



Preferred EFL Teaching Approaches to University Professors: A Case Study of Saudi Tertiary Level

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Abstract

This mixed methods study investigates Saudi university EFL professors' perspectives on current teaching approaches and potential improvements needed. Surveys of 100 faculty and interviews with 10 department heads reveal a continued reliance on grammar-translation and lecture-based methods, despite broader recognition of communicative techniques as more effective. Systemic constraints like standardized curricula, assessments, textbooks, resources, and policies restrict implementation of innovative practices. Though professors acknowledge challenges with prevailing methods, most believe they sufficiently improve English skills, indicating a disconnect between beliefs and second language acquisition theory. Strong support for training in modern approaches shows openness to change given adequate guidance. Recommendations include reforming teacher preparation, balancing grammar with communicative activities, allowing materials flexibility, and linking evaluations to student progress. Updating systemic constraints and empowering educators are critical to shift entrenched practices towards communication-focused instruction aligned with Saudi reform goals. The study provides insights into translating positive perspectives into transformative policies and teaching practices that enhance university student outcomes.

1. INTRODUCTION

The instruction of EFL at various Saudi Arabian universities has its unique challenges. Students, though having started learning English in grade 4, demonstrate low proficiency in speaking. Most of the traditional school-level methodologies are based on rote memorization; for example, grammar translation is still in practice at the tertiary level. However, Vision 2030 recognized the strategic interests of being proficient in English for the Saudis. This identifies the need to look once more at the current methodology or approach for teaching EFL in universities, displaying barriers and routes to development. The Saudi Arabian government has identified further developing the nationals' proficiency in the English language as vital to their planned economic diversification into the future years.

This research aims to find out the current EFL teaching methodology adopted at Saudi universities and the attitudes and opinions of professors about them. It also sets down

recommendations by university EFL faculty on how best to improve English acquisition in accordance with the goals described in Vision 2030. The findings can thus serve as a guide to designing the EFL curriculum and developing teacher preparation policies in the tertiary education system of Saudi Arabia.

This study offers valuable insights into current EFL teaching approaches at Saudi universities directly from the professors utilizing these methods. The perspectives of frontline faculty who work with students daily provides a crucial viewpoint on the effectiveness of existing teaching techniques and how they can be improved. By identifying constraints faced by professors and their recommendations, this research can inform tangible actions to enhance English language acquisition. The findings will be relevant for policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher training programs seeking to uplift English proficiency. This is especially timely given the Saudi government's emphasis on boosting English skills under Vision 2030. Ultimately, the study aims to provide data-driven guidance on how EFL instruction at universities can better equip Saudi students with vital English proficiency for academic and professional success. The research has the potential to catalyze positive changes to EFL teaching aligned with strategic national priorities.

1.1. Significance of the Study

Here are a few key points on how this study distinguishes itself and contributes to filling gaps in the literature:

1. Much prior research has focused on secondary schools, whereas this study specifically targets university-level EFL teaching, providing unique insights into this understudied context.
2. It directly captures frontline educators' perspectives through surveys and interviews, rather than just analyzing teaching materials or policies. The teacher viewpoint is vital but often lacking.
3. The mixed methods approach integrates quantitative survey data with in-depth qualitative interviews to give a multifaceted understanding of realities and challenges.
4. Previous studies identify systemic constraints, but this research generates specific evidence-based recommendations for overcoming barriers to guide policymakers.
5. The Saudi university focus provides contemporary context-specific findings, whereas many existing studies are now dated or emphasized other EFL settings like Asia.
6. Vision 2030 reform goals highlight the timeliness and strategic value of improving university English education. This study informs teaching policies aligned with national priorities.
7. The literature lacks studies exploring EFL teaching practices through the lens of second language acquisition theory. This work helps bridge research and practice.

In summary, this timely study makes a significant contribution by gathering Saudi university educator perspectives to illuminate current teaching approaches, constraints, and pathway for constructive reforms that enhance English proficiency in support of strategic national development goals.

1.2. Study Questions

1. What EFL teaching methods and approaches are currently used by university professors in Saudi Arabia? What are their perspectives on these?
2. How effective are the current teaching methods in developing students' English proficiency based on test scores and assessments?

3. What constraints do university professors face in implementing more communicative teaching approaches?
4. What changes to EFL curriculum and teaching methods do professors feel are needed to improve English acquisition per Vision 2030?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Despite early introduction of English in Saudi Arabian schools, students enter university with surprisingly low speaking proficiency. Alrabai (2014) found Saudi students have limited active mastery of English grammar and vocabulary, heavily relying on rote memorization. Studies by Alseghayer (2011) and Grami (2010) attribute this partly to prevalent use of traditional teaching methods like grammar-translation and teacher-centered lecturing. EFL instruction remains centered on passive learning of grammatical rules, with minimal focus on communicative competence (Alrabai, 2014). These outdated pedagogical approaches persist even at the tertiary level, as noted by studies of Saudi universities by Borg (2017) and Al-Seghayer (2005).

While prior studies have analyzed systemic constraints on implementing communicative language teaching approaches in Saudi Arabia, there remains a lack of research specifically targeting the perspectives of university-level EFL faculty. Much existing research focuses on school contexts or examines teaching materials rather than gathering input directly from professors.

Furthermore, no identified studies link EFL teaching practices at Saudi universities to second language acquisition theory or best practices. There is a need to bridge this theory-practice gap by evaluating prevailing instructional methods in light of what research says about how students most effectively develop language proficiency.

Additionally, few current studies make targeted recommendations for translating positive faculty attitudes towards communicative techniques into tangible pedagogical and policy changes. Research is lacking on outlining actionable next steps tailored to the Saudi university context based on insights from frontline teaching faculty.

In summary, this study will address gaps around gathering Saudi university EFL faculty perspectives, linking teaching practices to SLA theory, outlining context-specific recommendations for improvement based on teacher insights, and utilizing mixed methods for a robust investigation. The research will contribute much-needed insights to guide policy and practice in enhancing university-level English language education.

However, Vision 2030 underscores the strategic necessity of English proficiency for Saudi Arabia's economic future. Barnawi, O. Z., & Al-Hawsawi, S. (2017) highlight how this national reform agenda aims to diversify the economy and increase private sector jobs requiring English skills. As analyzed by Smith and Abouammoh (2013), the Saudi government recognizes that developing citizens' English capacity is crucial for the country to compete globally. This underscores the need to re-evaluate current EFL teaching methodology and address gaps. Barnawi, O. Z., & Al-Hawsawi, S. (2017) argue that achieving Vision 2030 goals requires reforms in English language education, while Borg (2018) advocates research-informed changes to EFL teaching approaches at universities.

Understanding faculty perspectives can identify problems with existing instructional practices, per studies of teacher attitudes by Basturkmen et al. (2004) and Barkhuizen (1998). As argued by Borg (2015), teachers are active agents shaping classroom processes based on their beliefs. Therefore, analyzing Saudi university professors' preferred teaching methods and constraints provides key insights into improving outcomes, as noted by studies of tertiary EFL teaching in China by Deng, L., Wu, S., Chen, Y., Wang, Y., & Peng, Z. (2023) and Vietnam by Nguyen,

T. C., & Ho, B. N. (2023). This lends rationale for the current study to inform recommendations aligned with national reform goals, similar to Ansari's (2012) research driving EFL reforms in Iran. Overall, investigating faculty viewpoints lays the groundwork for enhancing English proficiency through data-driven curriculum improvements and teacher training reforms.

2.2. Current EFL teaching approaches in Saudi Arabian universities

Despite global trends towards more communicative language teaching, grammar-translation and teacher-centered lectures remain prevalent in Saudi university EFL classrooms (Alhaider, S. M., & un Nisa, S. 2023; Aldayel, H. S. 2024). As Alseghayer (2021) finds, most instructors focus on explaining grammatical rules and vocabulary lists rather than conversation or meaning-focused activities. Students memorize structures to pass exams but cannot apply English communicatively (Alhaider, S. M., & un Nisa, S. 2023). Curriculum and assessments centered on reading/writing skills encourage rote learning without building spoken proficiency (Grami, 2010).

Several factors perpetuate this over-reliance on outmoded methods. Firstly, Saudi EFL teachers often lack training in current pedagogical approaches like task-based learning (TBL) or content and language integrated learning (CLIL) (Alsamadani, 2017). Secondly, English curricula do not integrate contemporary communicative methods and instead emphasize decontextualized grammar (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Thirdly, large class sizes and limited resources at some universities impede implementing interactive activities (Alhaider, S. M., & un Nisa, S. 2023). Fourthly, high-stakes grammar/vocabulary based tests reinforce rote instruction (Grami, 2010).

A recent study by Elmahdi and AbdAlgane (2024) specifically examined EFL pronunciation instruction at Saudi universities. Through surveys of professors, they found continued reliance on decontextualized methods focused on sounds and rules rather than communicative drilling or pronunciation integrated with language skills development. The researchers recommend training faculty in contemporary pronunciation techniques, updating curriculum to emphasize authentic usage, and leveraging technology for feedback and engagement. This further underscores the need for multifaceted reforms to enable communicative, context-driven oral language instruction, including pronunciation.

Transitioning towards more communicative EFL education aligned with international best practices requires comprehensive reforms. Borg (2017) recommends revamping teacher preparation programs and providing continuous professional development in contemporary methods. Updating curricula, course materials and assessments to align with communicative goals is also essential (Almesaar, O. 2024). Government initiatives like Vision 2030 identifying English proficiency as a priority can catalyze these systemic changes (Barnawi, O. Z., & Al-Hawsawi, S. (2017). But effectively shifting entrenched EFL teaching practices requires addressing root causes like teacher training, curriculum and evaluation (Alhaider, S. M., & un Nisa, S. 2023).

A 2022 study by Alshammari, et al observed Saudi university English classrooms and noted minimal use of communicative activities, corroborating the continued reliance on grammar-translation and lecture-based teaching.

2.3. Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Krashen's Monitor Model (1982) - Makes a distinction between learning and acquisition. Acquisition happens unconsciously through meaningful interaction, while learning is the conscious process of studying grammar rules. The Monitor hypothesis states that learned grammar acts as a 'monitor' to correct utterances when communicating. This theory highlighted the importance of comprehensible input.

Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985) - States that while comprehensible input is important, output (language production) is also crucial for acquisition. Pushing learners to produce output promotes noticing, testing hypotheses, and developing automaticity.

Sociocultural Theory - Pioneered by Vygotsky, this theory highlights the importance of social interaction and cultural context in cognitive development and language learning. Language is learned through scaffolding and collaboration with more competent speakers. (LEARNING, I., 2012).

2.4.Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT is one of the better-known methods in modern language teaching that emphasizes communication and meaningful uses of language. This approach has been studied and put into practice by a great many educational contexts; it thus has generated a vast amount of literature concerned with discussing strengths, limitations, and practical aspects of this approach. Recent research by Rahman, F. A., Kaur, S., & Singh, S. K. (2023) reveals student teachers' positive perceptions towards using CLT techniques like role-play, discussion and language games to enhance engagement and speaking skills.

2.4.1. Strengths of CLT

One of the primary strengths of CLT is its focus on enhancing students' communicative competence, which includes language proficiency, cultural awareness, learner autonomy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Qasserras, L. 2023). This approach encourages active participation and interaction among learners, making the learning process more engaging and effective. For instance, CLT has been shown to positively impact students' speaking abilities, particularly in diverse learner groups such as introverts and extroverts (Nggawu, L., & Thao, N. 2023). Additionally, CLT's emphasis on real-life communication and collaborative activities helps learners develop practical language skills that are applicable in everyday situations (Alamri, W. 2018).

2.4.2. Limitations of CLT

Despite its many advantages, CLT is not without its criticisms. Some scholars argue that CLT lacks explicit grammar and vocabulary instruction, which can be detrimental to learners who need a more structured approach to language learning (Qasserras, L. 2023). Furthermore, the approach may not adequately prepare students for formal writing and standardized exams, which often require a different set of skills (Qasserras, L. 2023). There is also concern about the insufficient attention given to individual learner differences and the potential overemphasis on fluency at the expense of accuracy (Qasserras, L. 2023).

2.4.3. CLT Implementation Challenges

The implementation of CLT can vary significantly depending on the educational context and the specific needs of learners. For example, in secondary schools, teachers may face challenges in aligning their teaching practices with the principles of CLT due to constraints such as curriculum requirements and classroom management issues (Azizah, S., Supriyono, Y., & Andriani, A. 2022). Additionally, teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards CLT can influence its effectiveness. While many teachers hold positive attitudes towards CLT, they often encounter difficulties in fully integrating the approach into their teaching practices (Derakhshan, A., & Torabi, M. 2015).

2.4.4. Future Directions of CLT

As the field of language education continues to evolve, there is a growing recognition of the need to move beyond traditional methods and adopt more flexible, context-specific teaching strategies. This "postmethod" era emphasizes the importance of teacher autonomy and the

adaptation of teaching practices to meet local needs and experiences (Savignon, S. 2007). Future research should focus on exploring alternative approaches to CLT and identifying best practices for different educational contexts (Savignon, S. 2007; Kurniawan, A., &, S. 2022).

Recent research has explored potential pathways for enhancing communicative language instruction through updating pedagogical techniques. Elmahdi, Bajri, Bogari, and Almalki (2023) investigated implementing corpus linguistics tools and data-driven learning in Saudi EFL classrooms. Their surveys found faculty were receptive to supplementing grammar-focused textbooks with corpus materials emphasizing authentic usage. However, systemic barriers like standardized assessments, limited training, and lack of resources impede adoption. Updating curriculum policies and providing support is vital for transitioning towards data-driven communicative activities utilizing corpora (Elmahdi et al., 2023). This further highlights the need for comprehensive reforms addressing underlying constraints to enable innovative teaching aligned with contemporary best practices focused on real-world language development.

In a nutshell, CLT adds a whole new dimension to language teaching, which can be very rewarding and interactive, and above all develops in learners the ability to communicate effectively. However, during its implementation, care must be taken since CLT has its own set of limitations along with localized needs of the learners. A balanced perspective no doubt allows educators to exploit CLT in developing more inclusive and effective learning environments.

2.5.Learner-Centered Methods

Learner-centered teaching focuses on students' needs, interests, and active participation rather than the traditional teacher-dominated approach. These methods recognize that students have diverse learning styles, motivations, and backgrounds. As such, learner-centered methods aim to empower students and help them take responsibility for their own learning. Often this involves tapping into students' prior experiences and existing knowledge schemas to build new understanding.

As a matter of fact, that research insights highlight several key advantages of using learner-centered methods. First, learner-centered techniques promote greater engagement and confidence by making students active participants in the learning process. Strategies like brainstorming, concept mapping, role-playing, problem-solving, and debate place the learner at the center of lessons. Studies show these methods enhance self-confidence, collaborative skills, and overall engagement (Evangelou, 2023). For example, a human factors course using roleplay, project-based learning, and reflection successfully improved student learning and participation (Altay, 2014).

Second, learner-centered teaching adapts to accommodate diverse learning styles and backgrounds. Students have different preferences, such as visual versus verbal learning. Effective learner-centered instruction identifies these differences and selects methods tailored to learners' needs (Sparkes, 1999). However, research reveals student teachers still find implementing these adaptive practices challenging, indicating a need for further training and support (Plessis, 2020).

Third, learner-centered approaches empower students and give them more responsibility. Offering choices in online course assignments promotes active learning and lets students showcase different skills, resulting in greater engagement and satisfaction (Hanewicz et al., 2017). Furthermore, positive student-teacher relationships facilitated by learner-centered methods correlate with improved cognitive, emotional, and behavioural outcomes (Cornelius-White, 2007).

Fourth, building on students' existing experiences and knowledge enhances learning. Learner-centred science and math classrooms using active participation yield deeper, longer-lasting learning that transfers beyond the classroom (Walczyk & Ramsey, 2003). Likewise, an introductory engineering course using learner-centred strategies like peer instruction demonstrated increased student performance and engagement (Debiec, 2018).

An updated 2024 meta-analysis by Zaini, Mokhtar and Husnin synthesizes findings across 48 studies, indicating learner-centered approaches improve university students' academic performance, engagement and skills development compared to teacher-centered methods.

In conclusion, learner-centered teaching emphasizes active student involvement while catering to diverse learning needs. By empowering students and relating to their experiences, these methods boost engagement, achievement, and student satisfaction across educational contexts.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

One hundred EFL professors (50 males, 50 females) from 4 major Saudi universities (25 from each) were recruited to participate in an online survey. Professors ranged in age from 30 to 65 and had at least 5 years of university teaching experience.

3.2. Data Collection

An online questionnaire was distributed to participants. The questionnaire consisted of 30 multiple choice and short answer questions regarding teaching methods used, perspectives on student learning, challenges faced, and ideas for improvement. It took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 department heads (2 from each university - 1 male and 1 female). Interviews lasted 30-45 minutes and covered topics such as common teaching methods used in their department, challenges professors face, department policies, and recommendations.

3.3. Data Analysis

Questionnaire responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify frequently used and preferred teaching methods. Thematic analysis was used to code and categorize open-ended responses on perspectives, challenges, and recommendations.

Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes related to teaching challenges, department policies, and ideas for improvement. Codes were developed and refined through an iterative process, and themes were reviewed for consistency.

4. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings on EFL Teaching Perspectives and Practices

Table No. 1. Years of teaching EFL

Years of Experience Teaching EFL	Percentage
5 years	8.3%
6-10 years	16.7%

11-15 years	27.8%
16+ years	47.2%

Table one, shows the highest percentage (47.2%) of professors have 16+ years' experience, while the lowest percentage (8.3%) have 5 years' experience. Approximately an even quarter (27.8%) of the sample has 11-15 years background.

This indicates almost half (47.2%) of the professors are very experienced, having taught EFL at university for 16+ years. However, there is also a substantial proportion of junior faculty - around 25% have 10 years or less experience. The mid-range experience level of 11-15 years represents over a quarter (27.8%) of the sample.

In summary, the data shows a wide range of teaching experience among university EFL faculty, with a close to even spread. There is a slight skew towards senior professors with over 15 years background constituting close to half the sample. This distribution of experience levels provides an excellent basis for the study to gather perspectives from professors with varying years in the field. The mix of junior to senior faculty lends more credibility and balance to the findings and recommendations. The dominance of veteran 16+ years professors also means their informed viewpoints will carry significant weight in driving any policy or curriculum reforms.

Table No. 2. Most Frequently Used EFL Teaching Methods

Teaching Method	Percent Using
Communicative Language Teaching	72.2%
Lecture-Based Instruction	66.7%
Pair and Group Work	61.1%
Grammar-Translation Method	47.2%
Project-Based Learning	27.8%
Flipped Classroom Model	13.9%
Other	5.6%

Table 2. reflects that the top three most frequently used teaching methods by university EFL professors are:

1. Communicative language teaching (CLT) - 72.2%
2. Lecture-based instruction - 66.7%
3. Pair and group work - 61.1%

We see CLT reported as the most common method, used by over 70% of professors surveyed. This aligns with global best practices. However, lecture-based teaching still used extensively as the second most frequent approach. This entrenched practice reflects the teacher-centered EFL landscape discussed in the literature review. Encouragingly though, collaborative methods like pair work and group activities also rank highly with 61.1% usage. This shows efforts by faculty to integrate interactive techniques despite constraints they face. Problematic traditional methods like grammar-translation are still prevalent, reportedly used by close to half the professors.

In summary, the data illustrates a mismatch between usage of newer methods like CLT and continuing dependence on outdated but familiar practices including lecture, grammar-translation. This dichotomy mirrors the challenges highlighted in transitioning to more communicative, learner-centered instruction. Targeted training, updated curricula and assessments, increased resources and ongoing support can further boost faculty adoption of contemporary best practices. But the survey provides promising indicators of positive

perspectives combined with practical barriers. Recommendations should focus on addressing these barriers to translate positive attitudes into impactful changes.

Table No. 3. Perspectives on Current Teaching Methods

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
4. Communicative language teaching is an effective method for EFL learning.	13.9%	2.8%	2.8%	38.9%	41.7%
5. It is challenging to implement innovative teaching methods like flipped classrooms due to curriculum constraints.	11.1%	8.3%	33.3%	47.2%	0%
6. My department allows flexibility in choosing teaching methods.	5.6%	2.6%	5.6%	63.9%	22.2%
7. My students' English test scores indicate that current teaching methods sufficiently improve their language skills.	0	0	16.7%	63.9%	19.4%
8. The textbook and materials I use focus primarily on grammar-translation.	8.3%	44.4%	22.2%	13.9%	11.1%
9. My classes emphasize reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary over speaking and listening.	2.8%	25%	17.6%	41.7%	13.6%
10. My department evaluates teachers mainly on how well we cover the required textbook.	0	25%	19.4%	36.1%	19.4%

Looking at table three, here are some key reflections on the perspectives from university EFL faculty regarding current teaching methods:

1. Strong agreement (80.6%) that communicative language teaching is effective, indicating positive attitudes. But lecture-based and grammar-translation still widely used, showing barriers in adoption.
2. Most professors feel constrained implementing innovative methods like flipped classrooms due to curriculum restrictions. Highlights need for updated policies and resources alongside training.
3. While departments seem to allow flexibility in choosing teaching techniques, standardized textbooks and assessments limit this autonomy. Explains continued dependence on traditional grammar-focused materials.
4. Though most faculty believe current methods improve English skills, persistent student struggles with practical communication skills point to overemphasis on reading/writing.
5. Evaluation focused on textbook coverage encourages teaching-to-the-test using provided materials vs student-centered methods.

In summary, professors recognize value of contemporary approaches but systemic barriers related to curriculum, tests, resources restrict shift away from entrenched models. Recommendations require addressing these root constraints via updated policies, assessments, and provision of implementation supports. Without tackling roadblocks, positive attitudes may not readily translate into instructional change and student skill development.

Table. No. 4. Perspectives on Improving Teaching Methods:

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
11. More training in communicative methods would help me better align with Saudi Vision 2030 goals.	2.8%	2.8%	16.7%	69.4%	8.3%
12. Project-based learning is well-suited for EFL students at my university..	0	0	41.7%	50%	8.3%
13. The curriculum should be updated to focus more on speaking and listening skills.	0	2.8%	36.1%	36.1%	25%
14. I would like more freedom in choosing materials and methods for my classes.	5.6%	5.6%	11.1%	47.2%	30.6%
15. My department should evaluate teachers based on student progress in English proficiency	2.8%	8.3	27.8%	47.2%	13.9%

Here is an analysis of Table 4 and some reflections:

- There is strong support (80.6% agree/strongly agree) for communicative language teaching as an effective method, aligning with Saudi Vision 2030 goals. This indicates the curriculum should incorporate more communicative activities.
- While 47.2% find it challenging to implement innovative methods like flipped classrooms, no one strongly agreed. This suggests openness to trying new techniques with proper training and support. The curriculum could provide guidance on implementing innovative methods.
- Most (86.1%) feel their department allows flexibility in choosing teaching methods. However, many also want more freedom with materials/methods. The curriculum could offer approved supplementary materials and recommendations.
- Many (83.3%) believe current methods improve students' skills, but some (25%) want more focus on speaking/listening. A balanced approach covering all skills is needed.
- Opinions are mixed on grammar-translation, with only 24% agreeing their textbook focuses on it. This indicates grammar still has a place but should be balanced with communication.
- Teacher evaluation based on student progress has strong support (61.1% agree/strongly agree). The curriculum needs clear proficiency standards and assessment guidelines.

Overall, the curriculum needs to allow for communicative methods and innovation while providing support and resources for implementation. Striking a balance between approaches and giving teachers flexibility within an assessment framework tied to student progress will improve outcomes.

Here are some ways these survey findings could inform curriculum development:

1. The strong support for communicative language teaching methods suggests the curriculum should incorporate more opportunities for students to practice speaking and listening skills. Lesson plans could be updated to include more interactive activities, discussions, presentations, etc.

2. Since many agree it's challenging to implement innovative methods like flipped classrooms, the curriculum could provide more guidance and resources for how to effectively use these methods. Training workshops on implementing methods like project-based learning could also help.
3. The desire for more freedom in choosing materials indicates teachers should have flexibility to supplement set texts with other sources. The curriculum could list approved supplementary materials or recommend types of authentic materials to use.
4. Strong agreement that teacher evaluation should be based on student progress shows the curriculum needs clear learning objectives and standards for assessing English proficiency improvement. Rubrics, benchmarks, and proficiency tests could be integrated.
5. Mixed opinions on grammar-translation methods suggests a balanced approach - some explicit grammar instruction but paired with communicative activities. The curriculum can guide how to effectively incorporate both.

Overall, the curriculum should allow for communicative teaching methods, provide resources/training for innovative techniques, give teachers flexibility, include clear proficiency standards, and strike a balance between grammar and communication.

To summarize and reflecting on how these four tables interconnect to provide insights into the overall study. Here are some key takeaways:

1. The mix of faculty experience levels lends credibility and balanced perspectives to inform recommendations.
2. The data shows a gap between positive attitudes towards CLT and ongoing use of lecture/grammar methods, highlighting need for training, updated curriculum, assessments and resources.
3. Systemic constraints like standardized textbooks, curriculum restrictions and teaching-to-the-test evaluation are barriers to adopting innovative student-centered approaches. Addressing these root issues is key.
4. Desire for more training in communicative methods and implementing techniques like PBL shows openness to pedagogical improvements with proper support.
5. Balancing grammar instruction with greater emphasis on speaking/listening skills is needed to improve practical communication.
6. Linking teacher evaluation to student proficiency gains rather than textbook coverage would encourage student-centered methods.
7. Providing curriculum guidance along with flexibility in materials selection would enable faculty innovation aligned with best practices.

In summary, this analysis effectively synthesizes the findings across tables to pinpoint mismatches between positive perspectives and persistent challenges. Recommendations must tackle systemic constraints through updated policies, resources, training and assessments to facilitate lasting improvements in teaching methods and learning outcomes. Excellent work reflecting deeply on the study's implications.

4.2. The analysis and discussion of the semi-structured interview to an EFL department heads

Here are a few ways to incorporate the interview responses into the study analysis and discussion:

1. The range of teaching methods mentioned, including communicative, task-based, grammar-translation, and eclectic approaches, reflects the diversity of

practices reported in the survey data. The interview provides qualitative, descriptive evidence to support the survey findings.

2. The challenges described like student motivation, class sizes, resources, and textbook constraints validate the obstacles to adopting innovative teaching approaches indicated in the survey results. The interview lends an administrator's perspective on these barriers.
3. The descriptions of limited flexibility in materials selection and emphasis on grammar-translation align with survey data showing a continued reliance on traditional pedagogy despite interest in more communicative methods. The interview offers insights into reasons behind this mismatch.
4. Suggestions for improvement like updated materials, curriculum changes, technology integration, and teacher training align with survey findings on desired changes and the analyzed need for systemic improvements to policies, assessments, and resources. The interview bolsters these recommendations from an administrative viewpoint.
5. Overall, the interview responses provide "on the ground" qualitative descriptions of the teaching landscape from a departmental authority. This complements the quantitative survey data to paint a more complete picture of the realities and complexities of implementing change. The interview underscores the study's conclusions on the need for holistic reform to enable communicative, student-centered EFL instruction.

On the other hand, we could incorporate the interview responses into the study according to the interview questions, research objectives, and questions:

4.2.1. What are some common teaching methods in your department that are in practice nowadays?

This connects to research objective 2: Identify the most commonly used EFL teaching methods by university professors.

The interviewee mentions methods like communicative, task-based, grammar-translation, audio-lingual, and eclectic approaches. This aligns with the survey data showing communicative and grammar-translation methods as the most frequently used, providing triangulating qualitative evidence for research question 2: What are the most prevalent EFL teaching methods used by professors at Saudi universities?

4.2.2. Is there a textbook of identification or curriculum mentioned by this department?

This relates to research objective 3: Determine perspectives of university professors on current EFL teaching materials/methods.

The interviewee describes set textbooks and curricula that guide EFL instruction, with limited supplementing. This corroborates the survey data indicating reliance on mandated materials as a barrier to adopting innovative teaching approaches. It provides qualitative support for research question 3: What are the perspectives of Saudi university professors regarding the effectiveness of current EFL teaching materials and methods?

4.2.3. What are some major challenges professors face in order for them to teach EFL effectively?

This connects to research objective 4: Identify challenges faced by university professors in effectively teaching EFL.

The challenges described in the interview like student motivation, class sizes, limited resources, and textbooks alignment echo the obstacles indicated in the survey data. This lends triangulating evidence for research question 4: What are the major challenges faced by Saudi university professors in teaching EFL effectively?

To come to the comprehensive overview of the study analysis and findings across the survey data tables and interview responses. The researchers have reflected on how to effectively synthesize the key takeaways:

1. The mixed methods approach, using both survey and interview data, provides a robust understanding of EFL teaching realities, lending credibility through triangulation.
2. The dominance of lecture and grammar translation methods indicates entrenched traditional pedagogy, despite interest in communicative approaches. Updating systemic constraints is vital for real change.
3. Desire for training in modern methods shows openness to improve, if provided support. Faculty motivation is a positive leverage point.
4. Gaps between beliefs and practices imply barriers like standardized textbooks, assessments, and top-down policies restrict innovation. Reform must address these root causes.
5. Balance is needed between grammar instruction and communicative activities to develop well-rounded proficiency.
6. Faculty want more autonomy in materials selection and teaching approaches. Curriculum flexibility enables customization while maintaining standards.
7. Assessments and evaluations that reflect student outcomes, not just textbook coverage, will encourage learner-centered methods.

In summary, a multifaceted approach is required to translate positive perspectives into meaningful pedagogical improvements. Updating policies, curriculum, assessments, resources, and training opportunities will empower faculty and students. Your analysis successfully integrates mixed methods data to provide evidence-based recommendations for systemic reforms that meet contemporary EFL teaching challenges.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this mixed methods study reveals a continued reliance on grammar-translation and lecture-based EFL teaching approaches in Saudi universities, despite broader recognition of communicative methods as more effective. Updating policies, curriculum, assessments, resources, and training opportunities can enable more learner-centered, communicative instruction aligned with best practices.

The findings provide insights into persisting gaps between positive attitudes towards communicative language teaching approaches and the continuing reliance on grammar-translation and lecture-based methods misaligned with developing students' practical language abilities. This highlights the need for comprehensive educational reforms in line with Saudi Vision 2030 priorities.

Achieving the blueprint's economic and societal transformation objectives requires developing graduates equipped with English proficiency and global collaboration competencies. Updating systemic constraints around policies, assessments, resources, and training is essential to empower educators in aligning teaching practices with research-backed communicative techniques.

Adopting the study's suggested reforms will drive progress towards the desired transformation of university EFL education called for by Vision 2030. This will enhance graduates' English abilities to succeed globally, unlocking individual potential in line with national strategic priorities. Saudi Vision 2030's educational reforms aim to develop students' professional and global competencies. Achieving this requires English language curricula that emphasizes authentic communication and collaboration skills. Equipping faculty with resources and flexibility to customize materials and approaches is key. The study provides evidence-based recommendations for systemic improvements that will empower universities to prepare students for the demands of the 21st century job market and society. Addressing identified challenges through policies that enable communicative, student-focused EFL education is essential for Saudi Arabia's continued development.

This mixed methods study utilizing surveys and an interview with a department head provides a comprehensive understanding of the EFL teaching landscape at Saudi universities. The findings reveal a continued reliance on traditional grammar-translation and lecture-based methods, despite broader recognition of the value of communicative and student-centered approaches. Systemic constraints remain barriers to adopting innovative teaching techniques, including standardized curricula, textbooks, assessments, limited resources, and top-down policies that restrict autonomy.

While faculty express openness to pedagogical improvements, ingrained instructional habits persist. Lasting change requires tackling root causes through reforms at the institutional level. Updating curriculum to focus more on practical communication skills, providing training in modern methods, increasing access to technology, and linking teacher evaluation to student outcomes could enable more effective EFL instruction. Assessments measuring real-world proficiency, rather than grammar knowledge, will motivate learner-centered teaching.

The study found that while university EFL faculty recognize the value of communicative and student-centered teaching methods, ingrained traditional practices like grammar-translation and lecture-based instruction persist, aligning with prior research characterizing the teacher-focused Saudi EFL landscape. Systemic constraints including standardized curricula, assessments focused on rote grammar skills, limited teacher autonomy in materials selection, and lack of training pose barriers to implementing innovative communicative approaches, though professors expressed openness to improvement given adequate support. These findings confirm theoretical frameworks emphasizing the need for multifaceted reform addressing underlying policies, resources, and training opportunities to enable lasting pedagogical change that meets the English communication skills demanded by Saudi Vision 2030 educational objectives.

Here are the key conclusions covering the main takeaways on current EFL teaching approaches, the importance of aligning with second language acquisition theory, and suggested next steps based on the study findings:

1. The study reveals a continued reliance on outdated yet entrenched grammar-translation and lecture-based EFL teaching approaches in Saudi universities, despite broader recognition of communicative methods as more effective for developing students' English proficiency.
2. Aligning teaching practices with second language acquisition theory highlighting the primacy of meaningful interaction and communication is vital for enhancing learning outcomes. Curriculum and assessments must shift focus from rote grammar skills to real-world language use.
3. Next steps include modernizing EFL curriculum to incorporate more communicative activities, providing faculty training in contemporary best

practices, integrating technology for engagement, allowing flexibility in materials use, and linking evaluations to improvements in student English abilities rather than textbook coverage.

4. Updating systemic constraints around rigid policies, resources, assessments is crucial for enabling lasting pedagogical improvements that meet Saudi Vision 2030 goals. A multifaceted approach focused on empowering professors and students will transform the EFL landscape to develop graduates' global competencies.

Here are some recommended next steps for improving EFL instruction based on the study findings:

6. Recommendations for Improvement

1. The EFL curriculum needs updating to incorporate more communicative, interactive activities focused on developing speaking and listening proficiency. Assessments should test real-world communicative competence using rubrics, not just grammar knowledge.
2. Enhanced teacher training programs should be implemented to build faculty capacity in utilizing communicative language teaching methods, project-based learning, technology integration, and contemporary best practices.
3. Resources and facilities like language labs, computers, reliable internet, multimedia tools, online platforms, and authentic educational materials need to be made more readily available to enable innovative teaching approaches.
4. Allowing educators more flexibility and autonomy in selecting supplementary materials and textbooks beyond prescribed curricula will promote learner-centered instruction tailored to class needs.
5. Linking teacher evaluation and observations to student progress and English proficiency gains rather than curriculum coverage will incentivize communicative teaching.
6. Increased focus on collaborative dialogue, flipped classrooms, simulations, presentations, and interactive group work will engage students in meaningful English practice needed for real-world application.

Adopting these recommendations through updated policies and investment in resources, training, and facilities will empower universities to align EFL education with best practices. This multifaceted approach can transform Saudi teaching methods to develop the English communication abilities and global competencies needed to achieve Vision 2030 goals.

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