

The Level of Technology use in the Saudi Arabian Secondary School English Language Classroom

Ali Mohammed Alqarni¹

Abstract

This qualitative case study explores the use of technology in an English language program in a male secondary school in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The qualitative case study uses the Technical Acceptance Model, constructivism and sociocultural theory to evaluate the level of usage of technology in the ESL classrooms. The research adopts a qualitative approach collecting data from teachers and students through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and classroom observations. The research occurs within the context of educational reform mandated in Vision 2030. The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education (MOE) is seeking to introduce digital technologies into the classrooms. The research identified that this has not occurred and that a text-book approach orientated towards the grammar translation model (GTM) remains. There has not been the expected shift to the pedagogy of communicative language teaching (CLT). The MoE needs to make significant changes if this shift is to occur.

Keywords:

1. Introduction

The Saudi Arabian government recognises the need to develop competence in English for its citizens and to modernise Saudi Arabian classrooms (Althobaiti, 2020). In Saudi Arabia, English is taught from Grade Six (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017). The primary pedagogy in the classroom is the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) with the traditional approach of chalk-and-talk (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017). The government is concerned that despite the revision of the curriculum, the encouragement of the use of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the introduction of technologies into the classroom, there has not been a significant improvement in student English proficiency (Althobaiti, 2020). This research explores the use of computers for the teaching of English in a Saudi Arabian boys' secondary school. The research seeks to understand the impact that the computerisation of the classroom has had on teaching pedagogy and student motivation. The research considers the level of self-efficacy of teachers in the use of technology-assisted language learning. Al-Seghayer (2022) identified that the technological self-efficacy (TSE) exerts a strong influence on the degree that technology is used to develop student's competency in English. Al-Seghayer (2022) found that TSE was very low amongst Saudi Arabian English language teachers. This chapter outlines the purpose of the research in relation to the use of computers in the English language classroom, the impact of technology on teacher's pedagogy and on student motivation.

¹ Department of Foreign Languages, College of Arts and Human Sciences, Al-Baha, Al-Baha University, Saudi Arabia

1.1 Background of the Study

The study builds on the research gaps identified by Al-Seghayer (2022) that a study of TSE in Saudi Arabia needs to include the students' perspectives and key demographics of the teachers. Al-Seghayer (2022) identified the need for a consideration of the interaction between the teacher's pedagogy and their use of computers in the classroom. Despite efforts by the MoE to modernise the curriculum, teachers appear resistant to shifting from GTM to CTL, to use the latest digital syllabus resources and to integrate computer technologies into their lessons (Al-Seghayer, 2022; Alharthi, 2019; Baroudi & Shaya, 2022). Research suggests that teachers in Saudi Arabia are resistant to the adoption of computers in the classroom ((Al-Seghayer, 2022; Alharthi, 2019; Baroudi & Shaya, 2022; Choi & Lee, 2016; Eslami & Fatahi, 2008). GTM dominates as the established teaching approach for English and Arabic as the preferred language of instruction (Al-Nasser, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2019). This situation results in the core problem of ascertaining the impact that the introduction of computers has in the English language classroom on the teacher's pedagogy and on the level of motivation of the students in learning the English language.

The MoE has initiated a number of changes over time to the English language programs in schools. The current reform process is part of the Tatweer reform process commenced in 2007 that initially sought a reform of the education system involving a decentralisation of power to the principal level, greater community involvement and the encouragement of distributed leadership (Alyami, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2003). Currently the reform process is in the third phase of the Tatweer reforms and is heavily influenced by the goals of Vision 2030. The Tatweer reform process seeks to create an education system that would be viewed as meeting international best practice and under Vision 2030 would provide students with the English language competency to be effective in the global commercial sector (Alyami, 2014; HMC, 2022). The Tatweer reforms started in 2007 and were initially confined to reform within fifty Saudi Arabian secondary schools: twenty-five boys' schools and twenty-five girls' schools (Tayan, 2017). The school selected to conduct the research was not one of the initial schools that participated in the first phase of the Tatweer reform process. The first phase of the Tatweer process occurred from 2007 – 2011 and within the English area sought to shift teachers from using GTM to adopting CLT. This change was supported through the provision of computer technology to the fifty schools (Tayan, 2017). The school where this research was conducted was not one of the schools involved in the first phase of Tatweer. In the first phase of Tatweer from 2007 to 2011, technology was provided to the schools to enable the introduction of new approaches to learning (Tayan, 2017). The three technologies introduced into the English language classroom were computers, electronic whiteboards and digital projectors. The second phase of the Tatweer reform process occurred from 2012 to 2019 and involved duplicating the reform process trialled in the fifty schools across the education system (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). The third phase of the Tatweer reform process is being conducted under the umbrella of Vision 2030.

Figure 1 presents the KSA Vision 2030. There are three interconnected themes that underpin the KSA Vision 2030. One theme is the need to develop a thriving economy that is not dependent solely on the production of oil. This theme involves the diversification of the economy, developing entrepreneurship skills, encouraging private investment and improving the educational system (Figure 1). Another theme is the development of an ambitious nation that is governed by a government that is highly transparent, accountable and efficient (Figure 1). The third theme is the creation of a vibrant society where Saudi Arabians are able to enjoy the benefits of a strong economy, and access free health and education (Figure 1). As can be seen from these three themes, the development of an education system that meets global best practice and that produces highly skilled, critical thinking, problem-solving and entrepreneurial citizens capable of functioning effectively within the international commercial environment.



Figure 1: The three themes of the KSA Vision 2030

Note: Sourced from Allmnakrah & Evers (2020, p. 24)

The focus of the latest phase is the improvement of student outcomes through the modernisation of the education system, the improvement of teacher training, the recruitment of young teachers with international experience, the inclusion of critical thinking, creativity and innovation into the curriculum and enabling support systems for teachers (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). New digital resources have been developed that promote computerised learning and the shift to CLT (Al-Shehri, 2020; Assulaimani, 2019). There is a need to research the degree that the changes have been successful. An assessment needs to be made as to whether the introduction of digital resources and computers has supported a pedagogical shift from GTM to CLT in the classroom and if so, the impact that this has had on student motivation. Minimal research conducted to date suggests that the reforms have failed to have the desired impact (Al-Mukhallafi, 2019). It appears that GTM is strongly entrenched as the dominant pedagogy, despite reforms to create a classroom environment that is more conducive to CLT approaches (Al-Mukhallafi, 2019; Al-Seghayer, 2015).

As part of the reform process, a digital set of resources were developed to support the introduction of a new textbook, student workbook and digital resources entitled *Flying High for Saudi Arabia*, (Macmillan Education, 2014). These resources were accompanied with the introduction of computers into the English language classrooms. This research assesses the degree of uptake of this technology in the secondary school classroom and the impact that this has on teacher pedagogy and student motivation. The level of English language competence amongst English language teachers is quite low (Alharbi, 2015; Khan, 2011; Moskovsky, 2018; Rabab'ah, 2005).

1.2 Importance of the research

The Saudi Arabian MoE has been proactive in funding the inclusion of digital technologies in the English language classroom, the development and distribution of digital resources that can be used to develop student competence and the insistence that teachers shift from the traditional GTM to CLT. There is no evidence of research into the degree that these initiatives have resulted in change at the classroom level and the impact of these changes where they have occurred. Research in this area would inform the MoE on the level of impact that the change has had and actions that are needed to further facilitate the shift towards CLT and computerised learning. Earlier research, such as Khan (2011), indicated that the change initiatives had been ineffective. More contemporary research is needed to ascertain the impact that the latest change initiatives have had on student language proficiency. Previous research suggests that the level of English language competency for students has been poor (Alshumaimeri, 2003); Elyas & Al Grigri, 2014).

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

This qualitative study explores the degree that computer learning has been incorporated in the Saudi Arabia secondary school environment and the impact of its introduction on teacher's pedagogy and student motivation.

1.4 Significance of the study

Currently, Saudi Arabian EFL teachers predominantly use a textbook approach that focus on the development of grammar, reading and writing. English classes are often conducted in Arabic (Elyas & Picard, 2010; Fare, 2010; Khan, 2012; Natsir & Sanjaya, 2014). This approach reduces the level of use of English language by the students in the classroom (Elyas & Picard, 2010; Fare, 2010; Khan, 2012; Natsir & Sanjaya, 2014). This approach appears to limit the opportunity for students to develop competence in English and can demotivate the learner (Abduh & Algouzi, 2020; Albousaif, 2011; Alhawsawi, 2013; Alsaif & Milton, 2012; Alshahrani, 2016; Fareh, 2010). One of the contributing factors to the shift away from GTM is the retention by the MoE of an examination system that is orientated towards testing the grammatical skills of the students (Abduh & Algouzi, 2020; Albousaif, 2011; Alsaif & Milton, 2012). Teachers lack training in alternative pedagogies and in the use of computer technologies within the classroom (Abduh & Algouzi, 2020; Albousaif, 2011; Alsaif & Milton, 2012). Many students do not value learning English (Abduh & Algouzi, 2020; Albousaif, 2011; Alsaif & Milton, 2012). The high power distance in relationships between the student and the teacher is suited to the GTM pedagogy. Hence there are significant barriers to the adoption of computer technology in the English language classroom.

1.5 Research Problem

There are a number of problems that will be addressed in this research. The first problem is the degree that teachers have retained the GTM pedagogy and resisted the use of technology in the English language classroom. The second problem is determining where technology has been used, whether this has resulted in a change in the pedagogy of the teacher with a shift to the use of CLT. The third problem is determining the impact of any shift to CLT and computerised learning on the level of motivation of the students. Research in this area can therefore inform the MoE on the actions and strategies that they need to implement to achieve their goal of encouraging a high usage of technologies in the classroom and a shift from GTM to CLT.

1.6 Research Questions

Main Question: Has there been a shift to the use of computers and CLT in the English secondary school classroom of Saudi Arabia and what has been the impact of this shift?

The research sub-questions for this thesis are:

- (a) What are dominant pedagogical practices used by EFL teachers in the Saudi Arabian secondary school classroom?
- (b) Are computers being used to develop student competency in English?
- (c) Where there has been a shift to the use of computers and CLT, what impact has this had on student motivation?

1.7 Research Method

The research methodology used is the qualitative case study approach. The qualitative case study uses the Technical Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), constructivism (Creswell, 2022) and sociocultural theory (Panhwar et al., 2016; Shabani & Ewing, 2016). Using convenience sampling, a boys secondary school was selected for the case study. Three EFL teachers were selected randomly and invited to participate in the research. Five students were randomly selected from their classes to participate in the research. Interviews were held with all the participants and one lesson was observed from each of the teachers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review considers the research on Technical Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), constructivism (Creswell, 2022) and sociocultural theory for evaluating the level of use of technology in English language classrooms in Saudi Arabia. A literature review is conducted into the current findings regarding the degree of adoption of technology by Saudi Arabian English language teachers. The key drivers influencing a change from a textbook based approach and a GTM pedagogy to a technology based approach and a CLT pedagogy has been discussed in the previous chapter. The Saudi Arabian government has signalled through Vision 2030 the intention to modernise the education system (OECD, 2020). To achieve this, a new National Curriculum framework and National Assessment program has been developed (OECD, 2020). Unfortunately, the new curriculum framework remains textbook centred, centralised at the Ministry of Education with minimal collaboration with teachers (Alnefaie, 2013; OECD, 2020), focused on rote learning (Alhareth, 2014; OECD, 2020), a focus on summative assessment (OECD, 2020), ignores critical thinking and problem solving skills (Almuntasheri, 2016; OECD, 2020), a lack of formative feedback provided by teachers (OECD, 2020), a lack of local adaptation of the learning material (OECD, 2020), and no alignment of the assessment with the curriculum (OECD, 2020). There is a policy initiative within the new curriculum to encourage the use of technology for communication within the classroom. This research is important to identify if this is in fact occurring.

2.2 Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a commonly used model that is used to assess the degree of acceptance of technology in a wide range of contexts (Ma & Liu, 2004). The stakeholder's beliefs regarding the usefulness of technology and the ease of use influence the willingness of the stakeholder to use the technology. The majority of research in this area within Saudi Arabia using TAM has been regarding the level of acceptance by secondary school and university students and university lecturers (Zalah, 2018). Given that the use of technology within classrooms is heavily influenced by the teacher, more research is needed into teacher's acceptance and use of e-learning technologies in the classroom. Zalah (2018) investigated the level of acceptance and usage of learning technologies by 347 secondary school teachers in regional Saudi Arabian secondary schools. Zalah (2018) identified limited use of learning technologies

within Saudi Arabian secondary schools, and where it was being used that it was ineffective. Younger teachers were more willing to use educational technologies than older teachers (Zalah, 2018). Teacher training in the use of educational technology improved the perceived ease of use (Zalah, 2018). Zalah (2018) identified that teachers provided with e-learning material are less likely to use the material than if they design it themselves. This is because, in the design process, the teachers perceived that the material would be easier to use in the classroom. There exist many impediments to teachers accessing and using technology within the schools, such as booking systems and limited ICT facilities in secondary schools (Alresheed, 2017; Zalah, 2018).

2.3 Constructivism

Constructivism can provide an effective theoretical basis for the exploration of the use of technology within education (Mohammed & Kinyo, 2020). Constructivism focuses on the optimum means for developing understanding and knowledge in students through enabling students with the opportunity to develop their own meaning through cognitive development and social interaction (Al-Abdulkareem & Hentschke, 2014). The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Saudi Arabia has incorporated constructivist principles into the secondary school classroom since the mid-1990s (Al-Abdulkareem & Hentschke, 2014). Implementing constructivist practices into the classroom has been challenging (Al-Abdulkareem & Hentschke, 2014). The prevailing textbook approach has not been supportive of the development of constructivist practices in the Saudi Arabian classroom (Al-Abdulkareem & Hentschke, 2014). The shift from a teacher-focused to a student-focused pedagogy is significant (Alazzaz, 2019). The research of Alghamdi and Prestridge (2014) of 67 Saudi Arabian secondary schools and 82 teachers suggests a high level of support for the implementation of online technologies to support constructivist pedagogies. Despite this identified support, the recent evaluation of the secondary school curriculum by the OECD (2020) suggests that this has not become a reality in many schools.

2.4 Sociocultural theory

A possible explanation for the disparity between the support of the use of online technologies and the failure to move beyond the use of textbooks may be found in sociocultural theory. Alnosiaan (2018) sought to explore the role that sociocultural factors that influenced the adoption of information communication technologies (ICT) in Saudi Arabian classrooms. The effects were negative (Alnosiaan, 2018). At the personal level, many teachers lack the motivation to overcome the convenience of changing their personal pedagogy and develop new learning materials to shift to an online learning environment (Alnosiaan, 2018). At the classroom level, the teachers are often concerned that the shift to a student-centred approach will undermine the high power-distance relationship between the teacher and the student characteristic of the Saudi Arabian culture (Alnosiaan, 2018; Hofstede Insights, 2023). Given that at the institutional level, the centralised exams remain orientated to the GTM, teachers are reluctant to switch to the CLT model and experience a decline in examination performance from their students (Alnosiaan, 2018). The end result is that the level of ICT use in the majority of secondary schools in Saudi Arabia is very low (Alnosiaan, 2018).

2.5 Level of use of technology in English language classrooms in Saudi Arabia

As noted previously, the level of research in this area is very minimal with the majority of research focused on the attitude of ESL secondary students towards the use of technology in the classroom. The most current research in this area was conducted by Alswilem (2019) prior to the implementation of Vision 2030. The research of Alswilem (2019) provides an important baseline for this study. The limitation of Alswilem's (2019) study was that it only used a survey without interviews and classroom observation and received no input from students. Alswilem (2019) identified that teachers were aware of the benefits of the use of technology in the classroom, particularly in improving their

effectiveness. All teachers in the research of Alswilem (2019) identified the need for training in how to integrate technology into the English classroom. A lack of training, infrastructure problems and a lack of resources were identified as the major barriers (Alswilem, 2019). Hence the level of ICT usage in the classrooms is quite low. Alswilem (2019) identified the need to use a range of data collecting tools in future research. Given the surge in resources and an effort by the MoE to increase ICT use in Saudi Arabian classrooms due to Vision 2030, this research is timely.

3. Research design

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the use of technology in English language classrooms within secondary schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The research was designed around the main research question and three sub-questions:

Main Question: Has there been a shift to the use of computers and CLT in the English secondary school classroom of Saudi Arabia and what has been the impact of this shift?

The research sub-questions for this thesis are:

- (a) What are dominant pedagogical practices used by EFL teachers in the Saudi Arabian secondary school classroom?
- (b) Are computers being used to develop student competency in English?
- (c) Where there has been a shift to the use of computers and CLT, what impact has this had on student motivation?

3.2 Methodology

The research paradigm used is the social constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2022; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The research seeks to understand how the two primary stakeholder groups in the classroom, the teacher and the student, view the use of ICT. As a form of qualitative research, social constructivism seeks to collect from the participants their views on their experiences and to explore the internal drivers for their attitudes (Andrews, 2012). It is to be expected that there is a multiplicity of attitudes and beliefs held amongst the sample. The social constructivist paradigm was embedded in a case study approach using the qualitative methodology. The use of the case study methodology enabled the researcher to explore the phenomenon in a greater depth.

The case study involved three EFL teacher from three different KSA public secondary schools in Riyadh and five students from each of their classes (15 in total). Permission for the research was sought from the MoE and the principals of the school. Convenience sampling was used to select the schools. The selection of the teacher from within the school to participate in the research was performed by the Principal and the Head of the English Department. The teacher was approached and the research was explained, ethical elements and privacy and confidentiality elements. The teacher selected five students from the class and permission was sought from their parents for participation in the research. In total, 3 teachers and 15 students participated in the research. Each teacher and student was given an unique code to protect their identity. The teachers were coded T1, T2, T3 and the students S1 through to S15. All participants were required to provide a signed consent form with students being required to get their parents to countersign the authorisation form.

The data was collected using three methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three teachers. Each interview was approximately One hour in length. Focus groups were held with the five students from the teacher's class. Each focus group session lasted for one hour. A one-hour classroom was conducted of each of the three EFL

teachers. In the semi-structured interview, teachers were asked about their dominant pedagogy and whether this had changed over their time as a teacher. The teachers were asked whether they used ICTs in the classroom and the role that they played in enhancing student outcomes. The teachers were asked their view on whether there had been a shift towards the use of ICT within the English classroom and whether they welcomed or were opposed to the change. In line with the social constructivist paradigm, open questions were asked and the teachers were encouraged to explore the issues in whatever manner that they chose.

In the focus group interviews with the students, the five participants were encouraged to interact with each other and to share their views openly and honestly. There was no apparent reticence in offering their point-of-view as all participants were informed that their views and opinions were treated in complete confidence and anonymity. The focus group was conducted in a comfortable room within the school where teacher meetings were held. The focus groups were audiotaped.

Classroom observations were conducted of each teacher. The observation allowed the researcher to evaluate the level of congruence between the opinions stated in the interviews and the evidence displayed in the classroom. The observation was conducted in both a structured and unstructured manner. An observation template provided the structure while the use of field notes enabled the researcher to record any insights. The observation was a non-participant observation with the researcher sitting in the rear of the classroom.

The data collected was then analysed using thematic analysis. The transcripts from the interviews and the focus groups were coded and common themes in the data were then identified. An analysis was conducted into the level of congruence that existed between the verbal feedback provided in the interviews and focus groups and the field notes made during the classroom observation. The data collected was Arabic as this was the language used in the interview and focus group. Ironically it was noted that Arabic was the dominant language of instruction in the classroom. The transcripts of the conversations were transcribed into Arabic and then translated into English. To ensure the validity and accuracy of the translation, a third person, a skilled translator, checked the transcription into Arabic and the English translation. The classroom observation was used to establish the authenticity of the comments made by the teachers and the students.

3.3 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations in this research involved seeking informed consent from all stakeholders including the MoE, the principal, the teachers, the students and their parents. Each participant had to complete a consent form with the student's consent forms being countersigned by their parents. Permission was sought for the recording of the interviews and focus groups. All participants were informed that they were able to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice. All participants were informed of the data storage methods and identity protection approaches that were used to ensure security of the data. The assurance that the individual's data would be protected and could not identify the person's identity was an important part of building trust.

3.4 Participants

Table 1 presents the profile of the three teachers who participated in the research.

Table 1: EFL teachers

Category	T1	T2	T3
Teacher service	5 years	10 years	12 years
Qualifications	Master's Degree in English Language	Bachelor's Degree in English Language	Bachelor's Degree in Linguistics
Current position	Urban public secondary school	Urban public secondary school	Urban public secondary school
Special notes	Won scholarship to view EFL practices in United States schools Developed resources for English language laboratory	Wishes to adopt CLT approach but struggles to make the change	Retains the GTM approach
Style of Teaching	CLT, student-focused, uses technology in the classroom, conducts lessons in language laboratory; wide range of resources used.	Uses resource materials provided by MoE <i>Flying High</i> , GTM, teacher directed	GTM, uses old textbook and not <i>Flying High</i> , teacher directed,
Technological Use	High	Low	Low

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

There were three sources of data used in this thesis: the data collected from the teacher interviews; the data collected from the student interviews and the data collected from the classroom observation. Data was analysed in respect to the three sub questions of the research.

4.2 Teachers

There was a full range of the pedagogies used by the three teachers. T1, the youngest teacher of the three, embraced CLT and the use of technology to provide students with access to resources that both facilitated and supported English language development amongst his students. T1 adopted a student-focused approach that involved students working together in teams with a high level of verbal interaction. T1 has served 12 months on a scholarship program in the United States and held the view that students learnt language more effectively when they could interact verbally and access resources that matched their interests and needs. The classroom was a language laboratory that used technology to teach and had technology available to the students at their team desks. T1 had developed a wide range of their own resources that allowed students to develop an individualised learning pathway. T1 was passionate about the advantages of technology for facilitating language development and lamented the slowness of change in the education system. T1 felt that the failure to shift from the GTM approach to CLT was due to a lack of training amongst staff, a lack of motivation to change, time pressures, the lack of IT resources in classrooms and the ongoing focus of the student assessment on grammar.

T2 had the desire to adopt the CLT approach and was using the new textbook provided by the MoE, *Flying High*. T2 still retained a teacher directed approach as this made him feel more confident and felt that this approach was more congruent with the Saudi Arabian culture. T2 saw the benefits of CLT but lacked the confidence and the understanding to be able to change his pedagogy. T2 felt that a shift to CLT under the current system would prejudice the students as assessment was still orientated towards grammar. T2 felt that the shift to the use of computers and CLT had not occurred. T2 was sceptical that a change to CLT would change student motivation. T2 felt that students were not motivated to learn English.

T3 was highly condemnatory to the attempts by the MoE to implement technology and CLT in the English classroom. The teacher resisted all change feeling that this undermined the very cultural and religious basis of KSA society. T3 felt that students were not interested in change and found little value in the study of English. T3 was unwilling to adopt the new textbook, preferring to teach out of the old GTM textbook. T3 felt that the majority of teachers were resistant to change.

4.3 Students

There was a wide range of views expressed by the students. Many of the students indicated that they saw little value in learning English. There were others that considered English essential to their future and to advancing their job prospects. The majority of those students lamented that there was not an opportunity within the wider KSA society to practice their English. Technology provided them with the opportunity to connect with students in other parts of the world and to engage in English with them. Those who saw the value of English often mentioned the presence of a group within the English classroom who were often disinterested and disruptive. Their behaviour often went unchecked by the teacher.

The students in the CLT class appeared to be more motivated and enjoyed the freedom and engagement. They were concerned that this may not result in an improvement in their capability to perform well in the assessment process. Students exposed to the GTM approach but who were aware of CLT pedagogies appeared to see the benefits in having a more interactive environment where English was the dominant language of instruction. The opportunity to be engaged in speaking and listening, as opposed to copying from the board and reciting what the teacher wanted them to say was appealing to the majority of students. It was apparent that the dominant approach was working through the textbook in a teacher-directed process.

Many of the students were concerned that they would lack the skills to be able to pass the exams. The focus on assessment-outcomes was understandably high and created a level of anxiety amongst all students. There was considerable debate and little agreement amongst students as to the best approach for preparing student for their assessment. Given that the test was exclusively written, students argued that they needed to be taught how to write in English. Speaking English was not important. It was evident that there was a high level of tension between the motivational nature of learning environments and their relative effectiveness in preparing the student for the exam.

4.4 Observation

There was a high degree of congruence between the lesson observation and the attitudes and thoughts presented by the teachers and students. The classroom of T1 had a high use of technology with the teacher and students speaking only in English. Students were organised in groups and involved in active exploration of topics in English using technology. The frequency of spoken interactions was high and the level of writing was comparable to that observed in the other two classroom. There was a higher level of peer interaction with peer correction and support. observation in the classroom of T1 than in the classrooms of T2 and T3. Students seemed to be highly motivated and energised in the classroom of T1 compared to the more docile and passive students observed in T2 and T3.

It was noticeable that the new textbook used in T2's classroom did not prompt a higher level of visible engagement in the classroom of T3 who was using the old textbook. Both classrooms were evidenced by the teacher talking in Arabic, completing the exercises and the students copying the answers into their workbooks. There was little evidence of student interaction. The only student responses was to questions targeted to a student in Arabic by the teacher. This suggests that the development of CLT must be accompanied by a shift to a student-centred learning environment.

Given that two-thirds of the classrooms observed had no use of technology, it appears that the shift to CLT, the use of technology and student-centred learning is still a long way from being a dominant part of the approach to teaching English in KSA secondary schools.

5. Findings

This chapter considers the findings overall from the research data and thematic analysis. The major themes are identified in relationship to the research questions.

5.1 Dominant pedagogical practice

The evidence suggests that the dominant pedagogical process that remains is the teacher-centred approach where instruction is textbook-based and students are involved in copying responses into the workbook and responding to the teacher's questions. There is little or no use of technology as a means of developing student competence in the language. The focus appears to be on developing the student to a level that they will be able to pass the grammatically orientated centralised exam. There is evidence of pockets of change where younger teachers are seeking to leverage the opportunity provided by technology to improve student competence. These changes are not systematic and there are concerns as to whether this approach translates into improved outcomes for the students.

5.2 Use of computers

It was evident that the presence of technology within the ESL classroom is largely absent. There is no use of mobile technologies and online access to learning material. Textbooks appear to be the dominant medium for instruction. There was one exception where a younger teacher had developed their own learning environment and associated materials using technology. This was the exception rather than the rule. Students did not appear to be motivated by the need to use technology although the observed classroom using technology was evidenced by a high level of energy and engagement by students.

5.3 Shift in the use of computers

From the research, the conclusion must be drawn that there has not been a systemic shift to the use of technology to improve the level of student competence in English. GTM is still the dominant approach to instructing students with a teacher directed approach. Because the shift to CLT, technology supported learning and student directed learning has been minimal, it is impossible to gauge the effects. This difficulty is further exacerbated by the retention of an assessment process that is orientated to a GTM approach. There does not appear to have been any noticeable impact on student motivation, with many students failing to see the value in learning English.

5.4 Conclusion

The thesis sought to identify if there has been a shift from GTM to CLT facilitated by an increase in the use of technology within the ESL classroom in KSA. There has not been a shift with the majority of classrooms retaining a GTM approach based on the textbook, a teacher-directed process, instruction in Arabic and minimal verbal interaction. Although limited to only three schools in an urban environment, the research suggests that the MoE goal of implementing a CLT approach leveraging ICT has not occurred to date.

6. Conclusion

This qualitative research into teaching pedagogies in EFL classrooms in KSA using the social constructivist paradigm has found that the anticipated change from GTM to CLT has not occurred. The use of technology in the ESL classroom is in most cases non-

existent. The thesis indicates that the MoE need to seek new strategies if the educational goals inherent in Vision 2030 are to be realised. The old GTM paradigm remains. There is a group of teachers that are highly resistant to any changes essentially on ideological and cultural grounds. There is a group of teachers that desire to shift to the CLT approach but are challenged by adopting a student-directed approach. There is a small group of teachers willing to implement the new approach, but they appear to be challenged by student disinterest, systemic challenges presented by an antiquated assessment system and the challenges presented by having access to technology and the necessary resources.

6.1 Implications

The implication of this research is that the MoE will not achieve the educational objectives sought under Vision 2030. The desire to become globally recognised as a leader in education is unlikely to occur under the existing situation identified in this research. The GTM approach is still entrenched within the ESL classrooms of Saudi Arabia. Although it is recognised that this research is limited to only three schools and three teachers, there is nothing to suggest that the situation identified is not reflective of the general situation across all schools. The prevailing research tends to suggest that this is the case. It is important therefore that the MoE consider the following set of recommendations for addressing the situation.

6.2 Recommendations

- That the MoE make significant investment in technology and classroom design across all public secondary schools so as to enable the efficient and effective use of technology in the ESL classroom;
- That a wide range of technological resources are developed, and stored in a centralised library that can be accessed by all students and teachers;
- That all teachers are training in the use of CLT, student-directed learning and the use of technology in the classroom;
- That a new assessment process is developed that embraces the CLT approach; and
- That English is the language of instruction in all ESL classes.

References

- Abduh, M. Y., & Algouzi, S. (2020). Revisiting grammar teaching in a Saudi EFL context: Teacher's' perceptions and practices. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(4), 291-306.
- Al-Abdulkareem, R., & Hentschke, G.C. (2014). Textbooks and constructivist pedagogy in Saudi Arabian classrooms. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 3(2), 13-24. <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v3n2p13>
- Alazzaz, H.A. (2019). The Saudi teacher experience with a constructivist curriculum reform (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis). Kent State University.
- Albousaif, M.A. (2011). Factors determining Saudi learners difficulties. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Newcastle.
- Alghamdi, A., & Prestridge, S. (2014). Principal and teacher beliefs about online learning technologies. The Australian Computers in Education Conference.
- Alharbi, H.A. (2015). Improving students' English-speaking proficiency in Saudi public schools. *International Journal of Instruction*, 8(1), 105–116. <https://doi.org/10.0.50.173/ iji.2015.818a>.
- Alhareth, Y. (2014). The assessment process of pupils' learning in Saudi education system: A literature review. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 2(10), 883-891. <https://doi.org/10.12691/>

- Alharthi, S.A. (2019). Secondary teacher attitudes toward computer-based devices in Saudi Arabia (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Flinders University.
- Alhawsawi, S. (2013). Investigating student experiences of learning English as a Foreign Language in a preparatory programme in a Saudi university, (Unpublished doctoral thesis), University of Sussex. http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/48752/1/Alhawsawi%2C_Sajjadallah.pdf
- Allmnakrah, A., & Evers, C. (2020). The need for a fundamental shift in the Saudi education system: Implementing the Saudi economic vision 2030. *Research in Education*, 106(1), 22-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523719851534>
- Almuntasheri, S. (2016). Saudi teachers' practices of formative assessment: a qualitative study. *Problems of education in the 21st century*, 74(6). http://www.scientiasocialis.lt/pec/files/pdf/vol74/6-15.Almuntasheri_Vol.74_PEC.pdf
- Al-Mukhallafi, T. R. (2019). English in Saudi Arabia: Status and Challenges in The Light of Prince Mohammad bin Salman's Vision 2030. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 9(4). <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v9n4p209>
- Alnefaie, S. (2016). Teachers' role in the development of EFL curriculum in Saudi Arabia: The marginalised status. *Cogent Education*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1240008>
- Alnosiaan, A.S. (2018). Socio-cultural factors influencing the use of ICT in intermediate schools in Saudi Arabia (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis). University of Exeter.
- Alresheed, S. (2017). Computer-assisted language learning in Saudi Arabian secondary schools (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis). University of Bedfordshire.
- Alsaif, A. & Milton, J. (2012). Vocabulary input from school textbooks as a potential contributor to the small vocabulary uptake gained by English as foreign language learners in Saudi Arabia. *Language Learning Journal*, 40(1), 21-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2012.658221>
- Al-Seghayer, K. (2022). Saudi EFL teachers' self-efficacy in technology-assisted language learning (TALL). *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English literature*, 11(2), 53-64. <https://doi.org/10.575/aiac.ojel.v,11n.2p.53>
- Alshahrani, M. (2016). A brief historical perspective of English in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, 26, 43-47.
- Alshammari, M. M. (2011). The use of the mother tongue in Saudi EFL classrooms', *Journal of International Education Research*, 7(4), 95-102. <https://doi.org/10.19030/jierv7i4.6055>.
- Al-Shehri, S. (2020). Transforming English language in Saudi Arabia: Why does technology matter? King Khalid University.
- Alswilem, D.A.M. (2019). Saudi English teachers' use of technology in secondary classroom: Perceptions, barriers and suggestions for improvement. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 10(6), 168-178. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.10n.6p.168>
- Althobaiti, H. (2020). The significance of learning English in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Critical Studies in Language and Literature*, 1(3), 20-24. <https://doi.org/10.46809/jcsll.vli3.25>
- Alyami, R. H. (2014). Education reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Tatweer schools as a unit of development. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal*, 5(2), 1515-1524.
- Andrews, T. (2012). What is social constructivism? *The Grounded Theory Review*, 11(1), 39-46.
- Assulaimani, T. (2019). The future of teaching English in Saudi Arabia. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 7(8), 1623-1634. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Turki-Assulaimani/publication/335310685_The_Future_of_Teaching_English_in_Saudi_Arabia/links/5d5eff77299bf1b97cff2acc/The-Future-of-Teaching-English-in-Saudi-Arabia.pdf
- Barnawi, O.Z., Al-Hawsawi, S. (2017). English language policy in Saudi Arabia; English language education policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Current trends, issues and challenges. In R. Kirkpatrick (Ed.). *English language policy in the Middle East and North Africa* (pp. 199-133). Springer.

- Baroudi, S., & Shaya, N. (2022). Exploring predictors of teachers' self-efficacy for online teaching in the Arab world amid COVID-19. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27, 8093-8110. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-022-10946-4>
- Choi, E., & Lee, J. (2016). Investigating the relationship of target language proficiency and self-efficacy among non-native EFL teachers. *System*, 58, 49-63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2016.02.010>
- Creswell, J.W. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Davis, F.D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319-340. <https://doi.org/10.2307/249008>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.
- Elyas, T., & Al Grigri, W. H. (2014). Obstacles to teaching English in Saudi Arabia public schools: Teachers' and supervisors' perceptions. *International Journal of English Language teaching*, 2(3), 74-89. www.eajournals.org
- Elyas, T & Picard, M. (2010). Saudi Arabian educational history: impacts on English language teaching. *Education, Business and Community: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, 3 (2), 136-145. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17537981011047961>
- Eslami, Z. R., & Fatahi, A. (2008). Teachers' sense of self-efficacy, English proficiency, and instructional strategies: A study of non-native EFL teachers in Iran. *TESL-EJ*, 11, 1e19. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ898136>
- Fareh, S. (2010). Challenges of teaching English in the Arab world: why can't EFL programs deliver as expected? *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 2 (2), 3600-3604. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.559>
- HMC. (2022, 29 March). Vision 2030- Education in Saudi Arabia. <https://www.hmc.org.uk/hmc-blog/vision-2030-education-in-saudi-arabia/>
- Hofstede Insights. (2023). Saudi Arabia. <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool>
- Khan, I.A. (2011). An analysis of learning barriers: The Saudi Arabian context. *International Education Studies*, 4(1), 242-247. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1066382>
- Khan, I.A. (2012). Relevance of teacher development: the EFL context of KSA. *Procedia- Social and Behavioural Science*, 47(2012), 756-764.
- Ma, Q., & Liu, L. (2004). The Technology Acceptance Model: A meta-analysis of empirical findings. *Journal of Organisational and End User Computing*, 16(1), 59-72.
- Macmillan Education. (2014). *Flying High for Saudi Arabia*. Macmillan Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2003). *The ten-year plan for the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2004-2014*. Ministry of Education (MOE).
- Mohammed, S., & Kinyo, L. (2020). Constructivist theory as a foundation for the utilisation of digital technology in the lifelong learning process. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 21(4).
- Moskovsky, C. (2018). EFL teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia: 25 years of research. In C. Moskovsky & M. Picard (Eds.), *English as a Foreign Language in Saudi Arabia: New insights into teaching and learning English* (pp. 12-77). Routledge.
- Natsir, M., & Sanjaya, D. (2014). Grammar translation method (GTM) versus communicative language teaching (CLT): A review of literature. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.2n.1p.58>
- OECD. (2020). *Education in Saudi Arabia*. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/76df15a2-en>
- Panhwar, A.H., Ansan, S., & Ansan, K. (2016). Sociocultural theory and its role in the development of language pedagogy. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 7(6), 183-188. <https://doi.org/10.575/aiac.aqls.v.7n.6p.183>

- Rabab'ah, G. (2005). Communication problems facing Arab learners of English. *Grazer Linguistische Studien*, 63 (1), 63–75. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED473079.pdf>
- Shabani, K., & Ewing, B.F. (2016). Applications of Vygotsky's sociocultural approach for teacher's professional development. *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1252177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1251177>
- Tayan, B.M. (2017). The Saudi Tatweer education reforms: Implications of Neoliberal thought to Saudi education policy. *International Education Studies*, 10(5), 61-71. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v10n5p61>