the integration of technology into their teaching experiences.

Irrelevant curriculum (curriculum-related challenges) was also cited as one of the key barriers to effective English teaching ($M = 9.06$, $SD = .956$) (Ranking 3). Further, the outdated curriculum (curriculum-related challenges) was ranked as the 19th barrier to effective English teaching ($M = 8.58$, $SD = 9.28$).

This finding echoes previous studies (Hussein et al., 2016). Further, Anyiendah (2017) argued that overcrowded and outdated curricula were key barriers to effective English teaching. The irrelevance of the curriculum can be exacerbated by the limited flexibility to tailor the curriculum to meet the specific interests and needs of students (Hanna, 2019). An irrelevant curriculum can be a key barrier to effective English teaching as it can be unable to meet the demands and needs of students.

The negative impact of the irrelevant curriculum on the effectiveness of English teaching can be explained by several explanations. For example, an irrelevant curriculum might concentrate on outdated language skills, limiting the ability of the curriculum to develop essential communication skills, which are urgently needed in real-life scenarios (Iwasiw & Goldenberg, 2014). This may limit the ability of students to apply their English language skills and knowledge outside the classroom, reducing their proficiency in English.

Further, language acquisition can be highly effective when it is connected to the lives of students and meaningful (De Cssia Veiga Marriott et al., 2008). An irrelevant curriculum might place increased emphasis on grammar drills, rote memorization, or outdated teaching methods that cannot promote meaningful communication or authentic language use (Garth, 2020). This may limit the ability of students to develop accuracy, fluency, and confidence in the use of the English language. Cook et al. (2015) argued that flexibility in adapting and improving the curriculum is a major requirement for effective teaching. This finding aligns with the fact that the limited flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the interests and needs of students ranked sixteenth on the list as a key barrier to effective English teaching ($M = 8.74$, $SD = .853$). Hence, the Ministry of Education should be aware that irrelevant curriculum is a key barrier to effective English teaching.

Lack of training in immersive learning (teacher-related challenges) was also ($M = 9.04$, $SD = .947$) (Ranking 4) cited by teachers as one of the key barriers to effective English teaching. Immersive learning refers to an educational approach that immerses students in a physical or virtual environment that simulates real-world contexts (Pagano, 2013). The significant impact of immersive learning on the effectiveness of English teaching is in line with a wide range of previous studies (Muñoz, 2012; Lyster, 2007; Sakamoto, 2012).

One of the key explanations for the significant impact of immersive learning on the effectiveness of English teaching may be that immersive learning can increase the engagement and motivation of students as it can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment (Duncan, 2020). When students are actively engaged and involved in the authentic use of language, they can become engaged enough to take part and learn (Chen et al., 2022). The interactive nature of immersive learning as well as the real-life relevance of the language can make the process of learning more meaningful, engaging, and enjoyable for students (Russell, 2020).

Teachers also believed that the lack of student motivation (student-related challenges) could be a key barrier to effective English teaching ($M = 9.02$, $SD = 1.204$) (ranking 5). Furthermore, a dull curriculum or unengaging content ranked thirteenth on the list of key barriers to effective English teaching ($M = 8.88$, $SD = 6.27$). This is in line with a wide range of previous studies (Copland et al., 2014; Kimura et al., 2022; Hoa & Mai, 2016). Limited motivation among students can lead to reduced engagement. When students are unmotivated, they may become passive and disengaged in the learning process (Meyer & Emery, 2021). They might show limited interest in actively listening to the teacher, taking part in the activities held in the classroom, or completing their assignments, limiting their capacity to retain or absorb new language skills and knowledge (Christenson et al., 2012).

Further, motivation has a key role in driving students to put increased emphasis on the required practice and effort to improve their proficiency in the English language (Gregory & Kaufeldt, 2015). With limited motivation, students might not be motivated to dedicate time outside of the classroom to review materials, seek extra learning opportunities, or improve their English skills. This limited practice and effort can limit their development and progress in the English language.

Teachers also believed that cultural differences (student-related challenges) among students can limit cooperation, limiting the effectiveness of English teaching ($M = 9.02$, $SD = 1.097$). Limited communication among students is believed to be the 20th key barrier to effective English teaching, according to the perceptions of English teachers in this study ($M = 8.50$, $SD = 1.418$). The negative impact of cultural differences on the effectiveness of communication during English classes can be explained by shedding light on the difference between high- and low-context cultures (Goodman, 2013). According to Milenkovic (2008), individuals tend to maintain and build strong relationships to have effective communication in high-context cultures. The dynamics of relationships influence communication in such cultures. Moreover, trust, respect, and understanding between people are highly valued (Thomas & Peterson, 2016). On the contrary, although relationships are important in cultures classified as low-context ones, communication can be more task-oriented and focus on the effective conveying of information (Goodman, 2013).

Further, the styles of communication differ between high- and low-context cultures (De Mooij, 2021). In high-context cultures, communication relies on non-verbal cues, implicit understanding, and shared cultural knowledge (Thomas & Peterson, 2016). Further, meaning can be inferred through non-verbal cues (e.g., context, relationships, gestures, body language, and tone of voice) (Milenkovic, 2008). On the contrary, people in low-context cultures convey messages through explicit words and verbal communication, and there is less emphasis on non-verbal cues and shared cultural knowledge (Goodman, 2013). Therefore, because people from different cultures (e.g., low- vs. high-context cultures) have different communication styles, the effectiveness of communication may be limited when there are cultural differences in the class, limiting effective English teaching.

The overcrowded curriculum ranked seventh among the key barriers to effective English teaching ($M = 9.00$, $SD = 6.39$). This echoes previous studies from other countries (Anyiendah, 2017). The overcrowded curriculum can be a key problem as it may negatively affect the quality of teaching (Khan & Iqbal, 2012). An overcrowded curriculum can lead to insufficient time for in-depth exploration of language concepts and skills and a lack of focus on language proficiency (Lundy, 2015). Further, an overcrowded curriculum with content can overwhelm students and result in limited engagement (Lundy, 2015). When students feel that they cannot keep up with the pace of teaching or are overwhelmed, burnout may occur, which may make students disengaged from the learning process and disinterested in the module (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Hence, it is highly important to address this issue.

Malfunctioning air conditioners were cited as the eighth key barrier to effective English teaching. Malfunctioning air conditioners can be a key problem, as they can lead to a lack of comfort due to inappropriate air temperature and humidity. Cognitive performance and students' concentration may be diminished by extreme temperatures or elevated levels of humidity (Chen et al., 2020; Tian et al., 2021). Numerous studies have shown that inappropriate temperatures have the potential to negatively impact memory, concentration, and general cognitive functioning (Chen et al., 2020; Lan et al., 2022; Zivin et al., 2020). Hence, it is highly important to maintain the air conditions working properly, as they can affect the cognitive performance of students.

Teachers also believed that the difficulty in creating an engaging classroom environment (teacher-related

challenges) ($M = 8.98$, $SD = .845$) (ranking 8). This is in line with previous studies (Sliwa et al., 2017). The lack of student engagement in the learning process has the potential to negatively impact their drive to acquire proficiency in the English language (Delfino, 2019). Hence, it is highly important to develop the skills of teachers to engage students through the provision of training opportunities and supervision.

Teachers also believed that impaired communication skills (teacher-related challenges) ($M = 8.98$, $SD = .869$) and limited use of interactive teaching methods (e.g., discussion-based learning, collaborative learning, game-based learning, flipped classrooms, problem-based learning, role-playing, or interactive technology) (teacher-related challenges) ($M = 8.96$, $SD = 1.616$) (ranking 10).

Communication skills are important as they can allow teachers to effectively communicate with their students (Skeen et al., 2016). Further, the significant impact of the use of interactive teaching methods on the effectiveness of English teaching is consistent with a wide range of previous studies (Sakamoto, 2012). Interactive teaching methods have a strong impact on the effectiveness of teaching English, as they can increase the engagement of students. For example, Beeland (2002) found that the use of interactive whiteboards can improve the engagement of students, according to self-reported questionnaires by students. Further, Muir et al. (2022) found that the use of multimedia can promote student engagement. Further, Lim (2017) found that mobile-based interactive teaching can improve student engagement. Moreover, a literature review from 2008 to 2018 found that game-based learning can significantly improve the engagement of students (Shu & Liu, 2019). Likewise, Hsieh et al. (2015) found that a game-based learning environment has a significant positive effect on the engagement of elementary school students. Hence, teachers are recommended to use interactive teaching methods as they can have a significant impact on the engagement of students.

Large class size (classroom- and school-related challenges) was cited as the 15th key barrier to effective English teaching ($M = 8.76$, $SD = 1.506$). This finding is consistent with a wide range of previous studies (Emery, 2012; Malik et al., 2021). A large class size can limit the effectiveness of English learning and teaching as it may reduce the ability of the teacher to manage the class as well as limit personalised and individual attention (Malik et al., 2021).

The provision of personalised attention to each student becomes difficult for the instructor in a large class (Zheng, 2018). The limited personalised attention may lead to a reduction in the availability of personalised teaching, feedback, and the ability to meet individual learning requirements (Rickabaugh, 2016). Students may have feelings of being ignored/neglected, reducing the levels of student participation in the class (Lin, 2012). Further, it may be challenging to allow each student to participate in group activities, discussions, and speaking exercises in a large class. This can limit the development of effective language use, confidence, and fluency.

Teachers also believed that limited access to technology (student-related challenges) among students ($M = 8.66$, $SD = 1.533$) (ranking 17), the presence of non-functioning or outdated computers (classroom- and school-related challenges) ($M = 8.64$, $SD = 1.481$) (ranking 17), and slow internet connections at the school ($M = 8.48$, $SD = 1.488$) (ranking 21) were key barriers to effective English teaching. Access to technology is highly important as it can offer access to interactive learning materials, a dictionary, additional language learning opportunities (e.g., daily English practice, English chat groups), English forums, allow teachers to offer personalised learning opportunities, offer interactive multimedia resources, and foster collaboration and communication among students (Hamilton, 2022). Hence, the Ministry of Education should be aware that access to technology, the presence of upgraded computers, as well as a speedy internet connection, are key requirements for effective English teaching.

2) Effect of demographics on the perceptions of teachers

There was a lack of significant differences for the majority of the barriers. However, females believed that it could be more challenging to engage students and that the curriculum was dull or unengaging compared to males. A potential explanation for the difference may be that female teachers have lower skills in using technology compared to male teachers, which may affect their ability to engage students using modern technology (e.g., use of PowerPoint presentations, interactive learning, use of educational videos, communication using technology). Future research is recommended to examine whether the limited skills to use technology mediate the association between the perceptions of teachers and the difficulty of engaging students.

Findings also showed a negative correlation between the years of experience and the teachers' ratings that impaired communication skills are a key barrier. A potential explanation may be that teachers with different years of experience have different expectations in terms of the levels of communication that should be used by students. In other words, teachers may have different values and beliefs.

Another explanation may be that those with more years of experience are usually old. Older people may find it

challenging to communicate with young students due to the generation gap. Older people might have different communication styles, values, and cultural references that might not resemble those of young students. This may make it challenging to establish a common group or effectively communicate ideas. Hence, future studies are recommended to further examine the impact of age on the ability to communicate with students.

Findings also showed that teachers from private schools had higher ratings that the lack of qualified teachers is a barrier to effective English teaching compared to their counterparts in international and public schools. A potential explanation may be that primary private schools in Saudi Arabia may lack qualified teachers due to potential reasons (e.g., low salaries), and therefore, teachers in private schools may overestimate the effect of the lack of qualified teachers on the effectiveness of English teaching. Hence, policymakers are recommended to consider whether there is a lack of qualified teachers in private schools and study the potential reasons, followed by addressing the key reasons.

4.3 Implications

1) Policy implications

Improving teacher training is a key policy implication. It is important to provide thorough and continuous training to teachers. This training should enhance participants' proficiency in technology competencies, immersive learning methodologies, and communication skills. By providing teachers with the required skills, knowledge, and information, their performance can increase.

The absence of technical support was reported as a key barrier to effective English teaching in this study. Ensuring the presence of sufficient technological support systems in schools is of paramount importance for policymakers. This includes the provision of access to functioning and current technology, together with support and direction for teachers in the efficient use of technology within the educational setting.

Enhancing student motivation is also another important policy implication. Tackling student-related barriers, such as insufficient motivation and a lack of enthusiasm towards the English language, necessitates the implementation of a comprehensive strategy. Policymakers have to consider many approaches for augmenting student motivation, including the integration of real-life circumstances, the incorporation of captivating and engaging learning materials, and the establishment of a supportive classroom context (Henning et al., 2014). Further, policymakers should provide the required financial resources to offer continuous professional development to teachers.

2) Research implications

This study examined the perceptions of teachers about the barriers to effective English teaching. Hence, findings cannot be generalised to the perceptions of parents, headmasters, and students. Future studies are recommended to examine the perceptions of other relevant stakeholders, as this can provide an in-depth understanding of the barriers to effective English teaching.

Future studies are recommended to examine and compare the perceptions of teachers in middle and secondary schools, as this can show whether there are significant differences between the barriers to English teaching in different schools. Further, the current study examined the perceptions of English teachers towards effective English teaching in Buraydah primary schools in Saudi Arabia. Hence, the findings of the current study cannot be generalised to other cities in Saudi Arabia. Future studies are recommended to examine the potential perspectives on English teaching in other cities (Riyadah, Dammam, Mecca, etc.).

Moreover, the sample exhibits a bias towards early adulthood teachers ($M = 35.70$ years, Median = 36 years, $SD = 4.132$, Min = 24 years, Max = 43 years). Additionally, the majority of the sample consists of females (54%). Moreover, 48% ($n = 24$), 32% ($n = 16$), and 20% ($n = 10$) of participants were employed in public schools, private schools, and international schools, respectively. These findings indicate a lack of a representative sample of the population.

This bias in sampling can reduce the generalisability of the findings to the general population of teachers in primary schools in Saudi Arabia (Dattalo, 2009). Future studies are recommended to recruit samples representative of the demographics of the wider population under examination.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Limitations

This study has a relatively small sample size. Studies with a small sample size have several limitations, limiting the reliability and generalizability of the findings (Ryan, 2013). First, they have low statistical power, as they lack the statistical power required to detect moderate or small effects accurately (Kraemer & Blasey, 2015; Myers et al., 2014). Hence, studies with a relatively small sample size might be underpowered, resulting in an increased risk

of type two errors and false-negative results (McKillup, 2011).

Further, the sample is biased towards early adulthood, as the mean age of participants was 35.70 years ($SD = 4.132$). The median age was 36 years. The ages of participants ranged from 24 to 43 years. This shows that the findings do not represent the perspectives of teachers in middle adulthood (40–65 years). Hence, the findings are biased. It is recommended that future studies seek to include a sample that accurately represents the age distribution of the broader population.

Another limitation is the sample's bias towards females, with 54% ($n = 27$) of the participants being female. This gender bias can lead to inaccurate or skewed conclusions due to the overrepresentation of female teachers in the sample (Berger, 2007; Qin, 2017). Disentangling the impact of gender from other variables being examined becomes challenging, making it difficult to draw accurate conclusions about the factors at hand (Berger, 2007; Qin, 2017).

5.2 Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the perceptions of English teachers in primary schools in Saudi Arabia about the potential barriers to effective English teaching. There were different barriers to effective English teaching. The top barriers to effective English teaching included the limited ability to use technology, the lack of technical support to use technology, the irrelevant curriculum, the lack of training in immersive learning, the lack of student motivation, and the cultural differences among students that limit cooperation.

The limited ability to use technology can be a key barrier, as limited technological skills can limit the ability of teachers to design engaging content using technology, limit their skills, and limit access to digital resources and platforms (e.g., Microsoft PowerPoint, language learning apps). The lack of technical support to use technology can also be a key problem, as it may limit the use of the available technology.

There were significant differences between males and females in terms of their ratings, as females' perceptions that creating an engaging classroom environment as well as a dull curriculum or unengaging content were key barriers to effective English teaching were stronger. A potential explanation may be that females have lower technological skills, limiting their ability to create an engaging classroom environment using technology.

A negative correlation was found between age and the perception that impaired communication skills were a key barrier. The generational gap may be a key explanation.

Teachers working in private schools had higher ratings, indicating that the limited number of qualified teachers is a barrier to effective English teaching compared to their counterparts working in international and public schools. This shows that private schools may have a shortage in the number of qualified teachers.

It is recommended that policymakers offer continuous training to teachers, technical support, design platforms for the exchange of information, and facilitate cooperation and coordination among the different parties involved. Teachers should engage in continuous professional development, improve their skills in technology, and improve their effective classroom management.

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Authors' contributions

This study was developed by a single researcher: Fahad Alrashdi. He was responsible for the design of the whole study.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Obtained.

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The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

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No additional data are available.

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Appendix A

Demographic questionnaire

No.	Demographic questionnaire	
1	What is your gender?	1. Male 2. Female 3. Prefer not to say
2	What is your age?	
3	What is the type of the school you are working in?	1. Public school. 2. Private school 3. International school.
4	How many years of experience do you have in teaching English	

Appendix B

Potential challenges to effective English teaching in classes of primary schools in buraydah city, Saudi, Arabia

	The following statements ask you about the potential challenges to effective English teaching in the classes of primary schools in Burydah city, Saudi Arabia. The challenges are classified into four main categories: teacher-related challenges, student-related challenges, class-related challenges, and curriculum-related challenges. On a scale from 0 (Strongly disagree) to 10 (Strongly agree), rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
Part 1 - Teacher-related challenges	Limited experience in teaching English Lack of qualified teachers Limited teacher training. Difficulty in creating an engaging classroom environment. Lack of motivation to teach English. Limited cultural competence. Inadequate planning of the classes. Impaired communication skills. Poor classroom management skills. Limited ability in using technology. Limited use of interactive teaching methods (e.g., discussion-based learning, collaborative learning, game-based learning, flipped classrooms, problem-based learning, role-playing, or interactive technology). Lack of training in immersive learning.
Part 2 - Student-related challenges	Disruptive Behaviors in the Classroom Limited cooperation among students. Lack of student motivation. Disinterest in English among students. Limited students' ability to use technology in learning English among students. students have limited access to technology Limited English proficiency among students. Cultural differences among students limit cooperation. Limited student attention span.

	Learning disabilities.
	Lack of student attention.
Part 3 - Classroom- and school-related challenges	Large class size.
	Limited classroom space.
	Non-functioning or outdated computers.
	Slow internet connections at the school.
	Limited classroom resources (e.g., limited workbooks, textbooks, and other educational materials).
	Classroom distractions (noise from outside the classroom).
	Malfunctioning air conditioners, leading to inappropriate temperature and humidity.
	Poor lighting
	Lack of comfortable seats.
	Lack of technical support to use technology.
Part 4 - Curriculum-related challenges	Irrelevant curriculum
	Outdated curriculum
	Overcrowded curriculum
	Limited flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the interests and needs of students
	Dull curriculum or un-engaging content

Appendix C

Consent form

“Challenges to Effective English Teaching in Primary Schools in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia: Perspectives of English Teachers and Implications for Practice”

Researcher’s name: Fahad Alrashdi

E-mail:

F-Address:

Phone:

Ethics System Reference Number:

School of Education, Bangor University

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understood the Participation Information Sheet for the above study.
- 2) I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily.
- 3) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.
- 4) (If appropriate) I understand that the information collected about me will be used to support other research in the future and may be shared anonymously with other researchers.
- 5) I agree to take part in the above study.
- 6) I have been given a copy of this form and the Participation Information Sheet.

Participant name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix D

Invitation letter

Title of the study: Challenges to Effective English Teaching in Primary Schools in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia: Perspectives of English Teachers and Implications for Practice”

Dear English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher,

Greetings! My name is Fahad Alrashdi, a Master's Education Studies student at Bangor University. I am conducting a study on the challenges of teaching English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in primary schools in Saudi Arabia, specifically focusing on the perspectives of Saudi EFL teachers. Your participation in this research is highly valuable and I would like to invite you to fill out a questionnaire that will help achieve the objectives of my proposed study.

The purpose of this study is to gather data on the perceptions of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching English in primary schools, specifically in the Qassim region. By identifying these difficulties, this study aims to contribute to the education context in Saudi Arabia and aid in the improvement of the EFL teaching profession.

Your participation as an EFL teacher is essential to the success of this study. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire, and all responses will be recorded anonymously on a password-protected computer. Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and appreciated and you may withdraw at any time without any risk or consequence.

I assure you that all data obtained from this study will be treated as strictly confidential, and anonymity will be maintained throughout the research process. By continuing to complete the questionnaire, you voluntarily agree to participate in this survey.

Thank you for your time and valuable contribution to this study.

Best regards,

The Researcher: Fahad Alrashdi

MA Education Studies Student

Appendix E

Letter to the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia

Title of the study: Challenges to Effective English Teaching in Primary Schools in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia: Perspectives of English Teachers and Implications for Practice"

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Fahad Alrashdi, and I am a Master of Education Studies student at Bangor University, United Kingdom. I am writing to request permission for the primary school EFL teachers at your esteemed institution to participate in an online questionnaire as a part of my proposed research study. The questionnaire is designed to gather EFL teachers' perceptions on teaching English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in primary schools in Saudi Arabia, specifically in the Qassim region.

This study aims to identify the challenges and barriers that EFL teachers face when teaching English in primary schools in Saudi Arabia and to contribute to the educational context in the country. The title of the study is "Challenges of Teaching ELF in Primary Schools in Saudi Arabia: Saudi EFL Teachers' Perspectives."

The EFL teachers at your institution are an essential part of this study, and their participation in the online questionnaire is highly appreciated. The questionnaire will take approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Please note that all data collected will be treated as strictly confidential and stored on my password-protected work laptop. The teachers' names and names of schools will not be identified in the thesis. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without any risk or consequence.

If a participant decides to withdraw from the study, they may simply email me a copy of their questionnaire responses and request that their data be removed. As the participants will be filling out the questionnaire online, there will be no need for codes to identify their data in case of withdrawal.

I would like to assure you that the participation of EFL teachers in this study is entirely risk-free. By accepting to continue completing the self-reported questionnaire attached, the participant voluntarily agrees to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Fahad Alrashdi

MA Education Studies Student

School of Education, Bangor University

Email:

Appendix F

Participant Information sheet

Challenges to Effective English Teaching in Primary Schools in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia: Perspectives of English Teachers and Implications for Practice

Information about the study

We would like to invite you to participate in a self-reported questionnaire that aims to gather your perceptions on the potential challenges to effective English teaching in primary schools in Buraydah City, Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire will ask you to rate your level of agreement with a range of statements on a scale of 0 to 10.

Your participation in this study is highly valuable, as it will provide important insights into the challenges that EFL teachers face in the primary school context in Saudi Arabia. The findings of this research will inform policymakers and teachers of the potential barriers to effective English teaching, and contribute to the development of more effective teaching practices in the field of English language education in Saudi Arabia.

We hope that you will take the time to participate in this study and share your valuable insights on the challenges of teaching English in primary schools in Buraydah City. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

Why have I been asked to take part?

Your participation in this study is crucial because you are an English teacher who is currently teaching in one of the primary schools in Buraydah City, Saudi Arabia. As an experienced EFL teacher, your perspectives and insights on the potential challenges to effective English teaching are highly valuable and can provide important information to policymakers and teachers.

By sharing your perceptions on the challenges of teaching English in primary schools in Buraydah City, you can help inform policy decisions and contribute to the development of more effective teaching practices in the field of English language education in Saudi Arabia. Your input is greatly appreciated, and we thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

What does the study involve?

The study involves responding to a self-reported questionnaire on the potential challenges to effective English teaching in Buraydah City, Saudi Arabia.

Are there any benefits or risks?

The study does not involve any risks or harms. The findings of the study will be valuable to primary schools in Saudi Arabia as they will identify the potential challenges to effective English teaching in primary schools in Saudi Arabia, informing policymakers in Saudi Arabia and contributing to higher-quality education.

What will happen to my data?

The information gathered from the self-reported questionnaires will be handled in a confidential manner and neither the school nor the participants will be identifiable in any reports, theses, or publications that may result from this research. The data will be stored securely and used only for this study. If a participant decides to withdraw from the study in the future, all information collected during interviews conducted at their school will be immediately disposed of and will not be used in the study.

What if I do not want to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the complete freedom to decide whether or not to take part. There will be no negative consequences if you choose not to participate. Furthermore, you can withdraw from the study at any point without providing a reason, including after an interview has already taken place.

Whom do I contact about the study?

If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the researcher and/or project supervisor. If you have any concerns or complaints about the way this study is being conducted, please feel free to contact Professor [insert name here]. They will be able to address your issues and provide any necessary support or guidance. Your feedback is important to us, and we are committed to ensuring that this study is conducted ethically and responsibly.

Supervisor

E-mail:

Researcher:

Email:

Appendix G

Debrief form

Record Personal Identifier here:

Ethics System Reference Number:

Title of Research Project:

Challenges to Effective English Teaching in Primary Schools in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia: Perspectives of English Teachers and Implications for Practice

Thank you very much for participating in the above study. Please detach and retain this part for your records. You may want to note your Personal Identifier for future reference.

Aims

- To examine the key challenges to effective English teaching in primary schools in Buraydah City, Saudi Arabia from the perspective of English teachers.
- To inform policymakers in the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia by giving them recommendations on how to enable effective English teaching in primary schools in Saudi Arabia.

Research Questions

- What are the key challenges to effective English teaching in primary schools in Buraydah City, Saudi Arabia from the perspective of English teachers?
- What are the key recommendations that can be given to policymakers in the Ministry of Education to improve the effectiveness of teaching English in primary schools in Buraydah City, Saudi Arabia?

Your data are held securely and confidentially / anonymously. If you wish to withdraw from the study, contact me with your identification code (see above) and your data will be removed from all files.

You may withdraw from the study at any time but after **data analysis**, the data you provided may still be used in collated form in the data analysis reported in the research findings but this will not be identifiable to you as an individual.

OR

You may withdraw from the study at any time but as your data were collected anonymously at the point of data collection, it is not identifiable and therefore cannot be withdrawn. Therefore the data you provided may still be used in collated form in the data analysis reported in the research findings but this will not be identifiable to you as an individual.

If you are a student, colleague, patient or in any other way have a dependent relationship with the researcher and you wish to withdraw from this study, you can be assured that this will not adversely affect the relationship in any way.

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation, please raise this with

Name:

The Research Supervisor

If you have any concerns or complaints about this study or the conduct of individuals conducting this study, then please contact Mr Huw Roberts, College Manager, College of Human Sciences, Bangor University, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2AS, telephone +44 (0) 1248 38 3136 or e-mail huw.roberts@bangor.ac.uk

If you feel that you need support after participating in this study, you should contact your Medical Practitioner or other appropriate person who is able to guide you towards suitable support agencies.

Appendix H**Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the type of the school**

Dependent Variable	What is the type of the school you are working in?	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.
Limited experience in teaching English	International school	3.000	.499	.109
	Private school	2.938	.394	
	Public school	2.000	.322	
Lack of qualified teachers	International school	1.600	.487	.037
	Private school	3.188	.385	
	Public school	2.250	.314	
Limited teacher training.	International school	8.700	.339	.733
	Private school	9.000	.268	
	Public school	9.000	.219	
Difficulty in creating an engaging classroom environment.	International school	8.800	.266	.298
	Private school	9.250	.210	
	Public school	8.875	.172	
Lack of motivation to teach English.	International school	1.800	.321	.181
	Private school	1.938	.254	
	Public school	2.417	.207	
Limited cultural competence.	International school	2.700	.382	.335
	Private school	2.000	.302	
	Public school	2.125	.247	
Inadequate planning of the classes.	International school	2.300	.276	.835
	Private school	2.250	.218	
	Public school	2.125	.178	
Impaired communication skills.	International school	8.900	.280	.889
	Private school	9.063	.221	
	Public school	8.958	.181	
Poor classroom management skills.	International school	1.600	.244	.107
	Private school	2.250	.193	
	Public school	1.875	.158	
Limited ability in using technology.	International school	9.300	.249	.104
	Private school	9.500	.197	
	Public school	8.958	.161	
Limited use of interactive teaching methods (e.g., discussion-based learning, collaborative learning, game-based learning, flipped classrooms, problem-based learning, role-playing, or interactive technology).	International school	8.800	.513	.468
	Private school	9.375	.406	
	Public school	8.750	.331	
Lack of training in immersive learning.	International school	9.500	.296	.224
	Private school	8.875	.234	
	Public school	8.958	.191	
Disruptive Behaviors in the Classroom	International school	9.200	.481	.202
	Private school	8.188	.380	
	Public school	8.250	.310	
Limited cooperation among students.	International school	8.800	.449	.383
	Private school	8.750	.355	
	Public school	8.208	.290	
Lack of student motivation.	International school	9.100	.370	.096
	Private school	8.500	.292	
	Public school	9.333	.239	
Disinterest in English among students.	International school	6.600	.595	.121
	Private school	7.563	.470	
	Public school	8.083	.384	
Limited students' ability to use technology in learning English among students.	International school	8.500	.275	.063
	Private school	8.625	.218	
	Public school	9.167	.178	
Students have limited access to technology	International school	9.000	.483	.320
	Private school	8.188	.382	
	Public school	8.833	.312	
Limited English proficiency among students.	International school	8.000	.481	.453

	Private school	7.938	.380	
	Public school	7.417	.311	
Cultural differences among students limit cooperation.	International school	9.300	.350	.588
	Private school	9.062	.277	
	Public school	8.875	.226	
Limited student attention span.	International school	1.400	.238	.085
	Private school	2.063	.188	
	Public school	1.667	.154	
Learning disabilities.	International school	3.200	.558	.182
	Private school	2.000	.441	
	Public school	2.875	.360	
Lack of student attention.	International school	1.800	.613	.085
	Private school	2.438	.485	
	Public school	2.667	.396	
Large class size.	International school	9.100	.477	.399
	Private school	9.000	.377	
	Public school	8.458	.308	
Limited classroom space.	International school	1.800	.509	.159
	Private school	3.063	.403	
	Public school	2.667	.329	
Non-functioning or outdated computers.	International school	8.300	.465	.260
	Private school	8.313	.367	
	Public school	9.000	.300	
Slow internet connections at the school.	International school	8.200	.470	.371
	Private school	8.188	.372	
	Public school	8.792	.304	
Limited classroom resources (e.g., limited workbooks, textbooks, and other educational materials).	International school	7.600	.491	.226
	Private school	8.313	.388	
	Public school	8.625	.317	
Classroom distractions (noise from outside the classroom).	International school	2.200	.512	.241
	Private school	2.375	.405	
	Public school	3.083	.330	
Malfunctioning air conditioners, leading to inappropriate temperature and humidity.	International school	9.200	.331	.773
	Private school	9.000	.262	
	Public school	8.917	.214	
Poor lighting	International school	1.800	.264	.321
	Private school	1.688	.209	
	Public school	2.083	.171	
Lack of comfortable seats.	International school	1.700	.251	.084
	Private school	2.375	.199	
	Public school	1.917	.162	
Lack of technical support to use technology.	International school	9.100	.289	.738
	Private school	8.938	.228	
	Public school	9.167	.186	
Irrelevant curriculum	International school	9.000	.308	.943
	Private school	9.125	.244	
	Public school	9.042	.199	
Outdated curriculum	International school	8.900	.293	.381
	Private school	8.375	.232	
	Public school	8.583	.189	
Overcrowded curriculum	International school	8.900	.205	.826
	Private school	9.063	.162	
	Public school	9.000	.133	
Limited flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the interests and needs of students	International school	9.000	.272	.544
	Private school	8.625	.215	
	Public school	8.708	.175	
Dull curriculum or un-engaging content	International school	9.000	.202	.786
	Private school	8.875	.159	
	Public school	8.833	.130	

Appendix I

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for gender

Dependent Variable	What is your gender	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.
Limited experience in teaching English	Female	2.444	.315	.796
	Male	2.565	.341	
Lack of qualified teachers	Female	2.296	.313	.563
	Male	2.565	.340	
Limited teacher training.	Female	9.074	.204	.337
	Male	8.783	.221	
Difficulty in creating an engaging classroom environment.	Female	9.222	.156	.026
	Male	8.696	.169	
Lack of motivation to teach English.	Female	2.037	.199	.450
	Male	2.261	.216	
Limited cultural competence.	Female	2.333	.234	.405
	Male	2.043	.254	
Inadequate planning of the classes.	Female	2.259	.166	.601
	Male	2.130	.180	
Impaired communication skills.	Female	9.000	.169	.862
	Male	8.957	.183	
Poor classroom management skills.	Female	2.000	.154	.568
	Male	1.870	.167	
Limited ability in using technology.	Female	9.333	.155	.210
	Male	9.043	.167	
Limited use of interactive teaching methods (e.g., discussion-based learning, collaborative learning, game-based learning, flipped classrooms, problem-based learning, role-playing, or interactive technology).	Female	9.111	.313	.479
	Male	8.783	.339	
Lack of training in immersive learning.	Female	8.889	.181	.225
	Male	9.217	.196	
Disruptive Behaviors in the Classroom	Female	8.259	.297	.430
	Male	8.609	.322	
Limited cooperation among students.	Female	8.630	.274	.489
	Male	8.348	.297	
Lack of student motivation.	Female	8.741	.226	.075
	Male	9.348	.245	
Disinterest in English among students.	Female	7.259	.367	.153
	Male	8.043	.397	
Limited students' ability to use technology in learning English among students.	Female	8.741	.174	.317
	Male	9.000	.188	
Students have limited access to technology	Female	8.407	.293	.210
	Male	8.957	.318	
Limited English proficiency among students.	Female	7.926	.291	.257
	Male	7.435	.315	
Cultural differences among students limit cooperation.	Female	8.963	.213	.695
	Male	9.087	.231	
Limited student attention span.	Female	1.815	.150	.467
	Male	1.652	.163	
Learning disabilities.	Female	2.815	.347	.513
	Male	2.478	.376	
Lack of student attention.	Female	2.593	.373	.499
	Male	2.217	.404	
Large class size.	Female	8.852	.292	.645
	Male	8.652	.317	
Limited classroom space.	Female	2.667	.319	.830
	Male	2.565	.345	
Non-functioning or outdated computers.	Female	8.889	.283	.201
	Male	8.348	.307	
Slow internet connections at the school.	Female	8.259	.285	.260
	Male	8.739	.309	
Limited classroom resources (e.g., limited workbooks,	Female	8.370	.305	.809
	Male			

textbooks, and other educational materials).	Male	8.261	.331	
Classroom distractions (noise from outside the classroom).	Female	2.333	.309	.105
	Male	3.087	.335	
Malfunctioning air conditioners, leading to inappropriate temperature and humidity.	Female	8.926	.200	.587
	Male	9.087	.216	
Poor lighting	Female	1.741	.160	.148
	Male	2.087	.173	
Lack of comfortable seats.	Female	1.963	.159	.599
	Male	2.087	.172	
Lack of technical support to use technology.	Female	9.037	.175	.719
	Male	9.130	.189	
Irrelevant curriculum	Female	9.148	.185	.486
	Male	8.957	.200	
Outdated curriculum	Female	8.630	.180	.686
	Male	8.522	.195	
Overcrowded curriculum	Female	9.037	.124	.662
	Male	8.957	.134	
Limited flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the interests and needs of students	Female	8.630	.164	.326
	Male	8.870	.178	
Dull curriculum or un-engaging content	Female	9.111	.112	.004
	Male	8.609	.121	

Appendix J

Correlational analysis

	How many years of experience do you have in teaching English	
Limited experience in teaching English	Pearson Correlation	.219
	Sig.	.127
Lack of qualified teachers	Pearson Correlation	-.188
	Sig.	.192
Limited teacher training	Pearson Correlation	.216
	Sig.	.131
Difficulty in creating an engaging classroom environment	Pearson Correlation	.003
	Sig.	.986
Lack of motivation to teach English	Pearson Correlation	-.079
	Sig.	.586
Limited cultural competence	Pearson Correlation	.042
	Sig.	.774
Inadequate planning of the classes	Pearson Correlation	.066
	Sig.	.649
Impaired communication skills	Pearson Correlation	-.302
	Sig.	.033
Poor classroom management skills	Pearson Correlation	.001
	Sig.	.997
Limited ability in using technology	Pearson Correlation	.181
	Sig.	.207
Limited use of interactive teaching methods (e.g., discussion-based learning, collaborative learning, game-based learning, flipped classrooms, problem-based learning, role-playing, or interactive technology).	Pearson Correlation	.192
	Sig.	.181
Lack of training in immersive learning	Pearson Correlation	-.068
	Sig.	.639
Disruptive Behaviours in the classroom	Pearson Correlation	-.201
	Sig.	.161
Limited cooperation among students	Pearson Correlation	.676
	Sig.	.061
Lack of student motivation	Pearson Correlation	.203
	Sig.	.158
Disinterest in English among students	Pearson Correlation	.174
	Sig.	.226

Limited students' ability to use technology in learning English among students.	Pearson Correlation	-.229
	Sig.	.109
Students have limited access to technology	Pearson Correlation	-.086
	Sig.	.554
Limited English proficiency among students.	Pearson Correlation	.327
	Sig.	.021
Cultural differences among students limit cooperation	Pearson Correlation	.266
	Sig.	.062
Limited student attention span	Pearson Correlation	.098
	Sig.	.498
Learning disabilities	Pearson Correlation	.098
	Sig.	.500
Lack of student attention	Pearson Correlation	.157
	Sig.	.276
Large class size	Pearson Correlation	-.042
	Sig.	.773
Limited classroom space	Pearson Correlation	-.048
	Sig.	.740
Non-functioning or outdated computers.	Pearson Correlation	.152
	Sig.	.292
Slow internet connections at the school	Pearson Correlation	.211
	Sig.	.141
Limited classroom resources (e.g., limited workbooks, textbooks, and other educational materials).	Pearson Correlation	-.034
	Sig.	.817
Classroom distractions (noise from outside the classroom)	Pearson Correlation	-.133
	Sig.	.356
Malfunctioning air conditions, leading to inappropriate temperature and humidity	Pearson Correlation	.157
	Sig.	.275
Poor lighting	Pearson Correlation	-.238
	Sig.	.096
Lack of comfortable seats	Pearson Correlation	.173
	Sig.	.229
Lack of technical support to use technology	Pearson Correlation	.164
	Sig.	.255
Irrelevant curriculum	Pearson Correlation	.188
	Sig.	.191
Lack of technical support to use technology	Pearson Correlation	.164
	Sig.	.255
Irrelevant curriculum	Pearson Correlation	.188
	Sig.	.191
Outdated curriculum	Pearson Correlation	-.158
	Sig.	.272
Overcrowded curriculum	Pearson Correlation	-.038
	Sig.	.795
Limited flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the interests and needs of students	Pearson Correlation	-.185
	Sig.	.197
Dull curriculum or un-engaging content	Pearson Correlation	.164
	Sig.	.254

Appendix K

Ranking of the different barriers

Ranking	Barrier	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
1	Limited ability in using technology (Teacher-related challenges)	9.20	.808
2	Lack of technical support to use technology (Classroom- and school-related challenges)	9.08	.900
3	Irrelevant curriculum (Curriculum-related challenges)	9.06	.956
4	Lack of training in immersive learning. (Teacher-related challenges)	9.04	.947
5	Lack of student motivation. (Student-related challenges)	9.02	1.204
6	Cultural differences among students limit cooperation. (Student-related challenges)	9.02	1.097
7	Overcrowded curriculum (Curriculum-related challenges)	9.00	.639
8	Malfunctioning air conditioners, lead to inappropriate temperature and humidity. (Classroom- and school-related challenges)	9.00	1.030
9	Difficulty in creating an engaging classroom environment. (Teacher-related challenges)	8.98	.845
10	Impaired communication skills. (Teacher-related challenges)	8.98	.869
11	Limited use of interactive teaching methods (e.g., discussion-based learning, collaborative learning, game-based learning, flipped classrooms, problem-based learning, role-playing, or interactive technology). (Teacher-related challenges)	8.96	1.616
12	Limited teacher training. (Teacher-related challenges)	8.94	1.058
13	Dull curriculum or un-engaging content (Curriculum-related challenges)	8.88	.627
14	Limited students' ability to use technology in learning English among students. (Student-related challenges)	8.86	.904
15	Large class size. (Classroom- and school-related challenges)	8.76	1.506
16	Limited flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the interests and needs of students (Curriculum-related challenges)	8.74	.853
17	Students have limited access to technology (Student-related challenges)	8.66	1.533
18	Non-functioning or outdated computers. (Classroom- and school-related challenges)	8.64	1.481
19	Outdated curriculum (Curriculum-related challenges)	8.58	.928
20	Limited cooperation among students. (Student-related challenges)	8.50	1.418
21	Slow internet connections at the school. (Classroom- and school-related challenges)	8.48	1.488
22	Disruptive Behaviors in the Classroom (Student-related challenges)	8.42	1.540
23	Limited classroom resources (e.g., limited workbooks, textbooks, and other educational materials). (Classroom- and school-related challenges)	8.32	1.571
24	Limited English proficiency among students. (Student-related challenges)	7.70	1.515
25	Disinterest in English among students. (Student-related challenges)	7.62	1.926
26	Classroom distractions (noise from outside the classroom). (Classroom- and school-related challenges)	2.68	1.634
27	Learning disabilities. (Student-related challenges)	2.66	1.791
28	Limited classroom space. (Classroom- and school-related challenges)	2.62	1.640
29	Lack of student attention. (Student-related challenges)	2.42	1.928
30	Limited experience in teaching English (Teacher-related challenges)	2.50	1.619
31	Lack of qualified teachers (Teacher-related challenges)	2.42	1.617
32	Limited cultural competence. (Teacher-related challenges)	2.20	1.212
33	Inadequate planning of the classes. (Teacher-related challenges)	2.20	.857
34	Lack of motivation to teach English. (Teacher-related challenges)	2.14	1.030
35	Lack of comfortable seats. (Classroom- and school-related challenges)	2.02	.820
36	Poor classroom management skills. (Teacher-related challenges)	1.94	.793
37	Poor lighting (Classroom- and school-related challenges)	1.90	.839
38	Limited student attention span. (Student-related challenges)	1.74	.777

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