Investigating the Low English Proficiency of Saudi EFL Learners

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Abstract
Saudi students studying English as a foreign language often do poorly in their English courses, and despite a growing number of studies on this issue the root causes have remained a mystery. To gain a more comprehensive perspective, this study investigated the underlying reasons for Saudi EFL learners performing poorly in English by including all major stakeholders. This study attempts to find out the potential underlying reasons for the low performance of Saudi EFL learners. The researcher conducted qualitative interviews with two educational consultants, six university teachers, six graduate students, and six high school teachers. In addition, quantitative data came from high school students via a questionnaire addressed to 100 participants. The data revealed a shared chain of factors related to objectives, learners, teachers, curricula, assessment, and practicality. The findings suggested a gap between the theories consultants used to set class objectives and actual practice. This gap stemmed from consultants not consulting with or directly evaluating people in the field, such as educators, students, or university staff. The study recommends researchers get an overview of Saudi English learners at the macro level rather than focusing solely on their performance in one language skill. That should produce more valid, reliable, and practical suggestions to improve Saudi EFL learners' performance.

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Introduction

Despite the efforts of individuals, learning institutions, and governments (Bashehab & Buddhapriya, 2013), students often have poor ability in their second language (L2). This is the case in Saudi Arabia, where the government has expended considerable time, money, and energy promoting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with less than remarkable results (Al-Khairy, 2013; Elyas & Picard, 2010). Numerous studies have shown that Saudi EFL learners routinely demonstrate below-average English skills (e.g., Al-Nasser, 2015; Alrabai, 2016; Alqahtani, 2019; Alshammari, 2021). Despite studying English for at least six years, they typically show poor reading performance in language proficiency exams, such as TOEFL, and are unlikely to have the competency needed at the university level (Alqahtani, 2019; Alshammari, 2021).

This study suggests that most treatments to improve Saudi learners' English fail to address the core problem (cf. Khan, 2011; Rajab, 2013). After years of L2 instruction following a traditional teacher-centric model, Saudis see themselves as passive recipients of knowledge (Alqahtani, 2019; Alshammari, 2021). This pattern leads them to be inactive and silent in the classroom unless they are asked to recall information. Such a scenario runs in contrast to the zone of proximal development, which asserts that "direct teaching of concepts is impossible and fruitless. A teacher who tries to do this usually accomplishes nothing but empty verbalism, a parrotlike repetition of words" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 150).

Alrabai (2016) proposed two main types of factors harming English performance: "internal/individual factors (the learner's demographic characteristics) and external factors (sociocultural variables, instructional variables, and problems with the educational system)" (p. 2). Given the number of studies that have offered potential solutions, why does this problem persist? Numerous studies have sought to uncover the reasons for the poor language performance of Saudi EFL learners (e.g., Al-Nasser, 2015; Alqahtani, 2019; Alrabai, 2016; Alshammari, 2021). However, to the researcher's knowledge, none of them included policymakers or educational consultants in the Ministry of Education along with university and high school EFL teachers. This study sought to understand the underlying reasons why Saudi EFL learners perform poorly in English by gathering data from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, from educational consultants, who work closely with policymakers, to educators who implement the resulting policies and students. In addition, the study comments on the practicality, validity, and reliability of the underlying reasons suggested by other studies attempting to find out responses to the two research questions; 1) What are potential underlying reasons for the low performance of Saudi EFL learners? 2) What recommendations could improve their English performance?

Literature Review

Alrabai (2016) highlighted internal and external reasons for Saudis' low English ability. The internal factors included: gender, age, motivation. That study claimed external factors had greater influence than demographic factors. External factors, which are not controllable by learners, could include sociocultural factors, such as the influence of Arabic as the first language (L1); religion, culture, and society; instructional variables […] the curriculum, and the teaching methods. Another issue was the large number of learners per class.

Alqahtani (2019) noted that Saudi EFL learners had an average overall TOEFL score of 64 out of 120 between January and December 2016. To investigate the reasons for such a low

score, Alqahtani interviewed a random sample of 60 EFL learners and 30 teachers. The study proposed several contributing factors related to the students, teachers, learning environment, and curriculum.

Al-Nasser (2015) examined teaching methods and environment. Reasons for poor English included (a) not introducing English earlier, (b) poor teacher training, (c) outdated curriculum, (d) poor technology use in the classroom, (e) students using their L1 instead of the L2, and (f) students' fear, anxiety, and lack of motivation. Al-Nasser recommended introducing English earlier, focusing on quality over quantity, paying more attention to evaluation than examination, limiting classes to under 20 students, and increasing the time allocated for English classes.

Many studies have examined Saudis' poor EFL performance in a specific area, such as reading or speaking. For instance, Khan et al. (2020) investigated reading difficulties in elementary school. They collected qualitative dada from 290 students and nine teachers and supervisors. Based on the interviews, reading test, and checklist, they concluded that students' reading difficulty was caused by insufficient vocabulary, incorrect spelling, slow reading, inaccurate pronunciation, and poor grammar. They recommended learners focus on these areas to improve their reading, which could consequently improve their overall language ability.

Alharbi (2015) suggested that Saudi EFL students' poor communication skills in English came from not using English outside the class and a lack of access to authentic language situations. Alharbi recommended (a) reevaluating Ministry of Education policies, (b) including higher-order skills and critical thinking, and (c) making some public schools bilingual.

Chatta and Haque (2020) attempted to improve writing skills of Saudi English learners through using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It substantially aimed at implementing Flipped Classroom instruction as a tool to improve the overall writing strategies through dividing the participants into control and experimental groups. It found out that the experimental group concluded with better writing performance than those in control group.

Altamimi and Ab Rashid (2019), also conceptualized the importance of English language learning in Saudi context, and they specifically explored Saudi English learners' writing/ spelling challenges since writing is a key success in academic life. They tried to understand the underlying reasons that caused spelling errors of Saudi EFL learners. They concluded with more frequent reasons; 1) English syllabus, 2) learners' attitude, 3) effect of first language. Also, Alshammari (2021) explored the pronunciation issues that Saudi EFL learners usually encounter during their English learning journey through highlighting the impact of dialect on mastering proper English onset clusters (two or three consonants in initial position). He concluded that Saudi learners who speak northern dialect receive the highest correctness rate due to their language contact with Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian and other Arabic variations.

Methods
This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, collecting qualitative data via semi-structured interviews to collect in-depth details and quantitative data via one hundred questionnaires filled out by high school students. It was guided by two main research questions:

1. What are potential underlying reasons for the low performance of Saudi EFL learners?
2. What recommendations could improve their English performance?

It also explored a secondary question: To what extent are the suggested treatments practical, valid, and reliable?

Participants

The study recruited 126 participants, including two educational consultants, six university teachers, six MA students, six high school teachers, and one hundred EFL learners attending high school (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Distribution of participants*

Participant Group	N	Gender		Education Level	Mean Age	Instrument
		Male	Female			
Educational consultants	2	2	0	PhD	48	Interview
University teachers	6	3	3	PhD	40	Interview
MA students	6	3	3	MA in progress	26	Interview
School teachers	6	3	3	BA in teaching	33	Interview
High school students	100	50	50	High school	17	Questionnaire
Total	126	64	62			

Procedures

Before conducting the study, the author received approval from the human subjects' committee. Sampling was based on certain inclusion criteria. For instance, the six faculty members had to be specialized in English language teaching, TESOL, or a related field, such as applied linguistics. After confirming that participants met the inclusion criteria, sent them the consent form, which explained the purpose of the study, confirmed the anonymity and confidentiality of the data, and stated that they would not be compensated. participants that the interview could be online or face to face, depending on their preference. For the questionnaire, contacted some English departments at Saudi universities that offered an MA program in English teaching or a related field. With departmental cooperation, I reached out to MA students willing to participate.

Results

Interview Results

Q1: Do you think there is any problem with Saudi EFL learners' level of English? To what degree out of 100% are you sure there is a problem?

All participants agreed that Saudi EFL learners' English ability was a problem, with their certainty ranging from 50% among educational consultants to 90–100% among teachers and students (see Table two).

Table 2. *Question one's results*

Participant	Level of Certainty
Educational Consultants	50%
University Teachers	90%
MA Students	100%
School Teachers	100%
M	85%
SD	23%

Q2: What do you think is the exact problem that we need to focus on?
Educational consultants and university teachers emphasized the need to include higher-order cognitive skills in language classrooms and felt learners focused mainly on lower-order skills, such as memorization. MA students felt the problem came from the use of a traditional teacher-centered approach. School teachers asserted the opposite, that students put less effort into EFL classes, were less likely to see learning English as important, and did not want to use available resources to improve their English.

Q3: Can you explain what we mean exactly by sufficient language level for Saudi EFL learners?
This question received several different responses. Educational consultants asserted that sufficient language level should be identified by "the ability to pass authentic and valid language tests" based on international standards. University teachers also referred to standardized exams but noted that sufficient language level included the linguistic knowledge that could help learners perform better. The rest of the participants concentrated on learners' ability to pass classroom tests with little-to-no reference to international standards.

Q4: Do you think learners are responsible for their low language performance?
The first set of educational consultants indicated learners were partially responsible for their poor English because they failed to use resources available online or study more. Consultants and university teachers agreed that students could ask more questions, study more at home, and use available resources and that most learners associated good language skills with high scores on class assessments. Most school teachers also gave a positive response. In contrast, MA students blamed teachers for interfering with the learning process and failing to motivate students to use English more inside and outside the classroom. One asserted that learners could improve their performance through teachers.

Q5: Do you think learners can improve their language performance by themselves?
Most educational consultants stated that this question should be rewritten (e.g., "To what degree do you think learners can improve their language level independently?"). They affirmed that learners could do this independently but to a limited degree. University teachers indicated that learners absolutely could improve on their own. MA students stated that learners needed intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, and self-confidence. School teachers also responded positively, pointing out that learners have more resources they can use independently if they have the motivation.

Q6: What do you think the most problematic issues are that affect learners' low performance?
Educational consultants listed several major challenges. One noted there were internal and external factors related to students, teachers, and assessment methods. Another mentioned application validity inside language classrooms. He continued, "we are hypothetically and theoretically fine" but have some issues related to putting educational theories into practice. University teachers claimed learners needed to change their conceptualization of a good learner. One stated that most learners thought they could only learn English through a teacher-centered approach in a classroom and that learners should know they need to practice more outside of class. Another said, "They can speak to themselves in case. They cannot find a proper environment to practice English." One stated the most problematic issue was "exposing L2 learners to English" and advocated including English in earlier grades. School teachers noted

learners' low motivation. One stated this came from the lack of English-related jobs. MA students indicated that problems often stemmed from teachers or traditional methods.

Q7: What ways do you recommend students could improve their language level?
 Educational consultants recommended learners use available sources and institutions giving teachers more comprehensive training. University teachers recommended learners do more research, called for more classroom observation to understand the problem, and stated that assessment methods needed to be reevaluated. School teachers said learners should put more effort into expanding their lexicon as most learners suffer from poor vocabulary, which is a lower level of Bloom's taxonomy and thus required for higher-order linguistic skills. MA students recommended motivating learners inside and outside the classroom.

Q8: Do you think teachers are responsible for learners' low language performance?
Educational consultants gave similar responses that teachers were partially to blame along with other factors. University teachers said the teacher could play a major role in low performance, while MA students responded in more affirmative terms. In contrast, school teachers claimed that teachers played only a minimal role in learners' low language competency as teachers had to follow inflexible lesson plans. For example, one said, "What can I do if I find out that some of my students lack English letters while they study in high school?" He continued, "If I waste the time of class teaching them basic letters/components, then I am not following the instructions received from the educational advisors."

Q9: Do you think teachers can help improve students' language performance?
Educational consultants agreed that teachers could improve student performance, although teachers might lack the motivation or knowledge to do so. They claimed that successful English learning should include all important factors. University teachers indicated that teachers could provide learners with ample help by motivating them and teaching them how to work for themselves rather giving them all the answers. MA students said teachers could help by making their teaching less traditional and more interactive. School teachers stated that the help they could give was limited by "students' willingness" to learn, which could be increased through internal and external factors.

Q10: What do you think are the most problematic issues in language teaching, if any?
Educational consultants stated that language teachers should be more creative to attract and motivate students, but the opposite is often the case, where teacher motivation relies on student motivation. Furthermore, teachers should update their knowledge of language education. To this end, the Saudi government has decided to include mandatory exams for a teaching license, which tests knowledge related to the teacher's field and targets teaching methods and issues. University teachers felt there was no single problem and instead proposed revising teaching methods and bridging the gap between theory and practice. They concluded that teachers should understand that not all successful methods are successful with all learners. MA students highlighted the importance of teachers' lack of communicative English knowledge. According to school teachers, there should be a smaller student-teacher ratio to make it easier to give individual feedback and follow the progress of each learner.

Q11: What ways do you recommend teachers could improve their teaching methods?
Educational consultants answered this question at the end of their response to the previous one (Question 10), i.e., that teachers should follow new developments in the field and be more creative about making learning more enjoyable and interesting. They also reiterated the importance of a license exam to force all teachers in the field to refresh their knowledge. University teachers noted the importance of teacher beliefs and the need to negotiate this issue for any changes to succeed. MA students mentioned that teachers should know more about interactive methods rather than only teacher-centered instruction. School teachers felt most teachers were fine but could improve by becoming more motivated.

Q12: Do you think English curricula are responsible for learners' low language performance?
Educational consultants said the curriculum was not responsible because the texts had been evaluated internationally and were continuously reevaluated by the Ministry of Education. Instead, they felt the root problem could be the inability to effectively teach them. University teachers were not sure because they had not looked at the new books yet. MA students gave a negative response, while school teachers said curricula were responsible to a degree, as the English knowledge in the books was far above learners' level.

Q13: Do you think English curricula can be developed to improve learners' language performance?
Educational consultants answered in the affirmative but noted the assigned English materials were not fixed, as they were "following the new trends" in L2 learning research. University teachers also responded affirmatively but had not looked at the new books. MA students said the curricula could be improved but largely did not suggest how, except for one participant who recommended adding "more communication than exams." School teachers reiterated that the number of topics and difficulty level were above learners' level.

Q14: What do you think are the most problematic issues regarding English curricula, if any?
Participants largely agreed there was no exact problem but recommend periodical evaluation of curricula to ensure they met learners' level.

Q15: Do you think the assessment methods are responsible for learners' low language performance?
Educational consultants stated that assessment methods needed higher validity to measure the course objectives and other elements. University teachers had not looked at assessment methods but recommended learners receive more valid, authentic, and reliable assessment. MA students proposed take-home exams to reduce test anxiety, while school teachers did not feel assessment was responsible for poor language skills.

Q16: Do you think the assessment methods can be developed to improve learners' language performance?
All groups of participants responded positively about the problems of current classroom assessment. University teachers always hoped there was a way of improving assessment to decrease the negative washback effect from exams.

Q17: What do you think are the most problematic issues regarding the assessment methods, if any?
Educational consultants recommended assessing higher-order thinking skills rather than concentrating on memorization, such as by adopting something similar to the norm-references scores operated by TOEFL. University teachers felt it was important to measure language skills beyond the ability to store and extract knowledge. MA students said learners should be asked to be more active, such as by giving presentations, rather than focusing on texts. School teachers felt learners should have to take a placement test before joining a class as teachers were burdened with learners lacking fundamental linguistic knowledge.

Questionnaire Results
The questionnaire results are presented in Table three. Regarding the first questionnaire item, more than 90% of participants felt they needed to improve their English skills (see Figure one).

Table 3. *High school student questionnaire*

| No.	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I feel that I need to improve my English skills	92%	2%	3%	3%	0%
2	My English level is okay	6%	11%	7%	44%	32%
3	I think learning English means learning English culture	72%	7%	2%	8%	11%
4	I feel bored of learning English	69%	11%	19%	0%	1%
5	The English teacher has good experience	4%	4%	82%	5%	5%
6	Teachers usually talk and we listen	91%	3%	5%	1%	0%
7	I care about grades more than learning English	93%	2%	2%	2%	1%
8	I don't want to learn English anymore	49%	21%	24%	1%	5%
9	The book is difficult to understand	64%	25%	9%	1%	1%
10	I usually revise my English lessons at home	18%	12%	26%	14%	30%
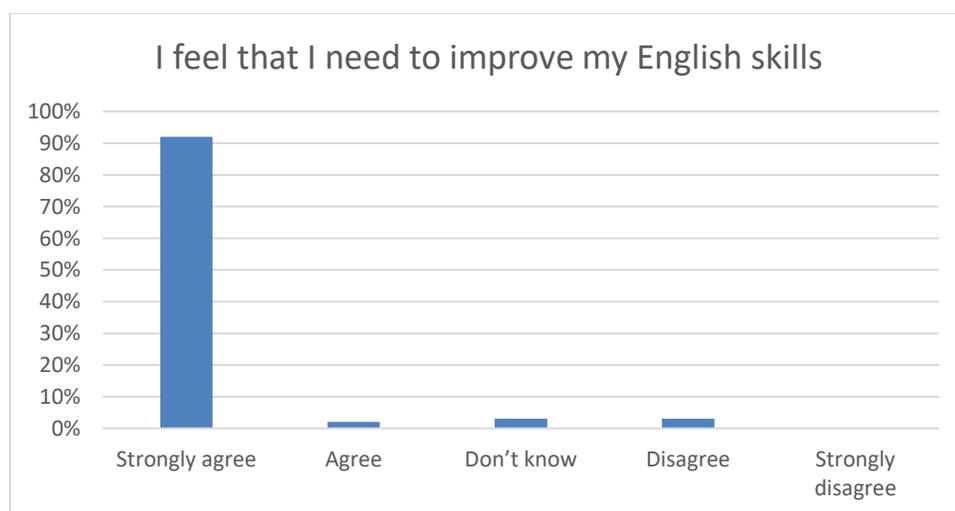
Figure 1. Distribution of responses to Item one

Not surprisingly given the response to Item 1, around three quarters of participants disagreed with the second item that their English was sufficient (see Figure two).
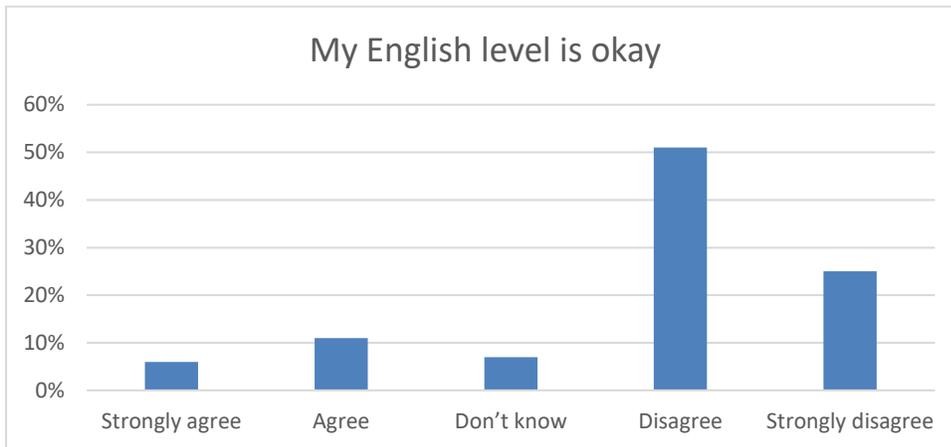
Figure 2. Distribution of responses to Item two

For Item three, learners largely conflated learning the English language and Anglophone culture, thereby viewing language and culture as inseparable (see Figure three).
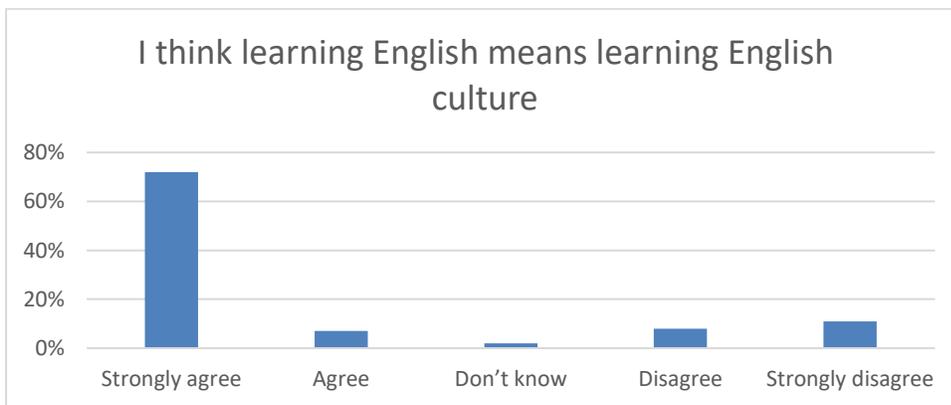

Figure 3. Distribution of responses to Item three

The participants strongly agreed with Item four that they frequently felt bored of learning English. This boredom could reflect low motivation to learn the language (see Figure four).
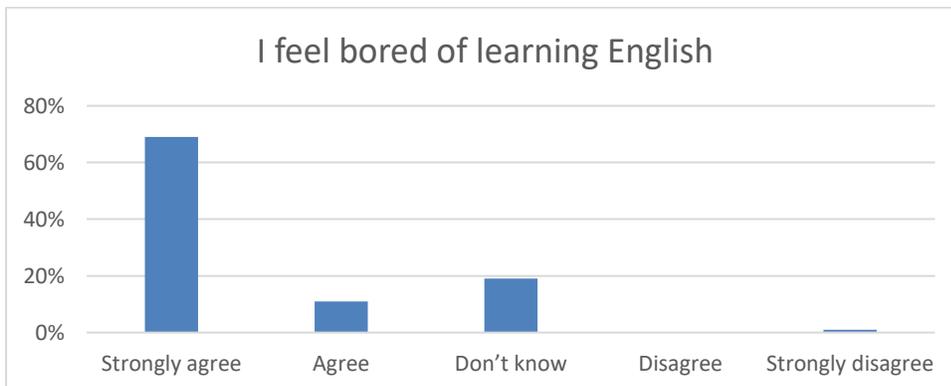

Figure 4. Distribution of responses to Item four

Over half of participants agreed that teachers lacked experience, and around a third reported they did not know, with few selecting other options (see Figure five).

Figure 5. Distribution of responses to Item five

Responses to Item six indicated the teachers followed a teacher-centered approach. Just over 90% of participants reported that teachers talked and students passively received the information (see Figure six).

Figure 6. Distribution of responses to Item six

Learners responded positively to Item seven, confirming they cared about their grades more than English because grades determined whether they would pass exams (see Figure seven).
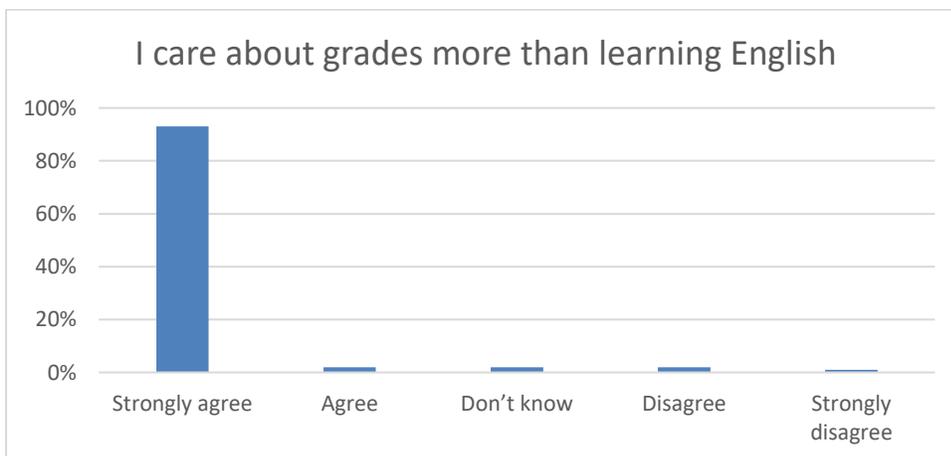

Figure 7. Distribution of responses to Item seven

Responses to Item eight indicated students mostly preferred not to continue learning English (see Figure eight).
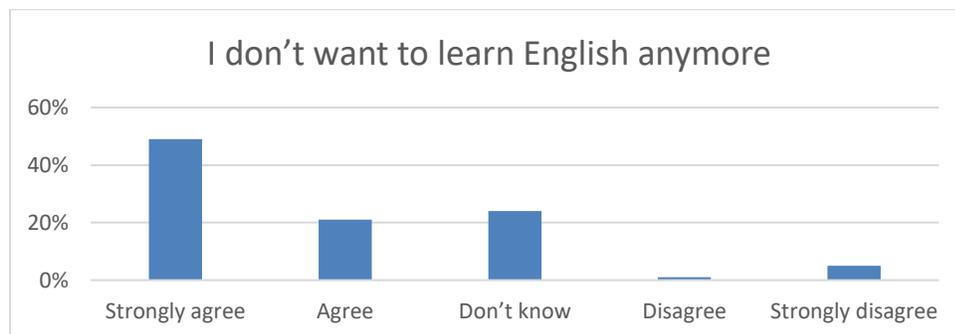

Figure 8. Distribution of responses to Item eight

For Item nine, participants thought English materials were difficult to understand and thus perhaps beyond their level (see Figure nine).
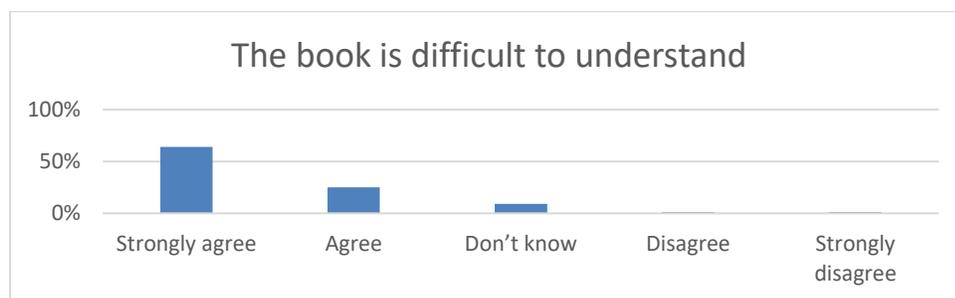

Figure 9. Distribution of responses to Item nine

Item 10 concerned whether learners looked over and revised their English lessons outside class. They were more likely to disagree than agree, but their responses varied greatly, as shown in Figure 10.
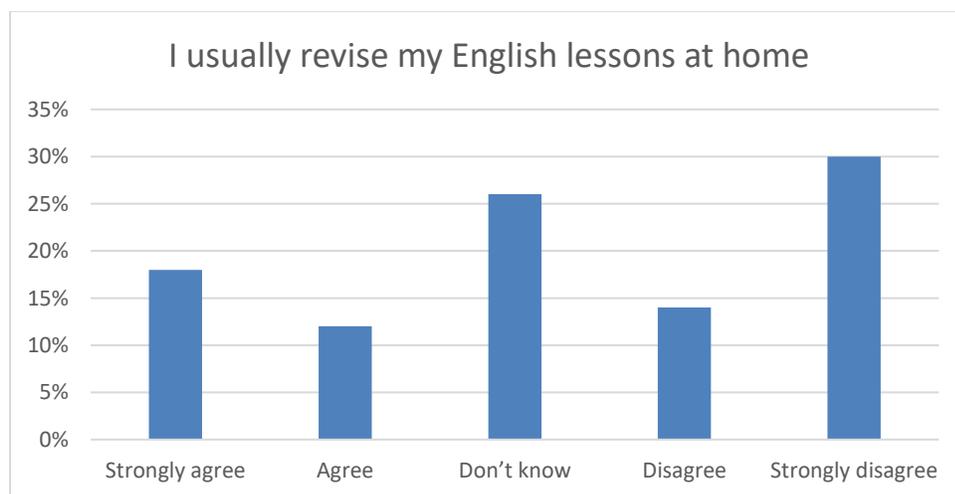

Figure 10. Distribution of responses to Item 10

Discussion

This study sought to answer three research questions: What are potential underlying reasons for the low performance of Saudi EFL learners? What recommendations could improve their English performance? To what extent are the suggested treatments practical, valid, and reliable?

The findings revealed several possible underlying reasons for why Saudi EFL learners perform poorly in English. A major issue was the gap between theory and practice. The Saudi government has spent considerable time, money, and effort hiring educational consultants to improve instruction. Although the resulting curricula, methods, and materials might be based on valid theory, they are not always effectively carried out in practice (Al-Nasser, 2015; Alqahtani, 2019; Alrabai, 2016; Alshammari, 2021). For the new learning objectives to be workable, they need to be communicated clearly at the micro and macro levels to English teachers, along with suggestions for the best ways to achieve these objectives.

The objectives could be made easier to achieve if policymakers took into account the varying characteristics of teachers, students, and local culture. For example, northern Saudi Arabia is more rural, and students there are often preoccupied with helping on their family farms, leading to more absences from class. Thus, it is vital to determine why students in a given area are not attending class regularly. With this information, it would be easier for policymakers to address student-related learning obstacles.

A growing body of research has investigated issues leading to low test scores, poor language ability, and concerns among students and faculty in the Saudi EFL classroom. However, prior accounts of this problem have failed to factor in the role of educational consultants in the Ministry of Education, where objectives are made, curricula designed, and guidelines produced. Despite the use of valid and reliable methodologies, these consultants may have failed to appreciate the target audience, i.e., Saudi students. Policymakers need more data on how these learners think and see their classes. They also need to look at other sociocultural and economic factors. Saudi students often view English more as a course to pass to obtain a degree and a better income. In contrast, EFL students in other Arab countries might also see the language as an additional tool they can use in their work. Therefore, Saudi students might be more motivated to learn English if they viewed the ability to use it as important to their career rather than merely for passing exams.

To address these issues, the Ministry of Education has had educational experts assess the validity, reliability, and practicality of implementing different methodologies and how well they actually achieve the desired objectives. Methods should be reevaluated to make students an active part of the learning process. In this way, students could be encouraged to move from the lowest stage in the cognitive process (memory) to higher stages, enabling them to think creatively and critically. This in turn could help them more confidently express themselves in the target language.

Conclusion

This study attempted to investigate all possible major reasons for the poor English of Saudi EFL students, starting with classroom practices. The data revealed a gap between the people setting objectives, designing curricula, and mandating policy on the one hand and the teachers and

students who have to implement that policy on the other. The researcher interviewed decision-makers as well as teachers and students at the high school and university levels to collect a broad range of perspectives. The findings showed that each group had sometimes very different opinions about learning problems and how to solve them. Therefore, educational consultants should observe classes and ask teachers about their professional needs and teaching challenges. To facilitate this process, the Ministry of Education could create an online portal for teachers and students to submit their concerns. Such data could in turn inform the research of university professors. This collaboration would work more efficiently under a single project. Resolving this problem requires more comprehensive data and analysis that examines how different factors are related and contribute to learning issues. Only then can the validity, reliability, and practicality of the Ministry of Education's objectives for English be assessed. Once that assessment is complete, the next step would be to select more effective methods by examining whether it meets learner needs. Finally, implementing these changes would requiring educating, training, and certifying teachers.

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Appendices
Appendix A
Consent Form for University Teachers

Dear Professor / Faculty Member,
I am Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari, and I am investigating challenges that could cause Saudi EFL learners to have low English performance as part of the study "Investigating the Low Proficiency Level of Saudi EFL Learners: A Comprehensive Analysis to Understand What the Problem Is, from Where It Comes, and How It Could Be Solved." I kindly ask for you to be part of this study as a participant. All personal information will be anonymous and confidential. No one will have access to it except the researcher for the purpose of coding only. For example, the researcher would report the responses as in "Participant 1, a male faculty member, responded to Question 9 by saying…" or "Participant 5, a female MA student, highlighted the importance of…" There is no reward for participating.

Basically, your job is to respond to several questions (maximum 25) regarding the study topic through a semi-structured interview that can be conducted face to face or online. If you are willing to participate, please send this form back to my e-mail ksa.usa.h@hotmail.com or h.alshammari@ju.edu.sa after circling the following information that best describes your current position/rank and signing below:

  o   I am a Faculty Member: (Assistant Professor) / (Associate Professor) / (Professor)

I am willing to participate in this study and am interested in this topic.

Please sign here:

………………………………..
Thank you for your cooperation.

The Researcher,
Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari

Appendix B
Consent Form for MA Students

Dear MA Student,
I am Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari, and I am investigating challenges that could cause Saudi EFL learners to have low English performance as part of the study "Investigating the Low Proficiency Level of Saudi EFL Learners: A Comprehensive Analysis to Understand What the Problem Is, from Where It Comes, and How It Could Be Solved." I kindly ask for you to be part of this study as a participant. All personal information will be anonymous and confidential. No one will have access to it except the researcher for the purpose of coding only. For example, the researcher would report the responses as in "Participant 1, a male faculty member, responded to Question 9 by saying…" or "Participant 5, a female MA student, highlighted the importance of…" There is no reward for participating.

Basically, your job is to respond to several questions (maximum 25) regarding the study topic through a semi-structured interview that can be conducted face to face or online. If you are willing to participate, please send this form back to my e-mail ksa.usa.h@hotmail.com or h.alshammari@ju.edu.sa after circling the following information that best describes your current status and signing below:

I am an MA student and my specialized area is (TESOL) / (TEFL) / (Applied Linguistics)

I am willing to participate in this study and am interested in this topic.

Please sign here:

………………………………..

Thank you for your cooperation.

The Researcher,
Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari

Appendix C
Consent Form for High School Teachers

Dear Teacher,
I am Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari, and I am investigating challenges that could cause Saudi EFL learners to have low English performance as part of the study "Investigating the Low Proficiency Level of Saudi EFL Learners: A Comprehensive Analysis to Understand What the Problem Is, from Where It Comes, and How It Could Be Solved." I kindly ask for you to be part of this study as a participant. All personal information will be anonymous and confidential. No one will have access to it except the researcher for the purpose of coding only. For example, the researcher would report the responses as in "Participant 1, a male faculty member, responded to Question 9 by saying…" or "Participant 5, a female MA student, highlighted the importance of…" There is no reward for participating.
Basically, your job is to respond to several questions (maximum 25) regarding the study topic through a semi-structured interview that can be conducted face to face or online. If you are willing to participate, please send this form back to my e-mail ksa.usa.h@hotmail.com or h.alshammari@ju.edu.sa after circling the following information that best describes your current position/rank and signing below:
   o   I am an English teacher with experience of (1-3 years) / (4-8 years) / (more than 8 years)

I am willing to participate in this study and am interested in this topic.

Please sign here:

………………………………..

Thank you for your cooperation.

The Researcher,
Dr. Hammad Ali Alshammari

Appendix D
Interview Items
a) Overall View

Q1: Do you think there is any problem with Saudi EFL learners' level of English? To what degree out of 100% are you sure there is a problem?
Q2: What do you think is the exact problem that we need to focus on?
Q3: Can you explain what we mean exactly by sufficient language level for Saudi EFL learners?

b) Student-Related Issues

Q4: Do you think learners are responsible for their low language performance?
Q5: Do you think learners can improve their language performance by themselves?
Q6: What do you think the most problematic issues are that affect learners' low performance?
Q7: What ways do you recommend students could improve their language level?

c) Teacher-Related Issues
Q8: Do you think teachers are responsible for learners' low language performance?
Q9: Do you think teachers can help improve students' language performance?
Q10: What do you think are the most problematic issues in language teaching, if any?
Q11: What ways do you recommend teachers could improve their teaching methods?

d) Curriculum-Related Issues
Q12: Do you think English curricula are responsible for learners' low language performance?
Q13: Do you think English curricula can be developed to improve learners' language performance?
Q14: What do you think are the most problematic issues regarding English curricula, if any?

e) Assessment-Related Issues
Q15: Do you think the assessment methods are responsible for learners' low language performance?
Q16: Do you think the assessment methods can be developed to improve learners' language performance?
Q17: What do you think are the most problematic issues regarding the assessment methods, if any?

Appendix E
High School Student Questionnaire

No.	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I feel that I need to improve my English skills					
2	My English level is okay					
3	I think learning English means learning English culture					
4	I feel bored of learning English					
5	The English teacher has good experience					
6	Teachers usually talk and we listen					
7	I care about grades more than learning English					
8	I don't want to learn English anymore					
9	The book is difficult to understand					
10	I usually revise my English lessons at home					