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Secondary School Teachers' Perceptions of the Qualities of Effective EFL Teachers in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of 138 Saudi secondary school male English teachers in Riyadh regarding the qualities of an effective EFL teacher. It aimed to investigate these qualities and explore the relationship between teachers' experiences and perceptions. A survey research design was used, with data collected through a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire. Descriptive analysis and an independent t-test were conducted. The findings revealed that effective EFL teachers possess various qualities in personal quality, attitude, pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, and classroom practice. Teachers considered all these qualities essential. However, no significant relationship was found between teachers' experience and their perceptions of effective EFL teacher characteristics.

INTRODUCTION

Effective education systems require well-trained teachers who have a significant impact on student learning (Markley, 2004). The quality of teachers influences learning outcomes (Campbell *et al.*, 2004; Lasley II *et al.*, 2006; Rockoff, 2004). Teacher effectiveness involves fitting into a specific type, adhering to standards, understanding success, and implementing suitable classroom activities (Hativa *et al.*, 2001). Effective teaching is crucial for educational systems and learning improvement. Teachers' role in students' academic performance is critical (Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009).

This study aims to discover the characteristics of an Effective English teacher in Saudi secondary schools, based on Borg's theory (2006). The study explores personal qualities, attitudes, pedagogical knowledge, subject matter expertise, and classroom practice. This research in Riyadh contributes to improving teacher quality in Saudi Arabia, addressing a limited area of study.

Research Rationale

Reforms in Saudi Arabia aimed to improve EFL education, but proficiency levels among Saudi EFL teachers remain below expectations. Factors such as attitudes, motivation, and inadequate preparation contribute to this issue (Alshumaimeri, 2019; Fareh, 2010; Wedell & Alshumaimeri, 2014). Teachers express the need for more effective practices and specific skills (Banks, 2014; Ryan *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, the practice of designating teachers based on demand impacts student learning. Effective teaching requires achieving desired results (Uchefuna, 2001).

This study aims to highlight the importance of teacher

effectiveness in promoting various aspects of student performance, such as academic achievement and competence.

Research Purpose

This survey research gathers perceptions of the qualities of effective secondary level Saudi male English teachers using theoretical data from various sources and analytical data collected by administering a Likert-scale agree-disagree standardized questionnaire.

Research Objectives

The research project assessed the qualities of effective English teachers perceived by Saudi EFL teachers in Riyadh. The objectives of the research are:

1. To identify the qualities of an effective English Teacher as perceived by secondary-level Saudi male English teachers.
2. To explore to what extent the qualities of an effective English teacher as perceived by the Saudi male English teachers differ according to the teacher's experience.

Research Questions

1. What are the qualities of an effective English Teacher as perceived by secondary-level Saudi male English teachers?
2. Are the qualities of an effective English teacher perceived by the secondary level Saudi male English teachers differ according to the teacher's experience?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective English language teaching (ELT) plays a crucial role in foreign language learning (Ghimire, 2019). High-

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quality teaching is recognized as the most significant factor linked to student achievement (Schleicher, 2016). This chapter reviews literature on teachers' quality, focusing on English teachers in Saudi Arabia. Borg (2006) proposed five qualities of effective English teachers: personal quality, attitude, pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, and classroom practice.

English Teachers' Preparation in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's EFL teacher training programs have been criticized as "inadequate and nonsystematic" (Al Hazmi, 2003; Al-Shumaimeri, 2003). Typically, English departments within colleges or other institutions were responsible for educating EFL teachers, who would then be offered teaching positions upon graduation after studying English for approximately four years.

In Saudi Arabia, English graduates without teaching experience or proper education preparation are often appointed as teachers. This lack of comprehensive training in teaching methodologies and assessments has been associated with undesirable outcomes (Al Hazmi, 2003; Bailey & Damerow, 2014). Furthermore, many graduates lack teaching certificates or specific courses in teaching English as a foreign language (Fareh, 2010; Wedell & Alshumaimeri, 2014).

The EFL teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia have faced criticism for their curriculum and study plans. Courses often neglect current teaching methods, assessments, and students' development (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Another concern is the lack of exposure to authentic English-speaking teachers, as many instructors come from non-native Arabic-speaking countries (Al-Shumaimeri, 2003; Alshumaimeri, 2019; Moskovsky & Picard, 2018).

One critique of current EFL teacher programs in Saudi Arabia is the lack of exposure to authentic English-speaking teachers (Alshumaimeri, 2003, 2019). Many teachers come from neighboring Arabic countries; therefore, teaching English as a target language by non-native Arabic speakers may lead to certain shortcomings, including non-native phonological features (Moskovsky & Picard, 2018).

In 2016, EFL pre-service teachers underwent a yearlong educational preparation program, including courses on teaching strategies, curriculum design, technology integration, micro-teaching, and assessment. They also completed a twelve-week practical in a school. The Saudi Ministry of Education also introduced the "Khebrat" program, providing intensive training to selected teachers, including EFL teachers, in collaboration with universities worldwide. This program aimed to enhance understanding of teaching and learning, resulting in increased research in EFL education (Moskovsky & Picard, 2018).

Saudi Arabia implemented a teacher's license to enhance teacher quality. The license includes a general education test and a specialized test. Criteria for getting licensed include having a minimum bachelor's degree and passing both tests with scores ranging from 50 to 69 for a

practitioner license, 70 to 79 for an advanced license, and 80 or above for an expert license.

Qualities of Effective EFL Teachers

Lamb and Wedell (2013) stress the significance of teachers in motivating language learners and considering the long-term impact of their profession on language learning. Bell (2005) acknowledges the complexity of effective English language teaching (ELT), while Uygun (2013) emphasizes the importance of clear and enthusiastic teaching for effective communication. Shishvan and Sadeghi (2009) underscore the role of qualified English-language teachers in educational system development. Thompson (2008) highlights the importance of excellent teaching skills and positive personality traits in successful English language teachers, and Liando (2010) emphasizes the influence of teacher competency on student motivation.

Bell (2005) found that effective foreign language teachers in the United States exhibited characteristics such as enthusiasm, target language competency, group work, error correction, and a focus on form and culture. Mullock (2003) surveyed pre-service English language teachers and highlighted the importance of subject knowledge, teaching skills, language proficiency, and cross-cultural knowledge and skills. Al-Maqtri and Thabet (2013) conducted a comparative study on Yemeni and Saudi college-level students, revealing that competence/qualification and pedagogical skills were valued qualities of effective teachers, with honesty, fairness, impartiality, and willingness to help being important across both student groups.

Similarly, Alzubai (2021) conducted research in Saudi Arabia to explore preuniversity students' perceptions of effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. The study involved 231 students enrolled in the preparatory year program at a Saudi public university. The findings revealed that 88% of Saudi preuniversity students agreed on an effective EFL teacher's essential characteristics, including personality, methodology, and language knowledge.

Personal Quality

Adewale (2013) emphasizes the importance of teacher personality constructs, including subject knowledge, communication skills, and behavior, in achieving good performance in the teaching profession. Mayer (2007) defines personality as a system of parts that influences a person's actions and plays a vital role in teacher-learner interactions. Stronge *et al.* (2004) describe teacher personality as inner qualities expressed through values, beliefs, behavior, and attitude.

Effective teachers exhibit personality qualities such as adaptability, agreeableness, compassion, collegiality, enthusiasm, fairness, friendliness, good humor, high expectations, honesty, patience, respect, and responsibility, which enhance student learning (Gao & Liu, 2013). Henson and Chambers (2002) note that teachers' personality qualities are reflected in their classroom performance,

including activities, materials, strategies, classroom management techniques, and student interaction.

Humor, a key personality trait (James, 2007), plays a significant role in teaching challenging course content, increasing student enjoyment, and reducing anxiety (Downs *et al.*, 1988; Kher *et al.*, 1999; Garner, 2005). It promotes a positive classroom environment, enhances learning, captures attention, fosters motivation, and promotes engagement (Lorenzi, 1996). However, studies have shown mixed findings regarding gender differences in humor, with Bryant, Comisky, Crane, and Zillman (1980) suggesting that male instructors who use humor are often perceived as better teachers.

Female instructors who frequently use humor may receive lower effectiveness ratings compared to those who do not employ humor, while no correlation between humor utilization and female teacher evaluations has been found (Gorham & Christophel, 1990).

Enthusiasm is a key characteristic of effective teachers (Cruikshank *et al.*, 2003), linked to motivation and improved learning outcomes (Madsen *et al.*, 1989; Lowman, 1994). Teacher personality impacts teacher-student interaction, particularly through the establishment of rapport, which enhances cognitive and affective functioning and leads to increased achievement (Wray *et al.*, 2000). Kindness, politeness, connection, and trustworthiness are suggested traits fostering teacher-student rapport (Garcia, 1991; Zhang, 2004).

Attitude

Attitudes, encompassing liking, evaluation of goodness, and emotional reactions, are evaluations of an entity (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Ajzen, 2001). In education, teachers' beliefs, practices, and attitudes shape the learning environment, influencing student motivation and academic achievement (OECD, 2009). Teachers' attitudes towards their profession impact their performance, commitment, and fulfillment of responsibilities (Issan *et al.*, 2011).

Attitudes are influenced by factors such as parental and peer attitudes, self-efficacy, shaping cognition and emotions (Brown, 1994; Brown, 2001; Mungasia *et al.*, 2022). In teaching, attitudes are crucial for success or failure (Freeman, 2000). Teachers' attitudes directly affect their teaching practices, student attitudes, and achievements (Avcam & Babanoglu, 2016; Al Harthy *et al.*, 2013; Duatepe & Akkuş-klā, 2004).

Osunde and Izevbigie (2006) found Nigerian teachers dissatisfied with their finances and facing societal undermining. Oruç (2011) reported positive attitudes among Turkish trainee teachers. Kitjarooncha, Smadi and Al-Ghazo (2013) noted a moderate attitude among Jordanian foreign language teachers, negatively linked to pedagogical competencies.

Pedagogical Knowledge and Subject Matter Knowledge

Shulman (1987) emphasizes teachers' knowledge in effective teaching. Grossman *et al.* (2005) support this,

highlighting the need for subject matter understanding. The relationship between teacher knowledge and effectiveness is complex. Some argue for following curriculum materials (Lawson, 1991; Mulholland, 2014, Noh & Webb, 2015), while others find a positive correlation with student achievement (Monk, 1994; Sadler *et al.*, 2013). Kennedy (1998) suggests reasoning from evidence, and Darling-Hammond (2000) acknowledges diminishing returns beyond a certain level.

Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) stress the importance of pedagogical knowledge in student learning. They argue that teachers' professional knowledge, experience, and subject matter expertise significantly impact student achievement. Research supports the notion that teaching expertise is as crucial as content knowledge (Begle, 1979; Monk, 1994; Wenglinsky, 2000). Thus, pedagogical knowledge should be seen as equally essential, not inferior to content knowledge.

Classroom Practice

Classroom practices are shaped by social, political, and economic contexts (UNESCO, 2009). The relationship between teacher performance and student outcomes is complex, requiring effective management systems (Best *et al.*, 2018). Classroom practice involves dynamic interactions influenced by internal and external factors (Li & Oliveira, 2015).

Teachers play a crucial role in promoting positive discipline and attitudes through communication, active listening, and student involvement (Osher *et al.*, 2018). Building warm relationships among teachers, students, and adults is linked to academic success and social-emotional development (Center on the Developing Child, 2016). Teachers' beliefs influence instructional practices and learning opportunities (Borg, 2011), and professional development and experience can shape teachers' beliefs and practices (Borg, 2018). Classroom practices encompass various elements such as time management, physical arrangement, and student interactions (Lampert, 2010).

Limited research has focused on the qualities of effective EFL teachers from the perspective of teachers themselves in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the need for further investigation (McBer, 2000; Witcher *et al.*, 2001; Saafin, 2005; Wang *et al.*, 2007; McCabe *et al.*, 2008; Minor *et al.*, 2002). Understanding secondary EFL teachers' perceptions will enhance our knowledge of effective teaching in Saudi Arabia. This study will employ Borg's (2006) framework, encompassing personal qualities, attitude, pedagogical knowledge, subject matter expertise, and classroom practice, to gather empirical data on teachers' perspectives.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a descriptive quantitative approach through survey research to answer research questions and achieve objectives. A Likert-scale questionnaire gathered

perceptions of effective secondary-level Saudi English teachers. Data was analyzed using SPSS 26.00, calculating statistics such as Cronbach's alpha, mean scores, frequencies, sums, percentages, and standard deviations. For these objectives, the researcher set two questions for this study to answer:

1. What are the qualities of an effective English Teacher as perceived by secondary-level Saudi male English teachers?
2. Are the qualities of an effective English teacher perceived by secondary-level Saudi male English teachers different according to the teacher's experience?

Sample of the Study

The sample of the study included a group of 138 Saudi state secondary school EFL male teachers in the city

of Riyadh. The teachers participating in the study had different qualifications and experience in teaching. The study is limited to Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, where the population is expected to represent the country.

Description of the Sample According to Qualification

Table 1 displays variations in qualifications among the study's sample. Specifically, 44 (31.9%) have a bachelor's degree in education, 31 (22.5%) have master's degrees, 31 (22.5%) have bachelor's degrees, 29 (21%) have a bachelor's degree with a diploma in education, and 3 (2.2%) have PhD degrees.

This diverse range of qualifications ensures that the sample is capable of providing valid perceptions on the qualities of an effective EFL teacher, given their academic backgrounds.

Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of teachers' years of experience.

No	Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Rank
1	BA	31	22.5%	3
2	BA in Education	44	31.9%	1
3	BA with education diploma	29	21.0%	4
4	Master	31	22.5%	2
5	PHD	3	2.2%	5
	Total	138	100.0%	

Description of the sample according to teaching experience

Table 2 shows variations in teaching experience among the participating teachers. Specifically, 40 (29.0%) had 5 to under 10 years of experience, 39 (28.3%) had 10 to under 15 years, 25 (18.1%) had 20 years and above, 20

(14.5%) had 15 to under 20 years, and 14 (10.1%) had 1 to under 5 years. This indicates that 84 (60.9%) had 10 years and above of teaching experience, and 124 (89.9%) had 5 years and above, suggesting that the participants possess sufficient experience to provide their perceptions on the qualities of an effective EFL teacher.

Table 2: Frequencies and percentages of teachers' years of experience

No	Years of experience	Frequency	Percent	Rank
1	1 to under 5 years	14	10.1%	5
2	5 to under 10 years	40	29.0%	1
3	10 to under 15 years	39	28.3%	2
4	15 years to under 20 years	20	14.5%	4
5	20 years and above	25	18.1%	3
	Total	138	100.0%	

Research Instrument

Data was collected from Saudi secondary school male teachers in Academic Year 2021/2022 using a 25-item questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire, based on Borg's (2006) framework, explored participants' perceptions of effective EFL teaching in Riyadh. It covered personal qualities, attitudes, pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and classroom practice. Participants used a 5-point Likert scale for rating (Appendix 1). The questionnaire's validity was confirmed through expert review, and its reliability was established with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.81.

Procedures of the Study

The study used a questionnaire with 25 items in 5 domains, ensuring validity through expert review and reliability through Cronbach's alpha. Permission was obtained to distribute the questionnaire to secondary school English language teachers in Riyadh, resulting in 138 responses. Descriptive analysis using SPSS 26.0 included frequencies, percentages, mean scores, standard deviations, and ranks. The instrument's reliability was examined with Cronbach's alpha. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research were discussed.

RESULTS

The findings are discussed in relation to the research questions and responses to the 25-item questionnaire based on Borg's (2006) framework. The analysis examines significant items in five domains: personal quality, attitude, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and classroom practice. It explores the impact of teaching experience on teachers' perceptions of effective language teacher characteristics.

Findings related to the first question: What are the qualities of an effective English Teacher as perceived by secondary-level Saudi male English teachers?

To address the question about the qualities of effective language teachers perceived by Saudi secondary school male English language teachers, mean scores and

standard deviations were calculated for each item on the questionnaire. The subsequent subsections present the findings for the five categories of effective language teachers examined in this study: personal qualities, attitudes, pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and classroom practice.

Personal Qualities

Table 3 displays the means, standard deviations, and ranks for the five items in the personal qualities category (items 1 to 5 in the questionnaire). The participants ranked "An effective EFL teacher is enthusiastic" as the highest in importance, with a mean (M) of 4.43 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.627. This was followed closely by "An effective EFL teacher is creative" (M = 4.41, SD = 0.712) and "An effective EFL teacher is kind and friendly" (M =

Table 3: Means and standard deviations of personal qualities of an effective teacher

Item	Description	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	Effective EFL teacher avoids students' favouritism	138	3.71	.982	5
2	An effective EFL teacher is enthusiastic	138	4.43	.627	1
3	An effective EFL teacher is creative	138	4.41	.712	2
4	An effective EFL teacher is kind and friendly	138	4.41	.721	3
5	An effective EFL teacher has a sense of humour	138	3.79	.970	4
	Overall mean	138	4.15	.496	

4.41, SD = 0.721). The characteristics "An effective EFL teacher has a sense of humour" (M = 3.79, SD = 0.970) and "Effective EFL teacher avoids students' favoritism" (M = 3.71, SD = 0.982) received slightly lower scores. The range of means in this domain was 3.71 to 4.43,

with standard deviations ranging from 0.627 to 0.982. All the means were above 3.71, and the overall mean for the personal qualities domain was 4.15, indicating the significance of these characteristics in defining effective English language teachers.

Table 4: Means and standard deviations of teachers' attitudes towards teaching English

Item	Description	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
6	I teach English because it has a prestigious place in society.	138	2.99	1.214	3
7	I enjoy teaching English	138	4.36	.809	1
8	I believe the English teaching profession fits me	138	4.12	.829	2
9	Teaching English in Saudi Arabia is a waste of time	138	1.72	1.087	4
10	Teaching English in Saudi Arabia is a waste of the government's budget	138	1.64	1.074	5
	Overall mean	138	2.96	0.579	

Teachers' Attitudes towards Teaching English

Table 4 displays the means, standard deviations, and ranks for the five items in the teachers' attitudes category (items 6 to 10 in the questionnaire). These items explore the reasons why Saudi English language teachers chose teaching as a profession and their attitudes towards it after gaining experience. The means in this category ranged from 1.46 to 4.36, with standard deviations ranging from 0.627 to 0.982. The overall mean for this category was 2.96 with a standard deviation of 0.579.

Among the items, "I enjoy teaching English" (item 7) received the highest mean with M = 4.36 and SD = 0.809, followed by "I believe the English teaching profession fits

me" (item 8) with M = 4.12 and SD = 0.829. "I teach English because it has a prestigious place in society" (item 6) had a mean of M = 2.99 and SD = 1.214. On the other hand, "Teaching English in Saudi Arabia is a waste of time" (item 9) had a mean of M = 1.72 and SD = 1.087, and "Teaching English in Saudi Arabia is a waste of the government budget" (item 10) had a mean of M = 1.64 and SD = 1.074, indicating lower agreement.

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers hold positive attitudes towards the teaching profession. The lower means of items 9 and 10 indicate that teachers do not perceive teaching as a waste of time or government resources. Additionally, a majority of teachers reported

Table 5: Means and standard deviations of Knowledge of Pedagogy

Item	Description	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
11	An effective EFL teacher has the knowledge of classroom management	138	4.25	.640	3
12	An effective EFL teacher knows teaching methods	138	4.24	.720	4
13	An effective EFL teacher knows classroom assessment	138	4.39	.677	1
14	An effective EFL teacher knows the individual student characteristics	138	4.30	.677	2
15	An effective EFL teacher structures learning objectives, lesson planning and evaluation	138	4.21	.768	5
	Overall mean	138	4.28	.543	

enjoying teaching and feeling that it is a good fit for them. However, less than half of the teachers agreed that the teaching profession holds a prestigious place in society.

Teachers’ Knowledge of Pedagogy

Table 5 presents the means, standard deviations, and ranks of the five items in the knowledge of pedagogy category (items 11 to 15 in the questionnaire). Among these items, “An effective EFL teacher knows classroom assessment” had the highest mean with $M = 4.39$ and $SD = 0.677$. It was followed by “An effective EFL teacher knows the individual student characteristics” with $M = 4.30$ and $SD = 0.677$, “An effective EFL teacher has knowledge of classroom management” with $M = 4.25$ and $SD = 0.640$, “An effective EFL teacher knows teaching methods”

with $M = 4.24$ and $SD = 0.720$, and “An effective EFL teacher structures learning objectives, lesson planning, and evaluation” with $M = 4.21$ and $SD = 0.768$.

The findings highlight the significance of a teacher’s knowledge of classroom assessment as the most important characteristic within the pedagogical knowledge category for effective English language teaching. It is followed by knowledge of individual student characteristics, classroom management, teaching methods, and knowledge of learning objectives, lesson planning, and evaluation. The means in this category ranged from 4.21 to 4.39. The overall mean for the category was 4.28 with a standard deviation of 0.543, indicating the high importance that teachers attributed to these characteristics in determining the qualities of effective English language teachers.

Table 6: Means and standard deviations of teachers’ knowledge of the content

Item	Description	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
16	An effective EFL teacher understands the purpose and values of educational ends as well as their philosophical and historical grounds	138	4.30	.688	2
17	An effective EFL teacher applies explicit instructions in a content area of learning	138	3.52	1.082	5
18	An effective EFL teacher reinforces reading in the classroom and outside the classroom	138	3.95	.899	4
19	An effective EFL teacher explains clearly and asks good questions	138	4.33	.728	1
20	An effective EFL teacher has a good command of English accuracy and fluency	138	4.29	.727	3
	Overall mean	138	4.08	0.592	

Teachers’ Knowledge of Content

Table 6 displays the means, standard deviations, and ranks of the five items in the knowledge of content category (items 16 to 20 in the questionnaire). The highest-ranked characteristic in this category is the teacher’s ability to “explain clearly and ask good questions” with $M = 4.33$ and $SD = 0.728$. It is followed by “understanding the purpose and values of educational ends as well as their philosophical and historical grounds” with $M = 4.30$ and $SD = 0.688$, “having a good command of English accuracy and fluency” with $M = 4.29$ and $SD = 0.727$, “reinforcing reading in the classroom and outside the

classroom” with $M = 3.95$ and $SD = 0.899$, and “applying explicit instructions in a content area learning” with $M = 3.52$ and $SD = 1.082$.

These findings indicate the importance of several key characteristics within the knowledge of content category for effective English language teachers. Clear explanations, effective questioning techniques, understanding educational objectives and values, proficiency in English accuracy and fluency, and promoting extensive reading are highlighted. The means of the characteristics in this category range from 3.52 to 4.33. The overall mean for the category is 4.08 with a standard deviation of 0.592,

demonstrating the significance that teachers attribute to these characteristics in determining the qualities of effective English language teachers.

Teachers’ Classroom Practice

Table 7 displays means, standard deviations, and ranks of 5 items in the teachers’ characteristics in classroom practice category (items 21 to 25). “Space for team-based/collaborative learning” ranked highest (M=4.22, SD=0.681), followed by “promoting learning in the classroom” (M=4.21, SD=0.656), “providing visual and verbal supports” (M=4.21, SD=0.719),

“using technology” (M=4.07, SD=0.877), and “using gamification” (M=4.00, SD=0.846). These characteristics are essential for effective English language teachers, as reported by teachers themselves. Teachers recognize the significance of unconventional practices, such as game-based learning, using visuals and audio, and technology, to enhance teaching and make the learning environment more engaging. The mean of the category as a whole was 4.14 with SD = .542, which indicated that the characteristics included in this category were reported by teachers to be significant for determining the qualities of effective English language teachers.

Table 7: Means and standard deviations of teachers’ knowledge of the content

Item	Description	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
21	An effective EFL teacher uses technology in the classrooms	138	4.07	.877	4
22	An effective EFL teacher gives space to students to learn as teams cooperatively or collaboratively	138	4.22	.681	1
23	An effective EFL teacher uses gamification to add fun to the classroom	138	4.00	.846	5
24	An effective EFL teacher provides visual and verbal support to make core content comprehensible	138	4.21	.719	3
25	An effective EFL teacher promotes learning within the classroom	138	4.21	.656	2
	Overall mean	138	4.14	0.542	

Categories of Effective Language Teachers’ Characteristics

Table 8 displays means, standard deviations, and ranks of the five categories of teacher characteristics: personal qualities, attitudes, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of content, and classroom practice. The means for these categories ranged from 2.96 to 4.28, with an overall mean of 3.92, indicating their importance to effective language teachers. Knowledge of pedagogy ranked highest (M=4.28, SD=0.543), followed by personal qualities (M=4.15, SD=0.496), classroom practice (M=4.14,

SD=0.542), knowledge of content (M=4.08, SD=0.592), and attitudes (M=2.96, SD=0.579). Although attitudes had a lower mean, it doesn’t diminish their significance. It is worth noting that these statements required teachers to disagree to indicate positive attitudes towards teaching English as a foreign language. Overall, effective language teachers should possess pedagogical knowledge, classroom practice, content knowledge, personal traits, and a positive attitude to effectively engage and guide students.

Table 8: Means and standard deviations of the five categories of effective language teachers’ characteristics

Category	Name of category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	Personal Qualities	138	4.15	.496	2
2	Teachers' attitudes	138	2.96	.579	5
3	Knowledge of Pedagogy	138	4.28	.543	1
4	Knowledge of Content	138	4.08	.592	4
5	Classroom Practice	138	4.14	.542	3
	Overall mean	138	3.92	0.392	

Findings related to the second question: Are the qualities of an effective English teacher perceived by the secondary level Saudi male English teachers differ according to teacher’s experience?

This section examines the relationship between teachers’ experience and their perceptions of effective EFL

teacher qualities. The researcher measured the correlation between experience and perceptions across the five categories of teacher characteristics, as presented below. Table 9 showed that the correlation between teachers’ experience and their perceptions of any of the five categories of characteristics is of no significance.

Table 9: The relationship between teachers' years of experience and perceptions of effective teacher characteristics

		Personal Qualities	Teachers' attitudes	Knowledge of Pedagogy	Knowledge of Content	Classroom Practice
Experience	Pearson Correlation	.065	.035	-.119	-.108	-.171*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.452	.685	.163	.209	.046
	N	138	138	138	138	138

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the qualities of an effective EFL teacher as perceived by Saudi secondary school male teachers and explore the relationship between teachers' experience and their perceptions of these qualities. Two research questions were proposed: 1) What are the qualities of an effective English teacher as perceived by Saudi male English teachers at the secondary level? and 2) Do the perceived qualities of an effective English teacher differ based on teachers' experience?

A questionnaire comprising 25 items was used to assess Saudi secondary school EFL male teachers' perceptions of effective language teachers across five domains: personal qualities, attitudes, pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and classroom practice. The findings highlighted the importance of these domains, with teachers considering knowledge of pedagogy as the most crucial, followed by personal qualities, classroom practice, content knowledge, and attitudes.

Effective EFL teachers demonstrate pedagogical knowledge in various areas such as classroom management, teaching methods, assessment, and understanding individual student characteristics. This is supported by studies conducted by Borg (2006), Thompson (2008), Reber (2001), Bell (2005), Al-Maqtri and Thabet (2013), Alzobiani (2020), Alzubai (2021), Osher *et al.* (2018), Basturkmen (2012), Farrell & Ives (2015), and Kuzborska (2011). Additionally, they incorporate technology, gamification, cooperative learning, and provide visual and verbal support to enhance classroom learning. Engaging activities like games, jokes, stories, and songs foster student interaction, communication, motivation, and engagement.

Effective EFL teachers demonstrate personal qualities such as enthusiasm, creativity, kindness, friendliness, a sense of humor, and fairness towards all students. This aligns with previous research by Uygun (2013), Borg (2006), Thompson (2008), Al-Maqtri and Thabet (2013), Alzobiani (2020), and Alzubai (2021), emphasizing the importance of teachers' personal traits in students' language learning. These personal qualities significantly influence student behavior, interactions, and classroom performance. Enthusiastic teachers inspire students to excel, while a sense of humor reduces tension, enhances enjoyment, and facilitates the teaching of challenging content.

This study concurs with Uygun (2013), Liando (2010), Bell (2005), Al-Maqtri and Thabet (2013), Sadler *et al.* (2013), Kennedy (1998), and Alzubai (2021) regarding the importance of effective EFL teachers' knowledge

of content. Clear explanations, skillful questioning, and explicit instructions are vital aspects of effective teaching. Furthermore, understanding the objectives and philosophy of language learning in the Saudi context is prioritized. Proficiency in English accuracy and fluency significantly supports learners' language skills. Effective EFL teachers serve as role models, displaying accuracy and fluency in the foreign language. Encouraging extensive reading outside the classroom is also crucial.

The findings of this study align with Issan *et al.* (2011), Al Harthy *et al.* (2013), Osunde and Izevbigie (2006), Smadi and Al-Ghazo (2013), and Reber (2001) in emphasizing the influence of teachers' attitudes towards teaching on their performance, teaching practices, and overall effectiveness. Additionally, this study found no association between teachers' experience and their perceptions of effective EFL teacher characteristics.

CONCLUSION

Based on this study, the researcher concludes that Saudi secondary school male teachers perceive the top five characteristics of an effective EFL teacher to be knowledge of pedagogy, personal qualities, classroom practice, knowledge of content, and teachers' attitudes. Developing these qualities is crucial for the successful teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. Being an effective EFL teacher requires a combination of professional and personal skills. Therefore, student-teachers, novice teachers, and future teachers need to adapt to these characteristics. Effective EFL teachers possess positive traits, employ effective teaching behaviors, and motivate students to reach their full potential. Teachers' rich knowledge of content and language proficiency plays a vital role in helping students overcome language learning difficulties and improve their language skills. Teacher education programs should prioritize enhancing pedagogical knowledge and language proficiency. Continuous professional development, such as reading, training courses, conferences, and seminars, can keep teachers updated on current pedagogical knowledge, teaching practices, and English proficiency, thereby enhancing student learning. It is important to note that the findings of this study are specific to secondary school teachers in Riyadh, so caution should be exercised in generalizing and interpreting the results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. There should be more research done to include more teachers (male and female) teaching English at different levels and students (male and female) reflecting on their perceptions of the characteristics of an effective EFL teacher. In order to investigate the differences between teachers' and learners' perceptions of the same thing.

2. Research should expand to include more qualities, and participants should be allowed to report their preferences of the qualities of an effective EFL teacher.

3. There should be a study investigating the effects of teacher characteristics on their students' language performances.

4. There should be a study to explore the qualities and classroom practices that could negatively influence an EFL teacher's efficacy.

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