ADVERSE EFFECTS OF THE CURRENT INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR MACRO AND MICRO LANGUAGE SKILLS ON SAUDI EFL LEARNERS' SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

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ABSTRACT: *Instructional approaches to language teaching are cornerstones around which to build effective processes for learning English, or more precisely the most successful and effective ways to learn English. The aim of this article is to explore the adverse effects that current instructional practices, which favor using the four macro language skills along with other language-related skills, have on the development of Saudi EFL learners' skills and competencies. In particular, we identify the extent to which teaching the four macro language skills* and *other language-related skills together in the Saudi EFL educational system* negatively impacts the abilities of those who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL). We highlight the ineffective*, indeed* detrimental, effects of EFL *teaching practices* in the classroom, derived as a *result of intensive research with data gathered from both digital and non-digital sources and studies and from our own thorough compilation, observations, mosaic of evidence, and in-depth analysis. We hope that* this study will *be useful for improving EFL teaching in Saudi English classrooms and will ultimately contribute to the attainment of higher English proficiency.*

KEYWORDS: instructional practices, four macro language skills, language-related skills, pedagogic approaches. Saudi EFL learners, skills, competencies

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is a challenging task throughout the world, and Saudi Arabian English education is no exception. The effects that the practices and pedagogical approaches currently used in teaching EFL have on achieving such a pedagogically challenging task is a driving force of critical importance within the walls of English classrooms. Sowell (2017) makes a strong case for the fact that classroom teaching practice has a major impact on how well EFL learners learn and that ineffective pedagogical practices lead to deterioration in English classrooms.

Unlike the traditional approach that involves dividing the instruction of language skills into a number of specific skills, instructional practices in Saudi EFL classrooms adhere to an integrated, holistic teaching method drawn from a skills-based language teaching approach. This approach entails teaching major language skills and subskills together. The assumption is that each skill will be developed in combination with the other skills to cover all language functions and achieve the goal of teaching English for communicative purposes. Thus, in Saudi EFL classrooms, the four macro language

skills and other micro language skills are integrated consecutively into each 45-minute class; each skill is allotted a designated portion of the class time, and classes are held four times a week for all educational stages, with the expectation of the elementary stage (grades 4-6). Several prominent and distinct features shape the English instructional practices used in the Saudi educational system in general and in country's public education in particular. These features exploit contemporary teaching practices, are pedagogically ineffective, and have been found to have damaging effects on Saudi EFL learners. Overall, these practices significantly impede the outcomes of EFL in the Saudi education system. According to Alrabai (2018), a range of classroom-related teaching practices has been found to have negative effects on EFL learning in Saudi Arabia, and he calls for immediate action to change such realities.

Our primary goal in this article is to identify the adverse, detrimental effects of actual instructional practices on the four macro language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with specific micro or language-related skills: namely, grammar, vocabulary, and culture, in the Saudi EFL context. To capture the prominent detrimental effects that this instructional delivery has on Saudi EFL learners' skills and competencies, we articulate separate comprehensive explorations of the impacts of these practices on each individual skill and each sub-skill. This article focuses on identifying and providing in-depth description and discussion of the significant negative impacts of the current mode of delivery for teaching English in Saudi EFL classrooms across the areas cited above, rather than proposing methods for changing the direction of classroom practices implemented in Saudi EFL classes. Therefore, this paper may be more descriptive than analytical in nature, with occasional critical analysis brought to bear as required by the specific issues under discussion. Our main concern is to identify the negative consequences of EFL instructional practices.

Through an inclusive, aggregate picture of the impact of the English teaching interventions currently implemented in Saudi EFL classrooms, we hope to reveal and elucidate a total account of the major adverse influences of EFL pedagogical practice on the ability of Saudi EFL learners to acquire the four core language skills as well as other language-related skills. It is a necessary venture to delve into unidentified symptoms that are part of the status quo within the harmful, outmoded approaches that dominate the actual EFL instructional practices in Saudi Arabia.

Adverse Effects of Teaching Listening Skills in Saudi English Classrooms on Saudi EFL Learners' Listening Skills
The current practices for teaching listening skills are inadequate and have had a variety of negative consequences, and they are therefore a major cause of the serious deficiencies in listening skills among Saudi EFL students. Data for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) indicate that the mean listening scores for Saudi test takers have consistently fallen below those for both international and Middle Eastern examinees. Specifically, the listening proficiency of Saudi EFL learners is the lowest worldwide (Educational Testing Services, 2009–2013 and 2015–2018; IELTS, 2012 and 2013). In 2019, the mean listening score for TOEFL Internet-based test (iBT) examinees

worldwide, regardless of their nationalities, was 20.9 ($SD = 6.4$), but the mean listening score for Saudi test takers was just 20 (TOEFL Test and Data Summary, 2019). Furthermore, the mean worldwide IELTS speaking score in 2019 was 6.8, whereas the mean for Saudi examinees was 5.4.

After investigating the listening difficulties of Saudi EFL students, Hamouda (2013a) found that the major issues included (a) an inability to comprehend natural spoken English delivered at normal speed, (b) anxiety, (c) insufficient exposure to English in terms of listening to various modes, such as lectures, radio news, films, television shows, plays, announcements, everyday conversations, interviews, and storytelling, (d) a lack of interest and motivation due to a classroom environment that is not motivating or conducive to improving listening skills or encouraging effective listening behaviors, and (e) a lack of sufficient training in useful English listening strategies during the school year. Al-khresheh (2020) took a similar view and conducted a study to investigate the listening skills of Saudi EFL learners, aiming to determine whether they face particular challenges with regard to listening comprehension. His findings revealed that Saudi EFL students encounter difficulties in relation to three cognitive processing phases: perceptions, parsing, and utilization. Perceptual processing refers to maintaining attention to spoken input, parsing means encoding the input to establish a meaningful representation in the short term, and utilization concerns drawing on background knowledge to interpret the input for storage. In the perception stage, learners reported their main difficulties as being based in their inabilities to concentrate; they devote their energies to deciphering the meaning of the first part of the texts and neglect to keep listening to the following parts. In the parsing stage, the learners have difficulties with respect to memory; they quickly forget what they have heard, fail to remember the previous text, and do not understand subsequent parts of a text. However, in the utilization stage, they have particular difficulties in relation to understanding the words (but not the intended message) and are confused about the key ideas in the spoken text. The findings of a study by Jamal (2020), who examined the difficulties that Saudi EFL learners confront in terms of listening comprehension, proved that the learners have weak listening skills because of their inabilities to concentrate and listen, their anxiety, and their low levels of orientation to English listening skills. By the same token, the study of Oteir and Al-Otaibi (2020) showed that Saudi EFL suffer from listening anxiety that imped their listening comprehension skills.

Saudi EFL students also struggle with difficulties in listening comprehension because of diverse or multifaceted factors that hamper their listening skills. These include issues around catching key words, understanding the main ideas of texts, concentrating while listening, identifying expressions and sets of utterances that create meaning, recalling important information after hearing it, and recognizing phonetic variations of a word (reduction, assimilation, elision, cliticization, and resyllabification). In addition, the students have poor knowledge of variations in accent, an insufficient grasp of cohesion, and selective attention using contextual clues and inferencing. Furthermore, Saudi EFL learners encounter a variety of other listening difficulties, such as in information processing (being unable to recall the meanings of the spoken words and identify or differentiate between individual sounds in a stream of sounds), processing speeds

(being unable to process spoken input efficiently), input retention (being unable to retain perceived input for further processing), and interpretation (experiencing problems regarding interpretations of perceived text; specifically, they are unable to interpret particular vocabulary items, expressions, or entire texts).

Because of the emphasis on bottom-up skills in Saudi classrooms, Saudi EFL learners also rely heavily on bottom-up processing and are therefore deficient in top-down processing. They also perform much better on local questions involving the location of specific details and facts than on global questions that require inferences or synthesis of information. Consequently, the students have problems understanding the overall concepts provided by spoken texts. All of these weaknesses are caused by inappropriate teaching methods or by not having adequate listening strategies, which together negatively affect the listening proficiency of the Saudi EFL learners and cause them to have ongoing difficulties with regard to these skills.

Current instructional practices exacerbate these issues, particularly because they affect the confidence levels of the EFL learners. In particular, Saudi EFL teachers do not provide ample opportunities to practice listening, and this has a negative influence on learners' attention during the instructional process (Ansari, 2012). Enhancing opportunities for listening might include speaking to students in English, exposing them to a range of listening materials in the classroom, and encouraging them to use whatever resources are available in their institutions or communities. Poor instructional practices contribute to students' inabilities to understand spoken English properly.

Adverse Effects of Teaching Speaking Skills in Saudi English Classrooms on Saudi EFL Learners' Speaking Skills
Current speaking practices in Saudi EFL education, such as inefficient teaching instruction, inappropriate teaching materials, insufficient opportunities to practice speaking in class, inadequate teacher training, and the backwash effect of testing on learning and teaching, have produced a variety of negative consequences. The most significant consequence is that Saudi EFL learners have poor skills in spoken communication. According to TOEFL and IELTS data, the mean speaking scores for Saudi test takers are consistently below those for international and Middle Eastern examinees. Indeed, the speaking proficiency of Saudi EFL learners is the lowest in the world (Educational Testing Services, 2009–2018; IELTS, 2012 and 2013). In 2019, the mean speaking score for TOEFL iBT examinees, regardless of their nationalities, was 20.6 ($SD = 4.4$), but the mean speaking score for Saudi test takers was only 18 (TOEFL Test and Data Summary, 2019). In addition, the IELTS mean speaking score worldwide in 2019 was 6.7, while the Saudi mean score was 5.8.

To understand these deficiencies, Alrabai (2014) investigated the levels and sources of foreign-language anxiety among 1,389 Saudi EFL students. The findings of his study suggest that the current speaking instructional practices produce communication apprehension or anxiety among Saudi students. In another study, Al-Saraj (2014) found that Saudi EFL students attributed their language anxiety to certain anxiety-provoking entities, including the teacher, the teaching methods,

competitiveness, communication styles, teacher-student interactions, and fears of negative evaluations. In addition, students in a study by Hamouda (2013 b) attributed their reluctance to respond to teachers and a tendency to remain silent in English-speaking language classrooms to many sources, such as shyness (49%), fear of making mistakes (50.3%), fear of speaking in front of others (64.2%), fear of negative evaluation (70.4%), and a lack of confidence and preparation (78.6%). However, according to the findings of Algonhaim (2014) regarding the specific types of communicative and non-communicative activities that provoke anxiety among Saudi students, classroom activities that involve speaking cause the most anxiety. Anxiety-inducing activities specifically involved giving oral presentations in English to the entire class (according to 61.5% of the students who were surveyed), providing oral reports (61.5%), pronouncing words (53.8%), conversing in English with classmates during class time (50.0%), and being called upon to provide answers in front of the class (53.8%). Because of their fears of being negatively evaluated by their teachers, Saudi students seldom ask questions, are overly dependent on their teachers, and demonstrate an unwillingness to provide responses or engage in class discussions.

On this note, in Hamouda's (2013b) study, 51.5% of the students surveyed attributed their reluctance to participate in class to a lack of practice. Because Saudi EFL students are reticent to speak during class time, have little confidence in their spoken English abilities, have fears concerning their lack of speaking proficiency in English, and often communicate in their mother language (Arabic) in English classrooms, they lack experience speaking English. It was also found that Saudi EFL students do not persevere in practicing English or seeking more opportunities to practice the language, which further contributes to reducing their confidence levels in using English to communicate.

In terms of this reluctance to persevere, Alharbi (2015) and Alrabai (2016) have argued that the extensive use of Arabic in English-speaking classrooms and the lack of authentic English-speaking situations decrease students' motivation to practice English in the classroom, even with their classmates. For instance, shy students tend to reply in Arabic, and those who have not understood what was said in English tend either to laugh and not reply or to pretend that they understood what was said and respond by nodding (Nather, 2014). This overuse of Arabic also encourages students to continue to think in their first language (L1) and then translate their thoughts into the second language (L2), which produces further deficiencies in their speaking skills. Also, when teachers and students' speak in their mother tongue in English language classes, this devalues the use of English for communication and sacrifices valuable opportunities for using English (Al-Hosni, 2014). English then becomes simply a language that is used for oral drills and dialogues.

A study by Kashmiri (2019) confirmed the findings noted above and the adverse effects that the current instructional approaches to developing speaking skills have on the speaking abilities of Saudi EFL learners. The findings of the study specifically revealed the causes of these effects, including reliance on outdated pedagogical practices and approaches to reading models, use of Arabic as a medium of instruction, and the fact

that the circumstances in English classes are not encouraging or motivating in terms of speaking. Ali et al. (2019) examined the factor affecting 100 Saudi EFL learners' speaking skills and found that they were the causative factors attributed to being quite inexpressive, lack confidence, and lack even basic speaking or communication skills. Overall, the current speaking instruction in Saudi EFL classrooms adversely affects students' skills in speaking English in many ways. As Alhmadi (2014) Hamad (2013), and Al-Seghayer (2017) argued, Saudi English students
are unable to converse accurately and fluently in English

i.   are unwilling to speak and take part in class discussions or are reticent when called upon to practice speaking

ii.   exhibit considerable weakness in speaking skills, such as when expressing basic language functions, asking and responding to simple oral questions, describing people, places, and things, participating in debates concerning current events or issues, expressing and elaborating on personal wishes and opinions, expressing ideas and opinions, and providing in-depth explanations

iii.   find themselves at a loss when asked to deliver speeches in front of their classmates

iv.   cannot express their points of view in English without Arabic translation

v.   cannot sustain conversation in English without occasionally code-switching to Arabic

vi.   use Arabic when interacting with their teachers or when expressing their thoughts, because of their inadequate English vocabularies, weak sentence-building skills, poor understanding of grammatical structures, and fears of making mistakes in front of their classmates.

Furthermore, based on my personal observations, Saudi EFL students speak slowly, do not sound natural, take too long to compose utterances, have poor grammar and pronunciation, are unable to engage in speaking in a variety of contexts and situations, and cannot formulate relevant questions or comments or talk at length at reasonable speeds without undue hesitation.

Adverse Effects of Teaching Reading Skills in Saudi English Classrooms on Saudi EFL Learners' Reading Skills

Current reading practices, such as insufficient teacher training, inefficient teaching instruction, inappropriate teaching materials, lack of reading practice in class, and the backwash effect of testing on learning and teaching, have produced a variety of negative consequences for Saudi EFL students. TOEFL results show that the reading scores of Saudi examinees have consistently fallen below those of international and Middle Eastern test takers (Al-Qahtani, 2015). Specifically, Saudi EFL reading proficiency is the lowest worldwide (Educational Testing Services, 2019). The mean reading score for TOEFL iBT test takers in 2019, regardless of their nationalities, was 21.2 ($SD = 6.6$), while Saudi examinees scored significantly below that, at 16 (TOEFL Test and Data Summary, 2019). Also, in a study by Al-Abiky (2014) that examined the English reading comprehension levels of senior Saudi students majoring in English at Qassim University, the participants' mean reading comprehension score was below the 50th percentile, and only 31% of participants obtained scores above the mean. In addition,

the mean score worldwide for the IELTS reading test in 2019 was 6.4, but the Saudi mean score was 5.2.

Because of the current state of English reading instruction in Saudi public schools, students have very limited vocabularies, with 890 of the 5,000 most common English words (Al-Qahtani, 2016), and are unable to generate questions consistently in relation to various texts (Al-Nooh, 2013). Also, Saudi students do not demonstrate effective, expeditious reading skills, such as previewing and skimming, or careful reading skills, such as guessing the meanings of unfamiliar words using contextual clues (Al-Qahtani, 2016). In addition to these deficits, Nezami (2012) and Altalhab (2019 a) found that Saudi EFL readers do not engage in sufficient self-study activities or extensive reading, have difficulty understanding the meanings of texts and summarizing their content, struggle with spelling, prediction, pronunciation, syntactic parsing, and using prior knowledge, and demonstrate a lack of motivation and interest in collaborative work and group discussions. These students are also unable to read for details, identify main ideas, or recognize relationships between the elements of texts. Furthermore, they experience problems with speed, fluency, automaticity of word recognition, cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies, deciphering written material, and positive attitudes toward L2 reading. In addition, the students do not know when or how to apply the reading strategies correctly. They also lack sufficient functional knowledge of grammar that would help them form a solid understanding of reading skills.

Altalhab (2019) found that Saudi EFL teachers do not encourage their students to engage in frequent reading practice and do not teach them a range of reading strategies to help them address English texts efficiently. Khan et al. (2019) explored the reading challenges faced by Saudi EFL learners and found that participants performed poorly and suffering from considerable weakness in reading skills. The authors attributed the reading difficulties to issues such as insufficient knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, incorrect pronunciation, wrong spellings or poor spelling proficiency, and slow paces of reading. Mohammed and Ab Rashid (2019) also revealed the sources of difficulties in EFL reading comprehension that are faced by Saudi EFL learners. The authors demonstrated that struggles with regard to reading were due to ineffective teaching, uninteresting textbooks and classroom environments, limited opportunities for extra practice, lack of support from their parents, teachers, and societies, limited knowledge of vocabulary, and insufficient interest in reading in English.

Al-Nooh and Mosson-McPherson (2013) continued along this line of research by exploring the effect that current instructional practices have on the reading skills of Saudi EFL learners. The authors found that concentration, overall comprehension, reading fluency, motivation, and retention significantly influenced students' reading achievements. In particular, the secondary EFL students and teachers who were surveyed noted that Saudi EFL lessons focus mainly on decoding comprehension passages, which makes learning undesirably challenging and unengaging. Finally, these students and teachers did not have the specific strategies that are necessary for efficient reading or sufficient knowledge about how to apply these strategies. Because of such ineffective reading instructional practices for English at all levels of education, Saudi

EFL students are currently unable to read efficiently or comprehend what they read, which indicates the lack of a well-rounded ability to comprehend written language.

Adverse Effects of Teaching Writing Skills in Saudi English Classrooms on Saudi EFL Learners' Writing Skills

The current instructional techniques for teaching writing in Saudi EFL classrooms reflect traditional approaches that focus mainly on the final product of the writing task. In such approaches, teachers do not work with students to overcome the difficulties encountered during the writing process or provide them with the tools needed to overcome such obstacles on their own. This form of instruction has produced a variety of adverse consequences. For example, the mean TOEFL and IELTS writing scores of Saudi examinees are consistently below those of international and Middle Eastern test takers. Indeed, Saudi EFL writing proficiency is typically the lowest throughout the world (Educational Testing Services, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018; IELTS, 2012, 2013, and 2019). In 2019, the mean writing score for TOEFL iBT examinees, regardless of nationalities, was 20.5 ($SD = 4.7$), while the mean writing score for Saudi examinees was substantially lower, at 18 (TOEFL Test and Data Summary, 2019). In addition, the mean IELTS writing score worldwide for 2019 was 6.12, but the mean writing score for Saudi examinees was 5.0.

Generally speaking, a product-oriented approach to writing instruction produces students who do not possess the abilities to develop correct, coherent, and lucid pieces of writing or to convey ideas and facts using clear, accurate, and appropriate written language. These students also struggle to demonstrate their critical thinking abilities and voice their opinions through writing. In addition, they lack skills in choosing the correct vocabulary to express themselves, developing ideas about suggested topics in a coherent way, and deciding how to start an essay or paragraph. Essentially, the students are unable to formulate and structure their thoughts on their own. Generally speaking, they have major problems in four areas of English composition: sentence structure, paragraph structure, content, and organization. Furthermore, they tend to make surface-level changes in response to teachers' written feedback, generally add to their texts rather than deleting from them when revising their summaries, and make grammatical and informational changes more often than mechanical ones.

Specifically, Saudi EFL students exhibit poor writing abilities at both the sentential and inter-sentential levels (Alharthi, 2011; Al-Seghayer, 2019). With regard to the sentential level, students struggle with spelling, word choices, word order, verb tenses, articles, conjunctions, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, incomplete sentences, formal styles, capitalization, and punctuation. Problems at the inter-sentential level include doing direct translations, including unrelated ideas, having underdeveloped ideas, lacking sentence coherence, and not having appropriate supporting details. Hence, students face problems in writing about the appropriate topics and producing concluding sentences and supporting details by adding examples and reasons, and using discourse markers appropriately. Furthermore, the students are unable to write simple, compound, and complex sentences. Consequently, their paragraph writing is poor, and their essays might not look like English essays.

In particular, Javid and Umer (2014) found that Saudi EFL students face serious problems in their writing because of weaknesses in using appropriate lexical items, organizing ideas, and employing proper grammar. In addition to some of the sentential-level issues noted above, Javid and Umer point out that Saudi students also struggle with irregular verbs, suffixes, and prefixes and commit serious errors in various syntactic categories. To this list of difficulties, Al-Fadda (2012) added pronouns, pronoun-antecedent agreement, and the use of "plague words and phrases" that should be avoided, and Al-Mansour (2015) added run-on sentences, the overuse of commas, and the inclusion of pronouns in relative clauses.

Similarly, Shukri (2014) and Bani Younes and Albalawi (2015) observed that Saudi EFL learners demonstrate problems with coherence, cohesion, paragraph unity, and the logical linking of ideas. They also face difficulties creating transitions, sequencing ideas, and writing thesis statements and topic sentences. Saba (2013) added that Saudi EFL learners lack a clear understanding of the subsequent steps involved in writing, the role of writing activities, and how such activities contribute to improving their writing, all of which further compound these issues.

As with speaking in English, Saudi EFL students demonstrate significant anxiety about writing in the language. Aljafen (2013) investigated the relationship between methods of teaching writing and anxiety within the Saudi EFL context and noted that the limited writing skills of Saudi EFL learners can be attributed to the substantial feelings of anxiety they experience in terms of how to manage pieces of writing. This anxiety has a negative influence on their abilities to write and causes them to experience writing apprehension, resulting in low English writing self-efficacy among Saudi students. Most participants in this study indicated that the sources of writing anxiety they experienced were due to the way they had been taught English writing. According to Aljafen (2013) and Ankawi (2015), the current approach to practicing writing hinders students in mastering writing skills and prevents them from expressing their ideas effectively in formal and informal compositions in a range of texts that involve several modes and in texts to fulfill their own purposes for writing. The previously cited research by Algonhaim (2014) also revealed that 57.7% of the students who participated in this study felt anxious when writing English compositions, dialogues, letters, memos, summaries, and reports in class.

Al-Mansour (2015) identified additional problems with writing that stem from the current issues associated with the practices for writing instruction. Al-Mansour investigated the effects of academic writing on the writing performance of Saudi EFL students and their inclusion of pronouns in relative clauses such as "Where is the pen which I gave it to you yesterday?" and use of too many commas as seen in run-on sentences, as well as their difficulties in organizing their ideas logically. Al-Fadda (2012) concurred that Saudi EFL learners face additional challenges, including writing sentence fragments, knowing the plague words and phrases they should avoid, and experiencing difficulties using pronouns and maintaining pronoun-antecedent agreement. In addition, Alharbi (2017) examined the writing difficulties that Saudi EFL learners face and found that they are unable to use cohesive devices properly, construct

logical arguments, make coherent links between ideas, and demonstrate critical thinking in their writing. The author believes that these difficulties in writing arise from a variety of factors, among which are the current instruction practices for teaching writing skills. Barzanji (2016) found that the most common writing errors that Saudi EFL learners make revolve around missing/unnecessary words, spelling errors, and incorrect word choices, articles, and noun forms. Along the same line, both studies of Alqhtani (2017) and Hafiz et al. (2018) examined the syntactic errors that Saudi EFL learners make in writing and found the most common syntactic errors that participants in these two studies made were sentence structure, adverbial clauses, relative clauses, conjunctions, articles, verbs, and prepositions.

Adverse Effects of Teaching English Grammar in Saudi English Classrooms on Saudi EFL Learners' Grammatical Competence

The inadequate practices that are currently used, specifically the ineffective methods and outdated pedagogical approaches for teaching grammar, have led to a variety of difficulties for Saudi learners in achieving higher levels of grammatical competence in English. Saudi EFL learners fail to acquire the expected skills in grammar, even though they successfully pass grammar courses at all levels of public education. Consequently, they are not able to use grammatical structures appropriately in either spoken or written English because they cannot transfer the grammatical structures they learned in the classroom to real communicative situations outside of the classroom. Chowshum (2014), Al-Seghayer (2017), and Almuhammadi (2020) have argued that such poor grammatical competency results from the lack of long-term effects from the classroom grammar instruction they received.Alahmadi (2014) found that the most common grammatical errors that are observed in Saudi EFL learners include:

(a)   misuse of singular and plural nouns
(b)   misuse of verb tenses (past tense, present tense, and future tense)
(c)   misuse of articles (definite articles, definite article deletion, definite article redundancy, and indefinite articles)
(d)   misuse of prepositions (errors with preposition omission, preposition substitution, and preposition redundancy)
(e)   unmarked forms of verbs
(f)   use of sentences without verbs (production of a sentence without a verb, deletion of the main verb, and deletion of the helping verb)
(g)   misuse of third-person pronouns (in subjective and objective cases).

Similarly, in his study that investigated grammar instruction, Chowshum (2014) found that Saudi students struggle with applying grammatical rules that are related to verb tenses, prepositions, and the functions of various types of verbs in sentences, such as finite verbs, participles, and modals. Alhaysony (2017) examined the most difficult grammatical features that Saudi EFL learners face and found that unreal conditionals, participial constructions, and determiners were reported to be the most difficult features, followed by real conditionals, embedded questions, prepositions, determiners, conjunctions, and the past perfect. The author attributed such defects in their

grammatical knowledge to, among other causes, not having adequate access to practicing English grammar features, which results in grammar attrition, as well as the absence of effective approaches for teaching English grammar.

Worse yet, current grammar instructional practices may actually demotivate Saudi students in the overall L2 acquisition process. According to Chowshum (2014), Saudi EFL students are not naturally motivated to learn grammatical structures in English-grammar classrooms. In fact, learning elements in isolated fragments rather than as a whole exacerbates students' lack of interest in English grammar, and the extensive drill exercises, memorization of rules, and teaching grammar without proper discourse increase their frustration. The findings of a study by Almuhammadi (2020) revealed that Saudi English teachers are not aware of effective and updated techniques and approaches to teaching grammar in EFL classrooms. Abduh and Algouzi (2020) also investigated the current practices for teaching grammar in Saudi EFL classrooms and found that the main obstacles that hampered the proper teaching of grammar are ineffective teaching methods and the absence of meaningful practice in EFL classes.

Adverse Effects of Teaching Culture in Saudi English Classrooms on Saudi EFL learner's Cultural Knowledge

 The failure to incorporate the cultural elements of English as an integral part of the Saudi EFL curriculum, because English is regarded as a fifth language skill, has produced various negative consequences, particularly in terms of whether Saudi students act in a culturally appropriate manner. The lack of cultural background knowledge regarding native English speakers among Saudi EFL learners negatively affects their competence regarding intercultural communication in an increasingly multicultural world (Al-Seghayer 2017). With respect to the progress of their listening skills as a sociolinguistic dimension of listening, Saudi EFL students cannot achieve a thorough understanding of the context through listening to audio or audio-visual materials in English. Regarding their speaking skills, insufficient cultural knowledge leads Saudi students to experience miscommunication, misunderstanding, and an inability to express themselves correctly in a variety of circumstances. Because Saudi EFL teachers refuse to address cultural issues in an explicit and overt manner, Saudi EFL students struggle to communicate effectively, both linguistically and culturally. Students are often unable to interpret and understand the cultures of native English speakers appropriately. Al-khresheh (2020) looked at whether cultural background has any significant effect on the listening comprehension of Saudi EFL learners and found that not teaching cultural aspects of the target language as part of the language study in Saudi English classrooms detracts from the cultural and social awareness of Saudi EFL learners and leads to low levels of listening comprehension. Farooq et al. (2018) investigated the current cultural instruction in Saudi English classrooms and found that Saudi EFL teachers do not include cultural content or target culture-based activities. The reasons for this may include insufficient time to discuss cultural aspects of the target language in detail as other elements of the syllabus are overemphasized, or the teachers' lack of knowledge about the target culture. Some teachers reported that they

do not favor exposing their students to certain elements of the target culture or discussing specific elements of that culture in their language teaching classes.

Saudi teachers also fail to train their students to move through the stages of the learning cycle for building skills, developing cultural behaviors, and discovering cultural explanations. Therefore, given their lack of cultural schemata, Saudi students do not develop their sociocultural competence. As Faruk (2015) argues, intercultural competence cannot be attained if the language is only presented within the student's own cultural context. Thus, instructional practices that do not attempt to connect local issues to global phenomena will ultimately fail to help Saudi students to become effective intercultural and global citizens who appreciate and celebrate diversity and uphold tolerance in their interactions. A study by Alamri (2019) revealed that the majority of teachers and decision makers were reluctant to incorporate foreign culture into Saudi English curricula. This decision is based on their views that the inclusion of foreign culture has a negative impact on their own culture and that foreign culture would replace their traditions and values once it has been included in the curricula. Additional negative consequences of not including foreign culture are that Saudi EFL students lack sufficient awareness and knowledge of the cultures of English-speaking people and are unable to acquire a command of the etiquette of the target culture. They also lack adequate understanding of the differences between their own culture and the cultures of English-speaking people, as well as of the differences between Arabic speaking values or Arabic values and those of English-speaking cultures. The immediate reasons for such consequences are that students have little or no context for developing sociocultural awareness and are unaware of how English functions in its real environment. Overall, because of the current approach to teaching culture in the EFL classroom, Saudi EFL students expect to be able to function within the new culture while maintaining their own culture. However, the use of any language must be associated with other culturally appropriate behaviors for communication to be successful.

Adverse Effect of Teaching English Vocabulary on Saudi EFL Learner's Second Language Vocabulary Development

The current ineffective approaches to teaching and enhancing vocabulary learning have resulted in various negative consequences, clearly the most notable of these being the difficulties that Saudi learners experience in acquiring English vocabulary. Several factors are associated with these difficulties.

First, there are too few teachers who support students' incidental and intentional vocabulary learning or stimulate students' interests in words and their denotative meaning. Furthermore, many teachers do not attempt to incorporate greater context or create connections between new vocabulary and existing schemata. As a result, students often forget the new terminology soon after learning it or fail to use the knowledge correctly and appropriately in authentic language contexts (Alqahtani, 2009). Al-Ghafli (2011) also stated that most EFL Saudi learners have difficulty learning vocabulary, and that they tend to forget new words quickly and have difficulty using such words

when speaking or writing. In a study of the extent of vocabulary attrition among Saudi EFL students, Alharthi (2014) reported that Saudi EFL students show drastic attrition in vocabulary knowledge soon after the end of formal instruction. This is followed by a slight gain, but the gain does not quite bring them back to the level of baseline achievement. The rate of attrition is also greater for productive than for receptive lexical knowledge.

A second factor that is associated with difficulties in acquiring English vocabulary is that Saudi EFL students experience problems with insufficient knowledge of vocabulary. Indeed, they have very little knowledge of vocabulary in terms of these aspects: size (number of words), breadth (number of words known plus the depth of that knowledge), and depth (knowledge of word pronunciations, spellings, meanings, forms, and parts of speech, the prefixes and suffixes and how these alter the word's meaning and use, the contexts in which words can be used, their frequency of use, and collocation). According to Nation (2006), to operate effectively in English, EFL students must acquire a large vocabulary and a number of aspects of lexical knowledge. For instance, EFL students need to acquire 8,000-to-9,000-word families to be able to read authentic texts and comprehend most of the written discourse in English. Reading these texts independently with minimal disturbance requires about a 15,000-word family. For basic daily communication, 2,000-to-3,000-word families are necessary, but most language use requires an estimated 10,000-word family. However, according to Al-Nujaidi (2003), by the time Saudi students have graduated from high school they will have acquired a vocabulary of only 500 to 700 words, which is far below the threshold needed for reading simplified English texts. The results of this study suggest that the participants were learning only approximately 100 words a year during their intermediate and secondary schooling. Al-Qahtani (2016) places this figure at about 890 of the 5,000 most common English words. In a study of the knowledge of vocabulary among 92 Saudi university EFL students, Al-Masrai and Milton (2012) discovered that they knew 2,000 to 3,000 words upon entry to the university and around 5,000 words near graduation. Because of this insufficient knowledge of vocabulary, Saudi EFL students face difficulties when reading English materials (Baniabdelrahman & Alshumaimeri, 2014). The results of a study by Alkaff (2013) showed that 74.47% of Saudi EFL learners who participated indicated that lack of vocabulary made understanding and communicating in English difficult.

Several recent studies confirmed these findings. The study by Al-Khasawneh (2019) showed similar results, indicating that poor knowledge of English vocabulary hampered Saudi EFL learners' abilities to process the language. The results of this study specifically revealed that the overall vocabulary sizes of Saudi EFL learners reached 2,025-word families. Altalhab (2019 b) also examined the knowledge of vocabulary among Saudi EFL learners and found their mean vocabulary size was roughly 3,000 words. The results of this study demonstrated that most of the participants achieved low scores in the vocabulary low frequency levels. Alqarni (2019) examined the vocabulary sizes of 71 Saudi EFL learners (2,000-word level, 3,000-word level, 5,000-word level, and 10,000-word level). The findings showed that the participants' vocabulary sizes were limited, especially in terms of the low frequency levels, and this confirmed that

the low sizes with regard to their knowledge of vocabulary set them below the desired level of vocabulary competency for EFL learners. The third factor that is associated with difficulties in acquiring English vocabulary is that Saudi EFL students lack effective strategies and skills for learning vocabulary, and they are not trained in strategies for tasks such as recognition, selective attention, word-form manipulation, word-meaning interpretation, and the production of words in context. Teachers place more emphasis on mechanical memorization. They do not place students in collaborative learning environments to practice their lexical competence, nor do they expose students to authentic language input. In other words, teachers do not implement instructional practices that are conducive to the development of strategies or which provide direct and indirect exposure to words in a variety of language contexts. As a result, Saudi students possess narrow ranges of strategies for learning vocabulary.

The fourth factor that is associated with difficulties in acquiring English vocabulary results from the limitations in classroom time and resources. Because of these, Saudi EFL teachers find it difficult to incorporate strategies and practical instruction for vocabulary, to help students learn the meanings of new words, retain or restore their knowledge of newly acquired words, and expand their vocabularies. Teachers are also bound by the policy of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to teach only the prescribed syllabus. Therefore, traditional teacher-centered textbook methods dominate vocabulary instruction.

Finally, Saudi EFL students struggle with spellings, silent letters, consonant phonemes, affixes and roots, and pronunciation because of inefficient methods of teaching vocabulary. For the same reason, students also have difficulties learning the synonyms and antonyms of many English words (Khan, 2011, Abdalla 2015, and Khan, 2016).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This comprehensive account provides a glimpse into the substantial adverse effects of instructional practices that are currently used in Saudi EFL classrooms. In particular, this in-depth description and discussion illustrate that current practices do not reflect cutting-edge L2 acquisition and teaching theories and current trends in English teaching practices. Furthermore, these do not incorporate the best practices, the most effective approaches to teaching EFL, or the highest instructional standards in the current field of English teaching. Indeed, this survey reveals that traditional methods for teaching languages, which divide English into subsets of discrete skills and areas of knowledge and therefore deal with skills in isolation, dominate Saudi EFL instruction. There is, consequently, an enormous gap between the recommended pedagogical approaches and the actual practices in Saudi English education, leaving the pedagogy of English with increasingly intractable problems.

To address these current issues, the Saudi MOE should redirect its recruitment policies to enforce strict requirements for English competency and teaching ability. The MOE should also consider several measures to ensure the quality and competence of teachers and enhance the quality of instruction.

First, efforts should be made to develop a state licensing system or a tiered licensing system to certify novice English teachers. Such a system would strengthen English teaching as a profession, enhance English teachers' professional skills, and even regain the public's trust in the English teachers who are employed in Saudi schools.

Earning a beginner's license should include passing a test on their knowledge of the subject matter as well as one on pedagogical knowledge. In addition, those who want to teach English should be required to attend a mentoring and induction program or participate in professional development opportunities. In particular, college of arts graduates whose English departments focus on literature and neglect courses in pedagogy should be required to take some methodology courses before becoming English teachers. Recruitment should also be revised to place greater emphasis on evaluating abilities in English communication. In addition, institutions should implement regular work assessments and ongoing evaluations of teachers' proficiency in English. To ensure that they have sufficient proficiency in the language, prospective teachers should be required to score within a certain range on standardized examinations such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC).

Furthermore, the goals of English education should be reshaped to enhance communicative competence and cultural understanding. Instructional approaches also need to be shifted from grammar-translation to being communicative and functional. In addition, there is a need to provide Saudi EFL learners with diverse learning resources and activities.

With the implementation of these suggestions, rigorous standards would be set and maintained for entry into the EFL profession in Saudi Arabia, and English teachers would be held to these standards.

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