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College Teachers' Implementation of Instructional Strategies to Support Students' English Language Skills

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Abstract

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MA, University of Nile Valley, 2013

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The instructional strategies implemented by the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in an international technical college in Saudi Arabia did not prepare students at an intermediate level of proficiency on the Common European Framework of Reference. As a result, more than 77% of the first-year students were not progressing to the specialized diploma studies in the second and third years of their learning journey. Thus, the purpose of this exploratory case study was to better understand the instructional strategies adopted by instructors and the barriers to students developing their English skills. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) served as a framework of the study because it is aligned with the purpose and it emphasizes the context of instructional strategies in understanding how knowledge and learning are constructed. Multiple sources of data and interviews with 8 participants were used to investigate the research problem. Data were analyzed using thematic coding based on the conceptual framework followed by open coding to discover any emerging themes. Data analysis revealed that the observed teachers did not implement the student-centered instructional strategies discussed in Vygotsky's conceptual framework or ZPD-informed strategies. By designing a professional development program to train teachers on student-centered instructional strategies such as feedback, scaffolding, and student engagement, the results of this study can be used to lead to positive social change by educating teachers on strategies to help students develop better English skills.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to the soul of my late father, the man who taught me the first lessons in life. I am who I am because of his sacrifices. I am also honored to dedicate this work to my loving mother whose support and encouragement helped me to pursue this exciting doctoral journey. This work is also dedicated to my sweet half, Sara, the apples of my eyes: Jasmine and Rancy, and my little hero, Omar.

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Before I express my gratitude and deep thanks to all those honorable people who stood by my side until this work came to light, I want to thank Allah for granting me the power, patience, and enlightenment to complete this study.

On top of the great individuals who offered me limitless support, relentless encouragement, and enlightened guidance comes my Chair Dr. Crissie Jameson – the gift heaven sent me in the right time to steer my doctoral ship to a safe harbor. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Chris Cale whose insightful comments helped me to produce better work.

I am also indebted to my wife whose love, care, and prayers contributed to my success. I am so blessed to have her in my life!

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The international technical colleges in Saudi Arabia were established to create more employable graduates equipped with English language skills that help them keep updated with international innovations in their technical fields (http://www.coe.com.sa). Driven by this objective, the international technical colleges use English as a medium of instruction and the first year of a 3-year diploma program as the foundation year. Based on a 2017 foundation manual for the schools, during the foundation year, students focus on developing their English language skills to an intermediate level of proficiency on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). To measure the attainment of this objective, the international technical colleges use the Preliminary English Test (PET), which is a standardized English test developed by Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). However, the instructional strategies implemented by the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers have not prepared students at an intermediate level of proficiency on the CEFR.

These instructional strategies have not been systematically examined to understand how they prepare students to attain the required level of proficiency. The EFL curriculum of the foundation year is designed to be aligned with the CEFR standards at an intermediate level and the language skills tested in Cambridge PET. Nevertheless, the PET results of the college show that 77.38% of students failed to pass the test at an intermediate level of proficiency. According to Cambridge English Assessment, grades statistics show that the pass rate of Saudi students across the country in the PET exam for

the last 3 years has been very low (cambridgeenglish.org). In 2014, the pass rate at an intermediate level was 36.2%, and this percentage dropped to 10.8% in 2015 and 14.1% in 2016 (cambridgeenglish.org). This could be attributed to the increased numbers of students taking the PET exam starting from 2015 when all international technical colleges started using the PET exam. However, this could also be attributed to the instructional strategies adopted by the EFL teachers in the Saudi context (Alrabai, 2016).

The instructional strategies used by teachers in Saudi Arabia are teacher-centered and rely on traditional and often ineffective approaches such as using Arabic to teach English and memorization as a primary learning strategy (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Additional research indicates that the instructional strategies adopted by English teachers in Saudi Arabia do not facilitate learning, often deter students from being involved in classroom activities, and impede the development of their language proficiency (M. A. Al-Khairy, 2013; M. H. Al-Khairy, 2013; Alrabai, 2014b, 2016; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Saudi students' lack of competence in EFL may stem from instructional factors pertinent to curriculum design, teaching methods, and instructional practices; learner-related factors such as gender, motivation, and anxiety; and sociocultural factors such as the influence of the first language, culture, and religion (Alrabai, 2016). The aim of the English curriculum and instructional strategies of the foundation year in a Saudi university is to help students to attain a B1 level of proficiency on the CEFR, but students cannot reach this level due to instructional practices that treat students as receptors of prescribed information, which is a surface approach to learning (Kabouha & Elyas, 2015). These instructional strategies encourage rote-learning and memorization rather

than using language communicatively in meaningful contexts that simulate real life situations (Kabouha & Elyas, 2015).

Rationale

More than 77% of the first-year students at an international technical college are not developing their English language skills or progressing to the specialized diploma studies in the second and third years due to the instructional strategies used by EFL teachers. Despite the availability of different types of data, the problem has not been systematically investigated. According to the director of the foundation year, most of the data available on the college learning management system are quantitative data in the form of test scores, passing rates, and attendance records, but there have not been efforts to make sense of these data or an examination of the instructional practices adopted by teachers. Classroom observation reports revealed that there are different instructional activities being implemented by different faculty members, and some of these activities are not geared toward the standards or test skills which students have to develop. In their annual institutional review report, Saudi Skills Standards reported that "in a large minority of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory because it is too teacher-led, and assessment for learning is poorly managed."

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to achieve a better understanding of the instructional strategies adopted at an international technical college in Saudi Arabia. The school administration follows a set of procedures to ensure that curriculum, instruction, and assessment are aligned with PET. The elements of this alignment process are the written curriculum, which is based on a set of intended learning outcomes,

instructional activities, and assessment regime that are all mapped with PET skills and the CEFR standards at B1 level. The implementation of the curriculum is assured as part of a larger school quality management plan.

Definition of Terms

Cambridge English for speakers of other languages (ESOL): Cambridge ESOL (also known as Cambridge English) is part of the University of Cambridge. Cambridge ESOL provides a range of research-based assessments and qualifications for learners and teachers of English. It is globally recognized by more than 20,000 leading universities, employers, and governments (Kang & Moran, 2014).

Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET): The Cambridge PET is an English qualification that shows the mastery of the basics of English and the practical language skills for everyday use (Kabouha & Elyas, 2015). Cambridge PET shows that the learner can read simple texts and articles in English, write letters and e-mails on everyday subjects, take meeting notes, and show awareness of opinions and mood in spoken and written English (cambridgeenglish.org).

CEFR B1: This is an intermediate level of English proficiency on the CEFR (North, 2014). This level of proficiency is interpreted through a list of can-do-statements in the four macro skills of English: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. According to North (2014), a B1 learner can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.; can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken; can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest; can

describe experiences and events, and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

College of excellence: The colleges of excellence in this study offer vocational training programs through public private partnerships with global training providers in Saudi Arabia. This partnership is focused on employer needs and enables students to obtain world class qualifications that allow them to turn their passions into careers. The aim of the colleges of excellence is to create a stronger, more skilled Saudi labor force and meet the needs of the local job market.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): The CEFR is an international standard for describing language ability. CEFR describes language ability on a 6-point scale, from A1 and A2 for beginners, B1 and B2 for intermediate level, and up to C1 and C2 for those who have mastered a language. The CEFR is used to provide reference points for assessment purposes and inform curriculum design and pedagogy (North, 2014).

Comprehensible input: Comprehensible input refers to language input that is slightly beyond the current level of the learner's internalized level (Gulzar, Gulnaz & Ijaz, 2014).

English as a foreign language (EFL): EFL refers to learning English in the environment of one's native language where EFL learners have little exposure to the target language outside of class. (Gilquin, 2015).

More knowledgeable others: More knowledgeable others are paired with less knowledgeable peers to promote the latter's knowledge and ability in a mediated learning experience (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015).

Peer interaction: Peer interaction is any communicative activity carried out between learners with minimal or no direct involvement from the teacher. This includes all forms of peer help such as cooperative learning, collaborative learning, peer modeling, and peer tutoring (Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014)

Zone of proximal development (ZPD): The ZPD is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Lantolf et al., 2015).

Significance of the Study

In this study, I addressed a local problem that influences more than 77% of the students of a medium-size technical college in Saudi Arabia that serves male high school graduates aged 18-25. The study is unique in that it addresses a problem that is under researched in the Saudi context (see Kabouha & Elyas, 2015), and thus it represents an original contribution of knowledge about the instructional strategies in the international technical colleges and how they support students to develop their English language skills. The results of the study can be used to inform instructional leaders as they reevaluate the instructional practices used to develop students' English skills. Professional development leaders could also benefit from the results of the study by designing professional development activities that train teachers on more effective instructional strategies that

are supported by research and best practice. Additionally, insights from this study can aid teachers in reflecting on their instructional strategies and seek opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills.

Research Questions

The problem of the study is that the instructional strategies implemented by the EFL teachers in an international technical college in Saudi Arabia did not prepare students at an intermediate level of proficiency on the CEFR. The purpose of this exploratory case study is to achieve a better understanding of these instructional strategies. To achieve the purpose of the study, I set out to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: What are the instructional strategies being used by teachers to prepare students to achieve an intermediate level of English proficiency?

Research Question 2: What are the barriers that teachers encounter when implementing instructional strategies to support students' learning?

Review of the Literature

Despite the efforts by the government to improve the quality of teaching and learning English in Saudi schools, barriers and challenges still exist for Saudi EFL students (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Research indicates that the challenges that impede Saudi students in schools and universities from the development of their English language skills include teacher-centered instruction; traditional teaching such as using Arabic to teach English, rote learning, and memorization; lack of real world practice; misconception about the negative influence of English on the native language and

culture; lack of teacher training; and lack of student motivation or encouragement from teachers (Ahmed, 2014; Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014b; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Al-Sharqi, Hashim & Ahmed, 2015; Rajab, 2013).

Research on instructional strategies indicates that instruction based on feedback, modeling, self-explanation, peer interactions, cooperative learning, inquiry, discussion, and visualization contribute to instructional environments that facilitate learning (Mayer & Alexander, 2016). The exploration of the barriers Saudi EFL learners face and instructional strategies can provide a framework of what impedes students from developing their language skills and what constitutes effective teaching practices. In the first part of the literature review, the barriers of teaching and learning English in Saudi Arabia will be analyzed, which is linked to the second research question. The analysis of the literature on effective instructional strategies will help understand the ineffective instructional practices implemented in the context of the study that form the essence of the first research question. Learning EFL, CEFR, and Vygotsky's ZPD will also be discussed to complete the elements of the framework and build the connections between the research problem, research questions, and conceptual framework.

A variety of research databases were used to collect information relevant to this study: ERIC, Education Research Complete, Education from SAGE, Education Research Starters, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, JSTOR, and Wiley Online. Key search words and combinations included *barriers Saudi EFL learners face, teacher-centered instruction, traditional teaching methods, student motivation, teacher professional development, effective instructional strategies, feedback, modeling, self-explanation, peer*

interaction, cooperative learning, inquiry-based instruction, second language acquisition, learning English as a foreign language, sociocultural theory of learning, Zone of Proximal Development, and *Common European Framework of Reference*. Only peer-reviewed literature within the past 5 years was considered for this project study. Sources older than 5 years were included only for the conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

Vygotsky (1978) suggested that cognitive development is a function of external factors such as cultural, historical, and social interaction rather than of individual construction. Vygotsky argued that people master their behavior through psychological tools, and he considered language the most important psychological tool. In second language learning, the engagement of learners in cultural and social settings with artifacts or more knowledgeable others such as family members, teachers, and peers contribute to the development of their language skills. In this process defined as mediation, learners benefit from regulation that takes three forms: object-regulation, other-regulation, and self-regulation (Lantolf et al., 2015). Object regulation occurs when objects in the environment, such as an online translation tool, a computer program, a dictionary, a thesaurus, or a smartphone application, scaffold the language learning experience of students. Other-regulation describes mediation by people such as teachers, experts, or peers, who afford corrective comments on assignments, explicit or implicit feedback on performance tasks, or instructional notes that help in task completion. Self-regulation refers to language learners who internalized external regulation techniques and use self-reflection and self-correction techniques as tools of mediation. Learners should move

from other-regulation to self-regulation when they demonstrate their ability to develop independently.

The ZPD is defined as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The ZPD's main attribute is helping identify the potential of learners through the assertion that what learners can do with guidance now is indicative of what they can do independently in the future. This is based on Vygotsky's conviction that guided assistance and formal instruction lead to development (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the ZPD, the learner is regarded as an integral part of the learning process and an active participant in how it is formed. The acquisition of knowledge is dependent on the cultural background of learners and their social interaction with knowledgeable members of the society. The ZPD identifies the teacher's role as a facilitator and not as an instructor. Therefore, the teacher helps the learner to get to his understanding of the content, poses questions that make the learner thinks, engages the learner in meaningful interactive activities, and creates an environment that is conducive to learning.

The ZPD can provide a framework to diagnose learners' future abilities, which informs a number of principles in second language teaching and learning such as explicit and implicit feedback, scaffolding, mediated instruction, learner's agency, and dynamic assessment. Effective instructional and learning strategies such as exposing students to authentic learning experiences, promoting deep learning techniques, student active engagement in the educational process, collaborative and experiential learning, problem

solving activities, higher order thinking activities, and metacognitive activities are informed by and inherent in the ZPD (Mensah, 2015). In addition, the ZPD can indicate time and resources required to help students achieve the curriculum standards (Poehner, Davin & Lantolf, 2017). Therefore, the ZPD informed this study because of its implications for instructional strategies and language learning and how they are based on constructing meaning of teachers and students' experiences and using these experiences to build new knowledge (see Amineh & Asl, 2015).

Barriers of Teaching and Learning English in Saudi Arabia

Teacher-Centered Instruction

Despite evidence that student-centered classrooms help students to learn more and better (Lasry, Charles & Whittaker, 2014), English language teaching in Saudi schools and universities is teacher-centered, which deters students from developing their English language skills (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). In the Saudi academic culture, teachers tend to lecture and present themselves as authoritative figures (Alrabai, 2016). In this context, students rarely ask questions or engage in classroom activities. Rather, they are passive listeners and receivers of information and they rely on teachers as the main source of knowledge (Alharbi, 2015). Not only does teachers' dominance have a negative influence on students' motivation, but it also instills anxiety in students and leads to poor learning outcomes (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Traditional Teaching Methods

Most EFL learners in Saudi Arabia are taught using traditional teaching methods such as the grammar translation method that is based on teaching grammar rules followed

by translating separate and decontextualized sentences from English into Arabic (Alrabai, 2016). This method may help students to develop accuracy in using grammar rules and answer discrete items in multiple choice grammar tests, but it does not help them to apply this knowledge to communicating in real life situations. Additionally, the methodological choices that most EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia make are geared toward instruction of grammar rules and discrete skills whereas productive skills and oral fluency are not receiving much attention (Ahmad, 2014; Al-Seghayer, 2014b). Additional research suggests that the EFL instructional methods adopted in Saudi Arabia encourage rote learning and memorization by training students to memorize paragraphs and vocabulary lists without employing strategies to understand how paragraphs are formed or how vocabulary should be used in context (Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014a; Al-Saraj, 2014). The use of Arabic by teachers in English classes is another instructional strategy that deprives students from exposure to the target language or practicing what they have learned, which in turn deters the development of their communicative competence.

Lack of Real World Practice

Exposure to the target language in academic and social settings is crucial in language acquisition and retention (Bisson, Heuven, Conklin & Tunney, 2014; Foster, Bolibaugh & Kotula, 2014). However, Saudi students have minimal exposure to English because English is a foreign language in Saudi Arabia and it is rarely used in everyday life situations (Alrabai, 2014a). The chances of exposure to English and practicing it are limited to communicating with teachers and peers inside classrooms, which in most cases is disconnected from a real-world practice for communicative needs. English learners

receive little exposure to situations that affects their communicative abilities and raises their anxiety levels in situations outside the classroom (Al-Seghayer, 2014b). Moreover, even in academic settings many teachers tend to use Arabic to teach English subjects, which further minimizes students' chances to be engaged in interactional activities that support the development of their English skills.

Misconceptions about English and Native Language and Culture

Even though in 2003 Saudi Arabia introduced English as part of the elementary school curriculum in an attempt to expose Saudi youth to the idea of acceptance and tolerance of others, some religious figures and members of the society raised concerns about the possible influence of teaching and learning English on the native language and local culture (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). These concerns are doubled when English is to be taught at a young age (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The opponents of teaching and learning English in Saudi Arabia have fears that Islamic subjects and Arabic that form the educational system would be influenced by the increasing interest in English. For instance, it might reduce the number of teaching hours dedicated to Islamic and Arabic subjects, introduce beliefs and ideas that could contrast with Islamic beliefs, or change the identity of the Saudi society that Islam and Arabic represent the most fundamental element in shaping it. Some of these fears were realized when Islamic classes have been reduced since 2003 to one class instead of four per day (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). This change was not universally welcomed (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). There are also concerns that focused attention on and interest in teaching and learning English will be accompanied by introducing unacceptable and unfitting ideologies in the Saudi culture

(Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). The English language is regarded as a container for ideas that contradict the Islamic beliefs and would reshape ideas in the Muslim world (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). These fears and concerns represent a demotivating factor for some students to learn English even though the leading businesses in Saudi Arabia such as gas, oil, and telecommunications companies mandate that their employees and job applicants have a specific level of English proficiency measured against international standards and standardized tests.

Lack of Teacher Training

Most students who join English departments and teaching as a foreign language programs in Saudi universities are not proficient in English because of inadequate preparation programs, which means that they graduate with linguistic and pedagogical deficiencies. Instead of designing in-service training programs to bridge the knowledge and skills gaps teachers have, these programs are scarce, poorly designed, and lacking the minimum characteristics of professional development as identified in the related literature and best practice (Al-Seghayer, 2014a). Effective professional development is sustainable, collaborative, multimodal, linked to students' achievement, based on teachers' needs, school based, and coached with ongoing feedback (Nishimura, 2014). Furthermore, EFL teachers' professional development is affected by lack of teacher training resources and incentives (Al-Seghayer, 2014a). The preservice and in-service preparation programs have produced a significant number of Saudi EFL teachers who still need more knowledge on teaching language as well as the language itself (Al-Seghayer, 2014a). For example, Mitchell and Alfuraih (2017) surveyed more than 2,500

teachers and found that over 70% of the respondents needed English proficiency classes including grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatics. Many also expressed their need for methodology classes including teaching low level students, motivation and engagement strategies, using technology in the classroom, and classroom management techniques.

Lack of Student Motivation or Encouragement from Teachers

Arousing and sustaining student motivation to learn a foreign language is one of the characteristics of effective teaching that leads to improving student learning experience and overall achievement (Moradi & Sabeti, 2014). Research has indicated that Saudi EFL learners do not have a high level of motivation to learn a second language (Alrabai, 2014b). Additionally, there are demotivating factors in the Saudi EFL context, such as teachers' competence and instructional methods, classroom dynamics, assessment policies and procedures, student behavioral and affective factors, and learning materials (Daif-Allah & Alsamani, 2014). On the other hand, there are external and internal factors that can affect students' motivation. Fahmy and Bilton (as cited in Al-Mahrooqi, Abrar-Ul-Hassan & Cofie, 2016) argued that EFL learners' motivation is usually instrumental in nature. Instrumental motivation means that students are motivated by having to meet school requirements, finding a job, or communicating with business partners. This argument is supported by Alrabai (2014b). From an instructional perspective, teachers' practices have an influence on student motivation as a dynamic, contextualized and reciprocal process (Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014). Teachers may use a range of motivational strategies to engage and develop students' language skills. These motivational strategies could be grouped into several categories such as instructional

interventions, self-regulating strategies, technology rich instructional environment, integrating the culture of the target language into the EFL classroom activities, and the interpersonal behavioral patterns of the teacher and students (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2016; Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014). In the absence of these and/or other motivational strategies, students' language anxiety is increased and their tendency toward autonomous learning is decreased.

Effective Instructional Strategies

Feedback

Feedback is among the top 10 influences on student achievement, but little is known about how to use it in the classroom (Hattie & Gan, 2016). Central to instruction based on feedback is that it meets the following criteria: that it follows instruction and it is important for teachers to consider when and how it is received more than when or how feedback is given (Hattie & Gan, 2016). Feedback should make success criteria tangible and visible for students. Feedback should cue students' attention to the learning task, how to process it, and self-regulation strategies instead of attention to the self without being far above the current level of the student (Brookhart & Moss, 2015). Feedback guides learners to set and monitor learning goals to enhance active engagement in learning and support learner's autonomy (Brookhart & Moss, 2015). Further, feedback should be part of a learning environment that welcomes errors as part of the learning process. Feedback also cues teachers to reflect on their instructional strategies and assess their relevance and effectiveness (Hattie & Gan, 2016). To provide all learners the opportunity to grow and improve, feedback should be ongoing, and recipients should be provided with

opportunities to respond, reflect, and contribute (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014). Finally, feedback should be given in a timely manner or students may not be able to remember the initial learning task or their thinking behind it (Thomas & Sondergeld, 2015).

Modeling

Modeling can be defined as a twofold process that includes demonstrating a desired skill or behavior while describing the actions and decisions being made throughout the process (Harbour, Evanovich, Sweigart & Hughes, 2015). Through modeling, teachers help students to be clear on task and the rationale that it is based on. Modeling is also regarded as a scaffolding technique that helps students tackle simple and complex tasks, which include addressing unclear tasks, making generalizations, and problem solving (Harbour et al., 2015). Students work on meeting a learning target by first identifying the specific learning target. This can be explained through assessment criteria and/or standards that define different levels of achievement (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). The most straightforward way to introduce these criteria to students is through instructional models or exemplars. These are effective because “they make explicit what is required, and they define a valid standard against which students can compare their work” (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, pp. 206-207). Modeling provides teachers the platform to illustrate standards and show students the expected product before they begin working on their own. Additionally, teachers are able to discuss elements of the exemplar that represent high quality work toward which all students should be striving (Thomas & Sondergeld, 2015). Discussing the exemplar can then

become part of the scaffolding process, gradually releasing students to independent work, and ensuring that students have a greater probability of understanding and meeting the learning target.

When the expectations and criteria do match, as can be emphasized through modeling and the use of exemplar texts, students are able to examine feedback in an actionable and useable way. Sharing a visual example of the learning target during student work time on an assessment helps students think ahead to the end-goal. “As students do their work, they make progress toward the target. This work produces evidence on which teachers can base effective feedback, which students can use, in turn, to self-regulate their learning” (Brookhart, 2012, p. 4). Modeling, therefore, enriches the feedback experience by empowering students to address the learning target in a tangible way, while offering opportunities for them to make connections between where they are and where they need to be.

Teacher modeling has been widely recognized as an effective tool that builds students’ skills and enhances their proficiency (Fisher & Frey, 2015). Fisher and Frey (2015) reported that after coaching eight teachers to integrate modeling into their instructional practices, they found a significant difference in the performance and achievement of the 446 students taught by the coached teachers. The areas where teachers applied most of their modeling practices included reading comprehension skills, using context clues to get to the meaning of unknown words, text structures, and text features such as visual and graphic tools. Modeling, however, does not mean that the teacher does all the work while students sit idly. Rather, students should be engaged in mental

activities such as anticipating what the teacher will do, or the teacher pauses every now and then to ask them to reflect on what has been happening with a partner (Fisher & Frey, 2015). Using their analytical skills, students should be able to transfer the models presented by the teacher into situations when they can act independently (Fisher & Frey, 2015). Mayer and Alexander (2016) maintained that example-based instruction does not only lead to initial cognitive skill acquisition, but it also leads to superior skill acquisition.

Self-Explanation

Self-explanation is when students explain to themselves the materials they are studying (Mayer and Alexander, 2016). Rittle-Johnson & Loehr (2016) stated that prompting people to explain new information leads to learning more across a variety of topics and age groups. Research studies have found that self-explanation leads to enhanced learning, more accurate self-assessments, and better problem solving (Mayer and Alexander, 2016). Self-explanation enhances learning and comprehension by integrating the new pieces of information together or new information with prior knowledge. This in turn prompts students to make inferences, generalize, and transfer new information to solve new problems and deal with new situations. On the other hand, there are some issues with the implementation of self-explanation which revolve around time constraints, the quality of student-generated explanations, and the instructional methods of integrating self-explanations in the classroom in alignment with the learning objectives. In order to achieve the utmost of prompting students to practice self-explanation as an instructional strategy and in the meantime avoid the issues that arise

with its implementation, Rittle-Johnson and Loehr (2016) developed four instructional guidelines. These instructional guidelines are selecting self-explanation activities based on the learning domain and target outcomes, scaffolding high quality explanations via training on self-explanation or structuring the self-explanation responses, prompting learners to explain correct information, and prompting learners to explain why incorrect information is incorrect if there are common errors or misconceptions in the domain.

Peer Interaction

Peer interaction is any communicative activity carried out between learners with minimal or no direct involvement from the teacher. This includes all forms of peer help such as cooperative learning, collaborative learning, peer modeling, and peer tutoring (Philp et al., 2014). Although it is discreet and usually unseen, the teacher's role is significant in setting up peer work, providing motivation, equipping students with linguistic and relational skills, modeling work prior to peer interaction, facilitating progress through encouragement when interest levels become weaker, prompting when peer talks become unproductive, resolving conflict or dysfunctional interaction, guiding students' self-evaluation and reflection, and offering feedback (Philp et al., 2014). Van den Branden (2016) categorized teacher's roles into pre, during and post interaction. For pre-interaction, the teacher selects content and determines the focus of interaction in alignment with the curriculum outcomes. During interaction, the teacher takes the responsibility of a motivator of actions, an organizer of the spatial and temporal aspects of the interaction, and a conversational partner and supporter. In the post-interaction stage, the teacher assesses students' performance, provides feedback, and plans actions

for development. For interaction to be authentic and meaningful, there should be an information gap to be filled by the participants. Without having to be equal in terms of competence, each learner depends on the other to complete the task and/or keep the communication going.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is when students work in small groups as part of an instructional strategy to maximize their own and each other's learning (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 2014). Students' learning experience is characterized by synergy which drives each individual student to work within a positive frame of mind that when my team members succeed, I succeed. Cooperative learning usually employs criterion-referenced assessment and it can be used to perform any learning task in any subject area in any curriculum (Chien, 2014)). However, seating students in a group and asking them to work together does not guarantee that cooperative efforts will be the result. For cooperative learning to take place, Johnson et al. (2014) contended that there should be a set of conditions which include positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, social skills, and group processing. Johnson et al. maintained that cooperative learning forms the foundation of other forms of active learning such as problem-based learning, team-based learning, and peer-assisted learning. In an experimental study to investigate the effect of cooperative learning on the achievement and knowledge retention of university students, Tran (2014) found out that there was a significant increase in students' achievement and retention of information as a result of studying for eight weeks using cooperative learning strategies.

Inquiry-Based Instruction

Inquiry-based instruction is a student-centered instructional format that employs classroom practices such as observation, generating questions, discovering gaps in one's knowledge base and exploring resources to fill in these gaps (Loyens & Rikers, 2016). Inquiry-based instruction highlights the role of the learner as an active agent in the learning process rather than a passive receiver of information. The learner does not only answer the teacher's questions by recalling textbook information, but they also explore answers based on their understanding and research techniques. Inquiry as an instructional method forms the foundation of a suite of active learning approaches such as project-based learning, task-based learning, case-based learning, and problem-based learning (Loyens & Rikers, 2016). In a quasi-experimental study to measure the impact of inquiry based instruction on the achievement of a group of 40 students over eight weeks, Abdi (2014) found out a significant difference between the experimental and controlled groups.

Discussion-Based Instruction

Discussion-based instruction is a teaching strategy where teachers and students or students themselves are engaged in an open-ended conversation for the purpose of developing students' learning, comprehension, thinking skills, and problem solving (Murphy, Wilkinson & Soter, 2016). There are different approaches to discussion-based instruction. Some focus on a text with the purpose of developing critical thinking skills, sharing lived experiences, or creating a mental representation of the text. Other approaches do not involve text at all; rather they help students to critically analyze information stemming from a classroom activity or observation (Murphy et al., 2016).

Engaging students in purposeful discussions is a meaning-making experience that supports the development of their language as well as thinking skills. Vygotsky (1978) also theorized that language is not only used as a means of communication, but it also helps learners to integrate into their society and develop cultural competence. In their meta-analysis of almost 50 correlational, quasi-experimental, and experimental studies to measure the effect of discussion-based instruction on students' reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, reasoning, and transfer, Murphy et al. (2016) indicated that there is, at least, a moderate level of evidence that discussions have positive effects on the aforementioned skills.

Instructional Visualization

Instructional visualization refers to using multimedia input side by side with lexical input for the purpose of promoting learning (Mayer, 2016). The multimedia message could be communicated through static graphics such as illustrations, photos, drawings, maps, graphs, and tables, or it can be of a dynamic nature such as animation and videos delivered on a screen. In an attempt to answer the question whether adding graphics to words helps people to learn better than presenting words only, Mayer (2016) presented evidence from cognitive psychology and 13 experimental studies that adding the multimedia element to the printed material has a significant impact on students' scores in transfer tests. Mayer (2016) analyzed evidence from other experimental studies which demonstrated that both visualizers and verbalizers benefit from the integration of multimedia with printed materials. More evidence is presented on the impact of visualization on processing and transferring input from the sensory memory and working

memory into the long-term memory and integrating that input with prior knowledge (Ainsworth, 2014; Ayres, 2015; Fiorella & Mayer, 2016).

Learning English as a Foreign Language

Freeman and Long (2014) argued that there are at least 40 Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories; each of which attempts to provide an explanation of how a second or foreign language is acquired or learned. Some of the theories and hypotheses which have held an important place in SLA are behaviorism, cognitivism, universal grammar hypothesis, comprehension or monitor hypothesis, sociocultural theory, connectionism, and complexity or chaos theory (Van Patten & Williams, 2014). However, because of the dynamic nature of language learning, none of these theories can provide a comprehensive and complete explanation of the phenomenon of SLA by itself; rather, these theories complement each other to create a model which helps achieve a better understanding of how a foreign language is learned (Hulstijn et al., 2014). In this model, the mechanical habit formation in language development based on the behavioral stimulus and response integrates with the innate mental structures proposed by cognitivists. The social affiliation of the learner of a second language with the culture of the target language meshes with the comprehensible input and output. In addition, negotiations of meaning and interactional adjustments blend with the sociocultural principles of the zone of proximal development, mediation, and scaffolding (Freeman & Long, 2014; Hulstijn et al., 2014).

The significance of studying SLA is multifaceted, but the insights it offers into SLA teaching and learning are the most important, especially for the purpose of this

study. When teachers understand how the process of SLA works by studying the different theories that provide scientifically sound and research-based interpretations to it, this will inform their instructional practices as well as the learning activities in which students are engaged. Freeman and Long (2014) claimed that some second language learners who studied SLA research reported that their study of SLA research facilitated their learning of a foreign language. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, more specifically the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), serves as a conceptual framework for this study. Therefore, it is discussed in more details in the beginning of the literature review part to demonstrate how it informs some key instructional principles in the field of second language learning. Some of the influential SLA theories and hypotheses will be discussed briefly hereafter.

Behaviorism

Behaviorism is a learning theory that attempts to explain human behavior with reference to external factors in the environment without considering mental or internal processes (Roberts, 2014). Behaviorists contended that language learning occurs as a response to an environmental stimulus followed by reinforcement or punishment. Reinforcement encourages continuation of the response whereas punishment discourages continuation of the response. According to behaviorism, people learn a second language by hearing sounds and structures in the environment and then imitating them accurately and repeatedly (Van Patten & Williams, 2014). Learning requires repeated engagement and active participation in the learning process. Within behaviorism, ideal learning conditions include exposure to a large number of examples from the target language, and

learners should repeat these examples accurately. Positive and corrective feedback leads to the development of automatic and error-free language production (Van Patten & Williams, 2014). However, the development of the second language (L2) is obstructed by the first language (L1), and L1 interference should be overcome for a successful learning of L2 (Van Patten & Williams, 2014). The main criticism addressed to behaviorism as a learning theory of a second language is that it views learning as a merely conditioned activity and it ignores internal mental processing.

Cognitivism

Cognitive theories of learning stress the mental processing of knowledge by addressing issues such as how information is received, organized, stored, and retrieved by the mind (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Learning is concerned with what learners know and how they acquire this knowledge. Knowledge acquisition is a mental activity that entails internal coding and learner's active engagement in the learning process (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Learners' thoughts, beliefs, and learning strategies contribute to shaping their knowledge formation. According to the principles of cognitivism, there are three types of memory that interact to encode the incoming information; these three types are sensory, working, and long-term memory. Language input is first perceived by the sensory memory which passes the input to the working memory. Within the limitations of duration and capacity of the working memory, the human brain processes the input in two ways: by repeating it several times in order to remember it which is equivalent to rote memorization or surface learning, or by organizing, analyzing, and understanding the

input in an active learning process which transfers information into the long-term memory (Khalil & Elkhider, 2016).

Universal Grammar Hypothesis

Universal grammar hypothesis suggests that humans are born with an innate device that guides and limits their processing of the grammar forms they acquire whether in their first language or second language (Van Patten & Williams, 2014). Universal grammar hypothesis is based on a number of principles: universality (all human languages share a number of properties), convergence (all language learners converge on the same grammar even though they are exposed to different input), poverty of the stimulus (children know things about language which they could not have learned from the input they had), no negative evidence (children know which structures are ungrammatical although they are not exposed to negative evidence), uniformity (all children learn languages by going through the same stages in the same order), maturational effect (language acquisition is sensitive to maturational factors and relatively insensitive to environmental factors), and dissociation between language and cognition (Van Patten & Williams, 2014; Dąbrowska, 2015). However, other research criticized universal grammar and argued that it is based on false or invalid premises (Dąbrowska, 2015; Ibbotson & Tomasello, 2016; Lin, 2015; Lin, 2017). This criticism to the universal grammar hypothesis led to the rise of other theories that attributed greater importance to the role of the environment than to any specific innate knowledge in the learner.

Connectionism

Connectionism is seen as a unifying theory that claims all types of knowledge can be understood within it. Therefore, it does not make a distinction between language development and acquiring other types of knowledge. This comprehensive approach puts connectionism in conflict with the universal grammar assumption that there is an innate device responsible for language acquisition (Joanisse & McClelland, 2015). Connectionists argue that learners build up their knowledge of language gradually through the frequent exposure to thousands of language chunks in various situational or linguistic contexts. Over the course of time, learners develop strong connections between these language elements, and eventually the presence of one element will activate the others in the learner's mind (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). For example, learners may get the subject-verb agreement correct, not because they know the rule, but because they have been exposed to examples like "I study" and "he likes" so frequently that the connections get stronger, and each subject or subject pronoun activates the correct verb form. The connectionist view of second language acquisition is supported by the observation that much of the language that people use can be predicted, and it is often learned in chunks, not word by word (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Lain, 2016).

Krashen's Monitor Theory

Developed by Stephen Krashen in the 1970s and early 1980s, the monitor theory of language acquisition consists of five hypotheses. These five hypotheses are learning-acquisition distinction hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis (Freeman & Long, 2014). The

acquisition –learning hypothesis makes a distinction between acquiring and learning a language. Acquisition is a natural process that takes place unconsciously and emerges spontaneously when learners engage in a normal interaction with more focus on meaning than on form (Van Patten & Williams, 2014). In this sense, second language and first language are acquired in the same way. Conversely, learning involves explicit instruction of the language rules and patterns, and gaining this knowledge is a conscious and intentional process. According to Krashen (as cited in Van Patten & Williams, 2014) knowledge that is learned cannot by converted into acquired knowledge that is accessed spontaneously. This distinction may interpret why a student would know a particular grammar rule, but they cannot use it spontaneously without making mistakes. The monitor hypothesis refers to editing the acquired knowledge when there are no constraints of time on language production. For example, when a student is composing a piece of writing or filling the blanks in a grammar exercise, they have time to monitor this production and edit the acquired knowledge (Liu, 2015). Within the natural order hypotheses, learners follow a sequence in their acquisition of specific language forms and grammar rules such as adding ing, ed, and s to verbs. This sequence is not controlled by instructional practices or the complexity of these structures; rather, it is dependent on an innate language acquisition device (Van Patten & Williams, 2014). The fourth hypothesis in the monitor theory is the input hypothesis which refers to comprehensible input that contains language slightly beyond the current level of the learner's internalized level (Gulzar et al., 2014). Learners are exposed to comprehensible input when they hear teachers or native speakers speak without being too fast or using complex structures (Van

Patten & Williams, 2014). Finally, the affective filter hypothesis refers to emotional and motivational factors that either facilitate learning or impede it. When the affective filter is up due to anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or lack of motivation, learning is not likely to happen. In contrast, when the affective filter is down, students are comfortable and more receptive of knowledge (Liu, 2015).

Complexity Theory

Complexity theorists study language development as an emergent, adaptive, nonlinear, dynamic, and open system (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014). Emergence refers to the spontaneous occurrence of a language element as a result of interaction between the different components of a complex system (Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Language development is adaptive when it changes in response to changes in its environment and responds to novel situations successfully. Nonlinearity of language development means that it is not sequential or based on a straightforward relationship of cause and effect; rather, it is so sensitive that even a small change at one point of the developmental trajectory could make a big difference as it proceeds (Larsen-Freeman, 2016). In addition, language development as a dynamic and open system means that depending on the type of interaction it has with the surrounding environment, development happens without having a fixed direction. These elements (with others) characterize the complexity theory which shifts from interpreting second language development in a reduced manner by using an individual theory or hypothesis to understanding that second language development is so complex that it is the result of the interaction between all these interpretations (Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Language has the seeds of its development,

and learners learn a new language based on their schematic knowledge or what they know, and what they know constantly changes with meaningful language use (Dörnyei, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2015; Larsen-Freeman, 2016).

Common European Framework of Reference

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is a descriptive scheme that consists of six proficiency levels with common reference points and descriptor scales with advice on curriculum scenarios and considerations for reflection (Lim, Geranpayeh, Khalifa & Buckendahl, 2013). In relation to assessment, the CEFR can be of help in the identification of what to be assessed, how students' performance is interpreted against assessment criteria, and how comparisons between the various proficiency levels resulting from tests and examinations can be made. The aim of the CEFR is to stimulate reflection on curricular, instructional, and assessment practices and provide a common reference levels to facilitate comparisons between courses, tests, and qualifications (North, 2014). Within the framework of the CEFR, users can make sense of test scores and what they mean in terms of the practical real life language ability. Two main points that identify putting the CEFR into good use are using the CEFR descriptors to inform designing learning objectives for a language course and linking these objectives to real world language ability (North, 2014).

Common European Framework of Reference and English Language Instruction

According to North (2014) the CEFR affords a distinct philosophy of language teaching and learning. This philosophy is based on analyzing the future real world communicative needs of the language learner and developing the competences that would

help the learner meet these needs. Within this philosophy, the learner is regarded as a partner that takes part in setting learning objectives and activities and then discusses how much was achieved with teachers. The future oriented outlook of the CEFR approach to teaching English as a foreign language and supporting learner's agency create the connection between the CEFR, ZPD, and some of the effective instructional practices outlined in this literature review. The CEFR does not induce teachers to stop teaching grammar or literature, but it recommends putting all language elements in a communicative perspective so that English is regarded as a vehicle for communication rather than a school subject. One of the main principles of the CEFR is the use of can-do statements to identify the intended learning outcomes of a language course (Council of Europe, 2018). These can-do statements provide a clear roadmap for learning and an instrument to measure progress. The CEFR's can-do descriptors also inform the design of language syllabi based on needs analysis and real life tasks rather than the traditional syllabi which are formed around grammar structures or pre-determined functions or notions. At a classroom level, the CEFR is aligned with the strong interpretation of the communicative method of teaching English which suggests that English is learned in communication and not only for communication. The implications that emerge from this interpretation include (but are not limited to) engaging students in real life and communicative tasks to express everyday needs, the extensive use of the target language inside the classroom not just learning about English as a subject, and the development of communicative and cultural competence of learners.

Implications

Informed by the research problem and questions and based on the anticipated findings of data collection and analysis, a professional development program was designed for the purpose of offering a hands-on and practical training on some effective instructional strategies. The training focused on using feedback strategies, scaffolding, and mediation. The activities of the professional development program were based on the principles of andragogy: the need to know the value of the professional development program before embarking on the learning experience, autonomous learning activities, utilizing prior experience, readiness to learn based on the appreciation of the relevance of the training to their needs, orientation to learning is task-based, problem-based and life-based, and motivation should be a mixture of extrinsic factors and intrinsic factors such as self-esteem and goal attainment (Georgievich, 2014). The tentative directions for the project deliverables were a written report prepared by the participants in the professional development program on the most relevant and effective feedback strategies they could use with their students using sample lessons from the syllabus they were teaching. I also asked the participants to demonstrate a change in their classroom application of using feedback strategies as evidenced in observed classes.

Summary

In the first section of the proposal, the local problem was described and situated within the larger educational context. Then, the rationale for the problem choice was presented, and the key terms used in the study were defined. After that, the significance of the study and the research questions were identified. A review of literature was

completed to describe the conceptual framework of the study and review the broader problem. This section was concluded with a discussion of the implications for possible project directions and deliverables.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

Using multiple sources of data such as observations, interviews, and documents (lesson plans, course review reports, and professional development plans), I used an exploratory case study to answer the research questions: "What are the instructional strategies being used by teachers to prepare students to achieve an intermediate level of English proficiency?" and "What are the barriers teachers encounter when implementing instructional strategies to support students' learning?" Case studies are focused on making meaning of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context to answer questions typically starting with *what*, *how*, and *why*, and they involve the investigator having little or no control over behavioral events (Yin, 2014). The bounded system of this exploratory case study was the EFL component of the foundation year at an international technical college in Saudi Arabia. Six EFL teachers, the college academic manager, and the foundation curriculum designer were interviewed. Additionally, these same six teachers were observed in their classrooms. Listening, recording, interacting, and contextualizing the participants' perspectives toward the instructional strategies used to develop students' language skills helped me understand the phenomenon (see Henwood, 2014). In addition, it was important to pay attention to the process to ensure a quality case study (Yin, 2014).

The research questions were best approached through a qualitative research design—an exploratory case study. Qualitative research is focused on discovery, insight, and understanding the phenomenon under investigation from the perspective of the

participants to make a difference in their life (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Understanding the realities of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants is where qualitative research aligns with the social constructivism theory. Additionally, qualitative research is focused on the creation of meaning (not discovering it) by interacting with the social world (Baskarada, 2014). This interaction takes place in a real-world setting rather than a laboratory, which makes the observed behavior naturalistic not controlled or manipulated (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Another characteristic of qualitative research that aligns with the research questions and purpose is that it is interpretive.

There were other research designs that could have been used to study the research problem, but an exploratory qualitative case study was most suitable. For example, a phenomenology study would not have been as effective because of its limitation to describing only one aspect of an intense human experience such as love, anger, or betrayal without being bounded by time or place (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A program evaluation was another design that could have been used, but assessing the value of the EFL component of the foundation year was not the purpose of the study, nor was it a possibility because this is a public college that started in 2013 and it is still in its early stages. Further, a program evaluation is used for decision-making purposes with the involvement of stakeholders to effect an immediate change (Brandon & Fukunaga, 2014), which was not the scope or purpose of the current study. Quantitative research designs are not aligned with the purpose of the current study because they are used to determine the cause of events, relationships between events and phenomena, or generalize the findings in other contexts. The purpose of this study was to achieve a better

understanding of the instructional strategies and barriers that deterred students from developing their English language skills, which should help improve teachers' practices and students' learning experience.

Participants

The purpose of the current study was to understand and gain insights into the instructional strategies adopted in the EFL program at an international technical college in Saudi Arabia and the barriers that impeded the development of students' English language skills. Therefore, the participants were selected on the basis that they knew the most about the case under investigation. They were information rich because of their roles, responsibilities, and expertise within the context of the study. A second criterion for the selection of the participants was that they represented the instructional part of the case (six EFL teachers), curriculum development (foundation year director), and academic management (college foundation year manager). The EFL teachers participated in interviews and they were observed in class while teaching. The teachers were selected to meet several criteria: First, they had to have taught the two levels of the foundation year for at least 1 academic year to be knowledgeable of the EFL program and the barriers that students faced. Second, they had to have experience in teaching most if not all the EFL courses of the foundation year. The director of the foundation year was selected because of her role as the head of the curriculum and assessment team. She was the most knowledgeable person of the academic policies and standards implemented in the foundation year. In addition, she had access to all quantitative and qualitative data of the foundation curriculum and assessment since the start of the college in 2013. The

college academic manager was selected because of his knowledge of the college academic policies, instructional strategies adopted by teachers, and the barriers that students faced.

The number of participants (six EFL teachers, one academic manager, and one curriculum designer) was decided to be parallel to the depth of inquiry and data they would provide. The total number of EFL teachers in the college was approximately 40. Hence, the number of participants with the selection criteria adopted ensured depth of information as well as balance with the time and resources needed to conduct interviews, observations, transcribe, and code all data (see Yin, 2014). To gain access to participants, I developed a protocol based on the framework of the study (see Appendix C). The protocol outlined the purpose of the study, what the participants were asked to do, any potential ethical considerations, any special arrangements that could have been required for the interviews and observations, and an informed consent form to be read and signed by the participants after they agreed to participate in the study. After the development of the protocol, the participants who received a letter of introduction and the consent form via e-mail to inform them about the study and get their approval to participate in it. The consent form was read, signed, and returned via e-mail.

For the establishment of a researcher–participant working relationship, several methods were employed. First, I considered how to build trust and rapport with participants so that they could act naturally and share their experiences. Spending time with the participants and demonstrating good listening skills promoted a strong rapport. Second, sensitive and honest communication and nonjudgmental interaction also helped

to build trust and credibility between the researcher and participants and enhanced the working relationship (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Safeguards were established to protect the rights of the participants. Some of these safeguarding measures included striving to maintain privacy (i.e., ability to participate without other's knowledge), obtaining informed consent from the participants, ensuring the voluntary nature of the study, ensuring confidentiality of shared information, and using the IRB application, conflicts of interest evaluation, member checking, and triangulation.

Data Collection

Collecting data for case studies depends on multiple sources. Case studies should not be limited to a single source of evidence (Yin, 2014). Therefore, in the current study, direct observations, semistructured interviews, and documents formed the sources of data. These three data sources provided corroborated data to answer the research questions about the instructional methods currently used by the EFL teachers and the barriers students face to develop their English language skills to an intermediate level of proficiency. Because a case study happens in a real-life setting, direct observations of six EFL classrooms were conducted to collect data on teachers' instructional methods, students' behavior, engagement in learning activities, and classroom assessment techniques used by teachers. Direct observation of the EFL classrooms also afforded data on the barriers that students encountered to develop their English language skills. For recording data from observation, an observation sheet was developed by me as part of the case study protocol (see Appendix B).

The second source of evidence was semistructured interviews with the six EFL teachers whose classes were observed, the college academic manager, and the director of the foundation program who leads the curriculum and assessment team. These semistructured interviews had more resemblance to guided conversations than structured queries (see Yin, 2014). During the interviews, the teachers were asked open-ended questions to understand the instructional strategies they used and the challenges their students encountered while trying to develop their language skills. The college academic manager was asked about his observations on the quality of the instructional strategies used by the EFL teachers, areas of improvement, needs for professional development, plans to satisfy these needs, and any specific policies and procedures that aimed to improve and manage the quality of teaching and learning in the EFL program. The curriculum leader was asked questions about the approach used in the curriculum design of the EFL component of the foundation year; the instructional methods recommended to achieve the objectives of the program; the assessment framework used to measure the attainment of these objectives; how the curriculum, instruction, and assessment were aligned; and the quality assurance procedures used to ensure that the policies and procedures of the foundation year program were implemented as planned. I developed an interview protocol as the instrument for collecting interview data (see Appendix C). After obtaining the interviewees' permission and ensuring that they were comfortable in the presence of a recording device, I used a recording device to record the interviews, which lasted for approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Recording the interviews provided a more

accurate depiction of the interviews data than the notes taken by the interviewer (Yin, 2014).

The third source of evidence was documents such as course review reports and professional development plans. Document reviews were conducted to provide further insight into the research questions and to provide triangulation of results. Documentation has advantages such as being stable, unobtrusive, detailed, and broad (Yin, 2014). On the other hand, documents could be difficult to find and may be biased. Course review reports reflected teachers' opinions in the curricular, instructional, and assessment procedures, and how these procedures supported them to help students achieve the set objectives. In addition, professional development plans offered data on teachers' needs for development and how the college planned to satisfy these needs. Course reviews and professional development plans are prepared by teachers twice a year and submitted to the foundation year director. I asked her permission to see these documents before I interviewed her. Even though documents are written for some specific purpose and specific audience (Yin, 2014), it was useful to use documents for corroborating other sources of evidence.

Researcher's Role

I work as the corporate foundation manager who is a member of a team that designs the EFL curriculum of the foundation year and takes part in overseeing its implementation. Despite this role that has connections with eight colleges under the umbrella of the corporate office and not only the setting of the study, I do not line manage or have any direct or indirect supervisory role or authority over any individual

working in the eight colleges. Five years ago, I worked in the setting of the study as an EFL instructor. Then, I was promoted to my current role, and a lot of changes in the leadership team of the college have occurred since then. These changes included a new dean of the college, a new academic manager, and new foundation coordinators. However, collecting data from teachers may have involved some sort of coercion due to the possibly perceived authority. There was also another ethical consideration that was related to the possible bias and potential conflict of interest I may have had regarding the policies and procedures I took part in.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consists of data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Analyzing case study evidence does not have well-defined techniques (Yin, 2014). However, after collecting evidence from the three sources identified in the previous section, I started by attempting to define the priorities of what to analyze and why through an initial check of the data to search for promising patterns, insights, or concepts. After that initial check, data analysis consisted of three concurrent flows of activity: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Data condensation means making the data stronger by focusing, sharpening, simplifying, sorting, discarding and organizing data from interviews, observations, and documents so that conclusion can be made and verified (Miles et al., 2014). Data display refers to assembling organized data into an accessible, compact form so that the analyst can see what the data show and make decisions of drawing conclusions or move on to the next step of the analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Drawing and verifying conclusions involved

drawing meaning from condensed and displayed data, noting patterns, irregularities, and explanations, then testing conclusions for robustness and validity (Miles et al., 2014). Coding occurs in two stages: thematic coding based on the themes from the conceptual framework and open coding to discover any emerging themes. However, because there were multiple data sources for this case study, an analytic strategy was developed. This general analytic strategy relied on the theoretical proposition and research questions of the study.

General Strategy of Data Analysis

The current case study followed the theoretical proposition that the instructional strategies used by the EFL teachers in the local setting were not helping students to develop the required English language skills. The case study was also guided by two research questions that explored the instructional methods used by the EFL teachers and the barriers that students faced while trying to develop the required English competencies. Therefore, the general analytic strategy relied on the theoretical propositions, research questions, and review of the literature. This strategy helped to organize the entire analysis, focus on the themes and codes related to the theoretical proposition and research questions, and examine the findings and explanations (see Yin, 2014). Then, open coding was used to analyze the themes and codes that emerged during data collection.

Evidence of Quality

To assure the accuracy and credibility of the findings, triangulation of evidence was used. Using multiple sources of evidence is considered one of the corroboration and

validation techniques that characterize strong case studies. Triangulation of evidence leads to the findings of the study being supported by more than a single source of evidence, but the data from multiple sources of evidence should be analyzed as part of one process, not separately; otherwise the procedure will be similar to making comparisons between findings from separate studies (Yin, 2014). In addition, the triangulation of data helps to strengthen the construct validity of the case study by developing convergent evidence (Yin, 2014). If the data sources provided conflicting information, which did not happen, I would have discussed the possible reasons for this conflict after examining the data for the rival examples or explanations (Spaulding, Lodico & Voegtle, 2013). Furthermore, data collection about these discrepant cases would have been pursued rather than trying to find a reason to reject them. If insufficient evidence was found, this would have added to the credibility of the findings of the study (Yin, 2014).

Data Analysis Results

In this exploratory case study, data were gathered from three sources: direct classroom observations of six EFL classes; semistructured interviews with the observed teachers, the academic manager of the college, and the leader of the curriculum development team of the foundation year; and reviewing course review reports and professional development plans prepared by EFL teachers. The process started by observing classes and collecting evidence on the instructional strategies used in the observed classes and how much these instructional strategies are aligned with and informed by what the literature identifies as effective instructional methods. The

observation notes were recorded on an observation sheet. Then, the semistructured interviews were initiated by interviewing the teachers whose classes were observed. During these interviews, the teachers discussed the instructional strategies they usually use with their students and the barriers that they encounter while helping students to develop the required English language skills. The interviews continued with the college academic manager who shared his observations on the quality of the instructional strategies used by the EFL teachers, the areas of improvement, the needs for professional development, and the plans to satisfy these needs. In the interview with the leader of the curriculum development team, she explained the EFL curriculum design approach, her observations on the quality of the instructional strategies used by the EFL teachers, and how much these instructional strategies are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the curriculum. After getting the interviewees' permission, the interviews were audio recorded for a more accurate depiction of the interviews data and then transcribed verbatim. The last source of data collection was documents checking. The observed teachers were asked to share their lesson plans with me before I observed their classes, but most of them did not do it. The implications of this behavior will be discussed later in this section. The course review reports and professional development plans were made available to me by the director of the foundation program. She gave me access to the online folder where these documents reside. I took notes from these documents in relation to the problem, research questions, and the larger body of related literature discussed in section 1.

Findings

In relation to the research problem and questions, the following findings were found.

Research Question 1 – Instructional Strategies Used

ZPD-informed instructional strategies. Most of the instructional strategies that are informed by the principles of the ZPD were not observed in class for all six teachers. For example, the observed teachers did not employ mediated instruction techniques, independent problem solving, self-regulation, or modeling. All six teachers stated that they use various techniques that can be aligned with the ZPD such as sharing lesson objectives with students at the beginning of classes, using supplementary materials, offering individual support, and guided discovery activities. These scaffolding techniques were verified during the observation of four teachers. No teachers implemented scaffolding (self-regulation), independent problem solving, or feedback during observation. Additionally, only two teachers demonstrated scaffolding (other regulation) and one teacher demonstrated modeling. Finally, all teachers demonstrated scaffolding (object regulation) during observation.

Scaffolding. Scaffolding occures in three different modes: other regulation, object regulation, and self-regulation. All six teachers were observed implementing teacher-student scaffolding, which is a type of other regulation. The teachers did that through explanations, monitoring, and offering individual support to students. Student-student scaffolding was not observed in any of the six classes although teachers stated that they sometimes use it in peer teaching and peer correction. Another form of scaffolding was

using supplementary materials and worksheets (object regulation) to support students' learning, and all six teachers were observed implementing this type of scaffolding. The third and most powerful type of scaffolding is self-scaffolding (self-regulation), and it was not observed in any of the six classes. In this type of scaffolding, students use self-reflection and self-correction techniques as tools of scaffolding.

The quality of the scaffolding strategies used is questionable for a number of reasons: First, the types of scaffolding that teachers were observed implementing were incomplete and insufficient to furnish students with a mediated learning experience. For example, teacher-student scaffolding should present corrective comments on assignments, explicit or implicit feedback on performance tasks, or instructional notes that help in task completion. Yet, what teachers did was limited to teacher-centered explanations and monitoring with individual support that did not culminate in independent task completion. Second, the tools that teachers used in object-scaffolding took one form, i.e. worksheets downloaded from the Internet, while object-scaffolding occurs when objects in the environment, such as an online translation tool, a computer program, a dictionary, a thesaurus, or a smartphone application, scaffold the language learning experience of students. In addition, the worksheets that five of the six teachers used were not aligned with the intended learning outcomes or assessment criteria of the courses they were teaching. Third, students did not receive constructive feedback that would help them self-scaffold their learning and complete the task independently or under guidance from the teacher or peers.

Modeling. Despite its importance as an effective ZPD and scaffolding strategy, only one out of the six observed teachers attempted to provide students with a modeling-based instructional experience. However, the experience was incomplete and lacked the fundamentals of modeling such as illustrating standards and showing students the expected product before they begin working on their own**,** identifying the specific learning target and sharing assessment criteria and/or standards that define different levels of achievement, and guiding students to make generalizations as part of a scaffolding process that would gradually release students to independent work. What the teacher did was using a model at the end of an activity so that students could check their answers against it.

Independent problem solving. None of the observed teachers applied this culminating step in the scaffolding process. Due to either the teacher-centered approach or teacher-led approach, teachers did not guide students to do tasks or solve problems independently. In every scaffolding attempt made by teachers, the focus was on regulating students' learning through the teacher or worksheets. In two classes, there were potential opportunities for students to complete tasks independently, but teachers' untimely interventions to do the tasks themselves ended students' attempts.

Lack of Implementation of Feedback-Based Instruction

Even though all six teachers stated that they implement various feedback techniques as part of daily classroom dynamics, none of them were observed in praxis implementing effective feedback-based instructional strategies. There was only one teacher who tried to provide students with corrective feedback by asking them to check

their answers against a model he prepared for part of the assigned task. The same teacher tried to practice another type of corrective feedback by raising students' awareness of the common errors they made while completing a task he assigned to them. During interviews, teachers elaborated on the feedback strategies they usually use, and they mentioned terms like peer correction, auto correction, delayed correction, immediate correction, questioning, and quizzes. If questioning and quizzes are excluded since they do not qualify as feedback strategies, all other terms dropped by teachers are various forms of one feedback strategy that is error correction. No teachers were implementing explicit feedback, implicit feedback, peer feedback, written feedback, or guiding feedback. Two out of the six teachers implemented teacher feedback, verbal feedback, and corrective feedback (error correction).

Feedback quality. Most teachers (at least five out of the six observed) did not provide students with constructive feedback which would help students regulate their learning experience. When given, feedback was only limited to error correction through the teacher. Sometimes, even error correction was not done effectively. For example, in one observed lesson, the teacher's comment on the answer a student wrote was "It can be anything". In an interview with a teacher, he was asked about the feedback techniques that he would usually use. In his answer, he used examples of the encouraging statements that he provides students such as "well done, good job, and excellent", which do not qualify as feedback. For feedback to be effective and to help students develop the required skills, it has to meet the criteria discussed in the conceptual framework. Below, table 3 demonstrates the characteristics of effective feedback, and how many teachers

were observed implementing them in their classes. Table 1 shows that the characteristics of effective feedback were not implemented in all observed classes, with one exception of a teacher who applied three out of the 11 identified criteria. This finding was supported and verified by the curriculum director who stated the following "The feedback that students get does not empower or enable them to develop the required skills and competencies such as autonomy and become lifelong learners." Teachers themselves verified this finding in their personal development plans by identifying providing effective feedback as an area of development.

Table 1

Characteristics of Effective Feedback and Number of Teachers Implementing Them

Characteristic	Number of Teachers
It provides evidence about student learning related to the ILOs of the curriculum.	0
Teachers consider when and how it is received more than when or how it is given.	0
It makes success criteria tangible and visible for students.	1
It cues students' attention to the learning task and how to process it.	1
It guides self-regulation strategies instead of attention to the self.	0
It guides learners to set and monitor learning goals to enhance active engagement in learning.	0
It clarifies the steps the learner needs to take to achieve the learning goals.	0
It supports learner's autonomy.	1
It should be ongoing to provide learners the opportunity to grow and develop.	0
It provides students with opportunities to respond, reflect, and contribute.	0
It is given in a timely manner.	0

Lack of Implementation of Research-Based and Student-Centered Strategies

All six teachers stated that they use various instructional strategies, but during observations none of the instructional strategies that promote and enhance deep learning were implemented. Below, table 4 demonstrates what the conceptual framework identified as research-based and student-centered instructional strategies that promote deep learning, and the number of teachers who implemented them in class during observation. Except for two attempts to apply learner active participation and peer interaction, all other student-centered instructional strategies that were discussed in the conceptual framework were not implemented by the observed teachers.

In the interview with the head of the curriculum development team, she stated that the instructional strategies recommended by the curriculum developers are those that promote deep learning, engage each and every individual student, and help them overcome their educational background which is very teacher-centered. However, none of these instructional strategies were observed in practice. In a few occasions, some teachers attempted to employ deep learning strategies by applying higher-order thinking skills, but they did not manage to complete the process due to the inconsistency of their practices. For example, in one of the classes, the teacher asked the students to read the grammar rule of the lesson from the book after he introduced some examples. Asking students to read the grammar rule from the book was in contrast with the inductive teaching approach and scaffolding that the teacher adopted in the beginning of the lesson by using elicitation and questioning to guide students to formulate the grammar rule

themselves. Therefore, an opportunity for a mediated learning experience that helps students to self-regulate their learning and employ deep learning strategies was missed.

Research Question 2 - Barriers to Required Language Skills

Based on classroom observations, reviewing documents, and interviews, the following were identified as barriers to the development of students' English language skills:

Low attendance. According to the learning and attendance management system of the college, students' average attendance does not exceed 64% in all classes, which interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning. Low attendance also makes it difficult for teachers to design projects or collaborative learning activities that may need to be completed over a number of classes or days. In addition, each lesson missed is a missed building block in students' scaffolded learning experience. In one observed class, only two students were present, which means less than 10% attendance. In another observation, five students were present, which means less than 25% attendance. The highest attendance in the six observed classes was nearly 50%.

Students' educational background. Students' educational background which is based on passively receiving information from teachers who lecture most of the time constitutes a barrier to the development of the required English skills. Students are often resistant to cooperative, interactive, or autonomous learning activities. They also lack in basic work ethics and study skills. In one of the observed classes, the teacher distributed a worksheet and asked students to complete a task, but none of the students had a pen. This is to be added to students' frequent absences, showing up for classes late, leaving their

books and other learning resources in the classrooms until the next day, and not doing homework or engaging in any self-study activities.

Lack of academic guidance or ongoing professional development activities. During interviews, all six teachers raised concerns about the lack of proper academic guidance from their academic coordinators and managers. They stated that neither teachers nor students receive a proper induction that introduces them to academic policies and procedures. All six teachers expressed their need to be part of an ongoing professional development program that is based on teachers and students' needs. Most of the identified barriers are supported by the findings of the conceptual framework pertinent to the barriers that impede the development of the English language skills in the context of the study.

Emerging Themes

The open coding of data revealed a number of themes and instructional strategies that were not discussed in the conceptual framework. These emerging themes and instructional strategies could be summarized in writing lesson objectives on the board and occasionally reading them to students at the beginning of the class. Teachers usually check students' understanding of instructions and new concepts by asking instructions-checking questions and concept-checking questions. Elicitation was another strategy that teachers used frequently to engage students in the lesson, and they did that verbally by asking guiding questions and sometimes visually through flash cards and pictures. Teachers monitored students while completing the assigned exercises or tasks, and they offered individual support whether by giving direct answers to some questions or

providing students with language chunks that would help to complete the task. Most teachers used questioning as an instructional technique to engage students and activate their schematic knowledge pertinent to the lesson content. In most classes, teachers employed some motivational strategies such as using humor, offering individual support, using technology, and giving students external worksheets. The way lessons were concluded was random and did not reflect any attempts to furnish students with an effective plenary or recapping activity.

Explaining lesson objectives to students. One of the instructional strategies that all observed teachers used was writing the lesson objectives on the board and sharing them with students before they embarked on any class activities. This is an effective engagement and scaffolding technique and it gives students a sense of purpose and direction from the beginning until the end of the lesson. In order to reap the benefits of this strategy, the lesson objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timed) and aligned with the intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the course. However, most of the lesson objectives shared with students lacked these two fundamental criteria. For example, in one class, the teacher's objective was to develop students' listening and speaking skills, which is a too broad objective to be achieved in one lesson; it does not qualify as a SMART objective either. In another listening and speaking class that should develop students' listening and speaking skills such as keeping a sustained monologue, describing experiences, turn taking, negotiating meaning, expressing viewpoints and support them with reasons and explanations, listening for the main idea, listening for the global meaning or specific details, the teacher

spent the whole class reviewing the form of a very basic grammar rule (verb to be) using a worksheet downloaded from the Internet.

Use of supplementary materials. Using supplementary worksheets to scaffold students' learning was another instructional strategy that all teachers employed. According to the course review reports that teachers prepared, there is a consensus on the need to use supplementary materials to best respond to students' learning needs and to attain the intended learning outcomes of the Foundation Year. However, teachers expressed their discontent with the fact that they had to do this supplementation. They wanted a course book that does all the work for them. The quality of the supplementary materials used was another issue since they were not quality-vetted in a proper way. No specific measures to assure the quality of the supplementary materials were stated. Except for one teacher who designed the worksheet in the form of a letter skeleton and provided students with a list of phrases to use in completing the introductory and concluding paragraphs of the letter, all other teachers used worksheets downloaded from the Internet without adapting them to be aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the course, question formats, or skills tested in the standardized test students sit in the end of the Foundation Year.

Lesson plans not provided. Even though all of the observed teachers were asked to share their lesson plans for the observed lessons before the observation was conducted and they acknowledged this in the consent form, none of them made their lesson plans available to me. I couldn't verify whether they had plans for their lessons or not. However, the classroom dynamics and the instructional activities that most of the

observed teachers used reflected poor planning and a lack of meaningful lesson structure or smooth transition between the lesson stages. Additionally, a lot of the instructional strategies that teachers said they implement in the course review reports were not observed in reality. This gap between what teachers say they do and what they actually do could be interpreted as a problem of proper lesson planning.

Discrepant cases. There is a discrepancy between what teachers believe in as effective instructional strategies and what they implement in the classrooms. During interviews, teachers named some instructional strategies that, if used, could help students develop their English language skills to the required level. Some teachers used terms such as cooperative and collaborative learning techniques, peer teaching, problem solving and critical thinking activities, but they did not show any of this in practice. Some possible reasons for this could be related to students' unwillingness to take part in interactive activities, students' proficiency levels that are not strong enough to be involved in problem solving or higher-order thinking activities, or students' educational background that is very teacher-centered. On the other hand, this discrepancy could be related to teachers thinking that they are doing the right thing, but they do not actually know how to implement the right thing, teachers knowing what to say in an interview to impress the interviewer, or teachers were just having an off day when I observed them.

In the course reviews, teachers noted that they varied tasks and classroom settings and designed tactile and information gap activities to improve students' motivation and enhance their learning. However, none of these instructional strategies was observed in five out of the six lessons I attended for six different teachers. This finding is further

supported by what the students stated in one of the course reviews that they need “more opportunities to participate, a change in the teaching environment, improve the status of tables and their order according to the number of students, and improve instruction by giving simplified explanations” (“Course Review Report,” 2018). Other evidence on this discrepancy is provided by teachers themselves. In their personal development plans, teachers identified the following as areas of improvement: getting students motivated when tackling tasks, creating a culture of independent learning, using a variety of instructional activities, keeping the classroom visually stimulating, providing effective feedback, and enhancing knowledge and understanding of instructional strategies.

In this study, specific procedures were followed to ensure the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the collected data. Triangulation of evidence was used to ensure that the findings of the study are supported by more than a single source of evidence by collecting data from multiple sources such as classroom observation of various teachers who teach different courses, conducting interviews with the observed teachers, academic managers and curriculum developers, and reviewing documents such as course review reports, and personal development plans. These multiple sources of evidence were analyzed as parts of one process that produced convergent evidence. The discrepant cases were identified, analyzed, and the possible reasons for this conflict were discussed to further support the credibility of the findings of the study. Sample field notes, researcher logs, and interview recordings will be included in the appendices.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The problem that prompted this study was that the instructional strategies implemented by the EFL teachers in an international technical college in Saudi Arabia did not prepare students at an intermediate level of proficiency on the CEFR. I used the findings discussed in Section 2 to provide the description and rationale for my project study in the form of a professional development plan, which includes training modules to improve the instructional strategies of all EFL teachers at an international technical college in Saudi Arabia. The findings revealed that EFL teachers did not implement research-based instructional strategies and there was a gap between what teachers said they did in the classrooms and what they did based on observation, which required a professional development plan to train teachers on student-centered instructional strategies such as feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and student engagement techniques. Additionally, interviewees expressed concerns about the quality of professional development activities in the college and their need to have an ongoing professional development plan that addresses teachers' needs and improves students' achievement.

Rationale

The international technical college does not have a professional development plan to help teachers with feedback-based instruction or other student-centered instructional strategies. Therefore, this professional development plan is a suitable project for the study because it can improve the knowledge and skills of the EFL teachers in implementing

feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and student engagement techniques. Professional development that is focused on instructional strategies aids in curriculum implementation and improves student achievement (Baird & Clark, 2018). Based on the findings of data analysis, I chose professional development as a project to address the problem of the study. This selection is supported by the following data and findings.

During the interviews, all teachers expressed their need to have an ongoing professional development program that trains them on practical techniques of how to provide feedback, scaffolding, and engagement techniques. According to one of the teachers, "Professional development is an area that needs a lot of work to be done. There must be ongoing professional development activities either weekly or fortnightly where teachers discuss teaching and learning topics such as feedback-based instruction and scaffolding." This finding was also supported by the personal development plans prepared by teachers where they identified topics such as feedback and scaffolding as areas of improvement they need to work on. The director of the foundation program agreed with teachers on their request for professional training on instructional strategies that promote giving and receiving feedback and scaffolding. Without an adequate professional development program on the instructional strategies that promote feedback and student engagement, the director of the foundation program believed it would be difficult that teachers could implement these instructional strategies in their classrooms. She added that having a follow-up plan is a necessity to ensure the effective implementation of the newly acquired practices.

In all observed classes, I identified that teachers required professional training on various feedback techniques such as peer, teacher, corrective, guiding, implicit, explicit, and written feedback. Only two out of the six observed teachers made attempts to use feedback, but their attempts were limited to error correction rather than integrating feedback into a mediated learning experience. This finding reflected teachers' need to be part of a sustainable professional development program on how to implement instructional strategies that are informed by feedback and scaffolding principles. The content of the professional development project also addresses the problem by offering training on student-centered instructional strategies such as engagement and modeling.

Review of the Literature

Because of the dynamic nature of teaching and learning, the rapid changes in school environments, and the growing body of research on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, ongoing professional development for teachers is considered significant for a healthy educational setting. For instance, Lee, Mak, and Burns (2016) maintained that professional development is needed to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to deal with innovative ideas in the field of teaching and learning. Because the educational context and the cognitive skills of the students in the international technical college require teachers to demonstrate innovative instructional abilities, teachers can benefit from a sustainable professional development program that can improve their instructional practices and students' achievement. The findings indicated that teachers would benefit from a professional development program that trains them on (a) feedback-based instruction, (b) scaffolding, and (c) engagement techniques.

Professional Development

Professional development is an ongoing learning experience of teachers that start before they step into classrooms as teachers and continue until their last day in their education career (Luft & Hewson, 2014). High quality professional development is characterized by features such as sustainability, focus on content knowledge, active engagement of teachers, collective participation, and alignment with school policies and standards (Kennedy, 2016; Luft & Hewson, 2014; Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). Professional development programs that allow teachers to construct their knowledge through collaboration also add to the efficacy of these programs (Koh, Chai, &Tay, 2014). However, professional development that leads to an enduring change in teachers' beliefs and practices as well as an improvement in students' learning outcomes is considered the most effective (Kennedy, 2016). To ensure an enduring change, professional development research suggests following up with teachers for at least a full year to examine how much teachers are able to sustain the new practices after the professional support is gone (Kennedy, 2016; Stewart, 2014; Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). The core of professional development programs should contain four main foci: generic teaching practices, subject-specific teaching practices, curriculum and pedagogy, and how students learn (Kennedy, 2016).

Professional development is important for teachers and students because high quality professional development helps to have high quality and effective teachers, and these teachers are the ones who ultimately enact changes in the classrooms (Holm & Kajander, 2015). Yet a question that needs answering is how teachers are selected to

participate in professional development programs. Research indicates that when teachers are mandated to participate in professional development training, they will not actively resist the assignment, but they will forget about the program when they return to their classrooms (Holm & Kajander, 2015; Kennedy, 2016). Hence, motivating teachers to participate in professional development activities that expand their pedagogical horizons by discussing the rationale of their participation and seeing the value of the professional development program is essential for the successful implementation of newly introduced practices.

One of the findings of the data analysis in this study was the gap between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning as expressed during interviews and what they did when I observed their classes. This disconnect between teachers' theories and their classroom practices was identified by Kennedy (2016) as a problem of enactment, which occurs when teachers espouse certain ideas but continue enacting different ones without noticing the contradiction. For teachers to enact a new practice, they have to abandon a practice they have developed and used for some time. They also have to find out how and when to incorporate the new idea into their ongoing and habitual system of practice (Kennedy, 2016). There are four methods to facilitate enactment. The first method is prescription in which the professional development program designers demonstrate what they believe the best way to tackle a teaching and learning problem. Teachers should follow the prescribed guidance and avoid using their judgment. The second way of facilitating enactment is through strategies. Here, teachers are provided with a goal and a rationale for using some strategies, and they are trained on how to

independently make decisions to implement a strategy. The third way is through insight by raising questions that prompt teachers to reexamine their practices and see them differently. The fourth enactment method, which moves further toward teachers' autonomy, is presenting a body of knowledge that does not explicitly enforce a set of actions. Rather, it organizes a set of interrelated principles and concepts in the form of courses or textbooks, and teachers use their discretion regarding how to apply this body of knowledge to their own contexts (Kennedy, 2016).

Benefits of Professional Development to Teachers

Professional development offers teachers numerous benefits. High quality professional development helps English language teachers make connections between theory and practice, receive support from colleagues on the problematic areas in teaching and learning, share pedagogical ideas, and improve language proficiency (Giraldo, 2014). Professional development also helps teachers to become more reflective about their teaching practices and the difficulties English learners face, especially when professional development includes experiential activities by making teachers play the role of students (Giraldo, 2014). Ongoing professional development for English language teachers in Saudi Arabia serves as a learning activity, a challenge to think creatively and critically as a learner and a teacher, and an opportunity to learn with and from colleagues (Al Asmari, 2016). There are also certain types of professional development such as professional learning communities that empower teachers to take ownership of their own learning by identifying and solving instructional problems in ways that improve teachers' performance and students' outcomes (Baird & Clark, 2018). Teachers' involvement is

further consolidated by their participation in the planning and implementation of professional development activities, motivating them to attend the mandated sessions.

Research has indicated the significant influence of professional development on teachers' knowledge and implementation of instructional strategies and student outcomes (Baird & Clark, 2018). For example, Baird and Clark (2018) indicated that teachers' knowledge of instructional strategies such as discourse and reasoning increased because of participating in a professional development program, and teachers' implementation of the newly practiced strategies improved. In addition, students' achievement in literacy and mathematics was significantly increased as measured by pre- and post-test tools. These findings were also supported by other research (Giraldo, 2014; Lin, Cheng, & Wu, 2015; Piedrahita, 2018; Shaha, Glassett, & Ellsworth, 2015). This body of research provides evidence on the effectiveness of high quality professional development programs focused on instructional strategies that also includes observing and providing feedback on the improvement of teachers' knowledge and skills and students' outcomes. In an EFL context, professional development project for teaching writing broadened teachers' understanding of the different writing approaches, provided a clear model of how to integrate these new approaches into the regular writing courses, changed their instructional strategies, and altered their perceptions of teachers' roles (Teng, 2016).

Professional Development and Research Problem

The problem of the current study was that the instructional strategies implemented by the EFL teachers in an international technical college in Saudi Arabia have not prepared students at an intermediate level of proficiency on the CEFR. The findings of

data analysis in Section 2 revealed that there was a lack of implementation of student-centered instructional strategies such as feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and engagement by EFL teachers. Another finding from data analysis was that there was a lack of academic guidance and ongoing professional development activities. Hence, a professional development program focused on research-based and student-centered instructional strategies and informed by the principles of andragogy (adult learning) was identified as a suitable genre to address the research problem. During data collection, the interviewed teachers expressed their need to have training on instructional strategies such as feedback, scaffolding, and student engagement techniques. The same need was supported by the director of the foundation program.

Research provides evidence on how high quality professional development programs are needed and can help to improve teachers' knowledge and implementation of student-centered instructional strategies. For example, Lee et al. (2016) stated that teachers need to be educated and trained on feedback-giving strategies to enhance their knowledge and implementation skills. Alibakhshi and Dehvari (2015) also found that the many teachers in their study perceived professional development as developing their instructional techniques through in-service training. Additionally, Olofson and Garnett (2018) argued that shifting toward student-centered pedagogies (such as feedback-based instruction) requires high quality professional development to support teachers' learning. Instructional strategies that are based on and informed by constructivist principles (such as student-centered approaches) can be cultivated through high quality professional development (Gash, 2014). Therefore, student-centered instructional strategies that are

informed by the principles of constructivism will guide the development of the professional development project.

Student-Centered Instructional Strategies

Scaffolding. Having its roots in Vygotsky's ZPD theory, scaffolding is the support provided to the learner to complete a task or understand a concept that they cannot complete or understand independently (Wilson & Devereux, 2014). This support comes from the more knowledgeable others in the social environment of the learner such as teachers, peers, or parents, and it takes different forms such as questioning, elicitation, modeling, schema building, bridging, guided discovery, peer tutoring, peer checking, peer feedback, recapping (Wilson, 2016). For this support to be effective, social interactions have to remain within the ZPD of the learner (Radford, Bosanquet, Webster, Blatchford, & Rubie-Davies, 2014). In scaffolding, students are supported to do a task beyond their current ability, and when they gain confidence and ability, scaffolding is removed gradually until the student can do the task independently and move forward to more advanced tasks (Wilson & Devereux, 2014). Radford et al. (2014) summarized this process in three words: contingency, fading, and transfer. Contingency refers to adjusting support in the moment to match students' current level or slightly above it. Fading means withdrawing the scaffold gradually, and then transfer happens by giving students the responsibility of their learning. Students need careful and delicate scaffolding so that they remain secure in the dangerous area between where they are currently and where they need to be. Engagement is also crucial for successful scaffolding, and students can be engaged through texts that are challenging (but not too difficult), tasks that tap into their

imagination and creativity, and gives them a sense of achievement and agency (Wilson, 2016).

Scaffolding is a useful instructional strategy because it facilitates student engagement, enhances autonomous learning, enables students to be task-focused, and boosts skills transfer (Wilson & Devereux, 2014; Ardianti, 2017). According to Ardianti (2017), evidence showed that scaffolding through teacher's feedback motivated students to engage in oral interaction. In an experimental study to measure the impact of scaffolding and peer tutoring on the improvement of the reading skills of EFL learners, Haider and Yasmin (2015) found that there was a significant improvement in the reading skills of the experimental group as measured by the difference between the pre-test and post-test. Mulder, Bollen, de Jong, and Lazonder (2016) argued that scaffolding using modeling can enhance students' performance success, increase their conceptual knowledge, reduce errors, and improve near and far transfer. Hsieh (2017) provided evidence on how scaffolding helps language learners to produce collaborative dialogs, build linguistic knowledge, practice peer and self-correction, reinforce peer assistance, and achieve shared understanding.

Engagement techniques. According to Wang and Degol (2014), student engagement is a variety of goal-directed behaviors, thoughts, or affective states, and it represents the outward manifestation of motivation. Engagement is multidimensional in that it demonstrates itself in the form of behavioral, affective, and cognitive interest. Behavioral engagement can be observed through student participation in learning activities and tasks, while affective and cognitive engagement can manifest itself as states

such as interest, positive feelings, metacognition, or self-regulated learning (Wang & Degol, 2014). Research identified three different levels of engagement: engagement in school community, engagement in the classroom or subject domain, and engagement in specific learning activities within the classroom (Wang & Degol, 2014; Filsecker & Kerres, 2014). Student engagement is linked to a number of classroom dynamics. Classrooms where there are authentic, challenging, and hands-on tasks witness higher levels of student engagement. Teachers who provide clear objectives and instructions, strong academic guidance, and constructive feedback have their students more cognitively and behaviorally engaged (Fredricks, Filsecker & Lawson, 2016). A growing body of research links student engagement with achievement test scores and higher grades (Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Student engagement also has protective benefits against student behavioral issues (Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Engagement in the EFL classroom incorporates a variety of techniques that are linked to the three dimensions of engagement: behavioral, affective, and cognitive. These techniques include, but are not limited to, games, questioning, humor, pair and group work, dramatization, technology, formative feedback, varied assessment forms, and using students' first language discretionally (Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014; Han & Hyland, 2015; Wang, Bergin & Bergin, 2014).

Literature Search

Teachers should participate in a professional development program that focuses on student-centered instructional strategies as informed by the findings of data analysis.

Based on the evidence from the collected data and literature review, professional development has been identified as the appropriate project genre for the study.

The review of literature focused on the relevance and importance of professional development as a genre to address the problem of the study and to equip teachers with the required knowledge and skills of student-centered instructional strategies. I accessed the following databases for this review of literature from Walden University's online library: Google Scholar, ProQuest, EBSCO, Sage, Education Research Complete, and ERIC. The search terms included *professional development, effective professional development, importance of professional development, criteria of effective professional development, benefits of professional development for teachers, adult learner and professional development, student-centered instructional strategies, feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, project-based instruction, and student engagement.* I included more than 30 peer-reviewed sources published within the last 5 years in the literature review.

Project Description

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Needed resources. The required resources for the implementation of the proposed project include human, physical, technological, and financial resources. These resources are identified in alignment with the findings of the study. One of the interviewed teachers stated that "Academic support and professional development are two areas that need a lot of work to be done. There must be ongoing professional development activities either weekly or fortnightly where teachers discuss teaching and learning topics for the benefit of students." Another teacher supported this need by

saying, when asked about the barriers to the development of students' language skills, "Academic managers and coordinators are not offering much academic support, advice or guidance. Professional development activities are irrelevant." I will serve as a trainer along with the director of the foundation program. We will also perform follow-up observations to ensure fidelity of implementation in the classroom. Both of us will develop and collate copies of PowerPoint slides, handouts, and evaluations.

The venue where the proposed professional development program will be implemented is the International Technical College itself, which offers a solution to the biggest physical resource needed. The college resources will also be needed to print and make copies of the training materials. The college has a training room which is supported with all technological resources needed for the delivery of the training: Internet connection, data show, printer, speakers, and microphones. The three-day professional development program will take place during workdays, so teachers will not be entitled to any extra payments.

Existing support. Existing support includes professional development days that are usually held before the commencement of each academic semester. These professional development days are organized by curriculum leaders who are not based in the college, and these professional development days are usually informed by teachers' professional development plans, classroom observations, and assessment data with no follow up to ensure fidelity of implementation. Professional development events that are conducted twice a year do not reflect the continuity that quality professional development programs should have. Another existing support is a suite of online courses that cover a

wide range of curriculum, instruction, and assessment topics that teachers can enroll in at specific dates identified in the academic calendar at no cost. Additionally, the college has an academic manager and two academic coordinators who support teachers academically and administratively. Yet, the interviewed teachers stated that they were not offered the academic support that they needed or expected.

Potential barriers and solutions. Potential barriers of the proposed project include potentially unwilling participants, lack of collaboration of the college academic administration team, and absence of follow up on the implementation of the professional development program. There will be teachers who may be unwilling to participate in the professional development program due to their lack of motivation or misunderstanding of how the program could help them improve their instructional practices. It is vital that the program objectives and content are discussed with the college teachers in an open forum to get them buy into the idea of the project and boost their motivation. If they feel engaged in the planning stage and see what is in the project for each one of them, they will be motivated to participate. Moreover, the professional development events will not be scheduled after school; instead they will be job-embedded. The lack of collaboration of the college academic administration may stem from a misconception of the purpose and scope of the professional development program. If the purpose and scope are discussed with them with specific roles and responsibilities for the participants, their support is ensured. The critical element in the PD program is the follow up to ensure the fidelity of implementation. This has been identified by academic managers, professional development designers, and curriculum leaders as the main reason why previous

professional development events failed. Therefore, ongoing follow-up observations with constructive feedback are essential for the successful implementation of the professional development program.

Roles and Responsibilities of Researcher and Others

The researcher. My role and responsibilities are to create the proposed project, make recommendations on implementation, propose a timetable for implementation, and serve as the trainer for the professional development workshops. I will provide the participants, the college leadership team, and the Director of the Foundation program with the detailed plan of the professional development project. I will also conduct a formative and summative evaluation of the professional development project with recommendations for future improvements.

Director of the foundation program. She will participate in the delivery of the workshops, provide feedback on the content of the professional development program and implementation plan, take part in formative and summative evaluations, and embed the insights of the professional development workshops into the revised foundation curriculum.

Teachers. The roles and responsibilities of teachers are to participate in the professional development sessions actively, and implement the introduced instructional strategies with fidelity. They should also provide and receive feedback on implementation with the purpose of helping students to develop the required skills and knowledge. Finally, teachers should participate in formative and summative evaluations of the program.

College dean. The college dean is required to facilitate the implementation plan by securing the physical resources needed for the delivery of the workshops. He could also follow up on the fidelity of implementation after the training workshops are completed.

Project Evaluation Plan

Formative Evaluation

I will apply a formative evaluation method to examine the effectiveness of the professional development program and make recommendations for refinement. Formative evaluation tools will serve the purpose of making immediate changes in the program at the very moment when it is being conducted. An integral part of formative evaluation is to provide the participants with ongoing feedback that aims to improve their instructional practices and students' learning.

Formative evaluation data will be collected from the participants using exit slips. At the end of each professional development session, the participants will evaluate the training experience by completing an exit slip. The exit slip, included in the project, contains four open-ended questions that assess how much the participant gained from the professional development session, whether there are specific areas or concepts that they still need more elaborations or examples on, how the training is relevant to what they do in their classrooms daily, and any suggested changes to the daily sessions. The goal of the professional development sessions is to provide the teacher participants with training on some student-centered instructional strategies to develop students' English language skills. Exit slips will be the formative evaluation vehicle that provides timely feedback on

the project as it is still going. According to Venable, Pries-Heje & Baskerville (2016) formative evaluation is used to produce empirically-based interpretations that provide a basis for successful action in improving the characteristics or performance of the evaluated program. This is the task that exit slips will help accomplish by offering teachers' insights as they reflect on how to implement the newly introduced practices in their classrooms. Exit slips will be completed by the professional development facilitators as well, which affords them a reflection opportunity to think of how to make improvements in the future training sessions. Exit slips have been selected because they submit timely and prompt feedback in a non-threatening manner since anonymity is ensured. It is also a cost effective method of data collection. To ensure that the training affects a sustainable change in teachers' practices and beliefs, academic managers and instructional leaders should follow up by observing classes for a year after the professional support is gone. Follow-up visits will help teachers by providing timely and formative feedback.

Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluation is done for the purpose of measuring the outcomes of the program and determining how those outcomes relate to the overall judgment of the program and its success (Spaulding et al., 2013). The summative findings are provided to the project designer at the end of the project (Venable et al., 2016). Summative evaluations focus on meanings and the kinds of decisions that intend to influence the selection of the evaluated program for application (Venable et al., 2016). Summative

evaluation data are collected through surveys to elicit participant responses that summarize their perceptions of the outcomes of the training program.

After the completion of the professional development program, a summative evaluation will be given to all participant teachers for the purpose of getting their feedback on the whole program after they go back to their classrooms and start implementing the newly introduced instructional practices. The evaluations should help the facilitators to identify what worked well during the program, and what needs further improvement. In order to determine whether the professional development program achieved its objectives that are related to the findings of data analysis, a summative evaluation tool in the form of a survey will be given to the participants. The survey results should help the professional development program designer to see how much the teachers benefited from the training as demonstrated in their knowledge, understanding, and implementation of the content of the workshops

The project evaluation has four goals. The first goal is to find out if the professional development program outcomes have been attained by addressing the instructional strategies identified in the data analysis. For the project to be successful, formative and summative evaluations should indicate that teachers benefited from the training in developing their knowledge and implementation of student-centered instructional strategies such as feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and engagement techniques. The second goal of the project evaluation is to collect formative data to help improve the program as it is being implemented in response to the participants' timely feedback. The third goal of the project evaluation is to find out if the delivery of the

training was efficient. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the training, the program designer would be in a better position to make changes in the future professional development events. Finally, the fourth goal of the project evaluation is to validate the outcomes of the project by collecting data from the participants on the achievement of the professional development program objectives.

Description of Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders in this project are the EFL teachers, foundation curriculum designers, instructional leaders, and professional development leaders. The EFL teachers are the recipients of the training. The curriculum, instruction, and professional development leaders are deeply involved in the project as they assess its outcomes and decide on how to embed the training as part of the strategic improvement plan of the college.

Project Implications

Possible Social Change Implications

The professional development program has potential to effect a positive social change to the teacher participants and students. Teachers will benefit from the instructional strategies introduced in the training in improving their knowledge and skills of teaching English as a foreign language. These newly trained teachers may function as a catalyst to effect a positive change in the instructional practices of all teachers in the college, not just in the EFL program. Therefore, the transfer of knowledge and skills to the whole teaching faculty will potentially improve the quality of teaching and learning in the college. Students are at the receiving end of the effective instructional strategies that

teachers will implement as a result of participating in the professional development program. Given that the instructional strategies that the teachers will be trained on are all learner-centered, students will become more engaged in their learning. As a result, the learning outcomes and students' achievement will likely improve. Low-achieving students will benefit from the improved instructional practices of teachers in achieving an academic progress that would help them advance to the specific vocational majors they study in year 2 and three of their college journey. The ultimate goal is that the graduates of the college will be of a better quality which will help them get more sustainable employment opportunities.

Project Importance to Local Stakeholders and Larger Context

The project is important to local stakeholders such as instructional leaders, professional development leaders, and curriculum designers. Instructional leaders will benefit from the professional development program by getting more knowledgeable and skilled teachers who would play a pioneering role in raising the overall quality of teaching and learning in the college. Professional development leaders will benefit from the formative and summative evaluations in organizing more fit-for-purpose professional development activities informed by participants' constructive feedback. Curriculum designers will benefit from the professional development workshops by embedding the learner-centered instructional strategies in the revised English curriculum of the Foundation Program. The benefits of the larger context will be in the form of better-quality graduates who would increase the competitiveness among job candidates in the Saudi work market. These candidates will be an added value to the Saudi economy.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

The project that I created will provide EFL teachers, instructional leaders, and professional development designers with a blueprint of a professional development program that trains teachers on student-centered and research-based instructional methods. These instructional methods were identified based on the data collected from teachers, academic managers, curriculum designers, and documents in alignment with the problem of the study and research questions. These data sources indicated that EFL teachers need training on student-centered instructional methods such as feedback-based instruction, scaffolding techniques, and student engagement techniques. In the literature review, I discussed how research provides evidence on the influence these instructional strategies have on students' achievement, learning outcomes, and the educational environment in the college at large. The strengths of the project are multidimensional and are discussed on this section.

First, the instructional strategies that form the content of the professional development program were identified and selected by the target audience (i.e., EFL teachers) based on their real needs as emerging from interviews, observations, and professional development plans. Therefore, teachers may buy into the professional development project as it reflects their development needs. During interviews, teachers expressed their need to have an ongoing professional development program that is

focused on the techniques of giving and receiving feedback, scaffolding students' knowledge and skills, and student engagement. One of the interviewed teachers said,

> Academic support and professional development are two areas that need a lot of work to be done. There must be ongoing professional development activities either weekly or fortnightly where teachers discuss teaching and learning topics such as feedback-based instruction and scaffolding.

All other participants concurred with this statement and emphasized the importance of follow up to ensure that teachers implement the techniques they were trained on.

Fidelity of implementation is essential so that the professional development project can achieve its set objectives. Therefore, teachers need support and follow up from instructional and professional development leaders to ensure that the implementation of the instructional strategies that the teachers are trained on is up to the required standards. The foundation curriculum director stated that "As instructional leaders, we have not done a good job to follow up on what teachers do in the classroom to help students develop the required skills, and that is purely for structural reasons. As a result, teachers' implementation of student-centered teaching methods leaves a lot to be desired." Teachers should be engaged in sustained sense-making of the instructional strategies presented in professional development activities to support understanding of these instructional activities and increase the likelihood of implementation (Allen & Penuel, 2015). Delivering professional development activities is not sufficient to inspire changes in teachers' instructional practices; change is linked to how ambitious the

instructional practices are and how much implementation fidelity teachers demonstrate (Kisa & Correnti, 2015).

Second, the project is aligned with and informed by the principles of andragogy, adult learning. These principles include knowing the rationale behind the activities they are engaged in, having a self-concept of being responsible for their own learning, drawing on their previous experience, readiness to know what they perceive as a learning need, orientation to learning which is task and problem based, and giving more importance to intrinsic motivation factors such as self-esteem and job satisfaction (Ozuah, 2016). The project content and delivery are anchored in these characteristics of adult learners. This was achieved by designing professional development activities that facilitate learning and help learners grow through experiential learning and solving immediate problems that all participants are concerned with.

Third, the project is based on a strong research foundation that helped me to design and develop the content of the project in ways that scaffold participants' knowledge and skills in implementing student-centered instructional strategies. The training on feedback strategies, scaffolding, and engagement techniques will help teachers with their daily planning of lessons, delivery techniques, and reflection. The research that underpins the training activities can encourage teachers to buy into the instructional activities presented and increase implementation.

Limitations

The professional development project designed for this study has some limitations that may influence its appeal to the EFL teachers in the college that forms the setting of

the project. One limitation is the number of trainers that could be limited to only one or two because they should facilitate training for participants that may exceed 35 teachers. This could be remedied by asking some instructional leaders of the college to participate in facilitating the professional development activities after I train them to do so.

Another limitation is the sample size of the study. Six teachers, one academic manager, and one curriculum designer participated in the study and formed one of the data sources. The sample size might have limited the findings, but I collected data from different sources as a proactive measure and to ensure the validity and reliability of the collected data (see Yin, 2014). Moreover, this number of participants was purposefully identified so that they were rich informants.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Alternative Approaches to the Problem

The problem of the study could be addressed in various ways. One alternative approach is by studying how low attendance may be influencing the development of students' English language skills. Data analysis revealed that the average student attendance was 64%, and some of the observed classes had attendance of 25% or less. The interviewed teachers stated that low attendance impedes the development of students' English language skills and interrupts the continuity of learning and teaching. Another alternative approach of addressing the problem is to study the disconnect between teachers' theories about instructional strategies and instructional strategies put into action. Interviews and observations provided evidence that in many cases teachers possess knowledge of effective instructional strategies, but they do not implement these

strategies in their classes. This disconnect is a problem of enactment that can be studied with the purpose of providing teachers practical recommendations of how to implement their theories. Alternatively, the problem can be examined from an assessment perspective. Students' English language skills are assessed using a standardized test designed by Cambridge ESOL for EFL students all over the world. However, the test does not take into consideration the cultural differences between test takers or their schematic knowledge that may have an influence on their performance during the exam.

Alternative Approaches to Professional Development

This qualitative project study was designed to gain a better understanding of the instructional strategies implemented by the EFL teachers in an international technical college and help them develop deeper knowledge and skills to help students improve their English language proficiency. The professional development project is developed to equip teachers with research-based knowledge and skills of how to implement student-centered techniques in their classrooms.

One alternative to the professional development workshops would be video-taping model lessons of veteran teachers who implement feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and engagement techniques in their classrooms. These videos would be discussed in focus groups formed based on needs so that the teachers with scaffolding needs would be grouped together, and the teachers who need to experience how feedback is given and received would be together. Then they would be observed implementing what they watched and discussed and would be given formative and timely feedback. Modeling facilitates implementation by providing teachers a platform to observe the

standards and expected product before they begin working on their own. Additionally, teachers are able to discuss elements of the exemplar that represent high quality work toward which they should be striving (Thomas & Sondergeld, 2015). Another alternative would be a teacher's manual with detailed explanations of the definitions, characteristics, benefits, and techniques of student-centered instructional methods such as feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and student engagement. Teachers could study this manual independently and meet weekly to discuss it and reflect on how they implement it in their classrooms.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

As a budding researcher and doctoral student at Walden University, I have learned a lot while I was doing the course work and the final study project such as taking ownership of my studies and adapting to the virtual environment and its challenges. My research skills have also developed and enhanced during this project study. Through committee feedback, I developed a deeper understanding of research methods, designs, processes, and skills. The research skills that I managed to improve include, but are not limited to, conducting thorough research; identifying and writing the research problem; collecting data from multiple sources to ensure validity and corroboration of sources; ethical reporting of research results; conducting a literature review that guarantees saturation and meaningful synthesis of information; developing critical thinking skills such as analyzing, critiquing, evaluating, assessing and seeking rival explanations to the

studied phenomena; and maintaining research ethics such as protecting the rights and confidentiality of research participants, data security, and avoiding conflict of interest.

Additionally, this project has led to an improvement in my skills as a scholarly writer and researcher using qualitative data and analysis. Because of my background as an applied linguist, I thought that my writing skills would not have needed to be developed further. However, since I embarked on the project study research, my scholarly writing skills changed significantly. Qualitative data collection and data analysis is another area of growth and development for me. Guided by my committee chair, I broadened my readings to include more specialized works such as Yin's (2014) on case study research and Miles et al. (2014) on qualitative research and data analysis. By reading Yin's works on case study research, I learned the importance of using multiple sources of evidence. These data sources provide corroborated data to answer the research questions. Miles et al.'s work on data analysis enlightened me on the importance of analyzing qualitative data using three concurrent flows of activity: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. I also learned that coding occurs in two stages: thematic coding based on the themes from the conceptual framework and open coding to discover any emerging themes. The time that I spent in data analysis allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the research problem, which helped me to design a project that is grounded in research and data.

My doctoral journey with its two phases, course work and project study, has helped me to develop the scholar practitioner in me. I have never been more able to identify teaching and learning problems in my educational context and find solutions to

these problems based on scientific research and scholarship. This doctoral program has empowered me as an action researcher who can contribute to identifying and tackling the problems in my context without being biased or impeded by fears of having a conflict of interest.

Project Development

The idea of this project stemmed from the needs of the interviewed and observed teachers as expressed in their professional development plans and interviews with me. These needs were further supported during the classroom observations I conducted to the interviewed teachers. In addition, the interviewed instructional leaders concurred that teachers need to be trained on feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and engagement techniques. The project has been designed to meet teachers' needs and the characteristics of effective professional development programs such as focusing on content knowledge, developing instructional skills and techniques, engaging teachers in the design, development, and implementation of the project, alignment with school policies and procedures, and aiming at improving students' learning outcomes. Based on scholarly research and participants' feedback, the following professional development project was developed. The project included the following elements:

- Project purpose, goals, learning outcomes, and target audience;
- Components, timeline, activities, trainer notes, and module formats;
- Materials provided (PPTs, etc.), implementation plan, and evaluation plan;
- Specific hour-by-hour detail of three full days of training.

The project is aligned with the collected data, literature review on effective instructional strategies and professional development, and the findings of data analysis.

In spite of being familiar with designing and conducting professional development activities in all the organizations I worked for, I perceived embarking on the project study as a herculean task. This perception originated from the level of vigor and rigor that should be achieved in every step of the project design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The knowledge I gained from doing the course work enabled me to have an initial idea of how the project should look like, but the feedback I received from my committee members played the major role in putting the project in its final form. Helping my colleague teachers who will participate in the professional development training to develop their knowledge and skills of student-centered instructional strategies to effect a positive change in students' learning outcomes was the purpose and main driving force of the project. Therefore, the training materials were developed to respond to the learning needs of the participants and in alignment with the principles of adult learning to empower teachers' implementation of what they were trained on inside their classrooms. I also made sure the training materials enhance the participants' content knowledge and skills using technology in innovative ways. It is my hope that this project contributes to effecting a sustainable positive change by helping teachers and students in the local context of the study.

Leadership and Change

Out of my conviction that leadership is enacted within an organizational and environmental context, this project study represents an attempt to enact leadership by

providing the participants with a professional development program that helps the college to achieve its outcomes with a particular focus on student learning. Therefore, this project is an opportunity for me to exercise leadership that is driven by a genuine desire to help and support teachers and students to solve a real problem that has a negative influence on their abilities to achieve their full potential. On another level, this project study empowers me to exercise transformational leadership by responding to the individual learning needs of teachers and increasing their capacity to bring about a positive change. Furthermore, I envision effecting a change in teachers' beliefs, behavior, and teaching techniques as a result of participating in the project. This is in essence the sustainable change that I think both transformational leadership and effective professional development should produce.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

As I reflect on this work, I remember how hard it was to enroll teachers and some collaborators to participate in the study. Teachers are always overloaded with planning lessons, preparing materials, assessing students, writing reports, and many other duties. They perceived participating in the study as an extra load without any visible benefits. Yet, when I discussed the problem of the study and its implications with them, they were convinced of its importance and decided to participate. This whole experience remained in the locus of my attention to drive the design, development, and implementation of the project study. Hence, the importance of this work stems from the problem I set out to investigate and its influence on teachers' performance and students' learning outcomes. This project is also important because it helped me to achieve a better understanding of the instructional strategies implemented by the teachers in the local setting of the

problem, and what needs to be done to support teachers to be able to support student learning.

I learned that giving teachers a voice and choice in their professional development programs leads to their active engagement, and it could potentially lead to implementation fidelity. I also learned that when professional development is based on teachers' needs, it becomes more meaningful to the participants and they easily buy into it. Another lesson learned from the project study is that despite heavy teaching loads, many teachers are still eager to be part of an ongoing professional development program that is either led by instructional and professional development leaders or teachers themselves. Finally, teachers are more motivated to participate in professional development when it is embedded in the school calendar than when they have to take part in it after school.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Potential Social Change Implications

The professional development program has potential to effect a positive social change to the teacher participants and students. Teachers will benefit from the instructional strategies introduced in the training in improving their knowledge and skills of teaching English as a foreign language. These newly trained teachers may function as a catalyst to effect a positive change in the instructional practices of all teachers in the college, not just in the EFL program. Therefore, the transfer of knowledge and skills to the whole teaching faculty will potentially improve the quality of teaching and learning in the college. Students are at the receiving end of the effective instructional strategies that

teachers will implement as a result of participating in the professional development program. Given that the instructional strategies that the teachers will be trained on are all learner-centered, students will become more engaged in their learning. As a result, the learning outcomes and students' achievement will likely improve. Low-achieving students will benefit from the improved instructional practices of teachers in achieving an academic progress that would help them to advance to the specific vocational majors they study in the second and third years of their college journey. The ultimate goal is that the graduates of the college will be of a better quality which will help them get more sustainable employment opportunities.

A potential social change that may occur as a result of this project is reviewing the current professional development programs and coming up with a revised format that focuses on teachers' needs and benefits from the characteristics of effective professional development. This new format should engage teachers not just as participants but also as leaders of professional development activities. This change will potentially have a positive influence on teachers' content knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards professional development. On another level, this project can be presented in national educational conferences such as the annual conference of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Association of Language Teachers to expose more teachers to learner-centered instructional strategies which could improve students' learning outcomes nationally.

Applications

Driven by the research problem on instructional strategies implemented by EFL teachers, this qualitative case study encompasses significant methodological and

theoretical implications. Student-centered instructional strategies offered a possible solution to the problem based on the collected data from multiple sources and sustained by scholarly research. The methodology of this project study enabled me to collect data by interviewing teachers and instructional leaders, observing teachers in their classrooms, and checking their professional development plans. The research questions of the study formed the main questions of the interviews which helped me to understand the problem from the perspective of teachers and instructional leaders. I decided to use a qualitative case study as the research design because it focuses on making meaning of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context where the investigator has little or no control over behavioral events.

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored in Vygotsky's ZPD theory because it is aligned with the study purpose and it emphasizes the importance of the context and culture of instructional strategies in understanding how knowledge and learning are constructed. Vygotsky's ZPD also suggests that cognitive development is a function of external factors such as cultural, historical, and social interaction rather than of individual construction. With the theoretical framework in mind, I analyzed the data and drew the conclusions that led to the design of a professional development program that focuses on student-centered instructional strategies. These instructional strategies are grounded in Vygotsky's ZPD theory.

Directions for Future Research

This current study set out with the purpose of achieving a better understanding of the instructional strategies implemented by the EFL teachers at an International Technical

College in Saudi Arabia, and the problem of students not developing the required proficiency level. A professional development program was offered as a possible solution to this problem. Further research may be needed to measure the influence of this professional development training on teachers' efficacy. Further qualitative research may be required to examine teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the professional development project on student-centered instructional strategies. Additional quantitative research to measure student achievement as a result of being exposed to student-centered instructional strategies could be conducted. Moreover, qualitative research may be done to explore teachers' perceptions of mentoring programs. Finally, a study on why student attendance is low could be useful.

Conclusion

As I reflect on my project study, my confidence in the role quality professional development can play becomes greater and stronger. Students, whose success is all that education stakeholders work for, will benefit from professional development programs that equip teachers with the knowledge and skills that turn the classroom into a student-centered learning environment. Research provides evidence on the strong correlation between effective professional development and student achievement (Abou-Assali, 2014; Clark, 2018). There is also a strong correlation between high quality professional development and teacher efficacy (Giraldo, 2014; Holm & Kajander, 2015).

This project study afforded me an opportunity to exercise transformational leadership by leading change on both personal and community levels. As a scholar practitioner, researcher, and instructional leader, I have learned a lot about research-based

instructional strategies and the change they can bring about in teachers' performance and students' outcomes. On a community level, the project provided me the opportunity to enact leadership by helping the college attain its objectives and work as a catalyst for change in the instructional practices adopted nationwide. It is my role as an agent for change that this project empowered in me, and it will continue to exist to make a positive change in the lives of students and teachers in the college and beyond.

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Appendix A: The Project

The project outlined in this appendix is based on the results of this research study regarding the instructional strategies teachers of English as a foreign language use in an international college in Saudi Arabia. The results of this research study indicated that teachers need a professional development program that focuses on student-centered instructional strategies, feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and engagement techniques. The teacher participants stated that this professional development program would enable them to help students to develop their English language skills to the required level because it is based on actual needs as identified in classroom observations, interviews, and teachers' professional development plans. They focused on the need to develop their content knowledge and skills and the influence this development would have on student achievement. Professional development that focuses on developing teachers' knowledge of student-centered instructional strategies and how to implement them in the classroom supports teacher efficacy and improves student achievement (Giraldo, 2014; Lin, Cheng & Wu, 2015; Piedrahita, 2018; Shaha, Glassett & Ellsworth, 2015).

Each session in this professional development program engages participants in a variety of learning activities that include whole group and small group discussions, multi-media resources, and time for independent work, reflection, and evaluation. The following professional development program for this project includes feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, student-centered instruction, and engagement techniques. The project includes the following information for each full-day session: professional

development program objective, detailed agenda outlining the session's activities and discussion topics, presentation slides, and participant evaluation.

Purpose

This three-day professional development plan was created with the purpose of addressing the need to improve teachers' student-centered instructional strategies. Based on the findings of data analysis, the professional development plan will provide training on feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and student engagement techniques.

Goals

- ✓ Provide teachers with research-based content knowledge of student-centered instructional strategies;
- ✓ Empower teachers to implement student-centered instructional strategies in their classrooms;
- ✓ Equip teachers with specific classroom techniques pertinent to feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and student engagement; and
- ✓ Improve students' learning outcomes as a result of teachers' participation in the professional development project.

Learning Outcomes

Teachers will be able to

- ✓ demonstrate a deeper understanding of student-centered instructional strategies;
- ✓ implement feedback-based instruction, scaffolding, and student engagement techniques effectively;
- ✓ integrate feedback, scaffolding, and engagement techniques in their daily lessons;

- ✓ bolster student learning outcomes as a result of participating in the professional development project.

Target Audience

- ✓ English language teachers at an International Technical College in Saudi Arabia

Timetable for Implementation

The plan includes three training modules, 8 hours each, to support the equivalent of at least 3 days of professional development training.

Session	Module	Hours of Training
1	Feedback-Based Instruction	8
2	Scaffolding Techniques	8
3	Student Engagement Techniques	8
		Total 24

Professional Development Program Objective for Session 1: By the end of the feedback-based instruction training session, participants will be able to:

- analyze what feedback means.
- analyze the benefits of feedback.
- determine what makes feedback effective.
- dissect some effective feedback strategies.

Session 1: Feedback-based Instruction Training Agenda

Time	Activity
8:00am - 8:30am (30 minutes)	**<u>Welcome, Introduction, & Energizer</u>** • **Introduction of presenter** • **State today's learning goal** • **Review professional learning expectations** o Be engaged in today's work. Stay off personal technology unless it is part of the learning activity. o Share your ideas and listen to others. Everyone learns better together. o Be forward thinking. Apply today's work to your classroom environment. • **Large Group Energizer: Island Survival** o In this activity, groups of 5 to 10 individuals are formed. o A scenario is read that prompts the groups that they have been stranded on a deserted island following a ship wreck, when they discover several items washing up on shore. o They are handed a list of 20 items of which they can keep five. o Teams are instructed to determine which 5 items to keep and why. o At the conclusion, each team presents their items and why they chose them.
8:30am - 9:30am (60 minutes)	**<u>Feedback-based Instruction</u>** • **What is feedback?** o Introduce the four main elements of the feedback concept: feedback various definitions, benefits of feedback, criteria of effective feedback, and feedback strategies. o Rationale o Share selected definitions of feedback with small groups asking each group to discuss their definition amongst the group members. o Whole group discussion of the various definitions and identify the key words in each one. o Show a short video featuring one of the leading researchers in the field of feedback. In the video, he discusses what feedback entails.

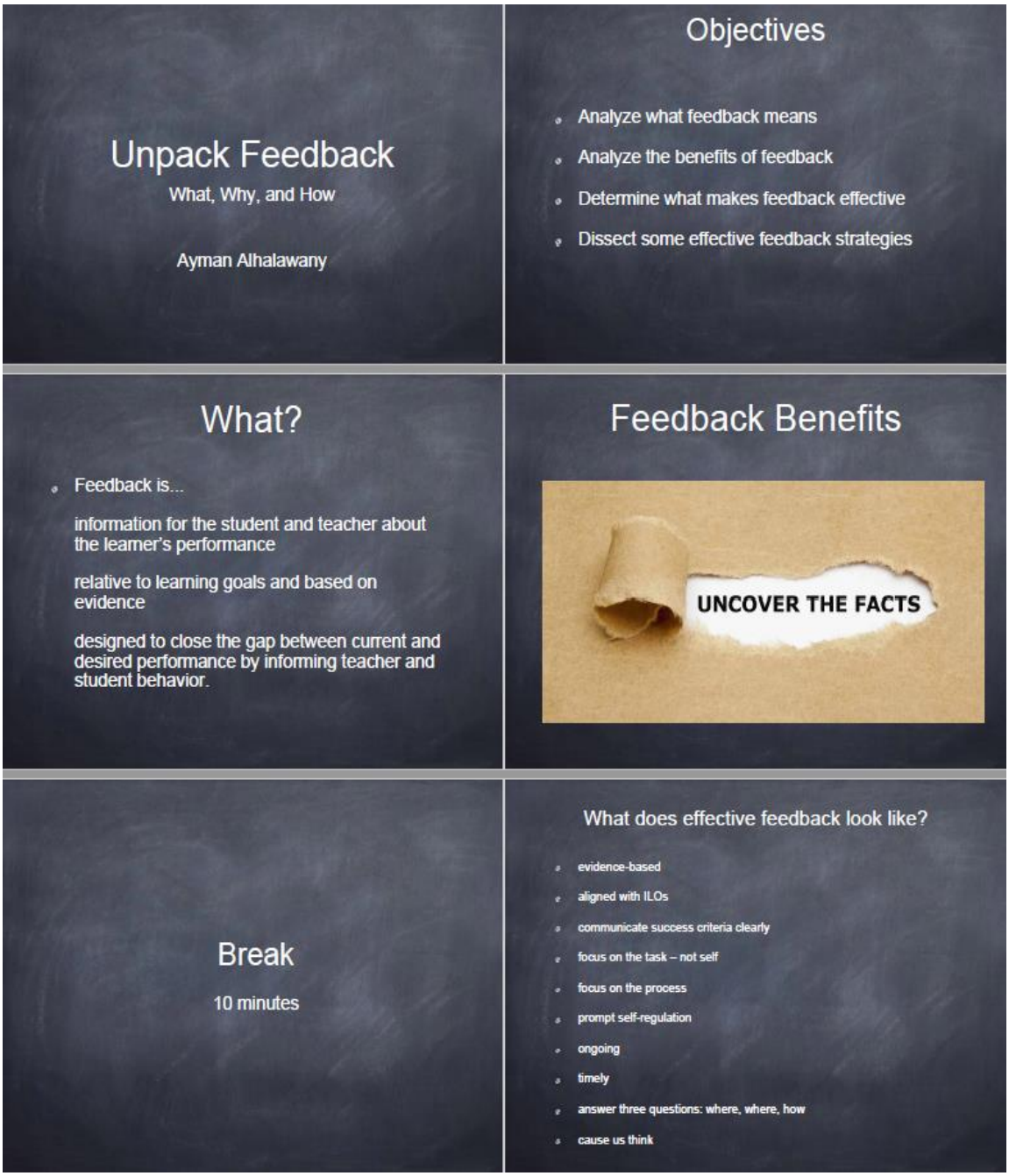
	○ The presenter summarizes the key points raised in the discussion and video, and shares the most comprehensive definition. • **What are some examples of feedback currently given by teachers?** ○ Share some examples for discussion within small groups. ○ Examples represent students' work reviewed by teachers and contain written feedback on reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. ○ Each group should identify how much the feedback examples are aligned with the final definition reached at. ○ Whole group discussion. ○
9:30am – 10:15am (45 minutes)	**<u>Benefits of Feedback</u>** ○ In their small groups, participants discuss and list the benefits of feedback. ○ Each group presents their list to all participants. ○ Presenter distributes a fact sheet that includes research supported facts about the benefits of feedback. ○ Participants read, compare, and reflect to see how their lists are similar or dissimilar to the fact sheet. ○ Facilitator runs a discussion and elaborates more on the fact sheet providing more information on the research studies that support the identified benefits. • **Classroom Examples** ○ Classroom examples are shared by the facilitator and a whole group discussion is triggered. ○ Each group should come up with examples from their own classrooms that support the benefits of feedback.
10:15am – 10:25am (10 minutes)	**<u>Break</u>** • Drinks and snacks provided for participants
10:25am - 11:55am (90 minutes)	**<u>Criteria of Effective Feedback</u>**

	• **What makes feedback effective?**
	  ○ Distribute current articles on effective feedback.
	  ○ At each table, participants will read the article they chose, take notes, and summarize what they learned.
	  ○ After time has passed, participants in the room that read the same article will meet to briefly discuss that article and choose talking points for that article.
	  ○ Participants will go back to their tables and share what they learned. They may choose how to share what they learned: verbal summary, poster, diagram, or another option selected by participant.
	• **Content Area Discussion**
	  ○ Project a list of the characteristics of effective feedback on the board.
	  ○ Within each group, participants compare their lists with the list projected.
	  ○ A discussion is triggered.
	• **Classroom Examples**
	  ○ Participants share classroom examples that reflect one or more of the characteristics of effective feedback.

11:55am - 12:45pm (50 minutes)	**<u>Lunch</u>** • **Options:** Participants may choose to bring sack lunch or leave campus and eat at a nearby establishment.
12:45pm - 1:45pm (60 minutes)	**<u>Feedback Scenarios</u>** • Facilitator explains the activity and the way it is connected to classroom practice. • Teachers are put in small groups. • Each group receives a sheet containing a description of a feedback scenario that has a mistake. • Within their groups, teachers discuss what the mistake is in each scenario. • Then, each group reports the scenario and their comments on it. • Finally, a whole group discussion is triggered.
1:45pm-2:45pm (60 minutes)	**<u>Feedback Strategies</u>** • Show a video featuring a teacher in a classroom

	implementing feedback-based instruction. • A whole group discussion is triggered to analyze how the teacher implements feedback-based instruction. • Project five feedback strategies on the board. • Briefly discuss each feedback strategy with the participants. • Distribute a handout with five feedback-giving examples and ask teachers to match the examples with the strategies. • Each group answers a question and receives feedback from the other groups. • Teachers are asked to generate similar examples drawing on their classroom experience.
2:45pm-3:30pm (45 minutes)	**<u>Reflection & Goal Setting</u>** • **Reflection** o Participants are to look back at their work with each of the four elements of feedback-based instruction and reflect on how they could see it being implemented in their classroom. o **Goal Setting:** Participants need to write a goal for a feedback strategy to be implemented in their classroom. o Participants will create a "to do" list for what they would need to embed feedback in their daily instructional practices.
3:30pm-4:00pm (30 minutes)	**<u>Wrap-Up & Evaluations</u>** • **Evaluations:** distribute evaluations for participants to complete. Participants may leave once evaluations have been turned in.

Session 1: Feedback-based Instruction Slides
Slides 1-6



Slides 7-12

Lunch Break

Next session starts at 12:45 pm

Scenarios

Austin's Butterfly

EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

Feedback Strategies

1. clarifying, sharing and understanding learning objectives and criteria for success
2. engineering classroom activities that elicit evidence of learning
3. providing feedback that moves students forward
4. activating students as instructional resources for one another
5. activating students as the owners of their own learning.

(Black and Wiliam, 2009)

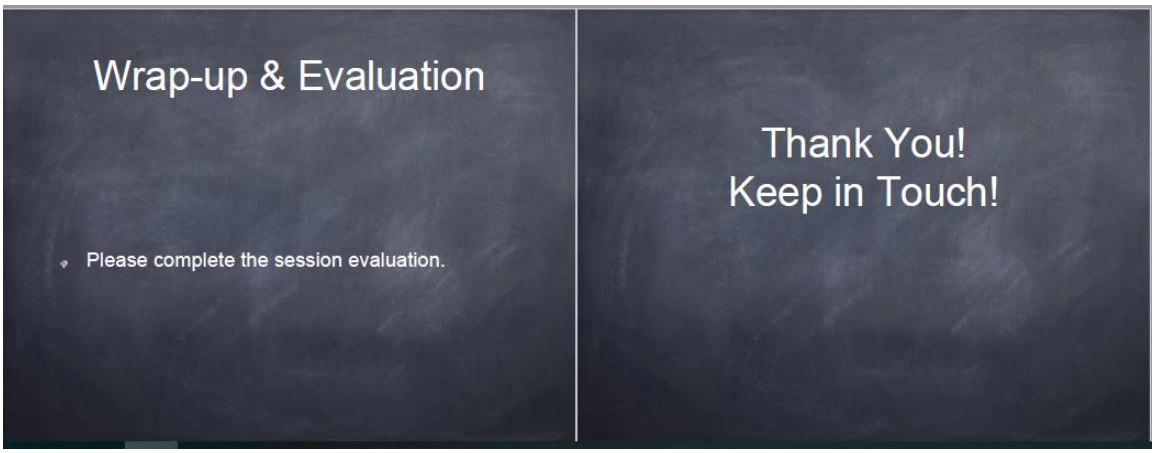
Time to Reflect

- Look back at your work with each of the four elements of feedback-based instruction and reflect on how you could see it being implemented in your classroom.

Goal Setting

- Write a goal for a feedback strategy to be implemented in your classroom.
- Create a "to do" list for what you would need to embed feedback in your daily instructional practices.

Slides 13-14



Session 1: Evaluation Questions for Feedback-based Instruction

1. In today's session, I learned
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
2. After today's session, I still need more clarification on
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

3. After today's session, I can implement my knowledge in the following ways
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

4. If I could change something about today's session, it would be
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

Professional Development Program Objective for Session 2: By the end of the scaffolding training session, participants will be able to:

- analyze what scaffolding means.
- analyze the benefits of scaffolding.
- determine what makes scaffolding effective.
- dissect and implement some effective scaffolding techniques.

Session 2: Scaffolding Training Agenda

Time	Activity

8:00am - 8:30am (30 minutes)	**<u>Welcome, Introduction, & Energizer</u>**
	• **Introduction of presenter**
	• **State today's learning goal**
	• **Review professional learning expectations**
	  o Be engaged in today's work. Stay off personal technology unless it is part of the learning activity.
	  o Share your ideas and listen to others. Everyone learns better together.
	  o Be forward thinking. Apply today's work to your classroom environment.
	• **Teambuilding Activity (Scaffolding Related)**
	  o Form groups of 3-4 teachers and give them a supply bag of random materials (i.e., cups, straws, newspapers, masking tape, paper clips, rubber bands). Each group must be given the same amount and type of supplies.
	  o Set a timer and give group 5 minutes to construct the tallest possible tower using their supplies. The tower's base must be on the floor. The tower must be a free-standing structure.
	  o Measure all the towers after time has passed to determine the winner.
	  o Debrief on strategy and team roles.

8:30am - 9:30am (60 minutes)	**<u>Scaffolding</u>** • **What is scaffolding?** o Introduce the four main elements of scaffolding:

	scaffolding various definitions, benefits of scaffolding, characteristics of effective scaffolding, and scaffolding strategies. o Rationale o Share selected definitions of scaffolding with small groups asking each group to discuss their definition amongst the group members. o Whole group discussion of the various definitions and identify the key words in each one. o Show a short video featuring one of the leading researchers explaining what scaffolding in language learning means. o The facilitator summarizes the key points raised in the discussion and video, and shares the most comprehensive definition. • **What are some classroom examples of scaffolding currently used by teachers?** o Share some examples for discussion within small groups. o Each group should identify how much the examples discussed are aligned with the final definition reached at. o Whole group discussion.
9:30am – 10:15am (45 minutes)	**<u>Benefits of Scaffolding</u>** o In their small groups, participants discuss and list the benefits of scaffolding. o Each group presents their list to all participants. o Facilitator distributes a handout that includes research supported facts about the benefits of scaffolding. o Participants read, compare, and reflect to see how their lists are similar or dissimilar to the given handout. o Facilitator runs a discussion and elaborates more on the handout providing more information on the research studies that support the identified benefits. • **Classroom Examples** o Classroom examples are shared by the facilitator

	and a whole group discussion is triggered. o Each group should come up with examples from their own classrooms that support the benefits of scaffolding.
10:15am – 10:25am (10 minutes)	**Break** • Drinks and snacks provided for participants
10:25am - 11:55am (90 minutes)	**Criteria of Effective Scaffolding** • **What makes scaffolding effective?** o Distribute current articles on effective scaffolding. o At each table, participants will read the article they have chosen, take notes, and summarize what they learned. o After time has passed, participants in the room that read the same article will meet to briefly discuss that article and choose talking points for that article. o Participants will go back to their tables and share what they learned. They may choose how to share what they learned: verbal summary, poster, diagram, or another option selected by participant. • **Content Area Discussion** o Project a list of the characteristics of effective scaffolding on the board. o Within each group, participants compare their lists with the list projected. o A discussion is triggered. • **Classroom Examples** o Participants share classroom examples that reflect one or more of the characteristics of effective scaffolding. •
11:55am – 1:00pm (1 hour and 5 minutes)	**Lunch** • **Options:** Participants may choose to bring sack lunch or leave campus and eat at a nearby establishment.
1:00pm – 3:00pm (2 hours)	**Scaffolding Techniques** • Show a video featuring a teacher in a classroom implementing a scaffolding technique. • A whole group discussion is triggered to analyze how the

	teacher implements scaffolding. • Project six scaffolding techniques on the board. • Briefly discuss each scaffolding technique with the participants. • Distribute a handout with six scaffolding examples and ask teachers to match the examples with the techniques. • Each group answers a question and receives feedback from the other groups. **Work as Curriculum Teams** • Group teachers by Foundation level teams: • Each team will select two units from the textbooks they are teaching, and design scaffolding activities based on the learning objectives and materials of each unit. • The facilitator will be available to assist each group as needed.
3:00pm-3:30pm (30 minutes)	**Share Ideas** • Each team will have to share their scaffolding activities with other teams. • Other teams are allowed to ask questions and provide suggestions for improvement.
3:30pm-4:00pm (30 minutes)	**Evaluations** • Distribute evaluations for participants to complete. Participants may leave once evaluations have been turned in.

Session 2: Scaffolding Slides

Slides 1-6

Scaffolding

What, Why, and How

Ayman Alhalawany

Objectives

- Analyze what scaffolding means.
- Analyze the benefits of scaffolding.
- Determine what makes scaffolding effective.
- Dissect and implement some effective scaffolding techniques.

What?

- Scaffolding is...

  the support provided to the learner to complete a task or understand a concept that they cannot complete or understand independently.

  This support comes from more knowledgeable others in the social environment of the learner such as teachers, peers, or parents.

Scaffolding Benefits

Break

10 minutes

What does effective scaffolding look like?

- Social interactions have to remain within the Zone of Proximal development of the learner
- It goes through three stages: contingency, fading, and transfer.
- It is careful and delicate so that students remain secure in the dangerous area between where they are and where they need to be.

Slides 7-12


What does effective scaffolding look like?
It fosters engagement.
It boosts students' agency.
Collaborative
Interactive
Lunch Break
Next session starts at 1:00 pm
Scaffolding Techniques
Questioning
Elicitation
Modeling
Schema building
Bridging
Contextualization
Scaffolding Techniques
Developing metacognition
Guided discovery
Peer tutoring
Peer checking
Peer feedback
Recapping
Time to Reflect
Look back at your work with each of the four elements of scaffolding and reflect on how you could see it being implemented in your classroom.
Goal Setting
Write a goal for a scaffolding technique to be implemented in your classroom.
Create a "to do" list for what you would need to embed scaffolding in your daily instructional practices.

Slides 13-14

Session 2: Evaluation Questions for Scaffolding Training

3. In today's session, I learned
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
4. After today's session, I still need more clarification on
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

3. After today's session, I can implement my knowledge in the following ways
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

4. If I could change something about today's session, it would be
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

Professional Development Program Objective for Session 3: By the end of the engagement training session, participants will be able to:

- analyze what student engagement means.
- summarize the benefits of student engagement.
- identify the characteristics of effective student engagement.
- assess and implement some effective engagement techniques.

Session 3: Engagement Training Agenda

Time	Activity
8:00am - 8:45am (45 minutes)	**<u>Welcome, Introduction, & Ice Breaker</u>** • **Introduction of presenter** • **State today's learning goal** • **Review professional learning expectations** o Be engaged in today's work. Stay off personal technology unless it is part of the learning activity. o Share your ideas and listen to others. Everyone learns better together. o Be forward thinking. Apply today's work to your classroom environment. • **Ice breaker:** Aha Moments o In your groups, state one "aha" that you had this year or during one of your training sessions over the past two days. o Explain how this "aha-moment" has influenced or will influence instruction in your classroom.
8:45am – 9:45am (60 minutes)	**<u>Student Engagement</u>** • **What is student engagement?** o Introduce the four main elements of engagement: Engagement definition and types, benefits of engagement, classroom dynamics that foster engagement, and engagement techniques. o Rationale o Share selected definitions of engagement with small groups asking each group to discuss their definition amongst the group members. o Whole group discussion of the various definitions

	and identify the key words in each one. o Show a short video featuring one of the leading researchers explaining what engagement in language learning means. o The facilitator summarizes the key points raised in the discussion and video, and shares the most comprehensive definition. • **What are the engagement types** o Using real classroom examples, facilitator discusses the three well known types of student engagement (behavioral, affective, and cognitive) with the participants. o Drawing on their classroom experience, each group should come up with more examples. • Whole group discussion
9:45am - 10:30am (45 minutes)	**<u>Benefits of Student Engagement</u>** o In their small groups, participants discuss and list the benefits of engagement. o Each group presents their list to all participants. o Facilitator distributes a handout that includes research supported facts about the benefits of student engagement. o Participants read, compare, and reflect to see how their lists are similar or dissimilar to the given handout. o Facilitator runs a discussion and elaborates more on the handout providing more information on the research studies that support the identified benefits. • **Classroom Examples** o Classroom examples are shared by the facilitator and a whole group discussion is triggered. o Each group should come up with examples from their own classrooms that support the benefits of student engagement.
10:30am – 10:40am (10 minutes)	**<u>Break</u>** Drinks and snacks provided for participants
10:40am - 12:00pm	**<u>Classroom Dynamics Fostering Student Engagement</u>**

(80 minutes)	• **What are the classroom dynamics that foster student engagement?**
	  ○ Distribute current articles on student engagement and classroom dynamics that foster it.
	  ○ At each table, participants will read the article they have chosen, take notes, and summarize what they learned.
	  ○ After time has passed, the participants who read the same article will meet to briefly discuss that article and choose talking points for that article.
	  ○ Participants will go back to their tables and share what they learned. They may choose how to share what they learned: verbal summary, poster, diagram, or another option selected by participant.
	• **Content Area Discussion**
	  ○ Project a list of classroom dynamics that foster student engagement on the board.
	  ○ Within each group, participants compare their lists with the list projected.
	  ○ A discussion is triggered.
	• **Classroom Examples**
	  ○ Participants share classroom examples that reflect particular classroom dynamics and how these dynamics influence student engagement.
	•

12:00pm - 1:00pm (60 minutes)	**<u>Lunch</u>** • **Options:** Participants may choose to bring sack lunch or leave campus and eat at a nearby establishment.
1:00pm - 3:00pm (2 hours)	**<u>Student Engagement Techniques</u>** • Show a video featuring a teacher in a classroom implementing some engagement techniques. • A whole group discussion is triggered to analyze how the teacher engages students. • Project some engagement techniques on the board. • Briefly discuss each engagement technique with the participants. **<u>Work as Curriculum Teams</u>** • Group teachers by Foundation level teams: • Each team will select two units from the textbooks they are teaching, and design activities to engage students based on the learning objectives and materials of each

	unit. • The facilitator will be available to assist each group as needed.
3:00pm-3:30pm (30 minutes)	**Share Ideas** • Each team will have to share their engagement activities with other teams. • Other teams are allowed to ask questions and provide suggestions for improvement.
3:30pm-4:00pm (30 minutes)	**Evaluations** • Distribute evaluations for participants to complete. Participants may leave once evaluations have been turned in.

Session 3: Engagement Slides
Slides 1-6

Student Engagement

What, Why, and How

Ayman Alhalawany

Objectives

- Analyze what engagement means.
- Summarize the benefits of engagement.
- Identify what makes engagement effective.
- Assess and implement some effective engagement techniques.

What?

- Student engagement is...

  a variety of goal-directed behaviors, thoughts, or affective states, and it represents the outward manifestation of motivation.

  Engagement is multidimensional in that it demonstrates itself in the form of behavioral, affective, and cognitive interest.

Scaffolding Benefits

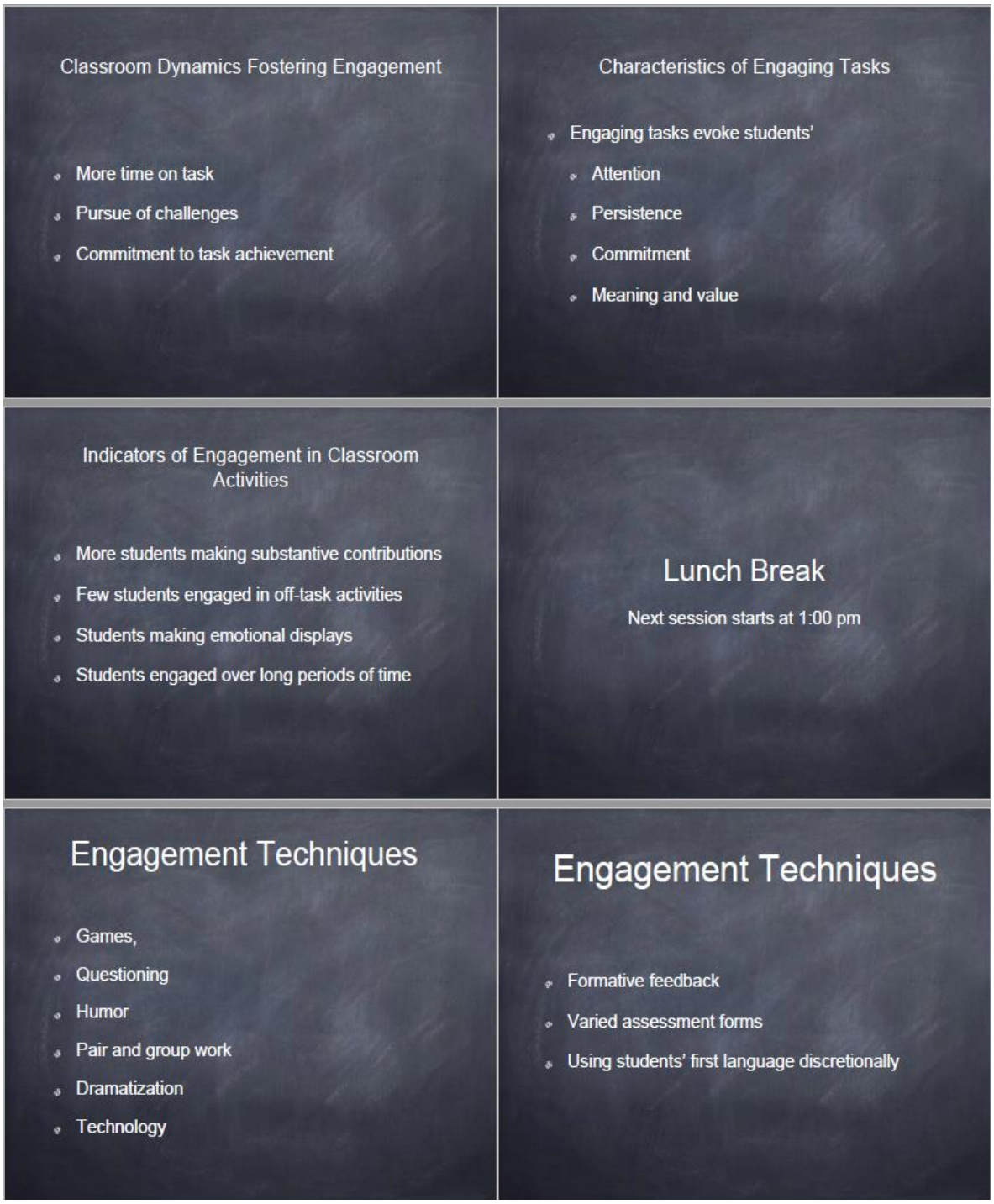
Break

10 minutes

Classroom Dynamics Fostering Engagement

- Integrating authentic, challenging, and hands-on tasks
- Setting clear objectives
- Providing clear instructions,
- Offering strong academic guidance
- Giving and receiving constructive feedback

Slides 7-12


Classroom Dynamics Fostering Engagement
More time on task
Pursue of challenges
Commitment to task achievement
Characteristics of Engaging Tasks
Engaging tasks evoke students'
Attention
Persistence
Commitment
Meaning and value
Indicators of Engagement in Classroom Activities
More students making substantive contributions
Few students engaged in off-task activities
Students making emotional displays
Students engaged over long periods of time
Lunch Break
Next session starts at 1:00 pm
Engagement Techniques
Games,
Questioning
Humor
Pair and group work
Dramatization
Technology
Engagement Techniques
Formative feedback
Varied assessment forms
Using students' first language discretionally

Slides 13-16

Session 2: Evaluation Questions for Engagement Training

5. In today's session, I learned
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
6. After today's session, I still need more clarification on
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

3. After today's session, I can implement my knowledge in the following ways
    a.
    b.
    c.
    d.

4. If I could change something about today's session, it would be
    a.
    b.
    c.
    d.

Appendix B: Observation Protocol

Section A

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory case study is to achieve a better understanding of the instructional strategies adopted at an International Technical College in Saudi Arabia

Research Questions

1. What are the instructional strategies being used by teachers to prepare students to achieve an intermediate level of English proficiency?
2. What are the barriers that teachers encounter when implementing instructional strategies to support students' learning?

Observee Participation

The observee is asked to conduct his class as he normally does. He might inform his students about the observer's presence in advance so that the students are not taken by surprise or their behavior would not be influenced by the observer's presence.

Observer Participation

The observer will arrive a few minutes before the lesson starts so that he does not interrupt the lesson. The observer will not participate in the activities of the observed lesson in any way. He will sit in a strategic spot in the classroom where he can see everything that is happening without causing any disruption to the lesson or changing the activities or behavior of students or the teacher. The observer will take notes using the observation sheet in section B.

Section B

Researcher: _____ Date of Observation: _____

Activity Being Observed: _____

Observer:_____

Observation Begin Time: _____ Observation End Time:_____

Location of the Observation: _____Room Number:_____

Note: Observational notes will be added during a 50-minute lesson

Time	ZPD strategies	Instructional strategies	Description of activity	Researcher notes
	Independent problem solving	Instruction based on feedback		
	Mediated instruction	Modeling		
	Object-regulation	Peer interaction		
	Other-regulation	Setting cooperative learning activities		
	Self-regulation	Inquiry-based instruction		
	Explicit feedback	Discussion		
	Implicit feedback	Visualization		

	Learner's active participation	Technology-rich instruction		
	Teacher as a facilitator	Motivational strategies		
	Scaffolding	Student-centered classroom		
	Exposing students to authentic learning experience	Integrating the culture of the target language		
	Deep learning techniques	Project-based instruction		
	Collaborative learning	Classroom dynamic assessment		
	Experiential learning			
	Higher order thinking activities			

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Research Questions

1. What are the instructional strategies being used by teachers to prepare students to achieve an intermediate level of English proficiency?
2. What are the barriers that teachers encounter when implementing instructional strategies to support students' learning?

Statement for Interviewees

Thank you for taking time to participate in this study. My name is Ayman Alhalawany, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. The purpose of my doctoral study is to achieve a better understanding of the instructional strategies adopted at an International Technical College in Saudi Arabia. The interview will take 45 to 60 minutes, and all information will remain confidential.

The following interview questions are part of my research study, *College Teachers' Implementation of Instructional Strategies to Support Students' English Language Skills,* for Walden University. Your responses to the following questions will be analyzed and interpreted for use in this project study. To assure that I correctly interpret your comments, I am recording this interview session. If you are comfortable participating in the study and in being tape recorded, please state that and we will begin the interview. However, if you do not wish to participate in this project study, you may state that now, in which case, the interview will not proceed."

Do you agree to participate?

Do you agree to be tape recorded?

(Note: Upon consent, the interview will proceed. If the participant responds “No” to either of the consent questions, the interview will be terminated and noted in the final study.)

Interview Questions

EFL Teachers

1. What are some various instructional strategies you use when introducing a new concept?
2. What are the feedback techniques you use in the classroom?
3. How do you use scaffolding with your students?
4. In what ways do you have the students interact with each other?
5. What kind of cooperative learning techniques do you use?
6. What are some of the barriers you face while helping students to develop the required language skills?
7. Do you have the classroom resources you need to teach the various courses in the Foundation Year?
8. How do you feel supported by your administration?
9. How do you feel supported by other staff/faculty?
10. Do you feel your students come well equipped to learn the material presented to them?
11. Are there instructional strategies you would hope to use but you have not so far? Why haven’t you used them?

College Academic Manager

1. To what extent do the academic policies and procedures in place help you manage the quality of teaching and learning?
2. What are your observations on the quality of the instructional strategies adopted by the EFL teachers in the college?
3. What are some examples of the effective instructional strategies used by the EFL teachers?
4. What have you identified as the areas of improvement relevant to the instructional strategies used by the EFL teachers?
5. What are the plans that the college has to satisfy teachers' professional development needs?

Curriculum Designer

1. What is the approach used in the curriculum design of the EFL component of the Foundation Year?
2. What are the instructional strategies recommended by the curriculum designers to achieve the objectives of the EFL curriculum?
3. Based on the qualitative data you have access to, what are your observations on the instructional strategies used by the EFL teachers in the context of the study?
4. How do you think the instructional strategies used by the EFL teachers help or impede students' development of the required language skills?
5. To what extent do you think that the instructional strategies used by the EFL teachers are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the curriculum?

Potential Interview Probes

- Please give me an example.
- Please give me more details.

Interview Conclusion

“Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview process. I will send you a transcript of the audiotape to be sure you concur with the base information I will use for analysis. Do you have any questions for me at this time?”