

## Exploring Gifted Secondary School Students' Needs for English Learning in Saudi Arabia

**Muhammad Manasrah**

Education College, Umm Al-Qura University - Makkah, Saudi Arabia

**Iman Alzobiani**

Education College, Taibah University- Almadinah, Saudi Arabia

**Noha Alharthi**

Applied College, Umm Al-Qura University- Makkah, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author: [naharthy@uqu.edu.sa](mailto:naharthy@uqu.edu.sa)

**Norah Alelyani**

English Language Teacher, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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### Abstract

This exploratory paper investigated female gifted secondary school students' needs for English Learning in Saudi Arabia. It has addressed a gap in the literature regarding English Learning needs analysis of gifted secondary school students in Saudi Arabia. It tries to answer the question: What are the needs of those students? The professional needs for English learning were collected through a need analysis questionnaire addressed to gifted secondary school students in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Al-Baha in Saudi Arabia. The data analysis techniques for the descriptive statistics were frequency count, percentage, means, and standard deviations. The results revealed that gifted students need to learn English primarily to access the vast body of international scientific knowledge and research, to get international certificates in English, and to deal with the media, technology, and the Internet. In addition, this study specified students' perceptions about the characteristics that should be included in English class, the difficulties they faced while studying language, and their suggestions for better English learning strategies. Furthermore, gifted students preferred to learn English from activities that resemble daily life situations and to learn at their own pace. The research results indicated that gifted students face difficulties in class, such as making mistakes and feeling bored because they already know the information. They have demonstrated a need to insert virtual learning environments into the curriculum. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education enable gifted students to study a tailored gifted curriculum in English and activate enrichment in and out of activities.

**Keywords:** English, Learning, gifted, giftedness, needs analysis

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## Introduction

Gifted education aims to provide Gifted Students (GSs) with appropriate opportunities to maximize their learning potential and make meaningful social contributions (Renzulli, 2012). GSs have the right to receive high-quality instruction in an educational system that meets their abilities and needs. Some GSs have shown high intellectual abilities and are capable of extraordinary performance and accomplishment because of their advanced creativity (Alharbi, 2021). GSs require special attention, in and out of school, to ensure fulfilling learning needs and provide opportunities to perform at a level that matches their potential (Kerr, 2009). Failing to meet the needs of GSs contributes to society's loss regarding future contributions (Alharbi, 2021).

The uniqueness of the gifted requires modification in parenting, teaching, and counseling to develop optimally (Boland & Gross, 2007). GSs should continually utilize their high abilities to keep developing their academic and thinking skills to prepare for future challenges.

GSs require well-designed curricula and programs to develop their full potential. However, identifying appropriate curricula for GSs is a universal challenge (Van Tassel-Baska, 2008). Therefore, GS needs ample educational opportunities and services which cannot be supplied with regular programs (Alelyani, 2021). Additionally, providing GSs with curricula that satisfy their needs demands trained and qualified teachers (Finley, 2008).

The needs of English as foreign language learners who have special needs like GSs have been a challenging task in many countries today (Do & Nguyen, 2021). These needs must be analyzed to understand the necessary changes to improve the curriculum, obtain deep insights, and provide more significant inputs about language learners' current and future needs (Cowling, 2007).

The GSs require special care and proper planning for their educational needs according to their abilities (Kerr, 2009). The unique needs of GSs have only recently begun to be recognized in Saudi Arabia. However, there has been a failure in providing necessary services to GSs. GSs in Saudi Arabia studied the same English language curriculum as regular students and were taught by untrained teachers of gifted education. There are some special programs for GSs, such as summer enrichment and weekend programs, but they do not include English Language (Alamer, 2014).

Therefore, students' learning needs should be considered sufficiently because their engagement will be increased when course plans and English lessons are tailored to their interests, needs, and current level of English proficiency (Brown, 2009). The current study attempts to determine the needs for EL among gifted secondary school students in Saudi Arabia by seeking the perceptions of gifted Saudi EFL students regarding their needs to learn English.

Over the past decades, research on the needs analysis of English learners has been done, such as Loan and Dan (2018) and Zafar (2020). However, previous studies on the needs analysis of English learners have not been rigorous or conclusive. Furthermore, although the gifted secondary school system has been in operation for several years in Saudi Arabia, a few studies have been conducted on EFL students' learning needs in Saudi gifted schools. The current research has addressed a gap in the literature regarding EL needs analysis of gifted secondary school students in Saudi Arabia. It tries to investigate the needs of gifted secondary school students for English learning in Saudi Arabia by exploring their professional needs, and the difficulties they face while studying the language and collecting students' suggestions for better English learning strategies. In light of these aims the following questions were formulated:

1. What are the professional needs of gifted secondary school students for English learning?

2. What are gifted secondary school students' perceptions about the characteristics that should be included in English class?
3. What are the difficulties gifted secondary school students face while studying the language?
4. What are gifted secondary school students' suggestions for better English learning strategies?

The findings of this study, practically and theoretically, are supposed to:

1. Provide valuable insights into the English learning teaching setting which provides the basis for organizing in-class activities and helps bridge the gap between what is taught currently and what needs to be taught.
2. Provide current evidence of gifted Saudi students' English learning needs and the degree to of their needs are met concerning English practices provided by teachers in the classroom.
3. Apply to evaluating English teaching-learning in gifted schools in Saudi Arabia, which will help stakeholders in Saudi Arabia, including school administrators and gifted coordinators, better understand learners.
4. Play an essential role in language curriculum planning and development since a program will be more successful if it aims to meet learners' perceived needs.
5. Be used as a premise for further studies in the settings of gifted schools in Saudi Arabia and beyond in needs analysis.
6. Allow educational professionals to decide how to provide additional support and training to Saudi teachers regarding how to meet the needs of gifted students in schools.

In this paper, the researchers presented a literature review along with an investigation of previous studies to identify the gap in research. It was followed by an overview of this paper's research method, participants, and instruments. Finally, the results, discussion, recommendations, and suggestions were presented.

## Literature Review

### *Gifted in Saudi Arabia*

There is no universal definition of giftedness. The Saudi Ministry of Education defined gifted students as students who have unique capabilities and skills or exhibit outstanding performance in comparison with their peers in one or more areas that society appreciates, especially in the areas of mental excellence, creative thinking, educational attainment, and unique ten skills and abilities, who require special education services that do not correspond to those offered in the regular school curriculum (Mawhiba, 2022). Operationally, the concept of gifted students in this study refers to secondary school students who performed Mawhiba Test and are enrolled in Mawhiba schools in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has been supporting the field of giftedness for many years. King Abdulaziz and his Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity "Mawhiba," the equivalent Arabic word for gifted, is a non-profit endowment organization in Saudi Arabia, by Royal Order No. 109, dated 13/5/1420H. It aims to identify and nurture giftedness and creativity in scientific fields. It focuses on fostering those gifted and creative in the scientific and technical areas. A strategic partnership was established in 2011 with Mawhiba, the Ministry of education and the National Center for Measurement "Qiyas" to develop and implement a "National Program for Gifted Identification" through standard tools and standards. The sponsorship of over 54,000 Saudi students of both genders by "Mawhiba" led to 597 medals and prizes in competitions, over

16,000 ideas developed, and 15 patents acquired. Over 1000 Saudi students were accepted into the world's top 50 prestigious universities in distinguished disciplines (Mawhiba, 2022).

According to Aljuhaiman (2016), the Mawhiba institution created a definition of a GS based on the view of giftedness as a multidimensional construct. GSs possess aptitude, 97 unique capabilities, or outstanding performance. They are particularly relevant to mental superiority, educational attainment, creativity, innovation, and unique talents and capabilities. Alherby (2012) mentioned that the nomination methods for the Mawhiba program are student self-nomination and teacher or parent nominations. The various aspects of the nomination process, including test registration, are conducted online through a portal system developed as part of the project. Then, the nominated students are offered an aptitude test. After that, GSs are placed either in a gifted school or gifted classes in a regular school. If the giftedness is not negatively affected, GSs can study regularly with their typical peers and receive pull-out programs and enrichment besides school time.

According to Alfaiz, Alfaid and Aljuhaiman (2022), the Saudi GSs can fruitfully benefit from several of Mawhiba's programs and services including: (1) enrichment programs, (2) abroad summer enrichment focusing on STEM, (3) limited self-contained classroom program in which GSs are taught regular curricula and then received extracurricular focused mainly on STEM, (4) pull out program that promotes thinking strategies and personal skills, (5) evening and Saturday program for GSs who does not receive services in their schools to nurture them, (6) there are 91 GE centers around Saudi Arabia (41 for males and 50 for females) focusing on creative problem solving and research skills programs, (7) limited intermediate and high gifted schools, (8) mentorship program to connect GSs (15-18 years) with distinguished supervisors (mostly faculty members) to develop students' abilities and skills based on their interests and to develop their scientific research skills and problem-solving strategies, to prepare the students to participate in the National Olympiad for Scientific Creativity, (9) national and international Olympiads and competitions program through intensive training to honorably represent the country, and (10) acceleration twice during their journey in the general education system from grade 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> and/or from grade 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, finally (11) professional development workshops for teachers.

The Advanced Supplementary Curriculum (ASC) textbooks are the enrichment curriculum Mawhiba designed for Saudi gifted in sciences, mathematics, English, and information technology. It aims to build generalization, reasoning, thinking skills, self-reflection, communication, and dialogue besides values, attitudes, attributes, inquiry, risk-taking, creativity, trust, mental openness, and collaboration through numerous advanced activities aligned with the Ministry's Curriculum. (Mawhiba, 2022). Alamer (2014) stated that the English language is not a means of presenting enrichment STEAM to Saudi GSs in school. Unfortunately, the situation is still the same now, as inquiring many English language teachers and supervisors around Saudi Arabia, ASC is not at hand and is not yet applicable even in Mawhiba's specialized schools. Gifted students are limited to the ministry curricula that are addressed to regular learners. They include McGraw Hill productions "We Can" for primary stages, "Super Goal" for the intermediate stage, and "Mega Goal" for high school. *MegaGoal* is a dynamic American English series for international communication in joyful, motivating, success-oriented content. It is designed to suit teenagers and young adults as secondary school students. Structure and vocabulary are introduced gradually and recycled while reading, and cross-cultural content and projects are related to real-world situations. Each semester, secondary students have to deal with vital and updated topics in the six units of the student's book (Santos & O'Sullivan, 2021).

*Difficulties Gifted Students Face while Studying the English Language*

GSs experience significant difficulties when learning a language due to the lack of additional resources for gifted learners. It is left to the schools and individual teachers to deal with the peculiarities of gifted learners. The most common problem areas for gifted children, according to Davidson Academy (2021), are sensitivities and overexcitement. Gifted individuals exhibit greater emotional sensitivity and awareness. Expression of emotional sensitivity can lead to frustration, sorrow, or withdrawal. Gifted children often display excitabilities in their intellectual and psychomotor areas, interrupt their teachers with unstoppable questions, and have adverse reactions to intense stimuli in the psychomotor, sensual, emotional, academic, and imaginative domains at school and at home. Instead of learning part-to-whole, GSs prefer learning whole-to-part. These features require teachers of the gifted to be prepared and aware of the complexity and variety of giftedness they are handling. Because giftedness is not a significant issue in the curricula of initial teacher training, David (2020) assumed that teachers are not professionally prepared to meet the needs of GSs. Abu Bakar and Ishak (2016) stated that gifted social and emotional states are disrupted due to a lack of decision-making skills. Consequently, gifted people seek counseling as they consistently express issues related to their unique psychological aspects and indicate that they need approaches to enhance their academic achievement and decide about their future.

Regarding the challenges facing Saudi gifted learners, Alamer (2014) stated that despite some special programs for the gifted, such as summer enrichment programs and weekend programs, gifted learners still face challenges as an uneven balance between STEAM and other subjects. In many schools, they have been taught by non-specialist or untrained GE teachers. Moreover, Saudi teachers' preparation and training programs for regular students in general and GSs need a lot of work from the Ministry of education and the teachers themselves.

*Needs Analysis*

Brown (2009) defined needs analysis as "the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary in the language learning requirements of the students within the context of the particular institutions involved in the learning situation" (p 267). Operationally, the term needs analysis refers to the learners' professional needs, preferred characteristics of English class, difficulties learners face while studying language, and suggestions for better EFL learning strategies.

Identification and evaluation of needs are integral parts of a needs analysis definition. A needs analysis help teachers identify students' knowledge and skills gaps. The benefits of needs analysis, as Morrison (2020) highlighted, include (a) Identifying knowledge and skills gaps and becoming proactive in approaching potential issues before they become actual problems, (b) Helping prepare training, and making informed decisions based on actual data, (c) Identify the areas that need to be prioritized, and (d) Identify the type of training needed.

In the case of GSs, the benefits of identifying learners' needs are of great importance to providing them with actual and functional requirements rather than what is expected from them. According to Al-Hamlan and Baniabdelrahman (2015), need analysis is a process that involves the development of the academic activities of an individual or a group of learners. A needs analysis that focuses on language programs incorporates curriculum development. The approach requires instructors to identify knowledge and skills gaps that can be used to change the curriculum to improve English students' outcomes in Saudi Arabia.



In the context of Saudi Arabia, Alelyani (2021) reviewed the special educational needs of gifted Saudi Arabia students' literature. Reviewing the literature included the significant concerns of cognitive, social-emotional, psychomotor, affective, intuitive, and diverse gifted needs.

Alharbi (2021) investigated the attitudes of Saudi elementary school general education teachers toward GSs and GE and their perceptions of giftedness. One hundred forty-one teachers participated through an online questionnaire about their attitudes plus perceptions. The results revealed that participants would support the needs of GSs, and some special services, yet they were not informed about the GSs' challenges and were unaware of the unique affective needs of the gifted. Still, they did exhibit some understanding of giftedness as a multifaceted construct and some positive social and emotional characteristics.

In a case study, Almalky (2021) provided evidence for developing programs to prepare school principals to meet the needs of GSs. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eight school principals who run gifted programs, eight GE teachers and coordinators, and 51 GSs were interviewed, then analyzed four policy documents. The findings revealed a lack of essential knowledge and skills among principals who deal with GE. However, principals of high-performing cases tended to be more aware of addressing the needs of GSs as they are instructional leaders, compared to low-performing building managers. The study recommended that the Saudi GE policy be urgently revised and that the responsibilities of principals towards GSs be clearly defined.

#### *English Language Learning Needs*

Identifying students' beliefs in learning English, their expectations, and how they evaluate their English ability is essential. In the case of verbal gifted, Yaafouri (2019) stated that the inclusive framework for finding gifted and talented English language learners must base on defining comprehensively exceptional ability that encompasses a range of cognitive, social and emotional, artistic, linguistic, and logical reasoning capabilities.

The first step in performing a learner needs analysis is investigating individuals' backgrounds (Irwansyah & Azis, 2018). During this phase, some elements to analyze are educational experiences, English Language Proficiency (ELP) scores, and reading and writing skills to compare them with the state's ELP standards. In addition, English learners' need analysis involves determining the learners' academic and language skills. Mahbub (2019) states that English students' intellectual and language capabilities help teachers assess their knowledge and skills gaps. The final step of conducting a needs analysis of English language students is determining their strengths and interests to determine the level of academic assistance required by the students.

GSs need to fulfill their social, emotional, creative, and physical needs and their cognitive desires through well-designed education to be fitted to the student's intellectual level and areas of giftedness. There is a need for a supportive environment that fully polishes the extraordinary, targeted input to realize high potential. Last, professional teachers, counselors, and supervisors must understand the accelerated developmental path and respond to gifted students' unique emotional needs (Alelyani, 2021). Phuong (2020) referred to the significance of professional needs as a wide array of English professionals needs to equip learners with suitable and technical facets needed at workplaces for proper communication with clients, employers, and colleagues.

Do and Nguyen (2021) attempted to find out the needs for English learning among gifted high school students in Vietnam by investigating the main question: How do these students report their needs for English learning? One hundred eighty English-majored students from five gifted

high schools in five provinces of Vietnam participated in a questionnaire-interview survey. The participants revealed their need for English because they needed it for future employment and cross-cultural/national communications for long-term purposes. Participants' needs were not very satisfactorily met in the classroom. They wanted to practice more English speaking and listening skills.

Al-Hamlan and Baniabdelrahman (2015) examined the needs of secondary school students related to learning English in Saudi Arabia through a questionnaire of 400 learners (males and females) in the second grade in secondary schools in Riyadh city, plus semi-structured interviews with eight students. It has been found that students should learn English primarily to communicate effectively, speak fluently, and obtain a job. They had lower speaking and listening skills than they did in writing, reading, and grammar. Students also preferred additional resources, allowing them to choose exercises, work in pairs, and translate unfamiliar words. The findings referred to the teachers' ignorance of students' differences, which frustrated students in class.

Previous studies have been vital to this research because they have provided rational background highlighting that gifted secondary school students require additional care. In addition, previous studies have provided insights into the diverse English language requirements, including grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, the studies have helped us understand how to perform a needs analysis of learners.

The previous studies used different instructional approaches to analyze students' needs. Most of these studies focused on general cognitive, social-emotional, psychomotor, affective, and intuitive needs, but none is specified for English learning. Instruments often used to collect need analysis data are questionnaires, interviews, observation, modules, or combinations for young and adult learners. The results revealed that gifted students are not satisfied because their unique needs are not taken care of by the GE, principals, coordinators, or unprepared teachers. One shared point is dissatisfaction, mainly because they need more space to practice, as Do and Nguyen (2021), to cope with educational and emotional challenges, as stated by Alelyani (2021). Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge that learning differences and preferable activities become outstanding issues, as in Al-Hamlan and Baniabdelrahman (2015), plus raising the awareness of the school staff to deal with the gifted uniqueness as in Almalky (2021). The final remark here is that giftedness in the context of foreign language learning in Saudi Arabia is still an underexplored issue that needs thorough deliberation.

## Method

This study aimed to explore the needs of gifted secondary school students for English learning in Saudi Arabia. The study adopts a quantitative method to analyze the English needs of gifted secondary school students. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research is focused on describing and explaining the phenomenon under investigation by collecting data analyzed using mathematical methods. Accordingly, this study was designed as survey research with data collected through questionnaires. This design enables the researcher to generalize a study's findings beyond the situation involved (Mertler, 2022). The research design is based on questions from the researchers' observations and the literature review. Students' perceptions regarding their needs for EL were examined using a questionnaire and the study's data were analyzed using SPSS 28 and descriptive statistics for students' perceptions.

### Participants

The study population consisted of all female gifted secondary school students enrolled in Mawhiba Schools in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Al-Baha for the academic year 2021-2022. The sample comprises approximately 118 randomly chosen students between 15 and 19 years of age from five gifted secondary schools to respond to the questionnaire. The study was conducted during the third term of the academic year 2021-2022. Among 118 participants, 41 were from Riyadh (34.7%), 25 were from Jeddah (21.2%), and 52 were from Al-Baha (44.1%) (Table one).

Table 1 *Data of respondents*

| City    | Grade Level  | No. of participants | Total | Percent |
|---------|--------------|---------------------|-------|---------|
| Riyadh  | First grade  | 17                  | 41    | 34.7%   |
|         | Second grade | 14                  |       |         |
|         | Third grade  | 10                  |       |         |
| Jeddah  | First grade  | 8                   | 25    | 21.2%   |
|         | Second grade | 9                   |       |         |
|         | Third grade  | 8                   |       |         |
| Al-Baha | First grade  | 12                  | 52    | 44.1%   |
|         | Second grade | 11                  |       |         |
|         | Third grade  | 29                  |       |         |
| Total   |              |                     | 118   | 100%    |

The table above has shown that the majority of students are from Al-Baha at a 44.1% followed by the percentage of students from Riyadh at 34.7% and the number of participants from Jeddah is the least with only 21.2%.

Participants were asked to answer two questions to collect primary data regarding their English language background. Responses to these questions revealed that most students did not live in an English-speaking country and that the number of students who had not taken English courses before is larger than the number of students who had as shown in Table two.

Table 2. *Responses to primary data*

| S  | Questions   | Yes   | No     |
|----|---|-------|--------|
| 1. | Have you ever lived in an English-speaking country? | 7.60% | 92.40% |
| 2. | Have you taken any English courses before?          | 46.6% | 53.4%  |

### Research Instruments

The research instrument was constructed by the researchers based on the relevant literature and previous studies that tackled the students' needs in English language learning (Al-Hamlan & Baniabdelrahman, 2015; Do & Nguyen, 2021). A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used and 31 items were included and divided into five main sections. Section one regarding personal information. Section two explored the necessities for learning English, whereas Section three focused on the characteristics that should be included in English class. Section four investigated their difficulties in English learning, and Section five asked for suggestions. The questionnaire was



translated into Arabic to avoid misunderstanding since all respondents are non-English native speakers. To address the face validity of the questionnaire, the researchers invited six knowledgeable ELT experts to give their feedback on the questionnaire. Then, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient has been used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. The test result was  $\alpha = .799$  ( $>0.7$ , the required coefficient).

### **Research Procedures**

The questionnaires of the study were distributed during the third term of the Academic year 2021-2022 to gifted secondary school students online. Students were allowed to answer and submit their responses within a week. Responses were then collected and analyzed using the SPSS program. The mean for each item and the standard deviation was calculated in the analysis process.

### **Statistical Methods for Data Analysis**

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software version 28.0.1. The main data analysis techniques used in this study are frequency count, percentage, means, and standard deviations. Descriptive statistics tests on the data (with mean scores level: Very high= 4.5 – 5; High= 3.6 – 4.4; Medium= 2.5 – 3.5; Low= 1.0 – 2.4).

### **Results**

The results are organized into four sections (a) students' necessities for English learning, (b) their perceptions about the characteristics of English class, (c) the difficulties that face them in English learning, and (d) their suggestions for better English learning.

### **The First Question Result**

Table three shows the participant's responses to the first question. The respondents have shown similar estimates for the items in this section. The total mean score for this section is 4.49, which means that the respondents highly estimated these items.

Table 3. *Students' responses to the first question*

| Item  | M    | SD   | Rank |
|---|------|------|------|
| 1. To pass the University enrollment exam.  | 4.38 | .86  | 6    |
| 2. To participate in different international workshops, conferences, or programs. | 4.43 | .87  | 4    |
| 3. To get a prize in international competitions and Olympiads such as "ISEF."     | 4.38 | .95  | 6    |
| 4. To get international certificates in English (IELTS, TOEIC, TOEFL)             | 4.60 | .74  | 2    |
| 5. To study abroad in the future.   | 4.43 | .91  | 4    |
| 6. To deal with the media, technology, and the Internet.                          | 4.55 | .78  | 3    |
| 7. To access the vast body of international scientific knowledge and research.    | 4.73 | .57  | 1    |
| 8. To share my research and inventions internationally.                           | 4.41 | .92  | 5    |
| Total Mean  |      | 4.49 |      |

**The Second Question Result**

Table four reveals the participant's responses to the items of English class characteristics. The respondents have shown different estimates for the items in this section. The total mean is 4.23, which means the respondents agree on these items.

Table 4. *Students' responses to the second question*

| Item   | M    | SD   | Rank |
|--|------|------|------|
| 9. English lessons should include research-based activities such as "presentations."   | 4.17 | .86  | 5    |
| 10. English lessons should include authentic problem-based activities such as "to be financial advisors."                              | 4.06 | .85  | 6    |
| 11. The activities should resemble daily life situations.  | 4.70 | .51  | 1    |
| 12. English lessons should be evaluated according to projects, assignments, class participation, and performance, not by a final exam. | 4.36 | .92  | 4    |
| 13. The teacher should allow me to select appropriate texts, course materials, and other resources.                                    | 4.43 | .69  | 3    |
| 14. The teacher should provide me with opportunities to work at my own pace.   | 4.65 | .59  | 2    |
| 15. I should perform the activities individually.  | 3.70 | 1.16 | 8    |
| 16. English lessons should be introduced in a laboratory instead of the classroom.   | 3.80 | 1.16 | 7    |
| Total Mean   |      | 4.23 |      |

**The Third Question Result**

Table five indicates the participant's responses to the difficulties they face in the English language. The respondents have shown different estimates. However, the total mean score for this section is 2.69, meaning that the respondents have difficulties in English. Only one item with a high mean score (3.6) implies that the most difficulty GSs face is that *the course does not provide extracurricular activities in English*. GSs disagree that the *English language is hard to learn*, with a low mean score (2.08).

Table 5. *Students' responses to the third question*

| Item   | M    | SD   | Rank |
|--|------|------|------|
| 17. I feel bored in English class because I already know the information.              | 3.26 | 1.37 | 3    |
| 18. The teacher does not give enough opportunities to speak English in class.          | 2.08 | 1.13 | 6    |
| 19. The course does not provide extracurricular activities in English.                 | 3.60 | 1.26 | 1    |
| 20. The teacher corrects mistakes immediately in front of the class.                   | 3.14 | 1.22 | 4    |
| 21. I am afraid of making mistakes.  | 3.31 | 1.41 | 2    |
| 22. I am unable to gather information about a particular topic from English resources. | 2.55 | 1.22 | 5    |
| 23. I think the English language is hard to learn.                                     | 2.08 | 1.27 | 6    |

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Total Mean 2.69

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### ***The Fourth Question Result***

Table six shows the participant's responses to the suggestions for best EL learning. The respondents have shown similar estimates for the items in this section. The total mean score for this section is 4.23, meaning that respondents agree greatly with the items mentioned here. The mean (between 4.54 and 4.66) implies that the GSs suggest some ideas to learn English effectively such as *being provided with virtual learning environments* and *being exposed to different practices of English language skills*.

Table 6. *Students' responses to the fourth question*

| Item  | M    | SD   | Rank |
|---|------|------|------|
| 24. I like to be exposed to different practices of English language skills.   | 4.54 | .66  | 2    |
| 25. I want to be provided with virtual learning environments to visit international museums, industries, institutions, etc. | 4.66 | .56  | 1    |
| 26. I prefer to be introduced to various online English courses.  | 3.99 | 1.3  | 7    |
| 27. I hope there is an English club in my school.   | 4.42 | .9   | 3    |
| 28. I want if my school provides us with enriched English courses.  | 4.19 | 1.1  | 5    |
| 29. I prefer if my teacher integrates technology in all English classes.  | 3.72 | 1.2  | 8    |
| 30. I like it if my school provided accelerated English programs.   | 4.31 | .85  | 4    |
| 31. I prefer if my school provides other languages besides English.   | 4.06 | 1.2  | 6    |
| Total Mean  |      | 4.23 |      |

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The findings revealed that gifted students need to learn English primarily to access the vast body of international scientific knowledge and research, to get international certificates in English, and to deal with the media, technology, and the Internet. Moreover, gifted students preferred to learn English from activities that resemble daily life situations and to learn at their own pace. The research results further indicated that gifted students face difficulties in class, such as making mistakes and feeling bored because they already know the information. They have demonstrated a need to insert virtual learning environments into the curriculum.

## **Discussion**

### ***Discussion of the First Question: What are the professional needs of gifted secondary school students for English learning?***

The first question aimed to identify the GSs' perspective of their professional needs. The findings have revealed that GSs need English for different purposes. Also, the findings showed that the three top reasons for learning English are the scientific resources in English, getting international certificates in English, the media, technology, and the Internet.

The findings are supported by previous research projects and studies that have already investigated the professional needs of GSs for English learning. Gifted secondary school students primarily learn English "to access the vast body of international scientific knowledge and

research." This result contradicts Do and Nguyen's (2021) study in which gifted secondary school students in Vietnam rated learning English to get an excellent job in the future as their primary professional need. In comparison, Al-Hamlan and Baniabdelrahman's (2015) study revealed that speaking English fluently is an essential professional need for English learning. Additionally, "to get international certificates" in English was rated as a medium-level need by gifted secondary school students in Do and Nguyen's (2021) study. Furthermore, Al-Hamlan and Baniabdelrahman (2015) have supported GSs' need "to learn English to deal with the media, technology, and the Internet" (p. 127). They have reported that learners need English to use the Internet and mobile applications and to deal with computer software.

The findings related to the first question indicate that gifted secondary school students in Saudi Arabia are fully aware of the global changes and the growing importance of knowledge, globalization, and technology. Rating the professional needs as the highest might be since gifted secondary school students are comprehending and willing to participate in the Saudi 2030 Vision that mainly highlights the importance of establishing a knowledge-based economy and the importance of international certificates and technology.

***Discussion of the Second Question: What are gifted secondary school students' perceptions about the characteristics that should be included in English class?***

GSs preferred to learn English from activities that resemble daily life situations, to learn at their own pace, to select appropriate texts, course materials, plus other resources, to be evaluated according to projects, assignments, class participation, and performance, not by a final exam. The tendency is noticed that GSs are less favorable to perform the activities individually. Alelyani (2021) and Van Tassel-Baska (2008) supported the current findings by asserting that GSs prefer to learn at their own pace and select appropriate texts, course materials plus other resources. The findings align with Al-Hamlan Baniabdelrahman's (2015) results, in which students rated "learning English from activities that resemble daily life situations" as their preferred characteristic that should be included in the class.

A curriculum should be flexible enough to accommodate self-directed learning fueled by student interests in several ways. It involves learners making choices about the direction and goals of their knowledge and adjustments at their own pace. Similarly, Do and Nguyen's (2021) interviews with gifted secondary school students in Vietnam highlight their preference for communication and using daily life situations.

Moreover, similar to the findings of the second question of the present study, Alelyani (2021), Do and Nguyen (2021), and Southern and Jones (2015) emphasized that GSs prefer being evaluated according to projects, assignments, class participation, and performance, not by a final exam. Alamer (2014) further asserted that relying on essential elements of cognitive abilities (i.e., memorization) is one of the significant challenges faced by Saudi gifted secondary school students. Accordingly, it can be implied that GSs should have access to faster-paced learning opportunities and more complex than what is usually available in a regular classroom with students having mixed abilities. If not, they may lack the experience to utilize their high skills. The gifted student is more prepared to acquire the high level of Bloom's taxonomy and gain advanced thinking processes, not only evaluated by the final exam.

Additionally, Alelyani (2021) and Al-Hamlan and Baniabdelrahman (2015) support the current findings in which the gifted secondary school students rated "to perform the activities individually" as their most minor favorable characteristic to be included in English class due to the

need to find true peers with similar abilities and ages. There is a need for a supportive environment that fully polishes the extraordinary, targeted input to realize high potential. Last, gifted and professional teachers, counselors, and supervisors must understand the accelerated developmental path and respond to the accelerated and unusual emotional needs.

***Discussion of the Third Question: What are the difficulties gifted secondary school students face while studying the language?***

The findings showed that GSs face some problems while learning English. "The course does not provide extracurricular activities" and "Feeling bored in English class because they already know the information presented" are rated by gifted secondary school students as top difficulties they face while studying the language. These results are supported by Alfaiz et al. (2022), who highlighted the significance of enrichment for GSs, and Alamar (2014), who asserted that GSs could not be expected to expand their talents if the curriculum does not give them adequate knowledge related to their needs. Thus, it can be indicated that one of the significant problems in language learning is the ignorance of the differences between GSs and other students, which may lead to severe consequences. GSs may miss the motive to learn, be reluctant to participate with their peers and be frustrated. Moreover, the "Fear of making mistakes" is highly rated by gifted secondary school students as a difficulty they face while studying the language. This result might be attributed to self-esteem issues since perfectionism is often associated with giftedness. Davidson Academy (2021) stated that as a perfectionist, a child might exhibit challenging behaviors, including being competitive with others, sacrificing socializing for achievement, or avoiding activities they fear they will fail. Whether perfectionism can be good or bad is debatable. Still, the problem stems from their inability to see themselves beyond their role as the "smart student" in class for many GSs.

***Discussion of the Fourth Question: What are gifted secondary school students' suggestions for better English learning strategies?***

It can be indicated that gifted secondary school students are suggested: "to be provided with virtual learning environments to visit international museums, industries, institutions, etc., to be exposed to different practices of the English language skills, and to have an English club." Their top-rated difficulty is "The course does not provide extracurricular activities in English." "To be exposed to different practices of the English language skills" and "to have an English club" by gifted secondary school students assembled with the interview results of Do and Nguyen (2021) that revealed gifted secondary school students are interested in more opportunities to practice the language in a variety of methods.

Moreover, the fourth rated suggestion, "I like it if my school provides accelerated English programs," might be associated with the difficulty mentioned in the third question, "Feeling bored in English class because they already know the information presented." It is grounded in the belief that gifted learners need advanced, often above-grade-level learning opportunities that mirror their rapid processing abilities and need for depth, complexity, and abstraction. Accelerated learning experiences provide advanced learners opportunities for faster progression through the curriculum than peers (Shaunessy-Dedrick & Lazarou, 2020).



## Recommendations

Here are several recommendations:

- GSs must be provided with a tailored gifted curriculum in the English language.
- Activate the English enrichment activities inside and outside the classroom.
- Develop a digital education platform with collaborative learning tools to allow GSs to access interactive educational content and interact with their peers nationally and internationally
- Provide regular professional development training for EFL teachers of gifted to keep them updated.

## Suggestions for Further Research

The study's results paved the way for further investigations including:

- The Effectiveness of English Language Enrichment Activities in Developing English proficiency in GSs.
- The Effectiveness of Modern EFL Teaching Strategies in Developing Gifted Achievement in International Competitions/ Exams.
- The Role and Characteristics of the EFL Teachers of Gifted in Supporting Innovation and Talent.
- The Characteristics of the Gifted EFL Curriculum and Activities.
- Content Analysis of English language Gifted Enrichment Materials in the Light of the Current Results of Gifted Needs for EL.
- An Evaluation of Mawhiba Advanced Supplementary Curriculum in the Light of Sustainable Development Standards.

## Conclusion

This paper explored female gifted secondary school students' needs for English Learning in Saudi Arabia. In addition, this study specified students' perceptions about the characteristics that should be included in English class, the difficulties they faced while studying language, and their suggestions for better English learning strategies. The results revealed that gifted students need to learn English primarily to access the vast body of international scientific knowledge and research, to get international certificates in English, and to deal with the media, technology, and the Internet. Furthermore, gifted students preferred to learn English from activities that resemble daily life situations and to learn at their own pace. The research results indicated that gifted students face difficulties in class, such as making mistakes and feeling bored because they already know the information. They have demonstrated a need to insert virtual learning environments into the curriculum.

## About the Authors

**Muhammad Manasrah** is a professor of ELT at the Education College at Umm Alqura University, SA. His research interests include ELT and teaching strategies. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5571-2636>

**Iman Alzobiani** is a Ph.D. candidate in Curricula and Instruction of the English Language and a lecturer in the Education College at Taibah University, SA. Her research interest includes ELT and CALL. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8336-3696>

**Norah Alelyani** is a Ph.D. candidate in Curricula and Instruction of the English Language and a Teacher in Riyadh, SA. Her research interest includes ELT and gifted education.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2608-1262>

**Noha Alharthi** is a Ph.D. candidate in Curricula and Instruction of the English Language and a lecturer in the Applied College at Umm Al Qura University, SA. Her research interest includes ELT and reflective practices. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1746-8833>

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