

## Exploring the Interactions and Perceptions of EFL Instructors in the Saudi Online Learning Environment

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### Abstract

With the proliferation of online teaching and learning in Saudi tertiary education, the role of the instructor during students' second language (L2) interaction has been seen as crucial in the online environment. However, it is yet to conclude how to promote L2 interaction between EFL instructors and their students when they interact in instructor-student online exchanges. The aim of the current study is to examine and understand the interactions and perceptions of EFL instructors to help enhance their interactions with their L2 students in the Saudi online environment. Three EFL instructors interacted online with their Saudi EFL students for a whole semester to discuss argumentative topics in the discussion forum. Data were collected through the transcripts of online interactions and one-to-one structured interviews. A content analysis approach was employed and a template for analysing online interactions was developed during the study. Qualitative and quantitative methods were employed for data analysis. The findings show that the three instructors played different interactional roles when they interacted with their students in the online discussion forums. Instructors observed that their students paid attention to linguistic errors and improve their L2 output when they interacted in instructor-student online exchanges. Instructor online presence and language corrective feedback given by instructors appeared to influence Saudi students to pay attention to the linguistic accuracy of their interactions and improve their language in the online environment. Some implications for EFL instructors have been pointed out by the researcher to help foster online L2 interaction between EFL teachers and Saudi students. More research is needed to help understand how to promote L2 interaction between EFL teachers and L2 students in the online environment.

**Keywords:** content analysis, discussion forums, EFL instructors, instructor-student interaction, online learning, perceptions, Saudi students

**Cite as:** Alamir, A.H. (2017). Exploring the Interactions and Perceptions of EFL Instructors in the Saudi Online Learning Environment. *Arab World English Journal*, 8 (1).

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol7no1.11>