

Implementation of New English Language Policy in Saudi Context: Perceptions, Challenges, and Remedies

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Abstract—With the advent of Saudi Vision 2030 implementation, the internationalization of the Saudi education system has invigorated significant alterations in teaching and learning practices specifically concerning English language teaching. Since the beginning of 2021, under the new language policy, English has been taught from Grade 1. The aim is to meet the persisting global educational, job, business, and linkage challenges by educating and training the youth in English as the focal tool for future advancement. However, the realization of these objectives depends on various sociocultural factors. The perceptions of the important stakeholders such as teachers, the suitability of the EFL curriculum, and the professional training of EFL teachers can perform a pivotal role in achieving or undermining these goals. Also, teaching practices in real contexts can pose multiple unforeseen challenges and hurdles. This research intended to explore the perceptions of EFL teachers in introducing English as early as grade 1, their practices, and the practical challenges this new policy poses in its effective implementation. To achieve the said objectives, a tailored-made questionnaire comprising quantitative and qualitative items was administered. The detailed analysis highlighted many aspects of concern such as the lack of professional training for EFL teachers, unsuitable and incompatible curriculum, neglect of communicative skills, etc.

Index Terms—English language policy, teachers' beliefs, EFL practices, curriculum/syllabus suitability, Saudi context

I. INTRODUCTION

The past few decades have witnessed an ever-increasing need of introducing English as an ESL or EFL in different countries' language teaching policies and systems. As English represents an unparalleled "social, cultural, intellectual, linguistic, political and economic capital" (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017, p. 200) different nations are forced to produce competent English speakers to meet global challenges. For that purpose, many countries have incorporated teaching and learning English into their national language policies. As the following figure illustrates, apart from English-dominant countries like the USA, UK, Canada, etc, 142 other countries maintain the teaching of English as a mandatory element whereas, another 41, incorporate English as an elective component, elucidating the denomination of English as a world language.

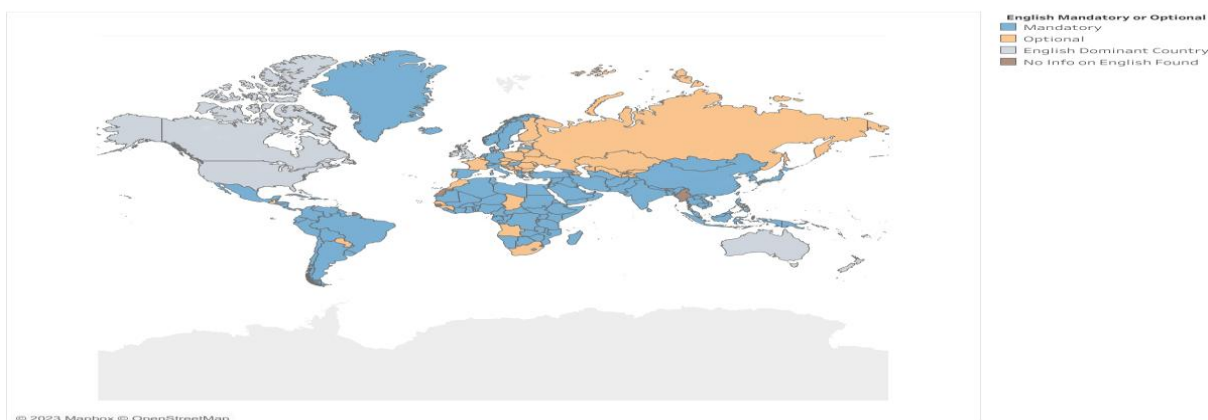


Figure 1. Global English Education Policy

Note. Countries in which English Language is a Mandatory or an Optional Subject (interactive). (n.d.). <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/global-english-education/countries-in-which-english-is-mandatory-or-optional-subject.html>.

In line with the global trends, within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (hence KSA), the language policy concerning English has undergone several changes over the past few years. Initially (1937) it was introduced at elementary school (grades 4,5,6), then was introduced at both intermediate and secondary levels (1942). Next, in 1974 & 1980, the contact

hours were increased and then decreased respectively. In 2004, the Saudi MoE introduced the “English language as early as grade six of primary school” (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017). More recently, English as a foreign language teaching and learning has been made part of the curriculum of grade 1 and onwards since the beginning of the academic year 2021 by MoE, as one of the key components of Saudi Vision 2030 which is considered a memorandum of economic growth of KSA (Jabeen et al., 2022). Devising ESL/EFL language policies, however, is only the first step, the successful implementation of the language policies is a more demanding, complicated process including the geo-political situation and status of English within the host country.

The socio-cultural and geo-political status of English within KSA has been of major concern as despite the government-level English facilitating mass attempts, and policies, there are still apprehensions at the ground levels against the inclusion of English into mainstream educational paradigm (Almansour, 2013; Al-mengash, 2006; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017; Phan & Barnawi, 2015) under the fear of bringing western culture, mindset into the country, and also compromising and undermining the status of Arabic. Moreover, the successful execution of language policies also depends on the beliefs and practices of the primary stakeholders such as teachers, students, and parents, designing and availability of appropriate curriculum, course materials, infrastructural support, and teachers’ training (Arago o, 2011; Lin, 2013). Among all the stakeholders, English language teachers hold a very vital position in the EFL/ESL teaching and learning process (Brown & Englehardt, 2016). Their beliefs, practices, and training, all contribute towards either the success or failure of the EFL/ESL language policies developed and implemented. Considering, the newly established EFL teaching policy in KSA, it becomes pivotal to explore the nature of the role English teachers are playing in the successful implementation of the policy under the following research questions:

- Q1. What perceptions do EFL teachers possess regarding the new English language policy and curriculum?
- Q2. To what extent EFL teachers are provided with English language teaching training?
- Q3. What are the various challenges teachers face while teaching English to young learners?
- Q4. How can EFL teaching challenges be addressed for effective implementation of the said policy?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indisputably, in recent times the boundaries between nations and countries have been reduced and confined to physical division on maps merely. People are interconnected and interlinked with each other more than ever now—socially, culturally, politically, ethnically, etc (Hülmbauer et al., 2008). Such complex and intricate worldwide interconnectivity has been facilitated by and paradoxically facilitates the phenomenon of ‘multilingualism’ dispelling the previously existing linguistic barriers among the speakers of varied languages. Among the languages that are commonly used around the world by non-native speakers, English indisputably holds the position of the most “prevalent language for intercultural communication” (Hülmbauer et al., 2008, p. 26) serving as a ‘lingua franca’. As defined by Firth (1996, p. 246) English as a lingua franca has been perceived as a “contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” making it inevitable for various countries to incorporate English as a second or foreign language into their teaching and learning systems by revising their language policies (Geiti, 2020). In such scenarios, the role of EFL/ESL teachers as one vital stakeholder becomes very crucial in the effectiveness of the English teaching and learning process (Bai & Yuan, 2019).

Multiple studies have been conducted in various contexts concerning the role of teachers’ backgrounds, beliefs, and perceptions in the way they deliberate teaching and learning English within formal academic situations. Belief as defined by Borg (2001) is “a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior” (p. 186) can deeply govern EFL teachers’ responses to and practices in teaching English. The majority of the findings in the previous research establish that there has been a profound and complex interplay between teachers’ beliefs and their teaching practices in the effective teaching of English as an FL (Kihlstedt, 2019; Lin, 2013; Tekin, 2015; Whyte et al., 2022). Teachers’ background knowledge, learning, social status, affiliations, and what they “think, know and believe” irrefutably “have much influence on what teachers do in the classroom” (Zheng, 2015, p. 1).

Along with teachers’ beliefs, teachers’ training and professional development in EFL teaching also have a deep impact on teachers’ performance. The teaching of a foreign language to different level learners needs different sets of skills and training as teaching young learners in early school years or kindergarten is different from teaching adult learners (Crosse, 2007). Many researchers have emphasized the inclusion of young learners’ specific “activities for the application of communicative and motivational initiatives which encourage children’s motivation, thinking skills, and creativity through involving them in play and storytelling (Cameron, 2003; Crosse, 2007; Gillis & Nilsen, 2014). However, in many ESL and EFL teaching contexts, the cruciality of language teachers’ training and development is undermined which resultantly, compromises the efficacy of the target language teaching and learning practices (Chaves & Guapacha, 2014; Mizell, 2010).

The lack of professional development, target language teaching skills, and exposure to digitalized and recent language teaching practices make the EFL/ESL practitioners overlook and unanticipated the challenges of changing language teaching contexts. Being unaware of the current developments, demands, and needs, the EFL/ESL teachers keep practicing the decades-old, traditional teaching methods, holding on to beliefs clashing with their language

teaching practices, and even believing that their way of teaching needs no changing (Chaves & Guapacha, 2014; Khan, 2012; Mizell, 2010; Novozhenina & López, 2018).

Within the KSA context, numerous studies have highlighted the status and situation of English language teaching. Despite the natives' occasional concerns, the government has consistently been advancing in incorporating EFL teaching in all educational spheres and levels (Almansour, 2013; Al-mengash, 2006; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017; Mehboob & Elyas, 2014; Phan & Barnawi, 2015). However, the extent such efforts are fruitful in developing and producing competent English speakers/users has been questioned rigorously in the previous literature being inadequate in achieving the said goal. Outdated teaching and learning practices, a lack of pre and in-service teachers' training and development, limited exposure to modern teaching and learning trends and methods, and challenges in incorporating digital literacies (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017; Khan, 2012; Mehboob & Elyas, 2014) are only a few examples of the causes that produce a gap between the EFL policies and their effective implementation.

The effectiveness of EFL teaching has become even more viable with the advent of the new language policy of teaching English from grade 1 in KSA and thus it is crucial to examine the nature of readiness and relevant training teachers have as fundamental stakeholders in the EFL teaching-learning continuum. Also, exploring their perceptions and beliefs regarding the new language policy, their classroom practices, the provision of administrative support, the relevance of the EFL curriculum, and the challenges they encounter was necessary to evaluate and predict the future of the new policy in KSA.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study was conducted to gain new insights and views, and for increasing knowledge of the phenomenon under discussion (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). Female English teachers at the early-year school level were the focus of the study. A total of 60 teachers within the Alkharj region participated in the research. Both quantitative and qualitative means were employed for data collection, analysis, and interpretation purposes. The mixed method approach supported understanding and exploring the English language teaching continuum in its breadth and depth taking advantage of the merits of both (Clark & Ivankova, 2016). To achieve a detailed, profound, and holistic understanding, a purpose-built, comprehensive questionnaire was developed and administered at schools involving female English teachers of early-year education to gauge their beliefs, practices, as well as the challenges they encounter (See Appendix A).

The questionnaire comprised 6 parts and a total of 45 closed and open-ended items, based on the pertinent areas of investigation as demonstrated in the table below:

TABLE 1
QUESTIONNAIRE FRAMEWORK

Part	Question/statements	Focus
1.	Demographic questions	Age, education level, field of education, and experience.
2.	New English Language Policy	Teachers' awareness of and beliefs about the new EFL policy.
3.	Provision, relevance, and effectiveness of syllabus, books/course materials, and infrastructure in implementing the new language policy	The relevance and importance of administrative, and infrastructural support, and the effectiveness of the EFL curriculum.
4.	Teachers' professional development and training for teaching English as EFL	The provision of the pre and/or in-service professional development and EFL teaching training
5.	Medium of instruction, focus of EFL curriculum, teachers' objectives of and practices in English language teaching	The focus of EFL teaching and learning curriculum, the language of the medium of instruction, and the teaching methods adopted.
6.	Challenges faced by teachers in teaching English as a foreign language.	The factors hampering the effective EFL teaching

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The questionnaire was administered online and once the responses were collected, they were analyzed in two phases: the quantitative and the qualitative analysis phases. The following section demonstrates the quantitative representation and analysis.

A. Quantitative Analysis

TABLE 2
PART 1: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Part 1	Question/statements	Responses	
		Range	No. / % of respondents
1.	Age (years)	20-30	10
		31-40	24
		41 and above	26
2.	Educational level	BA	73%
		MA	15.8%
		Other	11.2%
3.	Field of education	English	73.3%
		Other	26.7%
4.	Teaching experience (years)	0-2	5.6%
		3-5	11.1%
		6-8	11.1%
		9 and above	72.2%

As demonstrated, the majority of the EFL teachers were between the age range of 31 and 41 and above 83% to be exact. 73% of these teachers held a BA degree whereas 15.8% of them were MA graduates. Importantly, almost 73% of the teachers had an English specialized degree whereas, the rest 27% were graduates in other disciplines. Most of the respondents were experienced teachers with an experience of 9 years and above.

These demographic features represent important factors. For instance, the majority of the teachers are in mid-careers, teaching for several years, and hold a minimum degree level. It reflects that these EFL teachers, though have valuable experience in teaching English, may lack the knowledge of recent teaching and learning methods, approaches, and use of advanced technology. Also, 27% of the EFL teachers do not hold an English specialized degree which does not qualify them for being an EF teacher in the first place.

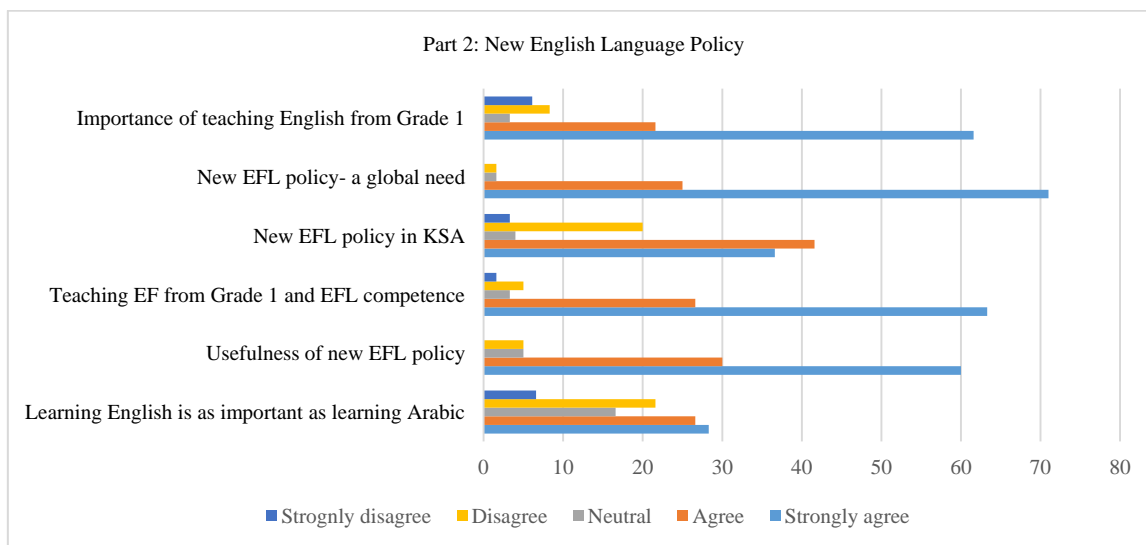


Figure 2. New English Language Policy

This section aimed at gauging EFL teachers' perceptions of introducing English teaching from grade 1 as EFL teachers' beliefs and perceptions have proven to be crucially related to and even governing their teaching and learning practices (Araga, 2011; Lin, 2013; Bai & Yuan, 2019). When asked whether or not teachers believe teaching English from grade 1 is important, 82% of them favored its importance. However, almost 16% of them believed it is not important to teach English which may affect their EF teaching intentions and practices. Similarly, although a significantly higher number of respondents (96%) acknowledge that the new EFL policy is in line with global needs, almost 23% of them do not believe it was necessary to introduce it as early as grade 1, which reveals their dissatisfaction with the new policy. Similarly, most EF teachers also opined that teaching English from early grades will enhance the linguistic competence of EF learners which shows a positive attitude towards EFL teaching. Interestingly, there was a mixed reaction from the teachers regarding the importance of teaching English and Arabic, with 42% of them believing that both languages are important, while, 29% refuted the importance of both. Another, 17% of them did not comment.

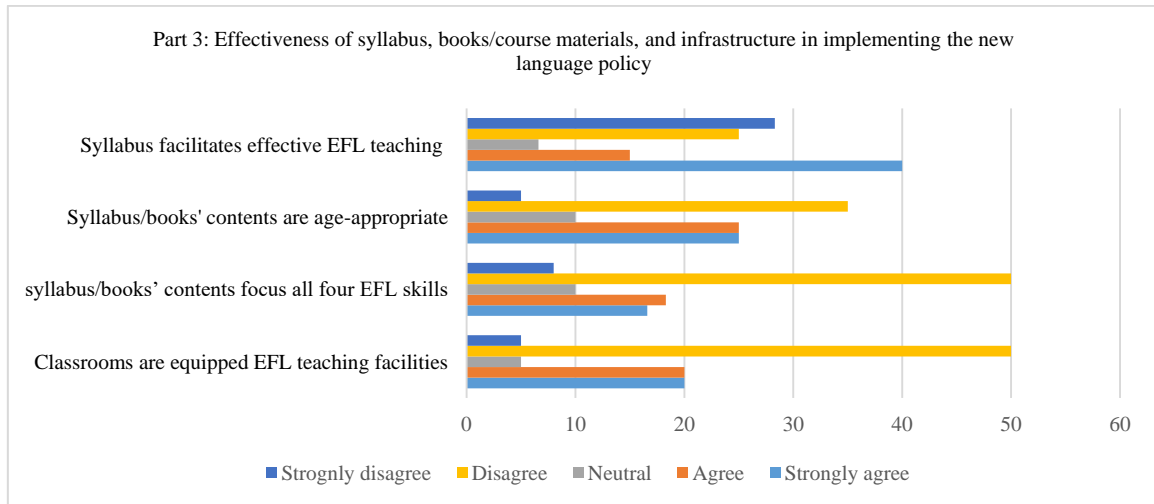


Figure 3. Effectiveness of Syllabus, Books/Course Materials, and Infrastructure in Implementing the New Language Policy

EFL curriculum and syllabus hold the key to implementing the language policies and obtaining the set goals (Itmeizeh & Hassan, 2020). If the designed curriculum does not encompass the main areas e.g. skills to be focussed, methods/approaches to be applied, linguistic competence, and critical thinking to be developed, etc, the end results will be compromised and left unachieved too. As per participants' responses, the curriculum and syllabus/books designed and developed for teaching English at grade 1 are not considered to be effective. Almost half of the teachers are dissatisfied and claim that the EFL curriculum does not facilitate effective EFL teaching. Likewise, 35% of the teachers consider the current curriculum unsuitable for the age level of the learners. Another major problem highlighted is that of the unequal focus of the curriculum, syllabus/books on all EFL skills. A vast majority of 58% of the participants believe that the books and syllabus contents do not focus on teaching reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills equally. In addition, EFL teachers also pinpointed that the classrooms lack language teaching equipment and resources.

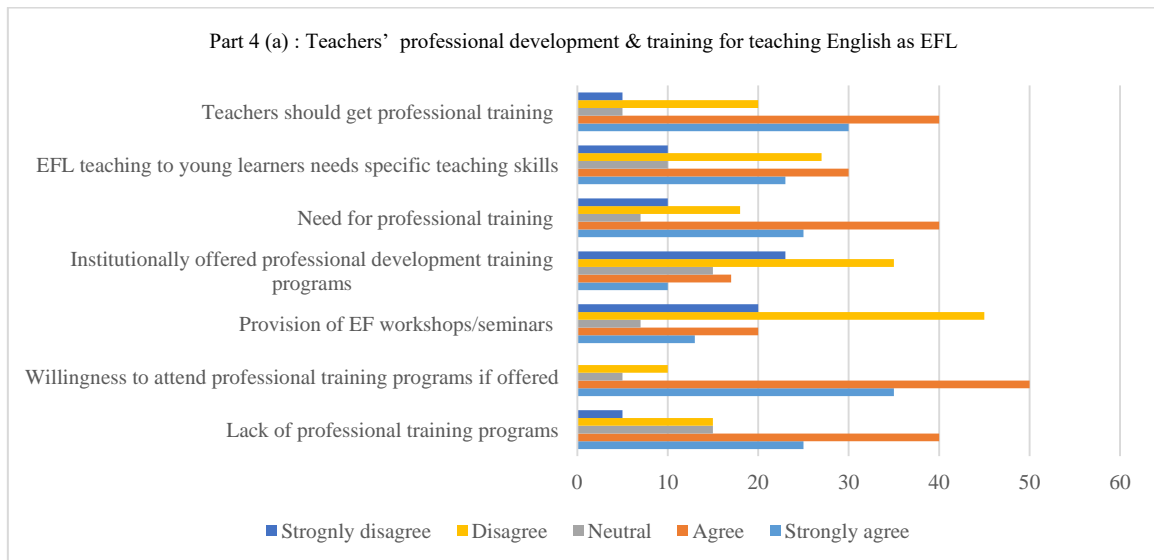


Figure 4. Provision and Perceptions of EFL Teachers' Concerning Professional Development

Continuous professional development and training have been considered and proven to be crucial in honing EFL teachers' skills for teaching more effectively and smoothly by professionally handling any challenges emerging (Chaves & Guapacha, 2014; Khan, 2012; Linz, 2013). Surprisingly, where 70% of teachers approved of the need for professional development, 25% of them negated it. As discussed earlier, teachers' beliefs and attitudes have a deep impact on the way they perceive and practice EFL teaching, this negation of the professional development need reflects teachers' unawareness of the cruciality of professional development. Also, almost 53% of the participants believe that teaching very young learners needs specific teaching skills, unlike 37% who do not think teaching to different age learners differs and requires different skills. Many previous studies have established the fact that teaching adults and teaching young learners are significantly different and require particular skills, training, and approaches (Crosse, 2007; Derakhshan et al., 2015; Ismail, 2015). The teachers' perception that teaching young and adult learners is the same may lead to the use of inappropriate teaching methods and approaches which in turn, may compromise the whole teaching and learning process and its effectiveness. Almost similar responses can be observed when the teachers were asked

about the need for professional development and training. Also, as per the responses of the participants, the provision of professional development training, workshops, and seminars by their institutions, and overall is one of the seriously neglected areas, as 58% and 65% of them respectively claimed that there is no such training, despite the fact that majority of them (85%) are willing to opt for such programs and opportunities if offered.

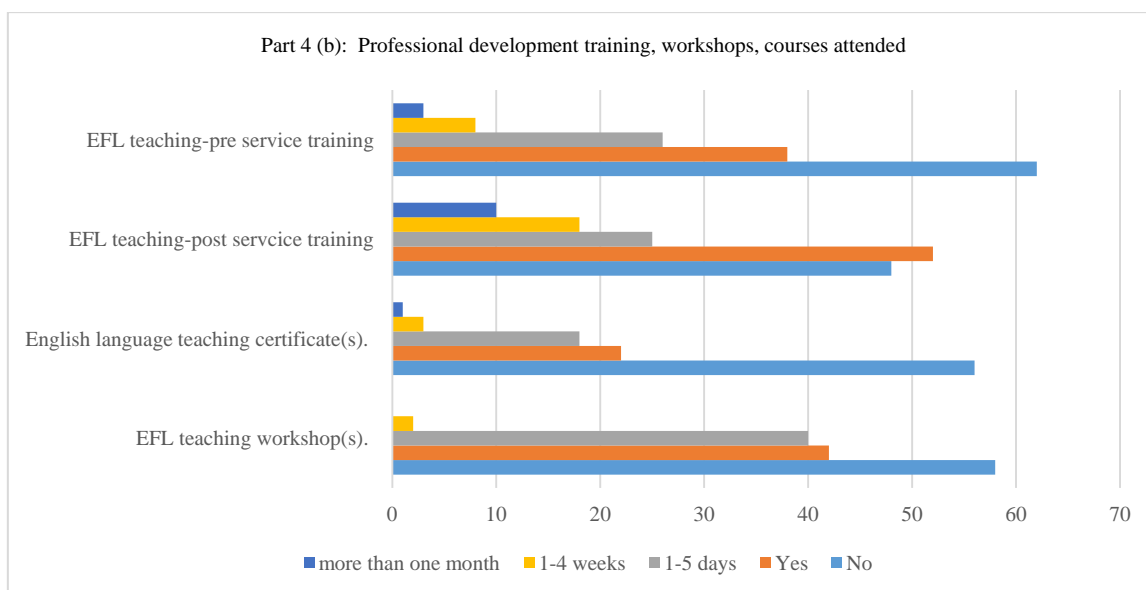


Figure 5. Teachers' Participation in Professional Development Training, Workshops, Courses

The above figure demonstrates the situation of pre and post-service teaching training, workshops, and/or certificates teachers have to perform as efficient EFL teachers. 37 of 60 teachers had no prior EFL training and 48% of them had attended no training after they started performing as EFL teachers. For the ones who had attended any training, their duration remained less than a week in most cases. As far as earning EFL-related certificates is concerned, 56% of the participants have no certificates, whereas, 18% of them avoided answering this question. Only 4 of the participants had EFL certification. A similar trend is evident in the reactions of the participants related to the workshops they had, with 58% having no workshops and 42% attending short-duration workshops. These responses validate the previously highlighted fact that there is a scarcity of pre and post-service professional development training, workshops, seminars, etc.

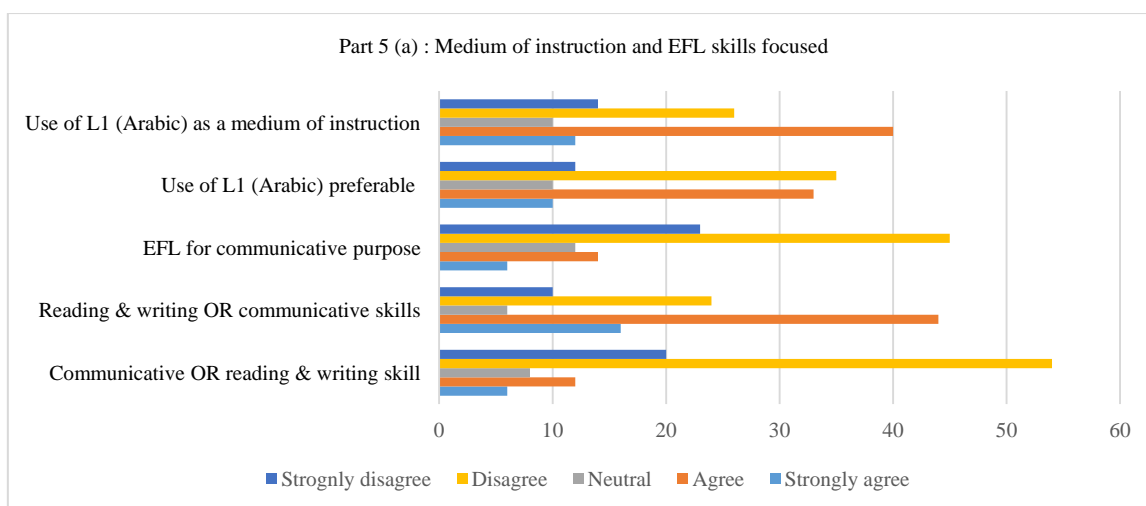


Figure 6. Medium of Instruction and EFL Skills Focused

One very pertinent area of EFL/ESL teaching and learning practices is the medium of instruction, common scholarly debate asserting that the target language should be employed as the medium of instruction and the use of L1 should be minimized (Almoayidi, 2018; Shin et al., 2020). 52% of the teachers established that Arabic is used as the medium of instruction, contradicting their responses when 47% of them do not prefer English to be used as a medium of instruction. It can be inferred that though teachers are aware of the necessity of using the target language as a medium of instruction, they still use Arabic as a teaching medium. Also, when asked whether or not the syllabus focuses on enhancing the communicative skills of EFL learners, the majority of responses remained negative demonstrating that communicating

in English is not the objective of the syllabus 74% of the teachers claim reading and writing skills are focused more than listening and speaking as far as the course materials and activities are concerned. This traditionally maintained focus on EFL teaching methods and approaches hampers the development of communicative competence in EFL learners in KSA which has been pointed out in many research studies (Al Ahdal et al., 2014; Al Asmari, 2015; Ashraf, 2018). Naturally, the learners will learn to speak in the target language when they will be given the opportunities to practice speaking in that language in various situations for various purposes.

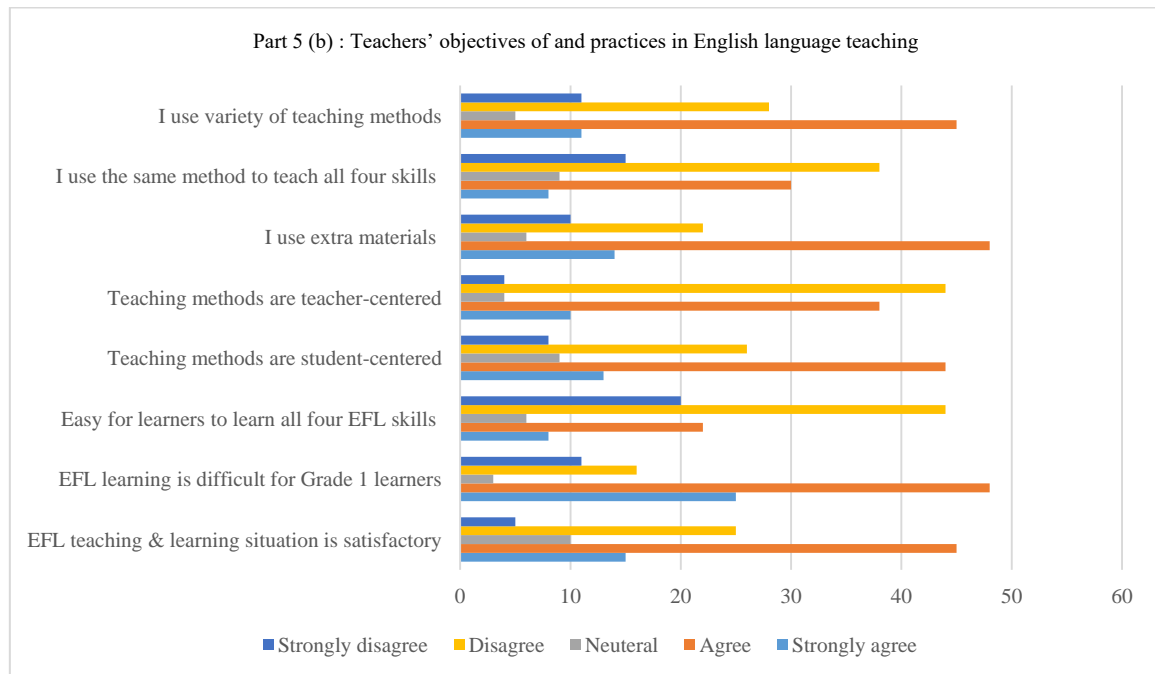


Figure 7. Teachers' Objectives of and Practices in English Language Teaching

The last part of the questionnaire focused on the individual practices of the respondents within the classroom situation. As asserted, a vast majority of teachers employ a variety of teaching methods and use extra materials if needed to make EFL teaching more effective. However, interestingly, almost half of the participants stated that the teaching methods are commonly teacher-centered and the other half maintained that they are learners-centered. On the other hand, 66% of the teachers said that the learners do not find it easy to learn English, specifically the young learners who face difficulties in learning English as declared by 73% of the teachers. But, 60% of the respondents despite all the issues highlighted in different parts of the questionnaire, believe that the overall EFL teaching and learning situation within KSA is satisfactory.

B. Qualitative Analysis

The open-ended, qualitative items were included so that pertinent areas of investigation can be investigated more profoundly through the perceptions and beliefs of the EFL teachers, the way they perceive them. Also, the main aim was to triangulate, validate and elaborate further on the key areas investigated in the quantitative part of the study.

(a). Language(s) Used Most Often as a Medium of Instruction and Why

One of the long-debated aspects of EFL/ESL teaching and learning practices is that should the teachers use the target language solely or L1 as well as a medium of instruction, or to what extent teachers need to rely on L1 if used. As established in previous studies, the nature and extent of the use of the target language or L1 can significantly hamper or facilitate EFL teaching and learning effectiveness (Chiou, 2014; Shin et al., 2020). With only a few exceptions, most of the teachers stated that they use both L1 (Arabic) and the target language (English), and sometimes Arabic is used more often than English. The most common reason offered for using L1 is that young learners come with exposure to only L1 listening and speaking and it becomes difficult to teach them in the target language only as stated '...they (learners) don't understand when I speak in English or explain in English. So I use Arabic to explain'. Also, some teachers believe that using the target language more often will stress young learners out right at the start of their school education. Some of the teachers said they use English very less resorting to the grammar-translation method when the book contents are taught or explained so that the learners can understand easily. Overall, it can be inferred from the responses that Arabic is adopted most of the time as a medium of instruction by EFL teachers which negates the fact that L1 should be used judiciously and sparingly while teaching a foreign or second language (Chiou, 2014; Shin et al., 2020) even recommending a "90% L2 and 10% L1" ratio (Hlas, 2016).

(b). EFL Skills Focused and Why

Traditionally, all around the world the main skills focused on within EFL/ESL contexts remain literacy skills i.e. reading and writing while oral skills are neglected (Jabeen, 2016). Within KSA, the same traditional way of teaching EFL has been questioned and criticized in many research studies (Al-Tale, 2017; Alrabai, 2016; Khan, 2013). Despite, the ongoing emphasis on focusing on the development of all skills, the majority of the teachers claimed that the main focus remains on reading and writing skills, and listening and speaking are less focused. Elaborating on the reason for this, they highlighted that the syllabus, books, and course materials, and contents lay more emphasis on teaching reading and writing than listening and speaking as in the words of one teacher "...the books and activities are mostly related to writing and reading... less tasks for listening and speaking".

(c). EFL Skills Neglected and Why

Some of the teachers believed that no skills are neglected, while others stated that more focus is laid on literacy skills and less on the development of oracy skills. And the causes of this less emphasis are the same as above i.e. lack of contents, focus, and activities in the syllabus and coursebooks. A few teachers remarked that "English pronunciation is challenging" for young learners and they find it difficult to speak in it.

(d). Challenges EFL Teachers Face in Teaching EFL Syllabus, Course/Textbooks Contents

Interestingly, almost 38% of the respondents claimed that they have no challenges in teaching the books, course materials, etc. While some of them pointed out that sometimes "...books contents are above students age level or understanding level" and "...it becomes difficult to clear their concepts". Some reported that linguistic content is difficult for young learners to comprehend. "Curricula are not compatible with the skills required of students to achieve and also not compatible with their desires", as described more specifically by one of the teachers, the curriculum and syllabus seem ineffective in promoting the specific language skills development and taking the needs of the learners into account.

(e). Challenges EFL Teachers Face in Teaching EFL Skills

Speaking is one of the most problematic and challenging skills for EFL teachers to teach as "...Textbook content doesn't provide to the student what they need in level 1 for speaking". Moreover, some EFL teachers believe that the role of parents and guardians needs to be more supportive and English language learning conducive "...Parents or guardians must talk to children in English and give time at home". Also, the interference of L1 on English pronunciation is another challenge both teachers and learners face, "...some of the sounds don't exist in our native language so the students could find it somehow difficult to pronounce". Similarly, the unavailability of audio-visual aids and language labs is also one of the major reasons why listening and speaking are not practiced more often. A few of the teachers also found the books "either too simple or too difficult". In addition, learners are sometimes not ready or motivated to learn, "...reading and writing skills in particular are not very appealing to students and most of them found these skills boring and challenging", as the content is difficult for the learners to comprehend so they lose interest.

(f). Ways to Make Teaching EFL More Effective

The teachers offered a number of suggestions to address the issue of EFL teaching and learning situations to make it more effective and successful. One of the major recommendations is revising the curriculum and syllabus of grade 1 English making it more suitable and relevant to the age, needs, and backgrounds of the learners. In addition, the teachers suggested adding more listening and speaking activities to promote the development of the speaking skill of the learners. Moreover, currently, the textbooks lack the fun-learning aspect. EFL teachers believe that adding fun activities, learning through playing, singing, and using hands-on tools and toys can significantly increase the learners' interest in learning English. The participants also emphasized the importance of a more supportive role of the parents in learning and speaking English at home too. A few teachers also highlighted the student-teachers ratio as well as one of the factors impeding effective English teaching and learning.

V. CONCLUSION

For the past few decades, there has been an increased awareness and acceptance of incorporating English into mainstream education within KSA, a reflection of which are the continuously changing EFL policies, immense efforts, budget spent, and multiple measures taken at the governmental and private levels (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017; Mehboob & Elyas, 2014). However, the success of any language policy depends on multiple factors and the effective roles played by each and every stakeholder involved. The current study aimed at constructing a comprehensive investigation and overview of the latest EFL policy and its implementation within KSA with respect to teachers' beliefs, curriculum relevance, teaching and learning practices, and challenging factors impeding its successful implementation. The demographic details reflect that the majority of the EFL teachers are in their mid-careers, teaching for more than 9 years, holding a basic BA degree (73%) and MA (27%), and without any EFL/ESL teaching certification (with the exception of only 2 teachers out of 60). The teaching of foreign languages and specifically to young learners need a set of specific skills, but as found in this study, there is a lack of professional training programs, workshops, training, and

seminars which deprives the EFL teachers of necessary exposure to the latest and up-to-date teaching methods and approaches, advanced technology, learning styles, etc.

Furthermore, most EFL teachers showed serious dissatisfaction with the syllabus, textbooks, and course materials of early-grade EFL learners being unsuitable to their age levels, too difficult for learners' comprehension, insufficient contents, and focus on communicative skills, etc. The next area of concern is the use of L1 for teaching English as EFL teachers acknowledge the frequent use of Arabic which has proven to be a main hindrance in developing the linguistic and communicative competence of the learners (Chiou, 2014; Shin et al., 2020; Jabeen, 2017). Also, as inferred from both quantitative and qualitative analysis, the textbooks, course contents, and activities, do not address the need for EFL teaching through fun and play which makes English learning more difficult, uninteresting, and challenging for young learners. To sum up, to achieve the goal of producing competent English users, EFL teachers should be continuously trained professionally through professional development and training and EFL/ESL teaching certification so that they are able to face the day to challenges of English teaching more efficiently. There is a dire need to revisit the EFL curriculum developed for young learners as it seems to seriously lack to address the multiple needs of the learners and EFL teaching objectives. Also, the overall EFL teaching and learning context should be made conducive to effective teaching and learning practices by providing infrastructural support, language labs, monitoring the student-teacher ratio, and more flexible teaching approaches.

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APPENDIX. QUESTIONNAIRE FRAMEWORK

The following questionnaire aims at identifying the perceptions and beliefs of early-year English teachers regarding the new English language policy, teaching practices, and the challenges they face in teaching English as a foreign language from Grade 1 and above. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.										
Part 1: Demographic items										
1. Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	20-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	31-40	<input type="checkbox"/>	41 and above				
2. Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	BA	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify) _____				
3. Field of Education/Highest Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify) _____						
4. Teaching Experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	0-2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	6-8 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	9 years and above		
Part 2: New English Language Policy Please choose your response from a scale of (1) Strongly agree to (5) Strongly disagree										
1. It is important to teach English from Grade 1 learners onwards in KSA.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
2. The new policy of teaching English from Grade 1 onwards is according to the global needs of learning English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
3. This new policy was needed according to the English language teaching context in KSA.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
4. Teaching English from Grade 1 will improve the early-year learners' EFL competence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
5. I find the new English language policy useful in teaching English as a foreign language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
6. It is as important for learners to learn English as to learn Arabic in the early years of language learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
Part 3: Provision, relevance, and the effectiveness of syllabus, books, and infrastructure in implementing the new language policy										
1. The syllabus provided facilitates teaching English effectively from Grade 1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
2. The syllabus/books' contents are appropriate according to the age level of the learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
3. The syllabus/books' contents focus on teaching all four skills- reading, writing, listening, and speaking equally.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
4. The classrooms are equipped with the basic facilities needed to teach English as EFL. (projectors, audio-visual aids)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree

4. Teachers' training for teaching English as EFL	
1. Teachers should get professional training for teaching English to young learners.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
2. Teaching English to young learners needs specific teaching skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
3. It does not need to have professional training to teach English to young learners.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
4. I attended training(s) for teaching English as a foreign language before starting to teach English.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes Numbers of trainings: _____ (i.e. 1, 2, 3) Duration of training: _____ (days, week, months) <input type="checkbox"/> No
5. I attended training(s) for teaching English as a foreign language after starting to teach English.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes Numbers of trainings: _____ (i.e. 1, 2, 3) Duration of training: _____ (days, week, months) <input type="checkbox"/> No
6. I have an English language teaching certificate(s).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes Numbers of certificates: _____ (i.e. 1, 2, 3) Name of certificate: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No
7. I have attended an EFL/ESL teaching workshop(s).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes Numbers of workshops: _____ (i.e. 1, 2, 3) <input type="checkbox"/> No
8. There are professional development training programs offered by your institute.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
9. There are workshops/seminars provided for teaching English more effectively.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
10. You would like to attend professional training programs if offered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
11. There is a lack of professional training programs at school levels to teach English to early-year students.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
5. Teachers' objectives of and practices in English language teaching	
1. Use of L1 (Arabic) is necessary to teach English to young learners.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
2. Use of L1 should not be allowed in EFL classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
3. The course materials and activities focus on teaching learners how to speak English.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
4. Teaching English for reading and writing is focused more than teaching how to communicate in English.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
5. Teaching English for communication is focused more than on teaching reading and writing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
6. I use different methods to teach English to young learners.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
7. I use the same method to teach all four skills i.e. reading, writing, listening, and speaking.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
8. I use materials other than course books to make teaching English more effective.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
9. My methods of teaching are more teacher-centered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
10. My methods of teaching are more learner-centered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
11. My students find it easy to learn all four skills in English.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
12. Young learners find it difficult to learn English as early as Grade 1.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
13. The overall situation of teaching English in the early years is satisfactory.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
6. Qualitative items: Medium of instruction, skills-focused, challenges faced by teachers in teaching English as a foreign language.	
1. What language(s) do you use most often as a medium of instruction and why?	
2. On what EFL skills, is most of your class time spent? Why?	
3. Which EFL skill(s) do you think are neglected or less focused? Why?	
4. What challenges or difficulties do you face (if any) in teaching EFL syllabus or course/textbook contents?	
5. Are there any challenges or difficulties in teaching English reading and writing skills to grade 1 and above learners?	
6. Are there any challenges or difficulties in teaching English listening and speaking skills?	
7. How can teaching English to young learners be made more effective?	

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