

Saudi teachers' perspectives on flipped learning: Are they ready and willing?

Flipped learning

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Abstract

Purpose – Incorporating flipped learning (FL) into teaching English as a foreign language may improve student learning outcomes. This study gathered information on Saudi EFL teachers' readiness and willingness to apply FL. So, it aims to describe Saudi EFL teachers' readiness and willingness to apply FL in language classrooms and to find suitable guidelines for Saudi EFL professional development (PD) designers to follow.

Design/methodology/approach – This descriptive study involved 153 male and female Saudi EFL teachers as participants, investigating the perspectives and perceptions of these teachers within the context of foreign language teaching in Saudi Arabia. Surveys in Qualtrics were employed as the primary data collection tool for the study.

Findings – Results showed that teachers' self-efficacy of their current teaching was high. Most participants had positive attitudes and abilities related to FL, although they also identified potential challenges related to its engagement and assessment. Teachers expressed a strong willingness to participate in PD in this area, with a preference for online videos and group workshops.

Originality/value – The study emphasizes the importance of PD for Saudi EFL teachers. In addition, it offers guidelines for planning effective PD.

Keywords Active learning, Flipped learning, Professional development, Saudi Arabia, English as a foreign language, Teachers

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Recently, the [Ministry of Education \(2020\)](#) (MOE) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has undertaken educational reforms as part of its Vision 2030 initiative, which, in part, aims to modernize the educational system ([MOE, 2020](#)). With a focus on providing a “premium education to build a universally competitive knowledge society” ([MOE, 2020](#), p. 1), the MOE is utilizing international best practices and technology to achieve its goals. The development of high standards of English literacy is seen as crucial to Saudi Arabia's national interests, given its position as a hub connecting three continents ([MOE, 2020](#)). The high number of Internet users in the KSA (95.7% in January 2021) further emphasizes the need for modernization and the adoption of new technologies ([Kemp, 2021](#)).

Improving English language fluency is a priority for Saudi Arabia because English represents various types of capital and proficiency in the language is crucial for learner outcomes; the KSA requires high-quality, well-educated language educators to help learners improve their English achievement ([Barnawi and Al-Hawsawi, 2017](#)). In turn, this means that relevant, frequent and modified PD programs must be developed for teachers ([Alzahrani, 2020](#); [Mitchell and Alfuraih, 2017](#)). As part of modified PD programs, PD facilitators can offer



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teachers opportunities to learn about and use technology, and they can provide teachers with new strategies to enhance their teaching skills and improve student engagement (MOE, 2020). To achieve this, researchers such as Cevikbas and Argün (2017) recommend focusing teacher PD on student-centered, technology-enhanced methods such as FL. However, implementing such extensive changes in English teaching requires prepared and willing classroom teachers (MOE, 2020; Alzahrani, 2020; Mitchell and Alfuraih, 2017). Therefore, PD facilitators need to have a comprehensive understanding of current Saudi PD and teacher attitudes toward it (Alzahrani, 2020; Mitchell and Alfuraih, 2017).

This study aims to discover Saudi EFL teachers' readiness and willingness to participate in PD programs and apply FL in language classrooms. Part of understanding teachers' readiness and willingness is also understanding their perceptions of their current instruction. This study is significant in several ways. First, it helps to support the national educational vision in KSA. Also, the study addresses the need for effective frameworks for PD programs for Saudi EFL teachers. Furthermore, it identifies the importance of integrating strategies and technology-enhanced methods to support teachers' practice and students' engagement. Overall, this study has practical implications and guidelines for PD designers to improve the content and format of PD programs.

2. Literature review

2.1 Professional development in Saudi Arabia

2.1.1 *The need for PD.* The continuing education of educators is a crucial element in the educational process (Egbert, 2017). Unfortunately, there is a lack of English as a foreign language (EFL) ongoing/in-service PD for public school teachers in Saudi Arabia (Al-Seghayer, 2017; Alzahrani, 2020; Mitchell and Alfuraih, 2017). Generally, according to The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2018), 86% of Saudi teachers attend an average of one PD activity each year, mainly in the form of taking a course or attending a seminar/workshop. TALIS (2018) also reported a lack of PD in several areas. For example, teachers said they need more training in information and communications technologies (ICTs). Ongoing PD might help Saudi EFL teachers to increase their effectiveness in teaching language classes and keep them updated on new teaching methods and strategies. Saudi scholars have provided evidence of the need for PD programs for in-service EFL teachers to improve their teaching practices (Alolaywi, 2020; Mitchell and Alfuraih, 2017). Al-Seghayer (2017) notes that Saudi EFL teachers need PD programs because they are generally not offered enough teacher preparation courses during their bachelor's degrees. Saudi English teachers graduate "with little or no exposure to English teaching methods or opportunities for adequate pre-service classroom teaching experience" (Alqahtani, 2020, p. 132), indicating a need for more training and support. Additionally, despite growing demands for education reform and improved outcomes in areas like English language fluency, the number and quality of PD opportunities for Saudi EFL teachers appear to be limited. In fact, 77% of Saudi EFL teachers report receiving no PD after graduating, although they are willing to receive more instruction in professional and teaching skills to address their dissatisfaction with the preparation and courses they had as pre-service teachers (Alolaywi, 2020).

2.1.2 *Saudi teachers' attitudes towards PD.* Saudi teachers have generally expressed positive attitudes toward PD (Alshaikhi, 2018; Oudah and Altalhab, 2018). However, there are concerns regarding the management and delivery of PD, as teachers reported receiving ready-made packages without consultation on their actual needs (Alshaikhi, 2018). Educators have suggested that PD options such as self-directed and collaborative learning and integrating the Internet would be preferable (Alshaikhi, 2018). Issues with

current PD programs in Saudi Arabia include one-time workshops, lecture-based workshops, limited participation opportunities and irrelevant content (Alshaikhi, 2018; Alzahrani, 2020). Hammond *et al.* (2017) and Chapelle and Sauro (2017) recommend that PD be developed based on teachers' needs and situated in their classrooms.

2.2 Active learning and flipped learning

Chapelle and Sauro (2017), along with other language educators (e.g. Barnawi and Al-Hawsawi, 2017; King, 1993; Röhl *et al.*, 2013), advocate for student-centered active learning (AL) strategies, such as FL, over traditional methods that rely on rote memorization and passive lecture. Since King's call in 1993 to shift from "sage on the stage to guide on the side" (p. 1), AL has become more prevalent in education, deeply engaging students in their learning (Hammond *et al.*, 2017; Röhl *et al.*, 2013). FL, an innovative AL strategy, flips the traditional curriculum by providing direct instruction outside of the classroom and using class time for interactive and collaborative activities (Kostka and Marshall, 2018). FL has been found to be effective in a variety of subjects and assists teachers in managing time while allowing students to lead class discussions (Arslan, 2020). According to Alzahrani (2019), 89.9% of Saudi secondary school teachers surveyed have not had a chance to participate in PD related to FL, and such novel PD needs to be provided to both in-service and pre-service teachers (Alshaikhi, 2018; Alzahrani, 2019).

Egbert *et al.* (2014) identified six FL components, including digital lectures, group discussions and differentiated pacing and timing, which can be applied in and out of class. FL often utilizes videos for direct instruction outside of the classroom, allowing for hands-on learning, individualized instruction and group collaboration during class time. In language learning, FL is particularly effective as it allows students to immerse themselves in the language while applying higher-order thinking skills in class (Webb and Doman, 2016). FL is also considered a metacognitive approach, allowing students to direct their learning and recognize their new understandings (Asiri *et al.*, 2021; Brame, 2013). Integrating technology in flipped language classes can help students overcome time and space limitations for language use (Asiri *et al.*, 2021). FL has significant potential in language learning settings (Andujar *et al.*, 2020; Arslan, 2020; Jafarkhani and Jamebozorg, 2020) and addresses the Saudi MOE's goals.

2.3 Flipped learning in Saudi Arabia

FL is not a completely new concept in Saudi Arabia; several studies have investigated its application in different fields. This research has shown that FL can have a positive impact on students' progress and performance, with some challenges in applying technology in class (Naem Ahmed Al-Amri, 2022; Al-Harbi and Al-Shumaimeri, 2016; Najmi, 2020). Alamri (2019) reviewed existing studies and found that flipping the classroom led to increased engagement, student satisfaction and better preparation for standard examinations. However, some students faced obstacles such as lack of computer skills and insufficient time, indicating that educators should create flipped classrooms that are customized to meet the particular needs of their students. Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) conducted a study of 43 female students in English language classes and found that the FL group was more upbeat and active in their own learning, leading to positive student perceptions, increased in-class interaction and discussion time, and improvement in students' autonomous learning.

Overall, FL can be an effective strategy for Saudi English students; however, studies have also identified some challenges, such as the need to provide necessary equipment and training to improve the at-home e-learning component and to provide workshops and teacher education courses on using the strategy.

2.4 Research questions

Because of the need to make language learning more effective in Saudi EFL classes by enhancing AL. The overarching purpose of this study is determining what kind of PD Saudi EFL teachers want and are ready for in order to help them to apply FL strategies in their classrooms. Therefore, these questions arise:

- RQ1. How do Saudi EFL teachers perceive their current teaching?
- RQ2. How do Saudi EFL teachers perceive their self-efficacy in the context of active learning, flipped learning and technology?
- RQ3. How willing are Saudi EFL teachers to learn about and use flipped learning in their classrooms? Why?
- RQ4. What types of professional development do Saudi EFL teachers prefer?

The results of the study provide an overview of teachers' perspectives toward active teaching and their readiness and willingness to participate in PD. These outcomes provide a foundation for planning PD in FL for Saudi EFL teachers.

3. Methodology

3.1 The research context and design

This descriptive study was conducted from a qualitative paradigm in order to obtain teachers' perspectives and understand their perceptions. The study used a survey as a main tool for data collection. This study was conducted in the Saudi FL context. This section describes the study participants, data sources and analysis, and methodological limitations.

3.2 Participants

A snowball method was used in this survey research to gather data from as many relevant participants as possible. Of the 249 responses, the study excluded 96 responses because they were completed in less than 60 s. Therefore, this study involved 153 Saudi English teachers from various districts, as shown in [Table 1](#). These participants included 96 male and 57 female teachers. Their teaching experience ranged from 11 to over 20 years, with the largest group (35%) having between 11 and 15 years of experience. Eighty percent of the participants held bachelor's degrees, 16% master's degrees and 4% a two-year teaching diploma. All participants were currently teaching in Saudi Arabia and had experience in teaching English there at the elementary (24%), intermediate (35%) and secondary levels (34%), with 11 participants (6.4%) identifying themselves as "other."

3.3 The survey

3.3.1 Structure and distribution. The online survey of teachers' readiness and willingness to use technology and apply FL in their classrooms had 14 closed-ended and 5 open-ended questions. The researchers developed the survey based on the literature. Then, three experts reviewed it for content validity. It was distributed in two languages (Arabic and English) to give the participants the opportunity to understand and write their comments in either language. Open-ended questions were included to provide participants an opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions ([Weisberg et al., 1996](#)). The survey was created in Qualtrics and distributed to Saudi EFL teachers via the social media applications WhatsApp and Telegram. The survey was open for three weeks and divided into the four sections described below.

	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	96	63.2%
Female	57	36.8%
<i>Ages</i>		
Less than 25 years	2	1.3%
26–30	18	11.8%
31–45	99	64.7%
46–50	27	17.7%
More than 50 years	7	4.6%
<i>Academic qualification</i>		
Bachelor's degree	122	79.7%
Master's degree	25	16.3%
Doctoral degree	0	0
Other	6	3.9%
<i>Teaching level*</i>		
Elementary	42	24.4%
Intermediate	60	34.9%
Secondary	59	34.3%
Other	11	6.4%
<i>Teaching experience</i>		
>2 years	11	7.2%
3–5	16	10.5%
6–10	29	19.0%
11–15	53	34.6%
16–20	22	14.4%
>20 years	22	14.4%

Note(s): *Equals more than 153 because some teachers responded that they taught at more than one level
Source(s): Table by author

Table 1. Participant description (*N* = 153)

3.3.2 Background questions. The survey started with background questions related to demographics adapted from [Teclaw et al. \(2012\)](#). Demographic questions help the researcher to see if there is diversity in respondents. In this section, the participants answered whether they were currently EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia, their ages, degrees, genders, teaching level(s) and years of teaching experience.

3.3.3 Current teaching self-efficacy. The second section comprised open-ended self-efficacy questions, in which participants had a chance to reflect on their teaching effectiveness and the challenges of using educational technology. The rationale behind this section was exploring common themes.

3.3.4 FL and pedagogical components. This section of the survey focused on three main topics concerning respondents' use of FL that were measured with a Likert-type scale (i.e. Agree, Undecided, Disagree). The first topic had seven statements about participants' knowledge of FL pedagogical components. The second topic had seven statements about participants' willingness to apply FL pedagogical components in their classrooms. Finally, nine statements under the third topic inquired about participants' current perceptions of technology use in language teaching and learning. This section focused on how Saudi EFL teachers perceive their self-efficacy for AL, FL, and technology use and describes their willingness to learn about them.

3.3.5 Teachers' PD preferences and willingness. In this survey section, three yes/no questions asked about respondents' willingness to attend and participate in PD about FL. Participants had an open-ended chance to explain their answers and provide reasons for their willingness. This section allowed for determination of precisely the types of PD respondents preferred and what aspects of PD they felt met their needs.

3.4 Data analysis

Descriptive data analysis was conducted in two steps. First, analytics from the Qualtrics software provided the total number of closed-ended responses in each response category to each question. The frequencies of responses were collated into tables and described. Second, open-ended responses received in Arabic were translated into English separately by two dual-language individuals and then compared to ensure that the translations were similar. Structural coding (Saldaña, 2013) was used to analyze the open-ended questions. All answers were read and categorized to uncover themes that addressed the research questions.

3.5 Methodological limitations

There are some limitations in this study. First, only 153 Saudi EFL teachers completed the survey. Second, most respondents did not explain fully many of them wrote short answers to the open-ended questions, often consisting of two or three words. Third, the study used self-report, so what participants reported might not be what they really think or do, and there is no way to know how "true" their information is. Finally, snowball sampling may have missed some important populations; however, it was used due to limitations imposed by Covid-19. In spite of these limitations, this study was able to obtain responses from a diverse group; additionally, a robust sample of >40 responses from each teaching level was obtained.

4. Findings and interpretations

The findings and interpretations section is divided into four parts according to the research questions. Guidelines for Saudi PD based on the findings are provided in the following section.

4.1 Teacher perceptions of their effectiveness

Eighty-eight percent of the participants reported that they felt they were effective language teachers, while the remaining 12% felt they were not effective. Responses to the open half of the question revealed some trends. For example, fifteen teachers felt they were effective in EFL classes because of using various teaching methods and strategies, but none of them named a specific strategy or a method. Nine teachers indicated they felt they were effective because they could engage students and keep them engaged during the class. Another six teachers stated that they were effective because they could observe and improve their students' progress, interaction, participation and development. Finally, four teachers felt effective because of being updated with new strategies and participating in PD.

Technology was also linked with teaching effectiveness in some answers. For example, seven teachers revealed that they thought that integrating technology is a way to be effective. One response mentioned the integration of online resources and social media, while other teachers mentioned using PowerPoint and technology without any explanation or description. In addition, some teachers present a digital version of the textbook using PowerPoint and a projector; as one said, "using PowerPoint slides is very helpful. Some of my students prefer them to the book." In contrast, eight of the fifteen teachers who felt they were

not effective provided more details on why. Three teachers indicated that they felt ineffective because they had difficulties speaking as natives and could not integrate technology in class.

These data imply that, although most teachers thought they were effective, their reasons were diverse and generally had to do with more traditional types of teaching. For example, many of the teachers said that they thought they were effective because of their abilities to be active and communicative in class, to see their students' progress and to enhance learning with technology. In the open-ended questions, only 4 teachers linked effective teaching to participation in PD. In addition, twelve teachers thought their effectiveness was related to preparing students only to take tests, listening to native speaker soundtracks, or noticing students' development, but did not mention AL.

In sum, even though most of the teachers said that they felt effective, they claimed to be effective in what may really be teacher-centered methods and strategies rather than student-centered; this is clear in part because they reflected on what *they* do instead of what their *students* do. Therefore, to prepare PD in FL for Saudi language teachers, it is essential to discuss effective *student-centered* teaching because that is the central idea of flipped instruction. In addition, these findings also suggest that PD in FL should incorporate student-centered strategies for teachers to follow.

4.2 Perceived challenges of using technology

Out of 121 answers to the second question, there were three major categories: (1) Twenty-six teachers who said they face no difficulties when they apply or use technology in class; (2) forty teachers who mentioned that they felt they could use and apply technology in class, but the obstacle was the absence of technology and; (3) twenty-eight teachers who claimed they could not use technology because of its difficulties and lack of experience, time management and materials creation. For the teachers who said that they do not have technology challenges, it is unclear what technologies they use. However, six of these teachers mentioned that some of their students do not have full access to the Internet, especially in rural areas.

On the other hand, teachers who stated that there were some obstacles, such as technology availability in school and difficulties using it, can be categorized into two groups. The first group, with 40 teachers, focused on the physical facilities. They mentioned a lack of available school equipment, language labs and technical support for issues such as spotty Internet connections; these participants mentioned that they were interested in using more technology in the classroom, but there was not enough equipment to apply, such as projectors and language labs. The second group of 28 teachers indicated challenges in using technology because of their lack of knowledge or some other instructional challenge, rather than just physical facilities. Examples included responses related to time management or experience; for example, they provided responses such as "I have not enough experience in dealing with them" and "Focusing on technology rather than the four language skills besides time management." Other difficulties mentioned in responses included the shortage of training, practice and available resources.

Overall, these findings indicate while that many teachers said that they knew the basics of technology in class (such as PowerPoint and using projectors), it appears the main issue was not the technology itself. Although many teachers mentioned the lack of technology in class, FL does not require more technology use in class, so FL can be implemented effectively where teachers and students can use their computers at home. More important, the teachers claimed that the lack of knowledge of time management and other instructional preparation was a core challenge. These teachers responded that they wanted PD regarding technology use and its effective application in class. Generally, these challenges could be addressed by focusing during PD on how teachers might apply FL strategies such as time management and extensive class size management.

4.3 Perceptions of FL components, pedagogy and technology use in the classroom

Teachers' perspectives of FL were positive in most aspects. As shown in Table 2, the majority of teachers agreed that they knew how to use FL's pedagogical aspects in class. A small number (less than 10% of respondents) selected Undecided when responding to the statements. Higher levels of Undecided responses were observed in questions related to whether they could: 1) develop activities to support and increase engagement and 2) create assessments that address students' AL. Finally, there were very low rates of Disagree responses (less than 5% in all cases). Overall, this indicates that many teachers think they can apply and use basic FL pedagogical knowledge in their teaching.

In addition, most respondents said they were willing to use FL's pedagogical aspects in class. As shown in Table 3, few teachers were unwilling to apply FL (under 3% in all questions), while more Undecided answers were received on questions related to willingness to develop activities and to create assessments to support AL. Overall, the majority of teachers stated that they were willing to apply FL pedagogy in the EFL classroom.

Regarding their current knowledge of technology use (Table 4) most teachers felt they were familiar with using and applying the technology aspects mentioned in the survey in EFL classes. Areas of potential difficulty were in areas related to application of technology in FL, such as providing supporting digital materials, evaluating digital resources and uploading videos. Overall, the results show that teachers appear to know about FL components and be willing to apply them in class; still, they could have worries about integrating some aspects of the technology related to FL elements.

In sum, teachers were at least somewhat confident in their abilities and said they had a background in FL pedagogical knowledge and integrating technology. However, although they marked that they know how to create, develop and plan active and flipped materials, it may not be something that they actually do in classes because they use a standardized workbook with ready-made activities. Given that creation of AL materials is not a current component of the MOE guidelines, it is unclear exactly how much teachers know about them and to what extent they can implement them.

Therefore, despite teachers' agreement to the survey items, the findings imply that they may still need PD to provide clarification of what AL terminologies mean in a practical sense. The majority of the Saudi EFL teachers said that they were willing to learn about and use FL in their classrooms even if they said they already knew its components; this indicates that their knowledge may not be as extensive as their agreement makes it seem. Therefore, teachers might benefit from the opportunity to share their current teaching and practice new strategies during PD.

Table 2.
Perceptions of FL
pedagogical
knowledge
use (N = 125)

	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
I know how to help students lead the class	110 (88%)	11 (9%)	4 (3%)
I can develop activities where students collaborate	109 (87%)	10 (8%)	4 (3%)
I can create related materials for students to use	116 (93%)	9 (7%)	0
I know how to get students to interact in class	116 (93%)	5 (4%)	2 (2%)
I can plan classroom tasks that promote interaction	111 (89%)	9 (7%)	5 (4%)
I can develop activities to support and increase engagement	102 (82%)	16 (13%)	6 (5%)
I can create assessments that address students' active learning	100 (81%)	19 (15%)	4 (3%)

Source(s): Table by author

4.4 PD preferences – types and elements

This section describes and discusses the PD that Saudi EFL teachers say they prefer and what elements they might want. It also includes teachers' justification of their willingness to participate in PD or not. In answering this question, teachers could mark more than one type of preferred PD and one element that could be more engaging to them. As shown in Table 5, teachers marked 226 choices. The most preferred forms of PD were online video (37% of the choices) and group workshops (26%).

In addition, there were 286 responses on the elements of PD that the teachers said engage them (as shown in Table 6). Teachers selected various elements to be included in PD such as AL, content-focused, curriculum materials and feedback and reflection. However, some of these aspects could not happen through their preferred PD formats such as online video. In this case, PD could integrate online materials and face-to-face interaction. On the other hand,

	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
I am willing to help students lead the class	101 (93.5%)	5 (4.6%)	2 (1.9%)
I am willing to develop activities where students collaborate	101 (93.5%)	5 (4.6%)	3 (2.8%)
I am willing to create related materials for students to use	96 (88.9%)	10 (9.3%)	2 (1.9%)
I am willing to get students to interact in class	106 (98.2%)	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)
I am willing to plan classroom tasks that promote interaction	99 (91.2%)	7 (6.5%)	2 (1.9%)
I am willing to develop activities to support and increase engagement	97 (89.8%)	10 (9.3%)	1 (0.9%)
I am willing to create assessments that address students' active learning	90 (84.1%)	14 (13.1%)	3 (2.8%)

Table 3.
Perceptions of willingness to apply FL pedagogical knowledge (N = 108)

Source(s): Table by author

Question	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
I know how to use a learning management system	101 (91.2%)	5 (4.5%)	4 (3.6%)
I know how to upload a video	87 (79.1%)	17 (15.5%)	6 (5.5%)
I can send and receive email to/from students	96 (87.3%)	7 (6.4%)	7 (6.4%)
I can use social media to interact with students	89 (80.2%)	15 (13.5%)	7 (6.3%)
I can find videos online that can support language learning	99 (90%)	9 (8.2%)	2 (1.8%)
I can provide supportive individual digital materials to students	88 (79.3%)	17 (15.3%)	6 (5.4%)
I can use online tools for assessment	89 (80.2%)	14 (12.6%)	8 (7.2%)
I know how to evaluate digital resources like apps and websites	85 (72.3%)	18 (16.4%)	7 (6.4%)
I know about many web-based apps for language learning	93 (85.3%)	13 (11.9%)	3 (2.8%)

Table 4.
Perceptions of technology use in EFL class (N = 110)

Source(s): Table by author

Response	Count
Online videos	83
Group workshops	58
Lectures	34
Printed materials	30
1-on-1 workshops	13
Others	8

Table 5.
Preferred types of professional development (N = 112)

Source(s): Table by author

the counts given for each of the elements were very similar, indicating that most of these elements were important for the participants.

There were 88 responses to the question, “*What knowledge or skills do you wish your professional development would address?*”. Twenty-eight teachers called for PD to incorporate new teaching methods and enhance technology use in language classrooms. For example, one teacher said, “Incorporating more websites and online tools in my activities.” Another hoped “to get and enhance technology skills to use them in a learning environment.” They also mentioned that they need to learn new effective language teaching strategies, AL and assessment to engage and interact with students. Four teachers wanted to learn about technology and be updated with online learning tools; one said, “create new useful applications for students to use in class.” Twenty-one teachers stated that they needed to know how to create a learning environment where students can practice and use language skills communicatively. Participants are also wanted to have some PD on time management (2), textbook content and materials (3), individual differences (2), language applications (7) and supporting language skills beside vocabulary and pronunciation (8). Overall, teachers are willing to participate in PD that includes technology aspects, such as online activities and learning tools.

Overall, teachers indicated many aspects they wanted to be covered in their PD. These included incorporating technology into AL, choosing suitable materials to use with students such as applications and websites, and learning how to manage class time given the use of technology and the need to offer enough time for students to engage in class. Also, it is important for them to be aware that excessive use of technology like the Internet and language labs in the classroom is not necessary. As a result, FL PD should address various topics and aspects that are based on reported needs.

4.5 Willingness to participate in PD

This section analyzes teachers’ willingness to participate in PD according to three different content types.

4.5.1 *Willingness to participate in PD about FL.* Eighty-one out of 103 participants (80%) who answered this question marked that they are willing to participate in PD about FL. Fifty-nine of these participants supported their answers with additional text responses. There were three main points in their answers. First, 21 teachers stated that FL can have a positive effect on students’ progress, developing their self-confidence in class by giving them time and opportunity to practice and use the language. For example, a participant said, “It saves time and gives more opportunities for students to discuss and speak.” Second, 13 teachers said that the FL strategy can engage students and increase students’ interaction. An example of the comments they wrote is, “I believe that the best way to learn something is by teaching it.

Response	Count
Incorporates active learning	54
Content-focused	48
Curriculum materials	47
Offers feedback and reflection	42
Demonstration lessons	37
Supports collaboration	36
Observation of peers	22
Others	0

Table 6. Elements of professional development (N = 112)

Source(s): Table by author

The flipped class method also engages the students with the curriculum.” Finally, 22 teachers wanted to participate in PD about FL because they felt the need to improve their self-development and learn a new strategy to make them able to teach language with different methods. In short, the teachers seemed interested in flipped PD, even though most of them had said in a previous question that they already knew about FL to enhance their knowledge.

4.5.2 Creating, developing and adapting class materials for active learning. Seventy-seven of 97 (79%) respondents said they wanted to participate in PD about creating, developing and adapting class materials for AL. Forty-three teachers explained their choice; First, twenty-six mentioned that these aspects of AL are valuable skills that teachers need to improve their teaching and increase in-class engagement. Second, fourteen teachers listed that creating and developing materials makes language learning easier; also, they wrote that this kind of PD would reflect on students’ progress in class. Accordingly, even though most of the teachers said previously that they knew how to do these pedagogical tasks, it seems that many teachers still wanted to learn about these methods, which are essential to improve students’ learning and their knowledge.

4.5.3 Student interaction and formative assessment. Eighty-three of 92 respondents (90%) to this question marked “Yes” regarding willingness to participate in PD about student interaction and formative assessment. Forty of these teachers added reasons in the open-ended section. Many teachers stated that interaction and formative assessment are fundamental elements in AL strategies. They also mentioned that they know what interaction and assessment are but still want to know more and improve their teaching skills. Three teachers said that AL is a new experience to them, and they want to benefit from this type of PD.

4.5.4 Overview of willingness to participate questions. Overall, teachers who marked “Yes” on all three questions indicated a strong willingness to participate in PD. The common reason stated was that the teachers believed in the importance of PD because it could help keep them updated and help them and their students be more active in class. In contrast, the teachers who marked “No” on willingness to participate in PD justified their answers in several ways. First, these teachers felt that they were not capable of using these types of strategies and these strategies were not suitable for either students or school settings. Second, some of the teachers said that they already had PD on the same topic, which is repetitious, and they do not want to attend workshops that may not reflect their teaching practice or add to it. Lastly, some of them mentioned that they do not have time to attend.

These open-ended questions indicate that many teachers believed that they must develop and update their teaching practice with new teaching strategies. As noted previously, PD should be designed to meet teachers’ needs and requirements; this includes teachers who are unwilling to participate. To do so, PD should avoid content repetition, be scheduled during teachers’ workdays (daytime) or free time to facilitate their attendance, and, finally, address and cover teachers’ needs and requirements in order to raise their enthusiasm about participating. This can be accomplished by giving teachers a chance to choose and be a part of developing workshop content.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated whether Saudi EFL teachers are ready and willing to participate in PD and apply FL in EFL classes. Most findings of this study agree with the literature discussed earlier, such as Saudi EFL teachers’ need for PD and their positive attitudes toward PD (Alshaikhi, 2018; Oudah and Altalhab, 2018). However, this study also adds to the literature that notes that current Saudi PD is not always relevant to Saudi EFL teachers and should be designed based on teachers’ needs in order to encourage effective participation. This finding matches a study conducted by Alruqi and Alharbi (2022) in Saudi and other

contexts (Bayar, 2014; Nazari *et al.*, 2019). According to the teachers' perceptions of effectiveness and challenges of using technology, most felt that their teaching was effective and that they did not face technology challenges. However, follow-up questions revealed that teachers might have differing understandings of what effective teaching means and how to use different technologies in class. In addition, most participants said they know AL and FL terminology and components, but the findings provide some indication that they still want to participate in PD about them because they may not know how to use them in their classroom and what appropriate technologies are effective in these contexts. Further, teachers' willingness to participate in PD indicates that they believe PD could support their teaching practice and improve effectiveness. Teachers appeared to like many PD types, but online videos appeared to be preferred; this could be because they were unfamiliar with many other types of PD. The minority of teachers that indicated unwillingness to participate in PD indicated concerns related to repetitious topics and a lack of time to attend PD after school hours. Therefore, these claims should be considered when planning PD.

6. Implications for professional development

Based on the PD literature and the study conclusions, guidelines are formatted below as statements to be used as criteria to design relevant PD. While the current study focused specifically on Saudi EFL teachers, many of the conclusions could be explored in other similar contexts within and beyond the Saudi education system. These guidelines are grouped into two categories, "Content" and "Format."

Content:

- (1) PD should specify student and teacher roles in AL/FL classrooms, particularly during class time.
- (2) PD should introduce guidelines or standards for technology use.
- (3) PD should enhance the use of available online resources and demonstrate how teachers can use them.
- (4) The PD should provide authentic uses of an online LMS such as Google Classroom.
- (5) PD should include a workshop in creating a lesson with materials and assessments.
- (6) PD must acknowledge teachers' actual present states of knowledge about pedagogical ideas and evaluating digital resources like apps and websites.
- (7) PD should be relevant to teacher needs and not ready-made.
- (8) PD should assess teacher knowledge and skills ahead of time and provide choices of topics and levels of those topics.
- (9) Participants should be able to choose from different types of strategies to learn about.

Format:

- (1) PD should provide teachers with opportunities to explore and understand some online assessment applications and websites.
- (2) Participants could start their PD by accessing online materials prior to the PD, then they may apply the knowledge in the workshops.
- (3) Teachers in PD should create lessons with integration of materials from school curricula to share and discuss.

- (4) Participants should be able to reflect on their teaching concerns and challenges and give feedback to each other.
- (5) The PD should provide opportunities for teachers to use technology and AL.
- (6) Participants should see others' applications and offer feedback and reflection.
- (7) Saudi EFL teachers should have their PD when they have time to participate fully.

6.1 Implications for future research

This study, including the literature reviewed, suggests additional questions about PD in EFL, such as:

- (1) What specific knowledge do Saudi EFL teachers need?
- (2) What is the impact of PD designed with the guidelines on teachers' PD satisfaction and self-efficacy and on their teaching effectiveness?
- (3) Which has better outcomes in the Saudi context, face-to-face or online PD?
- (4) What is the effect of flipped learning PD on Saudi EFL teachers' use of technology, online teaching and students' active learning?

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Further reading

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