

English Language Education in Saudi Arabia: Policy, Practice, and Pedagogical Shifts

Fahad Alqurashi

Department of English, Umm Al-Qura University, Makkah, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author Email: fmqurashi@uqu.edu.sa

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i6.2850>

APA Citation: Alqurashi, F. (2025). English Language Education in Saudi Arabia: Policy, Practice, and Pedagogical Shifts. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 7(6).599-613. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i6.2850>

Received:

20/08/2025

Accepted:

12/11/2025

Keywords:

Saudi Vision 2030, Reform, Technology, Perceptions and Concerns

Abstract

This qualitative study explored the perceptions and concerns of Saudi English language teachers regarding the changes introduced by Vision 2030 and their readiness to adopt technology in upcoming reforms. Six English teachers from Makkah School District were interviewed to assess how Vision 2030 affects English education in Saudi Arabia. They reported a positive attitude toward embracing change and integrating innovative technology, expressing optimism about the Vision's potential to transform education, inspired by successes in other sectors. However, some teachers raised concerns about their qualifications and reliance on traditional, teacher-centered methods. They questioned the feasibility of the Vision's ambitious technology integration goals, citing insufficient technological infrastructure in some schools. Additionally, rural schools faced limited and underfunded access to modern devices necessary for effective English instruction. The six participants also highlighted concerns about incorporating foreign cultures into the curriculum, emphasizing the need to align with Saudi religious and national values, reflecting previous findings on teacher hesitance. Yet, they acknowledged that the relationship between language and culture is complex, with no inherent conflict between foreign and local cultures. Given students' exposure to diverse perspectives through social media and globalization, technology-based learning can enhance engagement and promote intercultural awareness, making it impractical to exclude compatible foreign cultural norms.

1. Introduction

Since the Saudi government unveiled its ambitious Vision 2030 in 2016, numerous studies have explored the potential for reforming the Saudi educational system and addressing challenges that could impede this transformation. While some research has identified factors that could facilitate this change, most studies have outlined forward-looking plans for educational reform aligned with Vision 2030. Given that Vision 2030 was announced less than ten years ago, the studies examining the educational opportunities presented by the Vision are primarily proposals. Therefore, the current study seeks to understand perceptions and attitudes of six English language teachers from Makkah School District towards the Vision, as well as any significant changes they have experienced in their teaching behaviors and practices. Additionally, the study addresses various challenges to educational reform that may obstruct the attainment of the Vision's objectives related to English language instruction and technology integration.

Education opportunities

Saudi Vision 2030 includes ambitious plans to reform the educational system, primarily aimed at boosting the economy and reducing the nation's long-standing reliance on oil as a key income source. Among its educational objectives are the following (Vision 2030, 2017):

- Reducing the gap between the outcomes of higher education and the actual needs of local labor markets.
- Ensuring that at least five Saudi universities rank among the top 200 universities globally.
- Enhancing student performance to meet international standards.

While Vision 2030 does not explicitly outline strategies for improving English instruction or implementing technology, it suggests better use of digital curricula and the introduction of online learning and training platforms as interpretations of its goals. The Vision also emphasizes that these objectives should be achieved through talent development and ongoing assessment of learning outcomes across all educational stages (OECD, 2020).

Overall, the 2030 Vision and previous educational reforms emphasize the necessity for flexibility in adapting to change. Resistance to change among educators and students may arise from the deeply rooted conservative traditions within the Saudi community, which can inhibit the acceptance of innovative approaches. This cultural context can create challenges in implementing new educational practices, making it essential to address these underlying concerns to facilitate a smoother transition toward modernized teaching methods. English language education is no exception. Previous attempts to improve this field faced some resistance, even as the need for such instruction becomes increasingly urgent to promote competitive innovation and support national reform initiatives (Al Shibani, 2015; Assalahi, 2015). This reluctance can hinder progress, making it essential to address the underlying factors contributing to this resistance in order to enhance the effectiveness of English language education in alignment with national goals (Al-Seghayer, 2024).

English Education in Saudi Arabia within a Global Context

The Saudi educational system has experienced several reform initiatives, particularly with the establishment of the National Center for E-Learning and Distance Learning in 2007 and the Saudi Electronic University in 2011. Additionally, many universities created their own deanships of e-learning to oversee the implementation of e-curricula and online learning platforms. These initiatives have opened up opportunities for incorporating English instruction, leading to many English teaching practices being conducted online. The integration of technology into English education aims to enhance pedagogical methods, especially since most students remain reliant on teachers and lack effective self-learning skills (Haque et al., 2023; Noorwali & Sabir, 2025). One of the key benefits of this shift is the ability to utilize diverse digital tools and resources that can make learning more engaging and interactive. For instance, multimedia presentations, online quizzes, and collaborative tools can foster a more dynamic learning experience, appealing to various learning styles and preferences (Morel & Spector, 2022).

Furthermore, low achievement levels and a lack of motivation to learn are prevalent among many English language students. English teachers are often seen as key to either motivating or demotivating students regarding their English studies. A significant challenge is that students typically do not have opportunities to practice the language in real-life contexts. Addressing low achievement levels and lack of motivation among English language students requires a multifaceted approach that involves teachers as key motivators and the integration of technology. By providing students with innovative tools that facilitate real-life practice and engagement, educators can help foster a more positive learning environment that enhances both motivation and language proficiency. Therefore, the introduction of technology seeks to provide meaningful learning tools and communication channels to modernize English teaching practices (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

The Saudi Ministry of Education introduced the Qualitative Professional Development Program (Khebrat) in 2016 to enhance English language teachers' professional competencies and support educational reform in alignment with Saudi Vision 2030 (Alshaikhi, 2018). The initiative seeks to improve the professional practices of teachers and school leaders and provide them with opportunities to gain advanced experience in distinguished school environments according to established international standards through implementing partnerships with universities in countries possessing advanced educational systems (Al-Shehri, 2020). In accordance with directives issued by the Saudi Ministry of Education, the host universities initiated programs to develop teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes across three key areas: English language proficiency, effective educational practices, and school leadership. The universities implemented the training through overlapping phases, beginning with six months of intensive English language development, followed by pedagogical and leadership training. These activities included workshops, regional professional conferences, and graduate-level courses. Additionally, teachers participated in K–12 school immersion, observing and investigating innovative teaching approaches through individual research inquiries (Bentahar et al., 2021).

Educators' Perspectives towards English, Transformation, and Technology

Student achievement is often referenced in literature as a broad term representing educational reform. However, Burner argues that focusing on the improvement of education is more comprehensive, as it “better captures the more complex and broader picture of educational instruction than do ‘learning’ or ‘student achievement’” (Burner, 2018, p. 123). Despite this, student achievement remains a primary goal for educators and researchers, who believe that the basic English language skills and competence of Saudi learners are inadequate and do not meet the expectations outlined in Vision 2030. Teachers are integral to driving educational change who are often viewed as pivotal in providing the necessary positive influence on students in their language studies. Teachers who employ engaging and interactive teaching methods can inspire enthusiasm and a desire to learn, while those who rely on traditional, rote learning approaches may inadvertently contribute to student disengagement.

Several studies have examined Saudi teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward implementing Vision 2030 in English language teaching. For instance, Shawaqfeh (2018) studied 50 pre-service female English teachers and identified four key characteristics of effective English language educators in the context of Vision 2030: technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities. Overall, participants in that study did not view the integration of technology as an indicator of quality among English language teachers, as the study did not explore technology's potential in achieving Vision 2030 goals. Another study found that Saudi English teachers in government schools believe strongly in the positive influence of Vision 2030 on educational and professional development particularly in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). They talked about different social, individual, institutional, and economic benefits facilitated by the implementation of Vision 2030 (Abdullateef et al., 2023).

Some other studies investigated the role of English language teachers in reaching the Vision's objectives. Al-Seghayer (2024) found that most teachers held positive views on ‘professional development’ in English programs. The study also suggested that networking with native English teachers globally and attending international workshops and conferences could significantly assist Saudi teachers in adapting to the Vision's requirements. In contrast, while many teachers surveyed by Algethami (2022) acknowledged that online teaching could provide a better learning environment for language instruction than face-to-face (F2F) teaching, most considered online methods less effective overall. They identified several obstacles affecting online language teaching, including unreliable assessments and concerns about students using unethical practices to achieve higher grades due to inadequate monitoring. Additionally, teachers expressed that online instruction negatively impacted student motivation

and engagement, exacerbated by large class sizes and challenges in managing online classes. These issues can further diminish the quality of communication in online language instruction.

Overall, the integration of foreign culture in English language curricula enriches the educational experience, making it more holistic and relevant to students' lives in a global context. Several studies have examined the role of foreign culture in English language curricula in Saudi Arabia. For example, Saudi English teachers appreciated the incorporation of foreign cultural norms in developing the English language curriculum (Alamri, 2019). The study accentuated opportune moment to integrate foreign culture into the English curriculum within the educational reforms associated with Vision 2030. Furthermore, technology plays a crucial role in bridging cultural gaps and can effectively convey cultural norms in English language teaching contexts. For better implementation of this trend, English teachers need to receive comprehensive training on utilizing innovative technology in their teaching practices, asserting that "modern technology must become an integral part of the Saudi EFL classroom to enhance the quality and effectiveness of learning" (Alrabai, 2018, p. 115).

Research Gap

Although Vision 2030 establishes broad priorities for educational development, translating these priorities into meaningful changes in English language teaching requires more than policy commitments or recommendations for pedagogical innovation. It also depends on teachers' understandings of reform, their professional preparedness, their perceptions of the opportunities associated with change, and the institutional conditions that enable or constrain the adoption of new practices. Previous research has highlighted the potential benefits of professional development, technological integration, and changes in English language teaching in Saudi Arabia (Alamri, 2019; Alrabai, 2018; Al-Seghayer, 2024; Saleh & Meccawy, 2022). Other studies have examined teachers' perceptions of Vision 2030 and the challenges associated with online language instruction (Abdullateef et al., 2023; Algethami, 2022; Alshehri, 2025; Shawaqfeh, 2018). Taken together, these studies provide a useful foundation for understanding teachers' attitudes toward educational reform; however, the extent to which they explain the relationship between teachers' perceptions of Vision 2030, their perceived readiness for change, the challenges and concerns they have, and their reported teaching practices requires further examination.

A key issue, therefore, is not simply whether English language teachers recognize the opportunities associated with Vision 2030, but how they interpret these opportunities in relation to their professional responsibilities and everyday teaching experiences. Conceptually, further attention is needed to understand how teachers connect national reform priorities with their own understandings of effective English language instruction and educational technology. Methodologically, qualitative inquiry can provide a more detailed account of teachers' reasoning, experiences, and concerns than can be obtained from studies that primarily describe attitudes or evaluate predefined competencies. Practically, although previous research has identified challenges involving online assessment, student motivation, classroom management, and technological implementation, additional insight is needed into how teachers perceive these challenges in relation to the implementation of Vision 2030 and what forms of institutional support they consider necessary.

These issues should not be interpreted as evidence that previous studies have entirely neglected teachers' experiences; rather, they identify areas in which a more integrated investigation may extend existing knowledge. Accordingly, six English language teachers from Makkah School District were interviewed in the present study to explore their perceptions of the opportunities associated with Vision 2030, their self-assessed preparedness to respond to educational change, the challenges and concerns they encounter, and their recommendations for improving implementation, with particular attention to the role of technology. By examining these interconnected dimensions, the study seeks to contribute a context-sensitive understanding of how national educational reform is perceived by English language teachers

and how its implementation might be better supported in Saudi Arabia. In particular, the current study aims at addressing the following four research questions:

1. What advantages do English teachers see in implementing Vision 2030 within English language education?
2. How would English teachers assess their own preparedness to adapt in accordance with Vision 2030?
3. What challenges or concerns might arise when adopting Vision 2030 in English language education?
4. What recommendations do English teachers have for enhancing the implementation of Vision 2030? How do they view the role of technology in this process?

2. The Study

The current study aims to explore the perceptions and concerns of Saudi English language teachers regarding the educational transformation driven by Saudi Vision 2030 and to examine their readiness to embrace the anticipated reforms. In particular, the study seeks to understand how teachers interpret the goals of this national initiative and how they perceive its impact on curriculum development, teaching practices, professional development, and student outcomes. It also investigates the challenges teachers may encounter during the implementation of new policies and instructional changes. By focusing on their attitudes, expectations, and preparedness, the research aims to identify both opportunities and potential barriers to successful reform. Ultimately, the study intends to provide insights that can inform policymakers and educational leaders about the support systems and resources needed to facilitate a smooth and effective transition within English language education.

Participants

The participants comprised six English teachers from Makkah School District, each bringing between five and ten years of professional teaching experience, reflecting substantial classroom practice and ongoing pedagogical growth. Their experience suggests familiarity with curriculum implementation, student assessment, and diverse instructional strategies. The sample included three male and three female teachers who were randomly selected from both public and private schools. This intentional gender balance supported equitable representation and reduced the likelihood of bias linked to gender-based perspectives. Furthermore, including educators from two distinct educational sectors broadened the scope of the study by incorporating differences in administrative structures, institutional policies, available resources, class sizes, and student demographics. Such diversity enabled the research to capture a richer and more nuanced range of professional insights. By engaging teachers from varied working environments, the study enhanced the reliability and depth of its findings, ultimately contributing to a more balanced, inclusive, and comprehensive portrayal of the overall educational context.

Ethical measures

To protect their rights, the participants in the current study were provided with an orientation about the nature and purpose of the study in order to obtain their consent to participate and attend the interviews. Furthermore, to ensure confidentiality, the six teachers were clearly informed that all information they provided, including their views, opinions, and personal experiences, would be used strictly for research purposes. They were also assured that their identities would remain anonymous and that their names, schools, and any identifying details would not be disclosed in any reports or publications. This ethical measure was essential in building trust between the researcher and the participants. By guaranteeing privacy and anonymity, the study created a safe and secure environment in which participants felt comfortable and respected. As a result, they were more likely to speak openly and honestly, express their perspectives without hesitation, and raise concerns or offer constructive criticism.

Such transparency and assurance of confidentiality ultimately enhanced the credibility and depth of the data collected.

Data collection

The study adopted a qualitative research design, as qualitative methods are particularly effective in exploring the six participants' underlying opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in depth. Unlike quantitative approaches that focus primarily on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research seeks to understand meanings, interpretations, and personal experiences from the participants' perspectives. This design allowed the researcher to gather rich, detailed descriptions and capture the complexity of participants' thoughts and actions within their real-life contexts. By using interactive data collection techniques, the six participants in the current study had the opportunity to express themselves freely and elaborate on their experiences. Consequently, the qualitative approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the issues under investigation and enabled the researcher to identify patterns, themes, and insights that might not emerge through purely quantitative methods (Hennink et al., 2020).

In particular, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and professional experiences and also to investigate concerns and challenges in greater depth. This method was selected because it provides a flexible yet focused framework for data collection. While predetermined questions ensured that key topics were addressed consistently across participants, the open-ended format allowed teachers to expand on their responses, clarify their viewpoints, and introduce relevant issues not initially anticipated by the researcher. Teacher interviews are widely recognized as an effective tool for obtaining rich, detailed insights into classroom practices, instructional decisions, and pedagogical challenges. Through this interactive process, educators were able to explain the reasoning behind their methods, reflect on their experiences, and discuss the contextual factors influencing their work. As a result, the semi-structured format generated comprehensive and nuanced data that contributed significantly to understanding teachers' beliefs and everyday teaching practices (Richards & Morse, 2013).

Each interview lasted between 25 and 35 minutes and was recorded on the researcher's cell phone. Teachers were interviewed individually at their convenience in a relaxed environment to encourage open and honest discussion. The open-ended questions were crafted to elicit teachers' insights on various aspects of how Vision 2030 impacts English language education in Saudi Arabia. Initially, the six participants were interviewed and asked several questions regarding their readiness for change as well as their views on the transformative reforms and the ability to improve or even shift their teaching practices accordingly. Also, participants were encouraged to engage in further discussion to explore the topic more comprehensively. They were also given the opportunity to raise additional issues of personal or professional interest, share their experiences, and express diverse views and opinions freely, ensuring a broader understanding of their perspectives and experiences.

Data analysis

All data gathered in this study were obtained through interviews. Although there are various methods of analysis, "there is no single correct way to analyze and present qualitative data; the approach should align with the intended purpose" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 461). To interpret the collected data, thematic analysis was employed to systematically explore participants' views, opinions, and experiences and to understand their broader significance. This approach enabled the researcher to move beyond surface-level responses and identify meaningful patterns within the data. Thematic analysis is widely regarded as a valuable and rigorous method for examining data from interviews, particularly when the aim is to focus on participants' lived experiences, beliefs, values, and preferences. Through careful coding and categorization, recurring ideas and concepts were identified and organized into coherent themes. One of the key strengths of this method is its flexibility, as it can be adapted to different research questions and contexts. Additionally, it allows the researcher to highlight both similarities and differences across

participants' responses, providing a nuanced and comprehensive interpretation of the findings while maintaining a strong connection to the original data (Kalpokas & Hecker, 2023).

To provide a detailed and accurate description of the data from teacher interviews, the researcher listened to the recorded files using the "note-expansion" technique, where "the reporter (note taker) listens to the tape to clarify specific issues or confirm that all main points are captured in the notes" (Bertrand et al., 1992, p. 202). The notes from the data collection were carefully transcribed into a linear, readable text format to facilitate thorough analysis. Once transcribed, the content was examined inductively, allowing patterns and recurring ideas to emerge naturally from the responses of the six participants rather than being imposed by pre-existing assumptions. This process helped in identifying common perspectives, key points, and major issues discussed during the interviews. These insights were then systematically organized and coded into specific themes and categories, providing a structured framework for interpreting the data while preserving the richness and nuance of the original responses.

The data analysis followed a systematic thematic analysis process to identify, organize, and interpret recurring patterns across the collected data. Initially, the transcripts and observation records were reviewed repeatedly to develop familiarity with the dataset and identify meaningful statements, recurring ideas, and significant variations in participants' perspectives. These data segments were assigned codes, which were subsequently compared and grouped into conceptually related categories. The categories were then refined into overarching themes that captured patterns relevant to the research questions while preserving the diversity of participants' experiences. Consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis, each theme was reviewed, clearly defined, and assigned a descriptive label reflecting its central meaning and analytical significance. Both deductive and inductive coding strategies were employed: deductive coding drew on concepts from previous research, whereas inductive coding enabled unanticipated insights to emerge from the data. This iterative process supports coherent, data-grounded interpretations (Proudfoot, 2023).

Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of codes and themes is a critical step in data analysis, as it strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. According to Smagorinsky (2008), codes and themes gain reliability when "two independent raters produce roughly the same results when putting the system into effect" (p. 401), highlighting the importance of inter-rater agreement. To achieve this, the coding process in the current study was verified with the assistance of a second rater—an associate professor from the English Language Center with expertise in applied linguistics and qualitative research methods. The second rater was first familiarized with the code definitions and provided with randomly selected samples from each dataset. He then independently applied the codes to the data, allowing for an objective check on the coding system's accuracy. Any discrepancies between the researcher and the second rater were carefully reviewed, discussed, and resolved, resulting in refinement, addition, or deletion of certain codes. This process ensured consistency, rigor, and validity in the organization and interpretation of the data.

3. Findings

The six participants shared diverse perspectives in response to the research questions, highlighting several key dimensions of implementing Vision 2030 in English language education. Their insights addressed the anticipated benefits of educational reforms, teachers' preparedness and willingness to embrace change, the challenges encountered during implementation as well as recommendations for improving the adoption process.

Advantages in implementing Vision 2030 within English language education

Most comments reflected the six teachers' positive outlook on the adoption of Vision 2030 in English language education in Saudi Arabia. For instance, one participant noted that policymakers are now recognizing the need to transform learning policies to align with global trends in English language education. Another participant emphasized that the Vision necessitates the immediate implementation of modern learning approaches. She stated:

I believe there should be more student-centered activities in English language learning. Students should have the freedom to choose what works best for their learning and to select methods that align with their abilities and learning styles.

Additionally, another participant remarked that existing methodologies are thought to foster students' critical thinking skills and creativity. These approaches often try to emphasize active learning, collaborative tasks, and problem-solving activities, which are intended to engage students more deeply with the material. However, despite the theoretical potential of these methodologies, there is currently a disconnect between the intended outcomes and the realities of classroom practice. He observed:

Teaching methods in English language education should help students to promote their creativity and critical thinking skills. These important elements are not adequately highlighted in current teaching methods in schools.

Regarding language policy, some participants noted that while Vision 2030 promotes innovative teaching methods, it might simultaneously underscore the importance of preserving the culture and traditions of Saudi society. This dual focus presents both opportunities and challenges for educators and policymakers. On one hand, the advocacy for innovative teaching methods aligns with global educational trends that emphasize critical thinking, creativity, and the use of technology in the classroom. Moreover, the emphasis on cultural preservation reflects a deep-seated respect for the values, beliefs, and traditions that define Saudi society. Participant 6 noted:

What's commendable about Vision 2030 is its strong appreciation for our local heritage and traditions. It aims to boost students' self-esteem and pride in their culture on the global stage, even as it calls for change and reform.

Most participants appreciated the changes they had observed in their teaching practices as a result of the Vision. For instance, QR codes have been widely integrated into textbooks, enabling students to access websites for additional resources and exercises. Participant 4 noted that some schools and higher education institutions have begun permitting students to use their mobile phones for both personal and educational purposes. Participant 3 mentioned that some teachers have started to actively use social media and WhatsApp to collaborate with their students for learning, a practice that was previously limited or not even allowed a few years ago. Additionally, new learning concepts have begun to be incorporated into teaching. He elaborated:

Currently we are discussing new topics that hadn't been addressed before. We are talking about concepts promoted by Vision 2030, such as sustainability, instructional design, e-assessments, and virtual learning environments. I believe we are making significant progress toward digital education.

Assessing preparedness to adapt in alignment with Vision 2030

Overall, most participants expressed positive attitudes regarding teachers' willingness to embrace change and engage in the transformative process outlined by Vision 2030. For instance, one participant highlighted that many teachers are not only enthusiastic about enrolling in professional development programs offered by the Ministry of Education but also aspire to pursue advanced degrees, such as master's degrees, to further enhance their qualifications and expertise. Participant 5 mentioned that he and several colleagues had signed up for various programs covering topics such as e-learning, innovative teaching methods, and educational psychology. He highlighted:

We [teachers] are open to embracing the great changes of Vision 2030. For instance, many teachers are enthusiastic about enrolling in any development programs. Many of us took sessions that focus on e-learning, innovative teaching strategies, and educational psychology. I myself am waiting for the

opportunity to enroll in a master's program to speed up my personal and professional development.

Those professional development programs included summer training initiatives organized by Education Departments and certain Saudi universities, as well as the Qualitative Development enterprise in the form of Khebrat (experiences) Program. This program is a year-long international professional development initiative for teachers, launched by the Saudi Ministry of Education in collaboration with universities across several English-speaking countries to equip educators with the knowledge and skills needed to drive educational reform. However, participants in this study noted that as English language teachers apply what they have learned through their experiences, the developmental programs should incorporate more technology-based content. Participant 2 suggested:

Emerging development programs should include methodologies that highlight the potential of mobile devices in English education and how to effectively and thoughtfully implement them for learning purposes. Teachers should practice using mobile devices in real-world learning scenarios.

Challenges of Vision 2030 in English instruction

As with any change, participants initially recognized potential challenges that could affect the transformation of English education. Many of their comments reflected concerns about the adoption of Vision 2030 in light of their previous beliefs about English language education. For instance, there were comments that the policies governing English language education had not kept up with current global trends. As observed, the qualifications required for English language teachers did not seem aligned with this promising educational reform, and some of the learning materials still relied on traditional methods. Participant 1 noted:

While national transformation emphasizes a shift toward digital learning practices, past initiatives have shown that this transformation was often limited and superficial in its implementation of technology. This is certainly a positive step, but we still need to enhance teachers' digital literacy and their understanding of technology's potential in English language learning.

Also, there were remarks that many English language teachers continued to use outdated methodologies that favored traditional approaches, such as the audiolingual and grammar translation methods. According to Participant 3, with the integration of technology, English language teachers should adopt "perceptual processing strategies" that assist students in creating audiovisual representations of learning materials. There was also a sentiment that some teachers tend to rush through the curriculum, focusing on covering all subjects within the allotted time, regardless of students' comprehension or opportunities for practice. He explained:

Unfortunately, our educational system prioritizes quantity over quality. It fails to adequately consider effective teaching methodologies. There are numerous subjects and activities that teachers struggle to cover within the given timeframe.

Similarly, participants noted that requiring teachers to cover all subjects within the designated semester added to the stress of teaching throughout the term. One major challenge related to the adoption of Vision 2030, as mentioned by a participant, was that students tended to depend heavily on their teachers for most aspects of their learning. Such heavy dependence highlights various problems related to the inadequate implementation of student-centered learning approaches, which would necessitate additional time for fostering autonomy and engagement and more effort for the educational reform to succeed. Participant 1 stated:

This reliance on teachers has contributed to students becoming less motivated, complacent, and irresponsible, ultimately hindering their ability to meet learning objectives.

From the participants' perspectives, there were additional challenges facing educational reform, such as the difficulty in addressing students' individual differences due to large class sizes, the absence of language learning labs in some schools or the poor condition of existing labs, and insufficient teacher training on using technology for language learning. Teachers expressed that their expectations for improvements in the educational system had not been fully realized. Participant 3, for example, remarked that some students still exhibited negative attitudes toward English language instruction. He noted that teachers were continuing to rely on traditional methods (audiolingual and grammar translation). He gave the following example:

My daughter often tells me that she hates English, not just because her teacher fails to use engaging strategies or games, but because she frequently yells at them, making the class stressful.

Another significant challenge to Vision 2030 was the disconnect between students' and teachers' digital literacy and awareness which presents a major drawback in modern education. While many students today are digital natives, having grown up with technology and social media, many teachers often have varying levels of comfort and proficiency with digital tools and platforms and in many cases hold negative views about using tablets or mobile phones in schools. Participant 4 stated:

Teachers are seen as facilitators of the learning process, and while most recognize the importance of technology in English learning, they still view mobile phones as distractions. They worry that if mobile phones were permitted in class, students would misuse them, for instance, by cheating.

Participants also identified other ongoing challenges within the educational system, including students' low motivation, teachers' resistance to adopting technology, a lack of critical thinking and creativity skills in the classroom, and insufficient innovative assessment methods.

Recommendations to enhance the implementation of technology

Participants were asked about the practical changes they had made to their teaching practices after attending technology training sessions and returning to their schools, particularly regarding the integration of technology into classroom instruction. They reported attending professional development workshops organized by the Ministry of Education, which they viewed as valuable opportunities to enhance their professional competencies in alignment with Saudi Vision 2030. However, effective technology integration requires more than participation in training activities. Therefore, sustained, practice-oriented professional development, hands-on training in digital tools, access to appropriate technological resources, and ongoing technical support are recommended to help teachers translate their acquired knowledge into effective classroom practices. Additionally, Participant 5 stated:

Teachers now see professional development as essential in today's context. They recognize that the curriculum is undergoing significant changes, and educators need to adapt accordingly. They also emphasize that their input on curricular development should be valued to minimize resistance to change.

Integrating technology into teaching enhances student engagement, collaboration, and independent learning. However, effective implementation requires teachers to understand students' mindsets, behaviors, interests, and learning preferences in today's digital environment. Recognizing how technology shapes students' communication and learning habits enables teachers to design meaningful, interactive activities. Consequently, teachers become facilitators who guide students in critical thinking, problem-solving, and responsible technology use while addressing their diverse academic, social, and emotional needs. Participant 1 observed:

Upon returning to my school, I noticed that several teachers had integrated online platforms into their teaching, such as Google Classroom and Edmodo. I

was impressed by how actively students were engaging through these platforms. They were collaborating on various topics beyond the textbooks, using them for homework and communicating with their teachers.

4. Discussion

Teaching methods have witnessed great transformations over time and technology has made educational change a necessity rather than an option. Researchers found three major reasons why educational change is necessary: developments in technology, increased globalization, and advancements in research into teaching and learning approaches (Morel & Spector, 2022). Since change fundamentally involves altering human behavior and progresses through identifiable stages where motivation plays a crucial role, educational reform in Saudi Arabia is generally intended to occur through rapid actions. In an interview with David Ignatius of the Washington Post, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman described a new wave of reforms as “shock” therapy necessary for modernizing the Kingdom’s cultural and political landscape. This “shock” therapy is vital because previous educational reforms took longer than expected, cost more, and yielded unsatisfactory results. Since 2016, Vision 2030 has driven significant societal, economic, and technological changes in the country. However, educational transformation requires a more steady and sometimes cautious approach (Al Rasheed, 2026).

Accordingly, there is a positive atmosphere among Saudi educators toward embracing change and integrating innovative technology into their teaching practices. Participants in the current study expressed initial optimism about the Vision and its potential to transform education, based on achievements in other sectors. However, teachers, in practice, often exhibit reluctance for several reasons. For instance, some participants raised concerns about teachers’ qualifications and their reliance on traditional teaching methods. Teacher-centered approaches were still prevalent in many English language teaching contexts. Others noted that the Vision may be overly ambitious in its goals for technology integration, as the technological infrastructure in some schools does not support improved teaching practices. Technology availability in rural schools were described as scarce and underfunded and many schools lack modern devices and equipment that could enhance English instruction (Al-Nasser, 2015).

Recent studies suggest that innovative technology cannot be effectively integrated into traditional education without ensuring proper integration and meeting infrastructural requirements (Xu, 2025). Consequently, many English language teachers, as found by, believe they require better facilities and adequate training. This aligns with the current study, where participants showed a tendency to enroll in professional development programs, either locally or internationally. For example, the Khebrat (Experiences) program aims to enhance English language training, technical skills, and school immersion for teachers. Khebrat is a specialized one-year immersion program offered by select international universities, primarily from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. One of the key objectives in this program is to transfer valuable teaching experiences from esteemed educational institutions into Saudi schools, ensuring they maintain self-efficacy and high-quality standards (Alqahtani, 2023).

This push for modernization aims to enhance the quality of education and prepare students for a competitive global landscape. For instance, incorporating project-based learning, collaborative group work, and digital literacy skills can engage students more effectively and encourage them to think critically about their learning. Such modern educational practices aim to create a more enthusiastic and relevant learning experience. By focusing on collaborative efforts and digital competency, educators can cultivate a generation of learners who are better equipped to tackle complex challenges, and contribute meaningfully to society. This experiential learning method fosters deeper understanding and retention of material, as students see the relevance of their studies in practical contexts. Such holistic approach not only enhances individual student outcomes but also aligns with broader educational goals, ultimately contributing to the development of a skilled and innovative workforce ready to meet the demands of a globalized economy (Shan & Wang, 2024).

Simultaneously, the participants in the current study emphasized cultural preservation, reflecting a deep respect for the values and traditions of Saudi society. However, this focus may create tension between adopting modern educational practices and honoring traditional values. Educators often face challenges in balancing the need to foster a global perspective while instilling national pride and cultural awareness in their students. To tackle these challenges, language policies should offer clear guidelines for integrating innovative teaching methods with cultural content. Professional development for teachers is crucial, as it equips them to effectively merge modern pedagogical techniques with culturally relevant materials. By creating an educational environment that values both innovation and tradition, Saudi Arabia can develop students who are prepared for a global context while remaining connected to their cultural identity. This comprehensive approach supports the broader objectives of Vision 2030, fostering a well-rounded education that respects and reflects the unique aspects of Saudi society (Makhlouf, 2021).

Regarding actual teaching experiences, several participants in the current study indicated that they or some colleagues had already integrated technology into their classrooms, which reflects their positive attitudes towards technology. Technology is becoming an integral part of the daily lives of many Saudi citizens, evident in both governmental and private interactions. The use of e-government functions and procedures in schools and universities has become standard practice in Saudi Arabia. For instance, the Ministry of Education requires all enrolled students to be registered through a nationwide electronic system (the Noor System). Teachers use this system for grading, allowing parents to monitor their children's performance and achievements. Such technology-based changes in school environments resulted in high levels of satisfaction among both teachers and school leaders. This positive impact underscores the importance of ongoing investment in educational technology to further enhance the learning environment (Alshahrani, 2024).

5. Conclusion

The current study seeks to investigate the perceptions and concerns of a limited sample of Saudi English language teachers regarding the changes brought about by Vision 2030, as well as their preparedness to adopt the upcoming reforms. In their answers to interviews' questions the participants generally echoed those opinions and attitudes reported in several studies that explored teachers' perceptions of English education and the integration of technology, as well as their views on Vision 2030. Different studies concluded that Saudi educators generally have a positive outlook on integrating innovative technology into teaching and are optimistic about Vision 2030's potential to transform education. However, many teachers are hesitant due to concerns about their qualifications and a reliance on traditional, teacher-centered methods. Additionally, some believe that the Vision's technology goals may be overly ambitious, as many schools, particularly in rural areas, lack the necessary infrastructure and resources to support modern English instruction (Abdullateef et al., 2023; Alshehri, 2025).

Participants in the current study voiced concerns about incorporating foreign cultures into English language education, stressing the importance of aligning with Saudi religious and national values. This reflects previous findings of teachers' hesitance to include foreign cultural norms. However, the relationship between language and culture is complex, with no inherent conflict between foreign and local cultures. Given students' exposure to diverse perspectives through social media and globalization, technology-based learning can enhance engagement and promote intercultural awareness, making it unreasonable to exclude compatible foreign cultural norms. The study also assessed teachers' readiness to adopt innovative teaching methods aligned with Vision 2030's educational goals, focusing on pedagogical and technological behaviors and classroom technology effectiveness. Teachers' willingness to embrace change is vital for improving student engagement and critical thinking. Future research with larger samples should aim to enhance teacher-student communication, leverage students' digital literacy, and address the digital skills gap, ultimately supporting English

language instruction and progress toward Vision 2030 objectives (Alamri, 2019; Saleh & Meccawy, 2022).

6. Limitations

This study has three main limitations. First, the sample consists of only six teachers, which limits the diversity of perspectives represented and may affect the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Although the participants provide valuable insights, their experiences may not reflect those of the wider teaching population. Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample. Second, the study does not distinguish between public and private schools. Differences in institutional policies, teaching resources, class sizes, and professional development opportunities may influence teachers' experiences and practices. Including both school types in future studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of these contextual differences. Third, the study does not employ quantitative methods, limiting the ability to examine broader trends, measure relationships, or statistically generalize the findings. Future research could adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative insights with quantitative data to strengthen the validity and broader applicability of the results. Despite these limitations, the study offers useful insights and provides a foundation for further investigation.

7. References

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