
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A 25 Year Systematic Review of Language Teachers' Competence, Performance, Professional Development, and Well Being in Saudi Arabia

Reima Al-Jarf

Full Professor of English and Translation Studies, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author: Reima Al-Jarf, **E-mail:** reima.al.jarf@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

This study conducted a systematic review (SR) of the author's research program, comprising 35 studies published between 1999 and 2024, on teachers' knowledge, teaching performance, professional development, digital engagement, and well being in EFL contexts. The studies were organized into nine thematic clusters: teacher qualifications; instructional practices; pedagogical content knowledge; communication, engagement, and collaboration; instructional technologies; teachers' performance assessment; well being, time management, and resilience; professional development; and staffing standards and recruitment. Together, these clusters offer a comprehensive, multi layered understanding of the factors shaping EFL/ESL teaching and learning in Saudi higher education. Across clusters, the findings demonstrate that teacher expertise, assessment literacy, instructional design, technological readiness, and institutional structures collectively determine the quality of language education. Evidence shows that teachers with strong pedagogical content knowledge, effective classroom management, and well developed assessment practices achieve higher student engagement and improved linguistic outcomes. Studies on instructional technologies reveal that digital tools enhance learning when integrated purposefully and supported by adequate training. Research on communication and collaboration highlights the role of teacher-student interaction, multimodal engagement, and online communities in strengthening learning environments. The well being cluster underscores the impact of workload, time management, and resilience on teacher performance, while professional development studies show that online forums, social media communities, and structured training programs significantly expand teachers' access to resources and peer support. Staffing and recruitment studies expose systemic challenges—such as understaffing, misalignment between specialization and course assignment, and limited recruitment channels—that directly affect instructional quality and program sustainability. Overall, the SR reveals that effective teaching is not the product of isolated practices but of an interconnected ecosystem in which pedagogical decisions, digital tools, communication channels, staffing policies, and teacher well being operate together. When these elements align, students achieve higher levels of competence, autonomy, and engagement; when fragmented, instructional quality declines even when individual teachers are highly skilled. This SR provides the first holistic, context grounded synthesis of a unified research program of a single author. It offers a foundation for future inquiry, policy reform, and pedagogical innovation, and underscores the need for sustained investment in teacher development, institutional support, and evidence based decision making.

| KEYWORDS

Systematic review (SR), Al-Jarf research program, EFL teacher competence, professional development, instructional effectiveness, teaching performance, pedagogical content knowledge, teacher performance assessment, teacher well being, academic staffing and recruitment.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

A language teacher¹ is an educational professional dedicated to facilitating the learning and acquisition of languages. Such teachers typically possess a deep understanding of linguistic structures, communicative functions, and the cultural nuances embedded within the language they teach. Foreign language teachers², in particular, instruct learners in languages that are neither their mother tongue nor an official language of their country. Their work extends beyond linguistic instruction to include the development of communicative competence and intercultural awareness, positioning them as ambassadors of multilingualism and global citizenship.

The role of the modern foreign language teacher involves the following areas: (i) Instruction - teaching the mechanics of a language, including vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing; (ii) Cultural competence - connecting language learning to cultural understanding, which helps students navigate diverse global environments (Gimatdinova, 2018); (iii) pedagogical expertise³ - applying evidence-based methods aligned with second-language acquisition principles and international frameworks such as the CEFR; (iv) Interpersonal and adaptable skills⁴ - motivating learners, responding to classroom dynamics, and designing creative, learner-centered curricula. Excellence in language teaching is shaped by a number of professional attributes, including pedagogical content knowledge, reflective practice and teacher cognition, language awareness, interpersonal rapport instructional clarity, adaptability, creativity, and ongoing professional development (pd), teacher self-efficacy, charisma, pronunciation, accent, and phonological awareness, cultural inclusiveness, and responsiveness to learner needs

Contemporary scholarship on language teachers, a multitude of single studies in the literature investigated the psychological, cognitive, and pedagogical dimensions that contribute to teacher effectiveness. Key areas of inquiry include: (i) teacher cognition, examining how prior learning shapes teaching beliefs; (ii) language teacher psychology, encompassing emotions, resilience, and identity, investment, and well-being; (iii) pedagogical expertise⁵, focusing on the qualities, skills, and interpersonal capacities that characterize effective teaching; (iv) reflective practice involving teachers' ongoing engagement in self-evaluation and professional growth and (v) engagement with the field, referring to teachers' participation in professional communities and disciplinary development (Liu et al., 2022).

In parallel, a substantial body of systematic reviews (SR) has examined multiple dimensions of teacher-related research. These reviews can be organized into four overarching groups, each representing a distinct strand of inquiry within the broader field of language teacher education and development. The first group investigates teachers' underlying beliefs about language, multilingualism, English varieties, technology, and translanguaging, illustrating how belief systems shape instructional decisions and classroom orientations. This strand includes SRs on communicative language teaching in EFL (Bedah et al., 2026), language diversity and multilingual learners (Gallagher & Scrivner, 2025), teaching EFL to students with dyslexia (Folia & Malisiova, 2025), pre-service teachers' attitudes toward gameful practices (Bacsá-Károlyi & Fehérvári, 2025), World Englishes, EIL, and ELF (Manzouri et al., 2024), technology and sustainable adoption (Nogaibayeva et al., 2024; Utaminingsih et al., 2023), teachers' views toward English as a lingua franca (Norman et al., 2024), translanguaging (Wang et al., 2024), intercultural communicative competence (Nafisah et al., 2024), critical thinking (Yuan et al., 2022), English language learners (Kim, 2021), emotional display rules (Stark & Bettini, 2021), and language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Wyatt, 2018). Additional SRs in this group address teachers' knowledge of language and literacy concepts (Georgiou et al., 2026), bilingual teachers' competencies (Putri & Rasyidah, 2026), GenAI-specific technological pedagogical knowledge (Ceallaigh & Murphy, 2026), AI-related teacher competencies (Laoha et al., 2025), digital competence (Aznar-Díaz et al., 2025), intercultural knowledge (Kidwell, 2025), and pedagogical competences in higher education (Moreira et al., 2023).

The second group examines teachers' pedagogical practices, assessment literacy, and technology integration, revealing how perceived value and feasibility influence teaching behavior and learning outcomes. This group includes SRs on pedagogical translanguaging practices (Gusdian et al., 2026), teachers' self-efficacy (Zhang et al., 2026), classroom roles under CLIL (Zhang et al., 2025), teacher expectations and student outcomes (Rubie-Davies & Li, 2025), interprofessional practice between speech-language pathologists and teachers (Armstrong et al., 2023), critical thinking in teacher education (Huang & Sang, 2023), digital competence pre- and during COVID-19 (Smestad et al., 2023), ESP teachers' collaboration and sustainability (Supunya, 2023), creative teaching (Pazin et al., 2022), language outcomes of young bilinguals (Ramirez et al., 2021), use of didactic learning materials in L1 (Gissel & Buch, 2020), and innovative behaviour (Zainal & Matore, 2019). Further SRs address AI perspectives

¹ <https://jobs.aatg.org/career/>

² <https://www.oecd.org/>

³ <https://www.hltmag.co.uk/apr20/foreign-language-teachers-competences>

⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/teacher-of-languages>

⁵ <https://gianfrancoconti.com/2025/03/22/what-makes-an-outstanding-language-teacher-a-research-based-perspective/>

among EFL teachers (Özkan et al., 2024), AI adoption (Xue et al., 2025), and ICT integration challenges in China (Cao et al., 2023). A smaller subset focuses specifically on assessment practices, including humanistic writing assessment (Song & Mukundan, 2025), language assessment literacy (Puspawati, 2022), and teachers' conceptions of assessment (Abd Halim et al., 2024).

The third group of SRs centers on teachers' affective dimensions, examining emotional labor, well-being, identity, self-efficacy, and emotional experiences, and demonstrating how psychological factors influence resilience, motivation, and professional growth. Affective SRs include teachers' AI literacy and AI-induced emotions (Xie et al., 2026), emotional labor (Jaikla & Piyakun, 2025), self-efficacy research (Wang et al., 2024), PERMA-based well-being (Minh, 2024), TPACK and self-efficacy (Joshi, 2023), well-being during COVID-19 (Katsarou et al., 2023), second language teacher identity (Sadeghi & Bahari, 2022), and pre-service TESOL teachers' emotions (Kış, 2021).

The final group of SRs synthesizes research on teachers' professional development needs, training programs, AI-supported PD frameworks, reflective practices, and culturally responsive preparation, highlighting evolving competencies required in modern teacher education. Examples include assistive technology instruction for pre-service teachers (Park et al., 2024), learning English with AI (Peña-Acuña & Durão, 2024), AI-based continuous PD frameworks (Fakhar et al., 2024), culturally responsive teacher preparation (Miller et al., 2024), reflective teaching (Velasquez et al., 2023), challenges facing pre-service English teachers in Malaysia (Ag-Ahmad et al., 2023), TESOL teacher educators (Yuan et al., 2022), CLIL teachers' PD needs (Kim & Graham, 2022), new literacies in language teacher PD (Tafazoli, 2021), and regional PD programs for language teachers (Çinarbaş & Hoş, 2018).

Although the SRs reviewed above focus on various dimensions of teacher-related research, including teachers' competence, teaching performance, professional development, digital competence, affective aspects, and assessment, the existing SRs remain highly fragmented because they focus on single constructs (e.g., self-efficacy, emotional labor, digital competence, CLIL roles, intercultural beliefs) or specific teacher populations (pre-service teachers, CLIL teachers, preschool teachers, bilingual teachers). They offer isolated insights into particular aspects of teacher knowledge, psychology, or technological readiness, but do not provide an integrated, cross-domain, or longitudinal synthesis of a unified research program produced by a single researcher across multiple domains of teacher competence and performance. This represents a significant gap in the literature, as no SR has explored how one scholar's publications collectively contribute to interconnected areas such as teacher qualifications, pedagogical content knowledge, teaching performance, communication and engagement, instructional technologies, performance assessment, teacher well-being, professional development, or staffing and recruitment, nor has any review mapped how these domains intersect, evolve, and reinforce one another within a sustained research trajectory. Therefore, the current study sought to conduct a systematic review (SR) of the author's research program consisting of 35 studies published between 1999-2024 on teachers' knowledge, teaching performance, professional development, digital engagement, and well-being in EFL contexts. The study aims to answer the following questions: (i) What themes, patterns, and conceptual contributions emerge across the author's research on teacher competence, performance, and professional development? (ii) How do the author's studies collectively address interconnected domains such as pedagogical content knowledge, instructional practices, communication, digital engagement, assessment, and well-being? (iii) In what ways has the author's research program evolved over time (1999–2024) in response to shifts in EFL pedagogy, technology, and teacher education? (iv) How do the findings across the corpus map onto broader frameworks of teacher competence and teacher performance in EFL contexts?

This SR is significant because no existing SR synthesizes these domains together, nor examines how they collectively shape a comprehensive understanding of language teachers' professional lives. Prior SRs are topical, scattered, and externally authored, whereas your SR is the first to provide a systematic, author-centered synthesis of a unified research corpus. Thus, the gap lies in the absence of a holistic, longitudinal, and integrative SR that consolidates a single researcher's contributions across multiple interconnected themes in language teacher education. Your SR addresses this gap by offering the first multi-cluster, program-level synthesis of a coherent research trajectory, an approach not found in any of the 56 SRs in the literature review.

Moreover, this SR is part of a broader, long-term research program in which the author has produced an extensive series of SRs and meta-analyses (MAs) across multiple domains of language education, linguistics, and pedagogy. These prior SRs have synthesized research on social media in EFL teaching and learning (Al-Jarf, 2026a), English for art education (Al-Jarf, 2026b), EFL reading instruction (Al-Jarf, 2026c), educational evaluation (Al-Jarf, 2026d), translation errors (Al-Jarf, 2026f), mobile-assisted language learning (Al-Jarf, 2026g), adult reading practices (Al-Jarf, 2026h), pronunciation instruction (Al-Jarf, 2026i), Arabic reading pedagogy (Al-Jarf, 2026j), grammar teaching (Al-Jarf, 2026k), electronic searching skills (Al-Jarf, 2026l), global dimensions in L1 school textbooks (Al-Jarf, 2026m), cultural learning in L2 contexts (Al-Jarf, 2026n), vocabulary learning (Al-Jarf, 2026o), specific-skill assessment (Al-Jarf, 2026p), Arabic–English transliteration (Al-Jarf, 2026q), children's language development (Al-Jarf, 2026r), classroom writing enhancement (Al-Jarf, 2026s), collaborative digital learning (Al-Jarf, 2026t), distance learning during COVID-19 (2026u), mind-mapping strategies (Al-Jarf, 2026v), staffing challenges in EFL programs (Al-Jarf, 2026w), innovative word-formation processes (Al-Jarf, 2026x), interpreting pedagogy (Al-Jarf, 2026y), listening and speaking instruction (Al-Jarf, 2026z), online videos and podcasts for language learning (Al-Jarf, 2026aa), spelling error analysis (Al-Jarf, 2026bb),

student autonomy in second language learning (Al-Jarf, 2026cc), AI Arabic translation (Al-Jarf, 2026dd), ESP innovation (Al-Jarf, 2026ee), LMS-supported instruction (Al-Jarf, 2026ff), English–Arabic language dynamics (Al-Jarf, 2026), and linguistic landscapes and signages (Al-Jarf, 2026), and metaphorical and fixed expressions in students' translation (Al-Jarf, 2026).

Positioned within this extensive body of systematic inquiry, the current SR contributes a new and distinct dimension by synthesizing 35 studies conducted between (1999–2024) and covers a multi-decade research contribution that spans qualifications, performance, and effectiveness, pedagogical content knowledge, teaching strategies and multimodal instruction, communication, interaction, and engagement, instructional technologies and digital tools, performance assessment and digital rubrics, teacher well-being and resilience, professional development and online communities, and staffing, recruitment, and departmental structures. This domain has not been previously reviewed in the author's earlier SRs. It therefore extends the author's methodological tradition while opening a new line of inquiry into weaknesses in the translation of metaphorical and fixed expressions by student translators.

2. Methodology

To be included in the corpus, the research must be authored by Al-Jarf on teacher-related topics. Studies were included if they met all of the following conditions: (i) The study must be solely authored or co-authored by Al-Jarf, as the purpose of this review is to synthesize a unified research program produced by a single scholar. (ii) The study must focus on teachers, teaching practices, teacher development, instructional strategies, teacher–student interaction, instructional technologies, teacher performance, professional development, well-being, or staffing in language-related fields. (iii) Eligible publications include journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, and ERIC-indexed reports that present empirical findings, instructional models, or pedagogical analyses. (iv) The full text must be publicly accessible through academic databases, institutional repositories, or open-access platforms to allow complete data extraction. (v) The study must be written in English and situated within the domains of EFL, ESL, translation, linguistics, or higher education language programs. (vi) All relevant studies published between 1999 and 2024 were included to capture the full span of the author's scholarly contributions.

2.1 Study Corpus

The study corpus consists of 35 empirical studies authored by Al-Jarf over more than two decades, representing a sustained and multifaceted research program in language teacher education, instructional practices, and technology-enhanced pedagogy. These studies collectively examine how teachers develop, perform, interact, and adapt across diverse instructional contexts, including face-to-face, blended, and emergency remote environments. The 35 studies were organized into nine thematic clusters based on their conceptual focus, methodological orientation, and pedagogical relevance. Each cluster is described below.

Cluster 1: Teacher Qualifications, Performance, and Instructional Effectiveness

- 1) *Role of instructor qualifications, assessment and pedagogical practices in EFL students' grammar and writing proficiency (Al-Jarf, 2022i)*

Cluster 2: Pedagogical Content Knowledge

- 2) *What teachers should know about reading tests (Al-Jarf, 2017b)*
- 3) *What teachers should know about online grammar tasks (Al-Jarf, 2017a)*
- 4) *What teachers should know about vocabulary testing (Al-Jarf, 2015d)*
- 5) *What ESL teachers should know about online writing tasks (Al-Jarf, 2014d)*
- 6) *What instructors and students should know about interpreting problems (Al-Jarf, 2015c)*

Cluster 3: Teaching Performance, Practices, and Strategies

- 7) *EFL Female College Students and Instructors' Preferred Method of Speaking Assessment: A Perspective from Saudi Arabia. (Al-Jarf, 2021f)*
- 8) *How much material EFL college instructors cover in reading courses (Al-Jarf, 2021j)*
- 9) *Feasibility of digital multimedia language labs for interpreting instruction (Al-Jarf, 2021g)*
- 10) *Multimodal Teaching and Learning in the EFL College Classroom (Al-Jarf, 2024b).*

- 11) *Curriculum in Emergency Covid-19 Remote Education at Saudi Universities: Same or Adjusted* (Al-Jarf, 2022b)
- 12) *A Model for Communicative Error Correction in Saudi EFL Freshman Students' Writing* (Al-Jarf, 2021a).
- 13) *Strategies for effective distance learning in foreign language, linguistics and translation college courses* (Al-Jarf, 2022j)

Cluster 4: Communication, Interaction, Engagement, and Collaboration

- 14) *Online collaboration in translation instruction among students and instructors* (Al-Jarf, 2008d)
- 15) *Communication among language and translation instructors and students via Twitter* (Al-Jarf, 2020a)
- 16) *Connecting EFL Students and Instructors Online* (Al-Jarf, 2009)
- 17) *How EFL, linguistics and translation instructors engage students in distance learning during the Covid-19 second wave* (Al-Jarf, 2022f)
- 18) *EFL Faculty Online: Support and Development Issues* (Al-Jarf, 2008b)
- 19) *Communicating and Interacting with College Students through a Website Chatbox* (Al-Jarf, 2021c).
- 20) *Activities that promote student agency in linguistics in distance learning* (Al-Jarf, 2021b)

Cluster 5: Instructional Technologies, Digital and AI Tools

- 21) *Arab instructors' views on Students' assignments and research papers generated by AI:* (Al-Jarf, 2024d)
- 22) *What EFL students and teachers should know about Webster's mobile dictionaries* (Al-Jarf, 2014c)
- 23) *How EFL college instructors can create and use grammar iRubrics* (Al-Jarf, 2020c)
- 24) *Free innovative technologies for EFL teachers* (Al-Jarf, 2010a)
- 25) *University instructors and technology* (Al-Jarf, 1999)

Cluster 6: Teacher Performance Assessment

- 26) *Assessing EFL college instructors' performance with digital rubrics* (Al-Jarf, 2015b)

Cluster 7: Teachers' Well-Being and Time Management

- 27) *A model for alleviating work pressures and enhancing teachers' resilience* (Al-Jarf, 2024a)
- 28) *Time management for ESL teachers* (Al-Jarf, 2005)

Cluster 8: Teachers' Professional Development

- 29) *ESL teachers' professional development on Facebook during the Covid-19 pandemic* (Al-Jarf, 2021f)
- 30) *ESL teachers' online discussion forums and professional development* (Al-Jarf, 2014b)
- 31) *Teachers' online discussion forums in Saudi Arabia* (Al-Jarf, 2006d)
- 32) *A Training Program for Developing College Female Faculty Computer Skills and Utilization in Language Teaching, Translation and Research Based on Their Instructional and Occupational Needs* (Al-Jarf, 2002)

Cluster 9: Staffing, Recruitment, and Academic Workforce Issues

- 33) *Benchmarks for Staffing Translation Departments* (Al-Jarf, 2008a)
- 34) *Staffing EFL Programs in Saudi Arabia: Issues and Challenges* (Al-Jarf, 2004b)
- 35) *Do English Departments Search Optimally in Faculty Recruiting* (Al-Jarf, 2004a)

2.2 Eligibility (Inclusion & Exclusion) Criteria

The eligibility criteria were established to ensure that only studies directly aligned with the review's teacher-focused scope were included. Because this SR adopts an author-bounded, closed-corpus design, all publications by the author were screened systematically. Studies were excluded in the following cases

- Duplicate Studies by the author: *Arab instructors' views on students' assignments and research papers generated by AI* (Al-Jarf, 2024e); *communicating and interacting with college students through a website chatbox* (Al-Jarf, 2011a); *correcting students' writing errors: The role of communicative feedback* (Al-Jarf, 2011b); *curriculum in emergency Covid-19 remote education at Saudi universities* (Al-Jarf, 2021e); *empowering EFL teachers and students with grammar iRubrics* (Al-Jarf, 2011c); *evaluating EFL teacher performance with iRubrics* (Al-Jarf, 2014a); *how EFL, linguistics and translation instructors engaged students in distance learning during the COVID-19 second wave* (Al-Jarf, 2021h); *multimodal teaching and learning in the EFL college classroom* (Al-Jarf, 2024c); *teachers' online discussion forums in Saudi Arabia* (Al-Jarf, 2006c).
- Author's studies that partially addressed teacher-related issues such as *distance Learning and Undergraduate Saudi Students' Agency during the Covid-19 Pandemic* (Al-Jarf, 2020b); *online exams in language, linguistics and translation courses during the pandemic in Saudi Arabia* (Al-Jarf, 2022g); *and parental attendance of children's online classes from the perspective of parents and teachers in Saudi Arabia* (Al-Jarf, 2022h) and *collaborative distance Arabic language learning between Russian and Arab students in Africa* (Al-Jarf, 2025).
- Teaching guides by the author such as *A teacher's guide to language courses for levels 1–4* (2015a).
- Author's studies that fall outside the teacher-focused cluster themes: *connecting University Students, Faculty and Administrators through an Online SMS Service* (Al-Jarf, 2021d); *connecting Students, Faculty and Administrators through Online SMS* (Al-Jarf, 2012); *and large student enrolments in EFL programs: challenges and consequences* (Al-Jarf, 2006a); *emergency student practicum and training during the pandemic at Saudi universities* (Al-Jarf, 2022c).
- Author's studies that center primarily on student performance rather than teacher competence or instructional practice as in the following: *testing multiple vocabulary associations for effective long-term learning* (Al-Jarf, 2023); *a multiple-associations approach to teaching technical terms in English for specific purposes courses* (Al-Jarf, 2022a); *a model for enhancing EFL freshman students' vocabulary with mind-mapping software* (Al-Jarf, 2015a); *making connections in spelling instruction* (Al-Jarf, 2010b); *making Connections in Reading Instruction* (Al-Jarf, 2008c); *making Connections in Vocabulary Instruction* (Al-Jarf, 2006b); *grade inflation at Saudi universities before, during and after the pandemic* (Al-Jarf, 2022d); and *grade inflation in language and translation courses at Saudi schools and universities* (Al-Jarf, 2022e).

2.3 Corpus Characteristics

The corpus comprises 35 empirical studies authored by Al-Jarf between 1999 and 2024, representing a 25-year research trajectory across multiple domains of teacher competence and development. The studies were disseminated through peer-reviewed journals (18 articles or 53%), book chapters (6 chapters or 17.6%, including 4 Scopus-indexed chapters), and international conference proceedings (10 papers or 29.4%), reflecting a diversified and sustained pattern of scholarly contribution. Collectively, the corpus addresses nine interconnected dimensions of teacher development: qualifications, pedagogical content knowledge, teaching practices and multimodal instruction, communication and engagement, instructional technologies and AI integration, performance assessment, teacher well-being, professional development, and staffing in higher education.

Methodologically, the corpus exhibits a balanced mix of empirical designs, including quantitative surveys, qualitative thematic analyses, classroom-based investigations, and institutional case studies. This methodological variety enhances the coherence of the corpus and enables multi-angle interpretations of teacher-related phenomena. Temporally, the literature spans more than twenty-five years, capturing shifts in language-teaching paradigms from early computer-assisted instruction in the late 1990s to contemporary integrations of mobile dictionaries, digital rubrics, distance education during global crises, and generative AI tools. This temporal breadth provides a unique longitudinal perspective on how teacher practices, technological infrastructures, and institutional priorities have evolved over time.

2.4 Information Sources

Because this review is author-bounded, the information sources were limited to the complete body of published research authored by Al-Jarf across journals, book chapters, conference proceedings, and ERIC-indexed reports. All studies were retrieved

from publicly accessible academic platforms, including ERIC, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, institutional repositories, and publisher databases. No external studies were included, as the purpose of this review is to synthesize a closed corpus representing a single researcher's contributions to the field. Bibliographic information, full texts, and metadata were cross-checked to ensure completeness and accuracy before screening and clustering.

2.5 Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data extraction followed a structured, concept-driven procedure using a combined deductive–inductive thematic synthesis approach. For each study, core parameters were recorded, including author, publication year, research focus, instructional context, methodological orientation, participant group, language sub-domain, technological medium, and major findings related to teacher competence or performance. Extraction was guided by the operational boundaries of teacher competence (latent knowledge, digital literacy, psychological resilience, and qualifications) and teacher performance (classroom actions, communication practices, evaluation metrics, and administrative execution). A standardized analytic matrix was used to organize the extracted data, which were then analyzed inductively to identify recurring themes and conceptual patterns across the corpus. Through this process, the 35 studies were systematically grouped into nine thematic clusters representing distinct dimensions of teacher-related research: Teacher Qualifications and Instructional Effectiveness; Pedagogical Content Knowledge; Instructional Practices and Pedagogical Competencies; Communication, Engagement, and Collaboration; Digital Literacy and AI Tools; Teacher Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks; Teacher Well-Being and Resilience; Professional Development; and Institutional Staffing and Recruitment. This synthesis approach ensured conceptual coherence, thematic clarity, and a robust representation of the evolution of the author's scholarly contributions over more than two decades.

2.6 PRISMA Flow Description

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for SRs and Meta-Analyses) flow for this review reflects the structure of an author-bounded SR with a closed corpus. A total of 35 records were identified through academic databases and verified manually. All records were screened for relevance based on authorship, publication type, and alignment with the review's focus on teacher-related research. All 35 studies met the inclusion criteria, as the corpus intentionally encompasses the complete set of the author's publications related to teacher development, instructional practices, digital engagement, and educational technology. No duplicates were found, and no studies were excluded at the eligibility stage due to the bounded nature of the dataset. Following eligibility confirmation, the full texts were examined to extract conceptual, methodological, and thematic information. The final sample of 35 studies was then systematically organized into nine thematic clusters, providing a structured foundation for synthesis and enabling a clear, traceable representation of the author's scholarly trajectory over 25 years.

3. Results

3.1 Study Characteristics

Cluster 1: Teacher Qualifications, Performance, and Instructional Effectiveness

In the study titled *"Role of instructor qualifications, assessment and pedagogical practices in EFL students' grammar and writing proficiency (Al-Jarf, 2022i)"*, three groups of EFL freshman students were concurrently enrolled in grammar and writing courses. One group was taught both courses by the same instructor, while the other two groups were taught by different instructors using the same textbook but different instructional, assessment, and feedback systems. Post-tests showed significant differences among the three groups in grammar and writing scores, with the highest performance achieved by the group taught by a single instructor who integrated grammar and writing instruction. The findings indicate a reciprocal relationship between grammar and writing instruction: writing enhances grammatical competence, and grammatical knowledge supports writing development. Instructor qualifications, pedagogical expertise, integration of online instruction, type of error correction, instant communicative feedback, and formative assessment techniques were significantly more effective than textbook-dependent instruction. These variables proved essential for improving the grammatical knowledge and writing quality of low-ability EFL students, resulting in substantial gains in post-test performance.

Cluster 2: Pedagogical Content Knowledge

The 4 studies in Cluster 2 titled "what teachers should know about" provide comprehensive pedagogical frameworks across *reading tests (Al-Jarf, 2017b)*, *online grammar tasks (Al-Jarf, 2017a)*, *vocabulary testing (Al-Jarf, 2015d)* and *online writing tasks (Al-Jarf, 2014d)*. Collectively, these studies outline essential components of effective EFL instruction, including test design principles, skill specifications, task sequencing, instructional stages, criteria for validity and reliability, integration of digital tools,

and guidelines for selecting and implementing online resources. Together, they offer a unified knowledge base that supports teachers in planning, evaluating, and delivering language instruction across multiple sub-domains.

In the study titled *What instructors and students should know about interpreting problems* (Al-Jarf, 2015c), analysis of a corpus of interpreting errors revealed three major problem types: phoneme identification, listening comprehension, and meaning transfer. Students frequently used faulty strategies, including overgeneralization of equivalents, literal translation, and sound analogy. These errors stemmed from inadequate L1 competence, limited EFL vocabulary, unfamiliarity with specialized meanings, and insufficient world knowledge. The study recommends that interpreting instructors develop students' vocabulary accuracy, schemata, world knowledge, metacognitive skills, and context-based meaning analysis, and train them to identify the domain in which polysemous words are used.

Cluster 3: Teaching Performance, Practices, and Strategies

The study *EFL Female College Students and Instructors' Preferred Method of Speaking Assessment* (Al-Jarf, 2021f) examines preferences for face-to-face versus language-lab speaking assessment. Students preferred lab testing because conditions were uniform, anxiety was lower, and questions were more comprehensive, whereas instructors preferred face-to-face testing because it was easier and resulted in higher pass rates. Score comparisons showed that lab tests were more reliable, more valid, and had stronger discriminating power. The study concludes with recommendations for improving speaking assessment practices.

The study *How much material EFL college instructors cover in reading courses* (Al-Jarf, 2021i) analyzed textbook coverage across four reading courses. Examination of student textbooks revealed that instructors typically covered only 20–50% of reading texts and 25–65% of exercises and subskills, depending on the textbook. Survey responses indicated that coverage was influenced by time constraints, text difficulty, and student proficiency. The study raises concerns about curriculum implementation and misalignment between textbook design and classroom practice.

The study *Feasibility of digital multimedia language labs for interpreting instruction* (Al-Jarf, 2021g) evaluated the use of multimedia language labs (MLLs) in interpreting courses. Although COLT installed four fully equipped labs, only 20% of instructors used them for interpreting, while 80% used them as classrooms. Instructors reported hardware/software issues, limited training, student-related challenges, and insufficient technical support. The study concludes that normalization, attitude change, hands-on practice, and on-site support are essential for effective integration of MLLs.

The study *Multimodal Teaching and Learning in the EFL College Classroom* (Al-Jarf, 2024b) proposes a multimodal model integrating task-based learning, project-based learning, debates, digital storytelling, podcasts, mobile apps, and collaborative platforms. The model enhances listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar through interactive, collaborative, synchronous and asynchronous activities, supported by tools such as Vocaroo, Kahoot, Slido, and Padlet.

The study *Curriculum in emergency Covid-19 remote education* (Al-Jarf, 2022b) investigated whether Saudi universities adjusted curriculum content during the first three semesters of the pandemic. Instructors and students across eight universities reported no curriculum changes, with only the delivery mode shifting to DL. Practicum and graduation projects were adapted, and students preferred asynchronous lecture recordings. Institutional constraints prevented curriculum modification.

The study *A model for communicative error correction* (Al-Jarf, 2021a) proposes a communicative feedback model that shifts focus from meticulous correction to meaning-focused writing, self-editing, and peer-editing. Teachers highlight errors without providing correct forms, encouraging students to develop autonomy and reduce repeated errors.

The article *Strategies for effective distance learning* (Al-Jarf, 2022j) proposes a comprehensive model for effective DL, including platform training, multimodal resources, global topics, interactive activities, reliable testing procedures, and professional development for instructors.

Cluster 4: Communication, Interaction, Engagement, and Online Collaboration

In the study titled *online collaboration in translation instruction among students and instructors* (Al-Jarf, 2008d), an asynchronous online translation forum was created for English–Arabic student translators from different countries. Volunteer instructors provided communicative, color-coded feedback without supplying correct translations, prompting multiple rounds of revision. Students accessed online dictionaries and resources, and questionnaire results showed positive attitudes toward the collaborative online practice.

In the study titled *communication among language and translation instructors and students via Twitter (Al-Jarf, 2020a)*, Twitter accounts of instructors were analyzed to identify usage patterns. Results showed that instructors mainly used Twitter for announcements, with limited student interaction. Arabic was used for announcements, while English was used for course-related issues. Students viewed instructor Twitter accounts as useful despite minimal engagement.

In the study titled *connecting EFL students and instructors online (Al-Jarf, 2009)*, the author demonstrates how teachers across institutions can collaborate using free course-management systems. Weekly discussion threads, grammar-related links, and study-skills documents encouraged students to respond, add links, and write about topics of interest. The study highlights interactive, skill-focused, culturally enriching online collaboration.

In the study titled *how EFL, linguistics and translation instructors engage students in distance learning during the Covid-19 second wave (Al-Jarf, 2022f)*, survey results showed a shift from low engagement in Spring 2020 to more interactive DL practices in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. Instructors began using task-based and project-based activities, debates, guest speakers, and apps such as Kahoot, Padlet, and ConnectYard. The study documents improved digital readiness and student-centered engagement.

In the study titled *EFL faculty online: support and development issues (Al-Jarf, 2008b)*, findings show that novice instructors require pre-training, technical assistance, content-design support, course-management guidance, and time-management strategies. The study recommends gradual familiarization with online tools and establishing routines for monitoring student interaction.

In the study titled *communicating and interacting with college students through a website chatbox (Al-Jarf, 2021c)*, only 14% of instructors used Cbox chatboxes. Students posted questions about course content, administrative issues, grades, exams, and personal concerns. Instructors responded within four hours. However, Cboxes were public, unmonitored, and not user-friendly, raising concerns about privacy and management.

In the study titled *activities that promote student agency in linguistics in distance learning (Al-Jarf, 2021b)* reports 15 types of activities that EFL, linguistics and translation instructors at a sample of Saudi universities used in distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples include searching for linguistic and translation key terms and concepts, problem-solving questions, online debates, summarizing a research paper, attending a thesis defense, inviting guest speakers, project-based assignments, connecting writing and speaking topics with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, collecting and analyzing translation errors, translating Wikipedia articles, interpreting contests, linguistic analyses of family speech and videos, student-created podcasts and digital stories, dynamic online speaking activities, and integrating technology such as Slido and Padlet. The participating students found those activities beneficial, enjoyable, and helpful. Their skills improved as a result of reading, preparing and synthesizing information and the feedback received.

Cluster 5: Instructional Technologies, Digital and AI Tools

In the study titled *Arab instructors' views on students' assignments and research papers generated by AI (Al-Jarf, 2024d)*, survey results showed that instructors overwhelmingly disapprove of AI-generated assignments, viewing them as cheating and academically dishonest. They noted that AI produces unverifiable information and non-existent references. Limited AI use was accepted for statistical analysis, reference retrieval, summarization, translation, editing, and proofreading. The study recommends raising student awareness of institutional AI policies.

In the study titled *what EFL students and teachers should know about Webster's mobile dictionaries (Al-Jarf, 2014c)*, the author describes dictionary types and features such as audio pronunciation, quizzes, word-saving functions, example sentences, grammar review, and style handbook. The study lists frequently searched words and provides an instructional guide with tips and an answer key.

In the study titled *how EFL college instructors can create and use grammar iRubrics (Al-Jarf, 2020c)*, the author demonstrates how instructors can design and apply word-level and sentence-level grammar rubrics. The rubrics included performance criteria, levels, and marks, validated through peer feedback. The study explains how instructors can preview, edit, apply, grade, publish, and share rubrics, emphasizing transparent and criterion-based assessment.

In the study titled *free innovative technologies for EFL teachers (Al-Jarf, 2010a)*, the author introduces free technologies such as course-management systems, assessment tools, MP3 lessons, podcasts, text-to-speech software, blogs, wikis, forums, mind-mapping tools, and social networks. The study outlines pre-use, during-use, and post-use instructional stages, emphasizing active engagement and multimodal learning.

In the study titled *university instructors and technology* (Al-Jarf, 1999), survey results revealed that 50% of female faculty could not use computers, 30% used them only for typing, and 20% could use the internet. The study proposed a four-level training model and recommended needs assessment, clear objectives, targeted applications, structured scheduling, instructor assignment, and evaluation of training outcomes.

Cluster 6: Teacher Performance Assessment

In the study titled *assessing EFL college instructors' performance with digital rubrics* (Al-Jarf, 2015b), an exploratory investigation with instructors at COLT showed that most EFL faculty were dissatisfied with and felt underrated in the teacher performance appraisal (TPA) reports prepared by administrators. To help avoid biases, inconsistent ratings, and subjective interpretation of assessment statements, the author built two digital rubrics aligned with the existing TPA forms: one for students and one for administrators. Each rubric consisted of pre-established scaled criteria for assessing linguistic competence, teaching skills, professional achievements, personal qualities, and interpersonal relationships, with four clearly differentiated performance levels. Ten professors validated both rubrics to ensure that the descriptors and scales were discriminating, leading to clarifications and modifications. The digital versions were created using the iRubric tool of RCampus. The study describes how criteria, levels, and marks were entered; how scores were recorded and viewed; and how rubrics could be categorized, shared, and discussed with colleagues to promote transparent and reliable evaluation.

Cluster 7: Teachers' Well-Being and Time Management

In the study titled *a model for alleviating work pressures and enhancing teachers' resilience* (Al-Jarf, 2024a), survey results from 65 EFL/ESL, linguistics, and translation instructors across five Saudi universities showed that they face intellectual, emotional, and service-related stressors such as high workload, limited support, tight deadlines, time-management challenges, student behavior issues, classroom management concerns, health problems, and difficulty balancing work and personal life. Some instructors reported fatigue, irritability, anxiety, depression, headaches, lack of motivation, and difficulty concentrating. To address these challenges, the study proposes coping strategies grounded in positive psychology, including identifying stress signs, prioritizing self-care, setting achievable goals, improving time management, embracing flexibility, adopting a positive mindset, applying classroom-management techniques, advocating for resources, attending professional development, building support networks, collaborating with colleagues, reflecting on teaching practices, and practicing mindfulness, relaxation, visualization, deep breathing, and celebrating small wins.

In the study titled *time management for ESL teachers* (Al-Jarf, 2005), participants were introduced to strategies for maximizing productive time and reducing time-management problems. The study focused on time awareness, identifying time wasters, setting priorities, planning, handling interruptions, overcoming disorganization, managing procrastination, avoiding crises, and maintaining control over daily tasks. It emphasized writing a personal mission statement, setting long- and short-term goals, analyzing time use, keeping daily logs, tracing procrastination patterns, recording activities, decomposing tasks into sequential steps, and classifying tasks by importance and urgency. Additional strategies included developing realistic to-do lists, using calendars and planners, practicing punctuality, maintaining an organized workspace, scheduling uninterrupted work periods, and managing paperwork, visitors, meetings, and phone calls.

Cluster 8: Teachers' Professional Development

A set of three studies examines how ESL and EFL teachers engage in professional development through digital communities, including Facebook teacher pages, international online discussion forums, and Ministry-run teacher platforms (Al-Jarf, 2021f; Al-Jarf, 2014b; & Al-Jarf, 2006d). Collectively, these studies show that teachers use online spaces to exchange pedagogical knowledge, request lesson plans and teaching materials, share classroom challenges, seek technological support, and access peer-generated resources. Analysis of posts, threads, and teacher surveys reveals that digital communities foster rapid communication, collaborative problem-solving, and social rapport, while also presenting challenges such as uneven participation, overwhelming message volume, broad or overlapping categories, and limited search functionality. Across platforms, teachers perceive online communities as valuable sources of practical support, professional learning, and collegial interaction, though participation patterns and content quality vary by context.

In the study titled *a training program for developing college female faculty computer skills and utilization in language teaching, translation and research based on their instructional and occupational needs* (Al-Jarf, 2002), responses to the questionnaire showed that 50% of female professors cannot use computers at all, 30% use computers to print assignments and tests only, and 20% are able to use the Internet. The researcher proposed a computer training course that has four levels: beginner, intermediate, advanced, and special. The level of the professors should be determined before starting the course, and that goals be set for each level of the course, specifying the software and applications that the professors should be trained on, the location

and time of the course, trainers and administrators responsible for implementing the course, and how the benefits that instructors have made can be evaluated.

Cluster 9: Staffing, Recruitment, and Academic Workforce Issues

Three studies *Benchmarks for Staffing Translation Departments* (Al-Jarf, 2008a), *Staffing EFL Programs in Saudi Arabia: Issues and Challenges* (Al-Jarf, 2004b) and *Do English Departments Search Optimally in Faculty Recruiting* (Al-Jarf, 2004a) collectively examine chronic staffing shortages, recruitment challenges, and workforce misalignment in English and translation departments across Saudi universities. Together, they document persistent understaffing—especially in women’s departments—resulting in merged classes, heavy teaching loads, reliance on inadequately qualified local hires, and delayed course offerings. The studies highlight structural causes such as open-admission policies, limited funding, restrictive employment regulations, weak communication between departments and decision makers, and inefficient manpower planning. They also reveal misalignment between instructor specialization and course assignment, minimal use of technology in advertising vacancies, and inconsistent recruitment practices across institutions. Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive picture of systemic staffing and recruitment issues affecting program quality, instructional effectiveness, and the sustainability of academic workforce planning in Saudi EFL and translation programs.

4. Discussion

4.1 Meta-Conclusion

The 35 studies reveal a coherent and cumulative understanding of EFL/ESL instruction, teacher competencies, assessment practices, instructional technologies, professional development, and systemic challenges across Saudi higher education contexts. Despite the diversity of topics—ranging from pedagogical content knowledge, multimodal learning, online collaboration, digital rubrics, teacher well-being, staffing, and AI-generated assignments—the studies converge on a central conclusion: effective language education is fundamentally shaped by instructor expertise, instructional design quality, technological integration, and ongoing teachers’ professional development. Across the 9 clusters, the findings consistently demonstrate that teacher qualifications, pedagogical decisions, and assessment practices have a direct and measurable impact on students’ linguistic performance, engagement, and skill development. Studies on multimodal learning, online collaboration, and digital tools show that technology enhances learning only when instructors possess the competence, training, and willingness to integrate it meaningfully. At the institutional level, the research highlights persistent structural issues—such as understaffing, heavy workloads, limited professional development, and inadequate technological support—that hinder instructional quality and teacher well-being. The Covid-19 studies further confirm that curriculum rigidity and insufficient preparedness limited the effectiveness of emergency remote teaching. Taken together, the studies conclude that EFL/ESL education improves most when pedagogical expertise, technological readiness, assessment validity, and institutional policies operate in alignment, and declines when any of these components is weak or absent.

4.2 Meta-Interpretation

Interpreting the findings across the nine clusters reveals several cross-cluster patterns that deepen our understanding of how EFL/ESL teaching and learning function in real institutional contexts. First, the studies on instructor qualifications, pedagogical content knowledge, and assessment practices (Clusters 1–3) collectively suggest that student performance is not merely a function of curriculum content but of instructional coherence. When grammar, writing, reading, and speaking are taught through aligned pedagogical strategies—supported by valid assessments and informed by teacher expertise—students demonstrate higher gains. This interpretation aligns with the strong correlations found between grammar and writing performance when taught by the same instructor. Second, the clusters on communication, engagement, and collaboration (Clusters 4–5) show that student motivation and participation increase when instructors diversify communication channels and integrate interactive technologies. However, these benefits are contingent on instructors’ digital literacy and institutional support. The studies on Twitter, chatboxes, and online forums reveal that technology alone does not guarantee engagement; rather, engagement emerges when instructors use technology purposefully, consistently, and responsively. Third, the clusters on performance assessment, well-being, and professional development (Clusters 6–8) indicate that teacher effectiveness is inseparable from teacher well-being and institutional conditions. Digital rubrics improve fairness and transparency, but they cannot compensate for burnout, heavy workloads, or lack of recognition. Professional development through Facebook groups and online forums provides informal learning opportunities, yet these cannot replace structured, institution-supported training. Finally, the staffing studies (Cluster 9) provide a systemic interpretation: many instructional challenges originate not at the classroom level but at the policy and staffing levels. Understaffing, inadequate hiring practices, and reliance on underqualified instructors create ripple effects that impact curriculum delivery, student learning, teacher morale, and program quality. Thus, the meta-interpretation across clusters is that EFL/ESL education is an ecosystem, and improvements in one area (e.g., technology, assessment) cannot

fully compensate for weaknesses in others (e.g., staffing, training, well-being). Sustainable improvement requires a holistic, system-level approach.

4.3 Cross-Cutting Insights

A synthesis of the 35 studies reveals several overarching insights that cut across clusters, disciplines, and methodologies: (i) Instructor expertise is the central driver of student outcome. Regardless of the tool, platform, or curriculum, the studies consistently show that teacher qualifications, pedagogical knowledge, and assessment literacy are the strongest predictors of student success. Technology, rubrics, and collaboration amplify—but do not replace—teacher expertise. (ii) Technology enhances learning only when integrated purposefully. Across studies on multimodal learning, online collaboration, digital rubrics, mobile dictionaries, and innovative technologies, a clear insight emerges: technology is effective only when instructors are trained, supported, and intentional in its use. Untrained or overwhelmed instructors tend to underutilize or misuse digital tools. (iii) Staffing shortages, heavy workloads, limited professional development, and rigid curricula consistently undermine instructional effectiveness. These structural issues appear repeatedly across clusters, suggesting that systemic reform is necessary for sustainable improvement. (iv) Student engagement requires interaction, feedback, and agency studies on Twitter, chatboxes, online forums, and Covid-19 distance learning show that students engage more when they have multiple communication channels, timely feedback, interactive tasks, opportunities for collaboration, and autonomy in learning. Engagement is not a by-product of technology but of pedagogical design. (v) Digital rubrics, vocabulary tests, reading tests, and speaking assessments all point to the same insight: students perform better when assessments are clear, fair, aligned with instruction, and provide meaningful feedback. (vi) Burnout, stress, lack of recognition, and emotional fatigue reduce instructional effectiveness. The resilience model shows that supporting teacher well-being is not optional—it is essential for maintaining instructional quality. (vii) Professional development must be continuous and context-responsive. Facebook groups, online forums, and training programs demonstrate that teachers seek learning communities, but institutional PD remains inconsistent. Effective PD must be ongoing, practical, collaborative, and aligned with teachers' real needs.

4.4 Implications

The synthesis of findings across the nine clusters yields several implications for EFL/ESL policy, curriculum design, teacher preparation, assessment practices, and institutional planning. First, the strong influence of instructor qualifications, pedagogical expertise, and assessment literacy on student outcomes implies that universities must prioritize hiring well-qualified instructors, provide structured pedagogical training, and ensure alignment between instructional practices and assessment tools. The evidence shows that instructional coherence—such as integrating grammar and writing instruction or aligning reading skills with test design—produces measurable gains in student performance, suggesting that curriculum committees should adopt more integrated, skill-based course structures.

Second, the studies on multimodal learning, online collaboration, and digital tools indicate that technology enhances learning only when instructors receive adequate training, technical support, and time to experiment with new tools. Institutions should therefore invest not only in hardware and software but also in continuous, context-responsive professional development that equips instructors to use technology purposefully rather than superficially. The Covid-19 findings further imply that emergency remote teaching exposed systemic gaps in digital readiness, highlighting the need for proactive digital-pedagogical preparedness plans rather than reactive adjustments.

Third, the recurring issues of burnout, workload, and emotional strain among instructors imply that teacher well-being is a structural—not individual—responsibility. Universities should adopt policies that reduce excessive teaching loads, provide mental-health support, recognize faculty achievements, and create supportive work environments. Without addressing these systemic pressures, improvements in pedagogy or technology will have limited impact.

Fourth, the studies on communication, engagement, and interaction suggest that student motivation increases when instructors diversify communication channels and create interactive, collaborative learning environments. This implies that departments should encourage the use of multimodal communication tools (e.g., LMS forums, chatboxes, social media, SMS systems) while establishing clear guidelines for their pedagogical use to ensure consistency and quality.

Fifth, the findings on staffing and recruitment reveal deep structural challenges in Saudi EFL programs, including understaffing, reliance on underqualified instructors, and inefficient hiring practices. These findings imply that system-level reforms are needed, such as establishing transparent recruitment policies, improving manpower planning, and adopting benchmarks for instructor qualifications and teaching loads. Without addressing staffing issues, improvements in curriculum, assessment, or technology will remain constrained. Finally, the study on AI-generated assignments signals an emerging implication: universities must develop

clear policies on AI use, train faculty in AI-literacy, and educate students about academic integrity in the age of generative technologies. As AI becomes more integrated into academic work, institutions must balance innovation with ethical safeguards.

Collectively, these implications underscore that effective EFL/ESL education requires systemic alignment—between teacher preparation, curriculum design, assessment practices, technological infrastructure, staffing policies, and institutional support. Sustainable improvement will depend on coordinated action across all these levels rather than isolated interventions.

4.5 Positioning This SR Within the Language Teachers' SRs

This SR occupies a distinct position within the broader landscape of SRs on language teachers by offering a uniquely comprehensive, multi-cluster synthesis that spans teacher qualifications, pedagogical content knowledge, instructional strategies, assessment practices, digital tools, professional development, well-being, and staffing. While previous SRs on language teachers typically focus on a single dimension, such as teacher cognition, professional development, technology integration, or assessment, this SR integrates nine interconnected domains, providing a panoramic view of the factors that shape language teachers' effectiveness in higher education contexts. Unlike prior SRs in the literature that examine teacher beliefs or classroom practices in isolation, this SR demonstrates how teacher-related variables operate as an ecosystem: qualifications influence assessment quality; assessment practices shape instructional coherence; technology integration depends on teacher training; professional development affects teacher well-being; and institutional staffing policies determine the conditions under which teachers work. By synthesizing 35 empirical studies conducted across 25 years, this SR highlights the structural, pedagogical, and technological realities that language teachers face in Arab and Saudi university contexts that remain underrepresented in global SRs. Furthermore, this SR contributes a region-specific perspective that is largely absent from international teacher-education reviews. It foregrounds issues such as understaffing, heavy workloads, curriculum rigidity, digital readiness during Covid-19, and the emerging challenge of AI-generated assignments, topics rarely addressed collectively in prior SRs. In doing so, it positions itself as a bridge between global teacher-education literature and the lived realities of language teachers in the Arab world.

Overall, this SR advances the field by offering a holistic, context-grounded, multi-dimensional synthesis that expands the scope of Language Teachers' SRs beyond pedagogy alone, toward a more integrated understanding of the professional, institutional, and technological ecosystems that shape language teaching and learning.

4.6 How This SR Connects to the Author's Previous SRs

This SR builds directly on the author's long-standing program of research, which has produced a substantial body of SRs examining EFL/ESL learners, skills, instructional environments, and technology-mediated learning. While the author's previous SRs focused primarily on students' linguistic performance, skill development, learning difficulties, and the impact of instructional technologies on learners, the present SR shifts the analytical lens toward teachers themselves—their qualifications, pedagogical practices, assessment literacy, professional development, well-being, and institutional working conditions.

Across earlier SRs, the author consistently demonstrated that student outcomes are shaped by instructional design, learning environments, and the affordances of digital tools. This SR extends that trajectory by showing that these learner-level outcomes cannot be fully understood without examining the teacher-level variables that underpin them. In this sense, the current SR functions as a "missing link" that connects the author's earlier learner-focused reviews with the broader ecosystem of teaching, staffing, assessment, and institutional policy.

Furthermore, the author's previous SRs on reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, translanguaging, mobile learning, and social-media-mediated instruction repeatedly highlighted the importance of instructional coherence, assessment validity, and technology integration. The present SR deepens these insights by demonstrating how such instructional elements depend on teacher expertise, workload, training, and well-being. It shows that pedagogical innovations documented in earlier SRs, such as multimodal learning, online collaboration, and mobile-assisted instruction, are only effective when teachers have the capacity, support, and institutional conditions to implement them.

In addition, this SR complements the author's previous SRs on Covid-19 emergency teaching, which documented the challenges students faced during remote learning. Here, the focus expands to include teachers' engagement strategies, digital readiness, and professional pressures, offering a more holistic understanding of the pandemic's impact on higher education.

Finally, by synthesizing research on staffing, recruitment, teacher burnout, digital rubrics, AI-generated assignments, and professional development networks, this SR broadens the scope of the author's earlier work and positions itself as a culminating review that integrates two decades of research into a unified framework. It connects the micro-level findings of previous SRs (skills, tasks, learner performance) with macro-level institutional realities (staffing, policy, workload, digital transformation), thereby advancing a comprehensive model of how teacher-related variables shape the quality of language education.

4.7 Limitations

Although this SR provides a comprehensive synthesis of 35 studies across nine thematic clusters, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the review is author-bounded, drawing exclusively on studies conducted by the same researcher over a span of two decades. While this ensures conceptual coherence and methodological consistency, it also limits the breadth of perspectives and reduces the diversity of research traditions, institutional contexts, and analytical frameworks represented in the synthesis. Second, the studies included in this review were conducted primarily within Saudi higher-education contexts, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational systems with different staffing structures, policy environments, technological infrastructures, and teacher-education models. The contextual specificity of the studies, while valuable for regional insight, means that some conclusions may not fully transfer to settings with different institutional cultures or resource levels. Third, the review synthesizes studies that vary in design, scope, and depth, ranging from workshops and descriptive analyses to empirical investigations and technology-integration projects. Although this diversity enriches the synthesis, it also introduces variability in methodological rigor, sample sizes, and data-collection procedures, which may influence the strength of cross-cluster comparisons. Finally, because the studies span twenty-five years, they reflect different technological eras, institutional policies, and pedagogical priorities. This temporal variation may influence the comparability of findings, particularly in clusters related to digital tools, online learning, and professional development.

Despite these limitations, the review offers a coherent, context-grounded synthesis that contributes meaningfully to understanding the multifaceted realities of language teachers' work and the institutional ecosystems that shape their effectiveness.

5. Recommendations and Directions for Future Research

Drawing on the synthesis of 35 studies across nine thematic clusters, the following recommendations are offered for improving EFL/ESL teaching, assessment, professional development, and institutional policy in higher-education contexts: (i) Institutions should prioritize hiring instructors with specialized training in EFL, translation, interpreting, and assessment. Evidence shows that teacher expertise directly enhances student performance, instructional coherence, and assessment validity. (ii) Universities should offer continuous, hands-on training in multimodal learning, online collaboration, digital rubrics, and mobile-assisted instruction. (iii) Institutions should adopt policies that reduce burnout, provide mental-health support, and recognize faculty contributions. (iv) Universities should adopt transparent recruitment standards, realistic teaching loads, and long-term staffing plans. (v) With the rise of AI-generated assignments, institutions must develop guidelines for ethical AI use, train faculty in AI literacy, and educate students about academic integrity in the age of generative technologies.

In addition, this study recommends that future studies explore how teachers' beliefs, decision-making processes, and pedagogical reasoning shape instructional practices in EFL/ESL classrooms. Longitudinal research is needed to understand sustained impacts of multimodal learning, mobile dictionaries, and online collaboration. More empirical work is needed to examine how workload, institutional culture, and emotional labor influence teacher resilience and retention. Comparative studies across institutions and countries can identify effective staffing strategies and highlight structural barriers to quality teaching. Research should also examine how AI tools can support—not replace—teachers, and how AI can be used ethically in assessment, feedback, and instructional design. Finally, future research should document how teaching practices evolved after emergency remote learning and which innovations persisted or disappeared.

6. Conclusion

This SR synthesizes 35 studies conducted over 25 years, offering a comprehensive, multi-layered understanding of the factors that shape EFL/ESL teaching and learning in higher-education contexts. The findings demonstrate that teacher expertise, assessment literacy, instructional design, technological readiness, professional development, and institutional structures collectively determine the quality of language education. Across nine clusters, the evidence reveals that effective teaching is not the product of isolated practices but of an interconnected ecosystem in which pedagogical decisions, digital tools, communication channels, staffing policies, and teacher well-being operate together. When these elements align, students achieve higher levels of linguistic competence, engagement, and autonomy. When they are fragmented or unsupported, instructional quality declines—even when individual teachers are highly skilled. This review also highlights persistent systemic challenges, including understaffing, heavy workloads, curriculum rigidity, and uneven digital preparedness. Addressing these issues requires coordinated institutional action rather than classroom-level solutions alone. At the same time, the studies underscore the resilience, creativity, and adaptability of language instructors, who continue to innovate despite structural constraints. Ultimately, this SR contributes a holistic, context-grounded synthesis that expands the scope of language-teacher research in the Arab world. It provides a foundation for future inquiry, policy reform, and pedagogical innovation, and

underscores the need for sustained investment in teacher development, institutional support, and evidence-based decision making.

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ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6255-1305>

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