

**The Influence of Institutional Policy on Learning English as a
Foreign Language: A Perspective from King Saud Abdulaziz
University of Health Sciences in Saudi Arabia**

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الملخص

استخدمت هذه الدراسة النوعية نموذجًا من تحليل الخطاب النقدي، من أجل فهم التأثير المؤسسي على التعلم في برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية (EFL) في جامعة الملك سعود عبد العزيز للعلوم الصحية (KSAU-HS) في المملكة العربية السعودية. لذا تسعى هذه الورقة إلى التحقيق في كيفية تأثير السياسة المؤسسية، والانتماءات، والمناهج الدراسية، وطرق التدريس على دوافع الطلاب لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. تبنت الدراسة منظور الكاتب الفرنسي ميشيل فوكول (Foucault) للفرد والمجتمع في تحليل المستندات وبيانات المقابلات الخاصة بالمدرسين والطلاب من أجل الوصول لفهم أعمق لكيفية تبني اللغة الإنجليزية (EMI) كلغة تدريس أساسية بالجامعة. وأظهر تحليل البيانات أن ممارسات تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية قد تأثرت بشكل كبير بالسياسات والممارسات المؤسسية للجامعة ومكانتها في حقل التعليم العالي (HE). وتجدر الإشارة أيضا، الى ان ارتباط الجامعة بالشؤون الصحية بالحرس الوطني السعودي (SANGHA). كان له تأثير على اللغة المستخدمة في التدريس بالجامعة.



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Abstract

This study employs a qualitative paradigm with critical discourse analysis, which examines the institutional influences on the development of learning practices in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program at King Saud Abdulaziz University of Health Sciences (KSAU-HS) in Saudi Arabia. This paper investigates how institutional policy, affiliations, curriculum, pedagogy, and the resultant construct of agentic position influence students' motivation to learn English. Document reviews and teacher and student interview data are explored through Foucault's perspective of structure and agency to deeper understand how the English medium of instruction (EMI) has been developed and implemented at KSAU-HS. Data analysis revealed that EFL learning practices have been directly influenced by institutional policies and practices of the university and its position in the field of higher education (HE). It shows how language practices have been shaped by KSAU-HS's relationship with the Saudi Arabia National Guard Health Affairs (SANGHA). Furthermore, policies on faculty hiring and development, EFL instructors and administration connections, in addition to learning support resources and practices, have a considerable impact on EFL teaching and learning methods within KSAU-HS.

Keywords: English as a foreign language; institutional policy; learning; Saudi Arabia; Saudi Arabia National Guard Health Affair.

Introduction

Given the increasing relevance of English as a global language as a communicative medium for most scientific breakthroughs (Macaro et al., 2018), the international significance of English as a tool for integration and disseminating scientific explorations and ground-breaking advancements in knowledge has become a primary source of influence for global usage (Afroogh, 2018). Thus, English has internationally influenced countless higher education institutions (HE), which have responded to its adoption as a primary or secondary medium of academic instruction and other aspects of academic output. Here, it is imperative to refer to several studies that have detailed the implications of this phenomenon in several ways.

Importantly, many of these studies have influenced the policy development of numerous HE institutes in terms of their historical and structural position when using English as the primary language for communication (Alrabai, 2018). Hence, the influential position of historical and institutional factors and the constructed students' benefits in English language teaching and learning (T&L) construct the foundation of this study. Accordingly, this paper examines the various implications of the above points concerning learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and the English as a medium of instruction (EMI) usage at King Saud Abdulaziz University of Health Sciences (KSAU-HS).

Utilizing Foucault's notions of power and knowledge, the perspective of this paper will be interpreted through a poststructuralist lens of historical, structural, and power relations connected to the associated discourses, exploring how this may impact student agency (Alhamdan et al., 2017). This will be further examined through KSAU-HS's institutional perspective on the standardization of the T&L of the EFL program for the development of individuals who can participate in, contribute to, and leverage opportunities in the arena of global health science. This will be complemented by a discussion on the interests of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in global development by means of the connected thematic concerns.

Consequently, this study primarily examines the institutional establishment of a standardized EFL program and the approximate agentic influence on the student's readiness and interest in the EFL program. In light of structural and social influences as well as discourses, philosophically, this study focuses on the following: 1) the rationale and significance of the program, 2) how the EFL program contributes to the student's learning experience, and finally, 3) the student and teacher perceptions of the pedagogy and structure of the program.

In this study, we analysed how institutional policy has affected students' EFL educational experiences and how such regulations are implemented in the classrooms, where T&L are regarded to have great impact on students learn. Hence, the scope of this phenomenon shall be examined by employing the following research questions:

RQ1: How have the institutional policies of the university influenced T&L in the EFL program?

RQ2: How do the institutional policies regarding the EFL program contribute to the students' learning experience?

Background

The Agentic Nature of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has shared that they actively seek to spread the call of Islam on an international scale (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016; Alammash et al., 2021). Perceivably, this has been accompanied by the spread of the Arabic language, which is needed to accommodate the teaching and practice of Islam (Al Zumor, 2019; Saleh, 2017). In this, the historical dissemination and practice of Islam denote the global use of Arabic (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015), which has increased the number of people speaking the language outside the Arabian Peninsula. However, past studies have revealed a cultural belief that EFL learning has the potential to challenge these values and the purity of the Arabic language (Alsairi, 2018; Elyas & Badawood, 2016). Here, there is a reciprocal relationship between language and culture, where cultural backgrounds and behaviours shape perceptions and interpretations of the world (Kavakli, 2020), while language expresses cultural reality in a way that reflects people's attitudes, beliefs, and opinions (Alrabai, 2018; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017). However, it must be stressed that this argument for the effective learning of ELF in Saudi Arabia does not underscore the effective preparation for forming new values and practices under the influence of globalization and cultural development (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

Institutional policies on EFL learning suggest a factor influencing a student's ability to formulate cultural bipolarity will advance the status of Saudi Arabia on the global stage of research, discoveries, and developments (Alhuthaif, 2019). Constructed preconditions of cultural erosion, new cultural formation, and the possibility of subsequent cultural polarity ignite the pre-existing pointers of dissuading the agency of students' attitudes and interactions with learning and their reactions to T&L English (Alhawsawi, 2014; Alkhateeb, 2021). Thus, institutional policy on EFL learning in Saudi Arabia is accompanied by a designed curriculum and pedagogy built on a rationale that stresses the importance of teaching communicative strategies and the functional use of the language for the goal of conducting formal activities and communication through English.

Significance of English in the Context of Saudi Arabian National Development

In contrast to the constructed belief that learning English as a foreign language will challenge the vitality of the Arabic language and subsequently reduce the prominence of Islam, Alrahaili (2018) offers an alternative perspective. The teaching of EFL is a conscious effort of the government through the Ministry of Education and a selection of universities to develop intellectuals armed with bilingual skills to enhance the chances of promoting Islam internationally. Here, by teaching the true essence of Islam through employing English, certain misconceptions of radicalization of Islam from the Western outlook, such as religious extremism, can be interpreted from a different viewpoint.

In a similar vein, leveraging the opportunities of bilingualism among Saudi Arabian health scientists and physicians became explicitly important (Hajar, 2019) as local HE institutions strongly emphasize the strategic significance of EFL T&L. Such advantages can potentially allow Saudi Arabian health scientists to participate in and benefit from academic opportunities in the context of global health. Thus, despite the initial opposition to English upon its introduction to Saudi Arabia in an attempt to obtain a higher level of international integration, in hindsight, it has proven to be quite successful. Therefore, through the policies of HE, there has been significant and accelerated development in the T&L of EFL in Saudi Arabia (Alshahrani, 2016). It is also noted that EFL learning entails more than merely acquiring knowledge of a new language. Rather, it

requires developing an understanding of the learners' inclination towards their language and culture. This also translates as the recognition of this inclination in others of different mother tongues and cultures, including comprehending how this recognition affects the communication process within their language and culture.

The Implication of EFL Teaching in Saudi Arabia

As Mahboob and Elyas (2014) maintain, the primacy of English as a tool for globalization has grown exponentially alongside our knowledge of the world. It is, therefore, essential for Saudi's development and is employed in many academic and economic fields in the country, in addition to professional and social advancement (Alshahrani, 2016).

Furthermore, Alshahrani (2016) notes that in 2001, KSA heeded the call for educational policies relating to EFL studies as they had noted unsatisfactory levels of English in their schooling system. Hence, in 2003, the Saudi Ministry of Education ensured English became a central language in all primary schools, despite the worry of critics that this action could potentially challenge the younger generations' cultural and religious identity and their Arabic language development (Alshahrani, 2016). Counter to this notion of local critics, the development of this policy noted the following in accordance with sharing and strengthening Islamic beliefs while still advancing economically and academically internationally:

[T]o provide students with proficiency in English as a way of acquiring knowledge in the fields of sciences, arts, and new inventions, and of transferring knowledge and the sciences to other communities, in an effort to contribute to the spread of the faith of Islam and service to humanity.
(Ministry of Education, 2002, no page number)

This highlights the importance of teaching English in Saudi Arabia, specifically in attaining better job opportunities, gaining knowledge, understanding other cultures, and studying overseas. Therefore, this reaffirms the factor that stokes students' interest in acquiring experiences offered by EFL programs. Noticing the gap in the English language usage, Al-Seghayer (2012) observes that most Saudi universities now employ EMI, especially in fields such as medicine, allied health, science, engineering, and other technical subjects, through careful construction of their institutional policies.

Institutionalisation of KSAU-HS

KSAU-HS recognized the global significance of the English language for the globalization and development of KSA's health sciences. Hence, KSAU-HS possesses one of the leading HE institutional policies that influence the T&L of the EFL program to advance the global relevance of KSA. This was directly connected to KSAU-HS's affiliation with the Saudi Arabian National Guard Health Affairs Department (SANGHA), which founded the university itself.

Similarly, pursuing a tradition of excellence in T&L, the institution emphasized the relevance of the EFL program. Through its institutional policy, it extended the strategies of supporting the execution of the EFL program in all departments of KSAU-HS. The institution's policy on the EFL program influences a multidisciplinary approach to acquiring health science education that includes the acquisition of English for both basic and clinical science experiences. Since the institution's curriculum is problem and community-based, integrated, and centred on the students (KSAU-HS, 2021), the institution also seeks to expose students to the relevance of the

EFL program. This is achieved through various encounters from the start, promoting experiential learning. These opportunities are supplied by various web-based health science cases where students are expected to research and discuss class material in English. Saudi students must complete a three-semester EFL program as part of a four-semester unified pre-professional program (UPPP) to be equipped to handle the English language requirements of such a program.

With institutional discourse heavily favouring English, the EFL curriculum accounts for 75% of the UPPP as the university attempts to reduce the difference between what has taught in schools and what is required at the university. KSAU-HS promotes intensive and diverse discourses regarding the EFL program. There is a strong scientific component that assists students in enhancing their English language skills in preparation for medical school and the associated practical engagement with international communities.

Conceptualizing Institutional Influence on EFL Learning

Considering the above, teaching approaches and learning strategies in the KSAU-HS EFL program are influenced by various factors. For example, this includes variables such as teaching, examinations, curriculum, learning materials, teaching aids, class duration, class size, and teacher-student ratio. These variables and T&L activities in the EFL program are shaped by these institutional discourses, practices, and policies. As a result, it is crucial to comprehend structural effects and how they potentially influence T&L approaches.

Thus, several studies have looked at how university policy and other HE institutes influence T&L discourses and practices in HE EFL programs. Marginson (2008) links institutional policy and a university's status in HE by dividing the field of institutes of HE along two perspectives based on the work of Bourdieu (1977) on the exploration of the worldwide field of HE. The first perspective is a progression from elite research universities to commercial vocational education. While the second is based on whether the institute focuses on global or local markets. Different institutes within the field of HE have their own academic cultures and discourses, which are impacted by their positions in the field and, therefore, on T&L inside these institutions. Thus, as observed by Alkhateeb (2021), KSAU-HS's interest in preparing its students for global education and opportunities directly influences its EFL program and how students engage with its curriculum.

The Curriculum Structure and Pedagogy of the EFL Program in KSAU-HS

T&L of the EFL in KSAU-HS was designed, piloted, and influenced by the institution's related policy leading to the establishment of the EFL department to translate the institution's objectives on T&L of the English Language. This includes the translation of the institution's EFL curriculum objectives, where the KSAU-HS curriculum was developed in-house and used foreign EFL materials, including the American Headway and Azar-Hagen Grammar Series (Azar, 2011). The program aims to help Saudi students gain more complex English language skills and knowledge they will need to pursue health-related degrees. Although the English program was intended for health science students, it commences with general EFL courses in the first and second semesters, which shifts to ESP courses grounded in reading and writing during the third semester. This incorporates the development of critical thinking skills and ensuring learning autonomy has been built into its curriculum.

Generally, teaching approaches employed within EFL programmes in KSA can be categorized into two subcategories of methods, namely, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Alqahtani, 2018). The development of CLT approaches has been built through constructivist perspectives of T&L. In contrast, GTM approaches are based more on behavioural perspectives of T&L. Here, teachers either utilize one method in its purest structure or incorporate elements of other teaching methods. The choice of CLT or GTM is influenced by student need and their level of English language competency (Alkhateeb, 2021). A policy document, The Pre-Professional Program: The English language curriculum, states that:

The teaching methods should create space for including all students and cater for their educational and emotional needs.... Teachers must balance the teaching in a way that allows for a smooth student transition from high school education to university teaching and learning. (The Pre-Professional Program: The English language curriculum in Alhawsawi 2014: 297)

Since the students are familiar with GTM in their pre-university education, the desired teaching methods in the programme's first semester lean toward GTM. These shifts in the teaching methods are reflected in the way T&L is assessed in the programme (Alhawsawi, 2014). The EFL program comprises over 40 faculty members, with a student-to-teacher ratio of 20:1. Native English speakers (NES) represent the large population, while non-native English speakers (NNES) are recruited from various non-English speaking nations. At KSAU-HS, the EFL curriculum is rigorous and divided into eight modules, each of which is taught for 13-15 hours weekly throughout various semesters. Each lesson attempts to improve a distinct linguistic skill; however, others focus on improving more than one. Hence, they identify the best method of communicating the lessons to sustain student interest.

In the first semester, three courses of general EFL are provided. *Communication Skills* aims to develop linguistic communication skills such as listening and speaking. *Language Structures and Drills* develops students' language usage and accuracy. *Academic Reading and Vocabulary* aims at enriching students' vocabulary and provide them with the ability to understand various academic reading discourse, with a focus on fluency rather than accuracy.

In the second semester, more advanced modules of the same courses are taught, except for *Communication Skills*. This course is replaced with *Introduction to Academic Writing*, which aims to increase the academic challenge to ease their transition from general writing to structured ESP writing. The reduction of *oral skills*, and the additional *reading and discussion*, is rationalize by the assumption that the students are able to improve these skills independently by then.

In the third semester, students are offered an ESP course through two modules of *Advanced Rhetorical Writing* (a 7-hour per-week module) and *Language Structure and Grammar* (a 7-hour per-week module). Both modules are aimed at helping students to develop their academic writing skills through learning complex grammatical structures that assist with such a pursuit. Overall, the assessment of this program is heavily reliant on exams based on information contained in textbooks and associated critical thinking skills.

Discourses Regarding EFL Instructors in the Arabian Gulf

Many tertiary institutions in the Gulf region hire EFL instructors through outsourcing, which does not always require candidates to have a high degree of education or experience, especially if they are white native English speakers (Al-Zadjali, 2016). Many tertiary institutions in the Arabian Gulf still perceive NES as ideal candidates, where their understanding of 'NES teachers' is racially motivated (Al-Zadjali, 2016). Although these universities' policies do not mention an actual manifestation of what an 'English native speaking teacher' may be, many Gulf countries' practices suggest that this has been based on historically influenced notions of an instructor being a white English native speaker (Ali, 2009). This current reality exposes historical discourses, which have produced a contextually based power dynamic regarding their choice of potential candidates (Alhamdan et al., 2016). These institutions fail to benefit from employing EFL professionals who may help improve their EFL programs due to outdated discourses connected to mastery of the English language being tied to a specific race, where competency and experience should be their primary concerns (Al-Zadjali, 2016).

Policy and Discourses Regarding EFL Instructors in KSAU-HS

The EFL department at KSAU-HS does not appear to operate under the above criteria. The university applies rigorous selection criteria, irrespective of the applicant's race or origin. An EFL instructor must hold a degree in linguistics, or an area associated with English Language Teaching in order to work at KSAU-HS (ELT). The university also requires NES candidates to have 3 years of EFL teaching experience in non-native English-speaking countries. Additionally, KSAU-HS mandates that EFL teachers recruited from non-English-speaking nations possess at least a bachelor's degree in ELT and five years of relevant teaching experience. This is considered a way for KSAU-HS to ensure that their EFL instructors can establish a high-quality T&L environment that assists students in enhancing their linguistic abilities and easing their transition from Arabic to EMI.

Additionally, the university is able to provide substantial incentives to EFL instructors because to its relationship with SANGHA, a prominent government entity, which may draw instructors of a better calibre. EFL instructors and their families enjoy competitive salary as well as SANGHA medical coverage, which is considered as a highly prestigious. Moreover, globally recruited EFL instructors are provided with privileges not generally available at other colleges, such as a stipend for their children's education.

Method

Study Perspective

This study adopts a Foucauldian poststructuralist framework, drawing on data from document reviews, policy documents, and qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research is an effective strategy for investigating policy implementation and related issues in a real-world setting. It is commonly used to investigate complex phenomena in their multifaceted contexts (Creswell & Porth, 2017), which is in line with the objectives of this study.

For the purpose of this research, the data will be used to examine the complex EFL discourses relating to social practices surrounding T&L that have been developed at KSAU-HS. This will have an emphasis on the connected historical conditions, structures, and pedagogy that

have influenced the evolution of power relations that construct the associated discourses of students and teachers.

A thorough review was conducted of documents related to the EFL program. These include the university website, the program description, curriculum specifications, and teacher requirements and benefits. As a qualitative study of KSAU-HS' EFL program, the investigation is focused on the influence of institutional policy on epistemological access to the program.

Data Collection and Analysis

There were 36 male participants in total, with 27 EFL students at different stages of study and 9 EFL teachers at KSAU-HS. The students were recruited randomly to represent different semesters of the program. The teachers were recruited via purposeful non-probability sampling to ensure that native and non-native English speakers were represented in the sample group.

Since the study's primary goal is to examine the impact of institutional policy and reviews of EFL documents, such as the University Vision, Mission, Student Guide, and the publication of SANGA, these documents were then subjected to a thematic analysis, which was used to examine the data and allow for the emergence of alternative discourses and mechanisms (Creswell & Porth, 2017). The interviews were discussed with the participants before using the poststructuralist epistemological viewpoint. Each time new knowledge of the data surfaced, collected interpretations were re-examined. Through the use of hidden naming models, all information gathered from the participants was kept secure and anonymous. The data analysis yielded an overwhelming number of pertinent quotations and reached saturation. Hence, the best representation of each emergence was included to ensure the overall voice of the participants was shared.

The study adopts sound ethical principles regarding research participants, who were teachers and students of the KSAU-HS EFL program. Individual semi-structured interviews were performed in English and Arabic which lasted 20-30 minutes each. The processes were reflexive throughout the interviews by assuming the role of an empathic listener, with an open sharing of experiences being promoted (Creswell & Porth, 2017). In terms of ethics, this study had to be approved by the institutional review board of KSAU-HS and was provided with the IRB number 0486/22.

Findings

What Influence do University Policies have on the EFL Program?

A document review reveals that a royal decree established KSAU-HS as a specialised health science university in March 2005. The university's mission statement (KSAU-HS, 2021) emphasises the university's single-disciplinary nature:

... became an institution that could bring in talented pupils from across the Kingdom. The university attracted the brightest and most competent professors, and it has developed into a local and regional leader in health science education. (KSAU-HS, 2021)

This decision to be a single-discipline university seems to have arisen from KSAU-HS's association with SANGHA, which has significant implications for the university and its students. Therefore, via document analyses that emphasize the

connection between KSAU-HS and SANGHA, we may ascertain how these objectives are pertinent to the EFL programs. This may be seen in KSAU-HS's mission statement:

...Integration between the university, the Ministry of National Guard health affairs, and the King Abdullah International Medical Research Center to reach the level of a unified health system. (KSAU-HS, 2021)

Both KSAU-HS and SANGHA are handled by personnel who have roles inside each organization, based on the affiliation and structural connection that has been formed between the two organizations. Thus, the strategic goals of the explain the relationship created that informed KSAU-HS's policy development:

...national and international recognition and reputation through the continuous development of academic programs to produce highly qualified health professionals and active citizens.... Paying attention to scientific research and health activities of national value and global importance... Maintaining qualified teaching staff and a distinguished workforce while providing them with professional development opportunities. (KSAU-HS, 2021)

Therefore, KSAU-HS links all of its scientific activities with SANGHA in order to represent its academic success in medical health advancements, with institutional policies that are geared toward SANGHA's vision. This justifies the posture of external documents from King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, which states that a selection of universities in Saudi Arabia have instituted a policy to employ the use of EMI (Al-Seghayer, 2012). Thus, key institutional policies of the university, including EMI, are founded on this historical link because it being a single-discipline university and is association with SANGH.

How does the Institutional Policy on the EFL Program Contribute to the Students' Learning Experience?

Findings from document reviews and interview data explain how the institutional policy on EFL teaching contributes to the students' associated learning experiences. As previously stated, the university's T&L component of the EFL program is influenced by the historical relationship between KSAU-HS and SANGH. However, EFL T&L in KSAU-HS is more complex than merely learning a new language. Rather, it involves the policies of KSAU-HS on influencing the creation of experiential learning outcomes, i.e., learning and practising the use of English in speech and written communication during the learning process. This is pointed out in the institution's motivating values that are set to motivate the students towards learning. Motivating learners is a complex and demanding endeavour incorporating various psychosocial and linguistic elements (Albrecht & Karabenick, 2018). Solely this motivation underlies the global benefits attached to T&L in English. It is captured in the rationale of KSAU-HS EFL program orientation, policy on the program curriculum, learning conditions, and the recruitment of EFL instructors.

The claim that EFL learning has assisted the establishment of a tradition of learning for excellence is evident through the reviewed literature and interviews on the curriculum advantages of teaching the EFL program. This program commands dedication toward learning to fulfil the medical school requirement of preparing students for global opportunities (Alkhateeb, 2021). This

is attained through the university's policy structure of dependence on a tradition of excellence, which points to the need to shape the reality of the students through the accumulation of quality English language education. The university's long-term goal has been the development of graduates that can leverage international opportunities in the health sciences community. Importantly, KSAU-HS is the only institution in KSA to teach specialist health sciences and the second university to primarily incorporate EMI (Alkhateeb, 2021). This discourse is encapsulated in the address of the Dean of the Unified Pre-Professional Program at KSAU-HS:

The English language tends to be the common language in culturally diverse settings, and it is unmistakably the lingua franca in modern medicine. There are more professional journals published and conferences held in English than in any other language. This is why the College is an English-medium institution... Competency and confidence in English language skills are essential... All of our lectures, seminars, discussion sessions, and presentations are conducted in English... Laying down the basic foundation is an essential and integral part of preparing students for their future education at university. (Dean of UPPP, KSAU-HS, 2011, p. No page number).

The above quotation highlights why KSAU-HS and its administrators stress the necessity of studying English as being key to accessing the overall curriculum and why it incorporates the use of EMI. This demonstrates KSAU-HS's recognition of the necessity of English preparation for students pursuing health-related studies. This is especially important if students are to progress in their careers and extend the Saudi knowledge base into economic and educational structures on an international scale (Jawhar et al., 2022).

KSAU-HS's institutional policy adopts several historical aspects of SANGHA, including the extensive use of English in its internal and external communications. As Sousa (2019) identifies the use of English as the global lingua franca of academia, it becomes necessary for students to embrace the EFL program. Thus, if the goal is to integrate KSAU-HS within the international health sciences community, it is imperative to offer a high-quality EFL program in an Arabic-speaking and religiously homogenous country such as KSA (Alkhateeb, 2021).

As observed by Barnawi and Al-Hawsawi (2017), English lays the groundwork for the institutional policy on enhancing the T&L of the EFL program and for further improving the student's learning experience. It seems KSAU-HS's position on policy has influenced students' perceptions, which was echoed through the student interviews. This is especially notable in terms of the culture of the instruction of the EFL program and its influence on the learners' learning motivation. This interviewee affirmed that learning in the EFL program has not only created exposure to English but also built confidence:

Since I'll be studying medicine in English, I believe I should have faith in my ability to converse in English. The university English program is, in my opinion, the longest and most rigorous one available in Saudi Arabia. I'm in my third semester, and I think the program has helped me get better at using English, so I am ready to start my scientific education. I have good communication in reading, and reasoning skills. I was first concerned about how to learn a subject as difficult as medicine in English. However, now I am

more prepared to begin my professional education now that I've completed this extensive program [the EFL program]. (Student 1)

Another account was provided in support of the EFL program propelling students to do their best in order to improve their English language skills:

English is crucial for studying health sciences, but I believe the required level of English language here is to advance... everything is written here in English. The communication is English... it feels overwhelming for somebody like me who graduated from a government school. It makes me study hard all the time. (Student 8)

Although in the quotation above, student 8 complained about the overwhelming nature of the English language programme in KSAU-HS, it can be suggested through the same quotation that the rigorousness of the language programme motivated the student to study harder in order to actualise his educational goals.

These responses demonstrate the students' confirmation of the significance KSAU-HS EFL T&L, regardless of whether they are satisfied or unsatisfied with the rigorous structure of the university EFL program. Thus, it demonstrates how the policy's emphasis on English language learning encourages students to advance their language skills in order to succeed in their degrees. In a study conducted in KSA in the context of EFL, one of the primary causes of low achievement was directly related to students' lack of motivation (Alrabai, 2016). This emphasises the need to ensure that students are motivated to learn English for them to excel.

Another student considered how university administration works to improve his English language proficiency to the extent that he is able perform excellently within his various university programs:

For a variety of reasons, I enrolled to study medicine. One of them is that because the intensity and the uniqueness of the language program here at KSAU-HS. Despite the fact that this is only my beginning in the program, I believe that I met the challenge that I had anticipated. (Student 2)

Students who struggled with the EFL program also testified for the university policy and its association with SANGHA in upholding the quality of the EFL programme in the university:

When I applied to this university, I was very well aware of the university's excellence that comes from the association with the national guard... but I didn't expect the English program to be this demanding. I am working hard, but I am not sure if I can make it passed this first semester of the English language program. (Student 11)

The quotation shows that even if students were not doing as well in the EFL programme, they still testified to the programme's excellence that is often seen connected with SANGHA, where English is used as the medium of communication.

Significantly, employing EMI highlights the value the students attach to possessing superior English language skills or the ability to develop such skills through the privileges of the EFL program. This is noted in another student's reflection:

The fact that the presentations on the [orientation] day were given in English speaks volumes about the professionalism of the program and the university. There aren't many colleges that do their orientation in English language... I was quite excited and believed that the English language program would have the degree of challenge I anticipated from an institution that specializes in health sciences. (Student 3)

Here, it is noted that the promotion of the policy and its importance within the academic culture of KSAU-HS is held in high esteem by students. However, Elkhafaifi (2005) and Sadiq (2017) believed that students could be more engaged in class and improve their learning outcomes if they were less anxious about learning a foreign language. Therefore, KSAU-HS policy shows that the institutionalisation of EMI psychologically prepares a learning environment created by the university that influences the student's preparedness to join the international academic community (KSAU-HS, 2021). Thus, the findings establish the importance and benefits of the institution's policy on EMI through the university's worldview on globalisation and competency rationale.

How does KSAU-HS Policy Influence the Pedagogy of the EFL Program?

EFL instructors are hired to assist students in developing English language skills that will equip them to engage with and demonstrate an international academic level of English. The appointment of qualified and experienced EFL instructors to enhance the institution's policy on quality English language communication skills and experience is imperative. Therefore, attempting to understand how employing highly experienced and competent EFL instructors can benefit the institutional policy of enhancing the student's learning experience. Here, interviews with the students and instructors show how the EFL instructors add value to the institution's policy on learning the English language and engender the students' interest in quality learning:

I came from a government school. We were mostly expected to memorise a few words to pass the exam. I was good at that. But here, studying everything in English is a new and different game... I need to improve my English to a very advanced level if I were to have a chance to pursue my education. The teachers here are aware of my challenges. I am anxious, but they often modify their teaching to ensure I follow. For example, I was shown how to create a personal dictionary that suited only my needs. I could improve my English here if I did what I expected of me. (Student 20)

When establishing facts on the pedagogical role of the instructors in the EFL program, interviews with the instructors helped in creating a framework on how T&L activities have the potential to increase student understanding and influence learners' experiences of EFL learning:

The involvement of everyone in the classroom, including myself, is essential to effective teaching. Before they approach me, I always advise the students to talk and seek clarification from their classmates. When they ask me, I always try my best to explain the reasoning behind the answers and allow them to come to their own conclusions. Such dialogues, rather than my standing at the centre of the room lecturing, have always been seen as an essential part of learning in my opinion. (Teacher 1)

This teacher divulges the employment of engagement, critical thinking, and social skills, the incorporation of feedback and student autonomy, and ensures all students are part of the learning process. Here, using CLT stresses the importance of group-based activities to enhance student learning (Dos Santos, 2020). Students can enhance their learning independently at first, while engaging with other students in English and, if necessary, with the teacher directly. This shows that not only has the ELF program improved learners' English abilities, but it has also added to their social skillset. Here the EFL program has assisted learners in conversing in English in an academic context, aided in developing critical thinking skills as well as gaining a higher level of autonomy in their studies (Alkhateeb, 2021). In a study conducted in a similar EFL context, Gulnaz (2020) noted the effectiveness of promoting inter-student engagement by employing debate. The results showed that this form of engagement encouraged better student collaboration, improved critical thinking, increased independent learning, improved evaluation and analysis skills, and ultimately increased English language mastery. The strength of this engagement technique is communicated in the quotation below:

Students need to grasp exactly what I'm attempting to teach, so I take the time to plan out the lesson and clarify unfamiliar terminology. This enables the students to grasp how the vocabulary and grammatical rules are utilized in various phrases. Additionally, I offer them the chance to practice during the class, and I provide them with critique at the end. (Teacher 2)

This teacher resonates with how the institution's policy on creating an enabling environment for instructors through their welfare and nature of employment negotiates their commitment towards the institution and institutional policy value on T&L within the EFL program:

I received numerous offers from Saudi institutions. I did, however, choose to accept the position at this institution (KSAU-HS), not only due to the financial benefits but also due to the National Guard's status. I was aware that being a member of a university affiliated with the National Guard would mean having less issues navigating the bureaucracies, which can oftentimes be quite challenging, even when obtaining travel documents or a driver's license. The university works with several offices in medical centres to complete the majority of our documents without requiring us to visit the any government agencies. (Teacher 3)

Thus, according to Berry (2010), it is argued that teachers' knowledge, abilities, and attitudes are necessary, but so is their welfare. Teachers in high-needs and low-performing institutions of learning are increasingly seeing this as a practical reality (Al-Zadjali, 2016).

As Barnawi and Alhawsawi (2017) reflect, English as a foreign language is progressing in KSA. The methodology of T&L is receptive, and thus, through institutional structures, including policy on creating enabling environments for T&L of the EFL program, the program could go far to actualise the global significance of KSA in the area of human capital development and innovation. The advancement of the EFL program, however, relies on the university's policies and practices. Hence, students' motivation to participate in the EFL program, its class participation and relationship with teachers, pedagogical methods and overall program performances are

predominantly reliant on the university's policies regarding the T&L of the EFL program to project the global relevance of KSA through its development of human capital.

Implications

As was already said, KSAU-HS dedication to fostering students' proficiency in English throughout its many initiatives is unique within its own sociocultural settings and may be adopted by other universities in KSA. Such policies, as many students stated, assisted not only in the preparation of completing their university degrees; but also aided them in linguistic, academic, and social competence to compete on an international scale. Consequently, the findings of this study reflect the depth of the factors that influenced the T&L of the EFL program. This study has the potential to inform future research in new dimensions through the nature of the EFL programs at KSA. Other researchers are invited to further investigate the complexity of EFL learning in Saudi higher HE to grow KSA's participation in the international academic arena.

Conclusion

Results show that the most significant factors influencing EFL learning in KSAU-HS include its policy development and the high standards of preparation of the EFL program's instructors. This extends to numerous areas in which they aid in developing discourses and social practices associated with T&L in KSAU-HS. The first is the status of the establishment as a unipolar academic institution for health science and the need to develop learners on a global level. The second is the university's affiliation with SANGHA, which shapes the rationale of the university's institutional policy and the relationship between structure and societal agents. The third is the position of the institutional policy on T&L practices and pedagogies associated with the EFL program and the advancement attuned to the global view of the role KSA can play among the comity of nations through science and health.

This leads to a greater appreciation of the way the university impacts the EFL program by emphasizing the link between the institutional influences of KSAU-HS on T&L practices of the EFL program in the university as a specialized health sciences university that is aligned with SANGHA. Similarly, the alignment between the university's structure (institutional policies) and the societal agentic effects, such as students' motivation, educational aspirations, and economic opportunities among students, explicitly explains how KSAU-HS's institutional policies greatly influence and complement the students' motivation, passion, and commitment to KSAU-HS 's EFL program.

Realising the purpose of learning English, it is believed that intensive concentration on T&L will positively affect the associated practices. Hence, this study offers consolation where learning English for academic and career development may challenge the socio-cultural heritage of KSA and produce Saudi graduates that shun their heritage. Rather, it offers evidence that the development of such social practices through the ELF program has provided KSA with an avenue to attain a place in the international academic community.

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Bio

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