INVESTIGATING UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' ROLES IN TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS ONLINE IN SAUDI ARABIA: A CASE STUDY OF JAZAN UNIVERSITY AND KING KHALID UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

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Approval of the Thesis

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A CASE STUDY OF JAZAN UNIVERSITY AND KING KHALID UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

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Abstract

INVESTIGATING UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' ROLES IN TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS ONLINE IN SAUDI ARABIA:
A CASE STUDY OF JAZAN UNIVERSITY AND KING KHALID UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

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This study explored the roles of university teachers in Saudi Arabia in teaching English speaking skills in synchronous online classes, specifically focusing on teachers from Jazan University and King Khalid University. It identified seven key roles: Content Expert, Facilitator, Manager, Social, Pedagogical, Technical, and Assessor. A sequential mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys with teachers and qualitative interviews with online English teaching experts. The surveys evaluated teachers' awareness of these roles and the challenges they encountered, while the interviews provided strategies for overcoming these challenges.

The findings of the study revealed a strong awareness among teachers of all seven roles. However, significant challenges hindered their effectiveness in carrying out those roles. The challenges include psychological obstacles among students, insufficient personal interaction, social obstacles, low student engagement, assessment challenges, and time constraints.

The study recommended a comprehensive approach to enhance teachers' capabilities across all roles by fostering interactive, supportive environments, improving social interaction, refining pedagogy for teaching English speaking skills online, and diversifying assessment. It also stressed continuous professional development to address evolving online education demands, despite teachers' strong role awareness.

This research provided valuable insights into improving the online teaching of speaking skills in Saudi Arabia and offered practical solutions applicable to similar educational settings worldwide.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

AI Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge the use of ChatGPT (https://chatgpt.com/) solely as a tool for proofreading and correcting typographical, grammatical, and spelling errors in some parts of the research report. These actions were completed on 31.08.2024. It was not used to generate any content or ideas. All ideas presented are entirely based on my study and its findings, ensuring that the integrity and originality of the research remain intact.

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Dedication

I dedicate this humble achievement to my dear children. I wanted to be a role model for them, inspiring them to follow in my footsteps and never stop striving to achieve their dreams, no matter the obstacles.

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I am profoundly grateful to everyone who has supported me throughout this research journey. A heartfelt thank you to my research supervisor, Dr Peter Mitchell, for his dedication, meticulous attention, and hard work in ensuring the smooth progression of this study. I am deeply indebted to my mentors for their wisdom, guidance, and steadfast support. Your expertise has shaped and strengthened this project in immeasurable ways. I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to the School of Doctoral Studies Team at Unicaf University for their exceptional support, resources, and assistance throughout my study. To my family, your endless patience, understanding, and love have been my bedrock. Your support has motivated me to pursue excellence. Finally, to my friends and colleagues, your insightful discussions and unwavering encouragement have been a constant source of inspiration. Your contributions have been truly invaluable. This research would not have been possible without the collective efforts and support of every one of you. Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. 1. Background

The integration of advanced information and communication technologies into education and the emergence of new teaching and learning theories have created countless opportunities for teaching and learning English online. These ongoing transformations require EFL teachers to reconsider their roles in line with the online environment for an effective teaching process as well as to meet the challenges they face (Palvia et al., 2018).

Innovative technological tools and resources facilitate communication, creation, dissemination, storage, and management of information, while also supporting interactive, collaborative, and creative online teaching and learning. Information and communication technology enhances interaction between teachers and students, fosters multisensory delivery and authenticity, and encourages motivation and interaction. These technologies encourage learner autonomy and focus on online classes, enriching the learning experience and improving the academic performance in digital learning environments (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Educause, 2020; Procel et al., 2024; Pun, 2013; Wahyudin et al., 2024).

In the light of the technological advancements taking place now, various theories about online learning environments emerged based on the established teaching and learning theories of behaviourism, cognitivism, and social constructivism. Among some of these theories, and by no means exhaustive, are Community of Inquiry, connectivism, and Online Collaborative Learning, which have had significant influence on approaches related to online teaching and learning practices and enhance the effectiveness of online learning within digital contexts.

The Community of Inquiry framework delineates how deeper, richer experiences are created through the sustainable development of interdependent presences: cognitive, social, and teaching presence. These elements are quite key to allowing for successful online teaching-learning. By developing these interdependent presences, they bring forth greater student

engagement along with critical thinking under circumstances of better collaboration, leading to better educational outcomes in a digital setting of learning (Garrison et al., 2000; Picciano, 2021; Vaughan & Lee Wah, 2020).

Connectivism theorizes that learning is, and should remain, an enterprise greater than individual intelligence, emphasizing instead the option of tapping into a variety of resources for information. It states that this type of information sharing, information connecting with various forms of networks that present interaction, enables individuals to learn best in ways like social media, discussion conjugation, e-learning tools, and blogs. Learning takes place when learners form meaningful connections and navigate a set of networks that includes both human minds and societal structures. The second of these interplays with the first, the first producing patterns that are recognized and followed by the second thus exemplifying that learning is, after all, a network-driven process (Downes, 2022, 2020, 2012, 2008; Peter & Ogunlade, 2023; Picciano, 2021; Siemens, 2004).

Online collaborative learning theory endorses active learning by embracing cooperative activity among students in digital environments, in which the co-creation of knowledge is advanced and equal opportunity to produce learning outcomes is established. On the other hand, such a process allows learners to benefit from each other's insights as they problem-solve, complete a performance task, and exchange ideas. The interaction through online collaboration provides students with opportunities to gain critical skills where knowledge and understanding are consolidated through shared experience: assisting any other learner while helping their understanding, thus enriching the educational experience and building a vibrant learning atmosphere (Altowairiki, 2021; Bates, 2019; Harasim, 2012; Nazeef et al., 2024; Picciano, 2021).

In the face of these profound transformations, online teachers' roles are becoming increasingly important. English language teachers should be prepared to adapt their roles to

meet the demands of an effective teaching process and to reduce any learning disruptions in online environments. According to the online learning theories, teachers guide, facilitate, engage, energize, moderate, follow up, and evaluate their students. A lot of teachers' roles models have been developed, but Berge (1995, 2008) proposes a comprehensive one in which he categorized teachers' role as pedagogical, social, managerial, and technical. The pedagogical role involves facilitating student learning. The social role entails creating a friendly environment. The managerial role that defines course content. Finally, the technical role to help students with technical problems. All these roles and others are not without challenges that should be overcome.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has striven to keep pace with all these developments and adopt online education in all its educational institutions including universities. Due to the need for foreign languages in vital sectors such as economy, science and technology, the Ministry of Education has made considerable efforts to improve English language education. Educational institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have been equipped with the latest technology to serve teaching and learning. Educational virtual learning environments and platforms such as Blackboard, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom have been provided for both teachers and students by all universities. English Language curricula have been modified and improved in line with the online environment. Teachers are provided with extensive training programs so that they can use information and communication technology tools effectively.

These gigantic efforts culminated in the resounding success of online education in Saudi Arabia, even in times of crisis, such as Covid 19 pandemic. Contrary to expectations, English Language proficiency in Saudi Arabia is not improving, but rather declined even more during the period of full adoption of online education (2020-2021) (Education First English Proficiency Index, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025).

As an English language teacher with extensive experience in Saudi universities, the researcher has observed that many students continue to face various difficulties in learning English, notwithstanding the significant efforts of the Ministry of Education and universities to foster language proficiency. Moreover, researchers attribute the lack of progress in English proficiency to several reasons, among which are the difficulties and challenges teachers face in performing their required roles in the online environment (Algethami, 2022; Hakim, 2020; Khafaga, 2021; Rahman, 2020).

Teachers' roles are critical to the success of the teaching and learning process. Online teaching requires teachers to play different roles than those which are traditional. In an online environment, they are required to create more engaging, interactive and collaborative practice*s.*

Proficiency in English speaking is one of the most important criteria for English language proficiency and teaching speaking skills online is not an easy task, which requires teachers to be more aware of their roles and perform them in line with the new teaching theories and the evolving online environment. Although numerous studies have explored the importance of using technology in teaching online, as well as how to use it to teach English, few studies have addressed the vital roles of teachers in teaching speaking in an online environment, particularly in the Saudi context. Accordingly, there is a need for more research into these roles to help address the challenges and teach speaking skills effectively online in Saudi universities.

1. 2. Statement of the Problem

Due to the astonishing development of communication technology, which creates more human connections / interactions, and the emergence of new teaching theories (Community of Inquiry, Connectivism, Online Collaborative Learning), the roles of online teachers have evolved rapidly and need to be redefined and investigated to help raise the effectiveness of online teaching. Ní Shé et al. (2019) affirm that the role of teachers in universities "is changing, particularly when moving from the traditional face to face classroom to online learning. These

changes are occurring continuously as new theories of teaching and learning are being validated and as new technologies become available to support and/or transform teaching and learning in higher education."

The adoption of online teaching in higher education institutions has witnessed tremendous growth in Saudi Arabia over the past decade. All regions of the Kingdom have been equipped with a sophisticated information / communication technology infrastructure. The Ministry of Education has ensured proper planning, effective management, appropriate curricula, qualified teachers, and modern virtual learning platforms for the success of the online teaching process. Extensive training on the optimal use of technology in online education has been provided at all governmental universities. Workshops and Seminars have been held to prepare teachers to teach English effectively. Despite this encouraging situation to teach / learn English, the learning outcomes are still unsatisfactory and below expectations. The level of English language proficiency in Saudi Arabia is lower than desired (Education First English Proficiency Index, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025).

English speaking is considered as an indicator of overall language proficiency. Mastering speaking is important and difficult. Richards (2008, p.16) asserts: "The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second language or foreign language learners. Consequently, learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency." Teachers for their part also believe that speaking skills is important and not easy to teach. Around 70% of teachers also consider speaking skills to be very important compared to reading, writing, and listening (Cambridge University Press, 2017). Brown and Yule (1997, p. 25) confirm that "Spoken Language production, learning to talk in the foreign language, is often to be one of the most difficult aspects of language learning for

the teacher to help the student with." Therefore, teachers need to make additional efforts to improve the speaking abilities of their students in English classes.

In an online environment, teachers' responsibilities seem to be greater, as they should be aware of their appropriate roles and develop their proficiency for this environment. Setlhako (2014, p. 1406) assumes: "Teaching and learning online requires a different kind of workforce, taking up different roles and in need of different skills and competences to facilitate learning."

Researchers agree that online teachers' roles are increasingly important to the online teaching process and have a significant impact on student outcomes. It is alleged that the process of English language instruction in Saudi governmental universities is influenced in part by the challenges faced by teachers in performing their roles during online classes (Algethami, 2022; Hakim, 2020; Khafaga, 2021; Rahman, 2020), especially, when it comes to teaching speaking synchronously - the most important and difficult task (Brown & Yule, 1997; Burns, 2019; Pawlak, Waniek-Klimczak & Majer, 2011).

To teach speaking skills synchronously online, teachers face many challenges such as lack of physical presence, lack of participation / interaction during classes, insufficient speaking time, inadequate peer interaction, lack of timely feedback as well as psychological, cognitive and social factors (Jones, 2021; Thiriau, 2021). Researchers define several roles to be carried out by teachers to teach speaking skills effectively online. They propose eight essential roles: advisor, professional, pedagogical, social, evaluator, administrator, technologist, and researcher (Abdus, 2011; Bawane & Spector, 2009; Berge, 1995, 2008). A model of online teachers' roles proposed by Ní Shé et al. (2019) frames this research and serves as a basis to answer its questions. The model emphasizes roles of any online teacher including teacher of English as a foreign Language. These roles include facilitator role; content expert role; managerial role; pedagogical role; social role; technical role; and assessor role.

This study constitutes a relatively new area of research. Although researchers have shed light on online education in Saudi governmental universities, previous studies have been limited to investigate the online teaching process of English in general. The roles of online teachers are still not sufficiently explored, and no previous research has investigated these roles while teaching English speaking skills synchronously. The importance of the evolving teachers' roles in teaching speaking skills and the challenges they face during synchronous online classes in Saudi governmental universities call for further research to increase the effectiveness of teaching English online.

1. 3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to investigate closely the extent to which online teachers of English are aware of and perform their roles to the fullest to increase the effectiveness of teaching English speaking skills during synchronous online classes in Saudi governmental universities. The researcher outlined teachers redefined and evolving roles and the difficulties associated with these roles that hinder the online teaching of speaking skills. This research is an attempt to find appropriate solutions to overcome the challenges that online teachers face in order to fulfil their roles for the success of the teaching process and help Saudi governmental university students to master English language. Based on the evidence collected, the researcher develops a practical action plan to guide teachers to effectively take on the roles required to teach speaking skills online.

An explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach was employed. A quantitative approach was followed in the first phase of the study, and then a qualitative approach was used in the second phase. In the first phase, the quantitative approach was employed to measure the extent to which online teachers of English are aware of their roles and the challenges they face in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes. For this purpose, a sample of 100 ordinary practitioners—in-service online English teachers from two government

universities (Jazan University and King Khalid University)—was randomly selected to complete two online Likert scale questionnaires serving as quantitative data collection instruments. The participating teachers included both Saudi nationals whose native language is Arabic and non-Saudi teachers whose native languages vary.

In the second phase, a qualitative approach was adopted. A purposive sample of fifteen (15) experts in online English language teaching was selected based on the following inclusion criteria: a minimum of ten (10) years of experience in teaching English as a foreign language, at least five (5) years in online instruction, a documented record of professional development, specialized qualifications (e.g., CELTA), and relevant publications in the field. Participants engaged in standardized (structured) interviews featuring open-ended questions designed to identify strategies for overcoming pedagogical barriers to teaching speaking skills within the Saudi Arabian synchronous online context. Both the Likert scale items and the interview protocol were aligned with the research objectives and formulated to address the central research questions.

1. 4. Research Aims and Objectives

The importance and impact of teachers' roles are well recognized for effective teaching and learning in an online environment. This research aims to gain knowledge of the evolving roles of online teachers amid the astonishingly rapid development of communication technology and the new teaching theories. This study sets out to increase the effectiveness of teaching English speaking skills online to ensure the desired learning outcomes in the Saudi context. The researcher investigates the extent to which English language teachers keep pace with changes in their roles and whether they perform them well as online teachers. This research also identifies the areas of ineffectiveness of English language teaching and the challenges related to these roles. Based on the evidence gathered from the study, the researcher

proposes guidelines for mapping the road to successful online teaching of speaking skills in Saudi governmental universities.

To achieve the research aims, the researcher strives to:

1. investigate Saudi university teachers' awareness of the changing roles in teaching English speaking skills during synchronous online classes.
2. identify the significant challenges teachers face when English teaching speaking skills online, which prevent them from fulfilling their roles effectively during synchronous online classes at Saudi governmental universities.
3. identify the effective strategies for overcoming challenges that hinder teachers' ability to teach English speaking skills in the Saudi Arabian context during synchronous online classes.

1. 5. Research Questions

This research aims to answers the subsequent questions:

1. To what extent are governmental university teachers in Saudi Arabia aware of and taking on their evolving roles in English teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes?
2. What are the significant challenges that negatively affect teachers' roles in teaching English speaking skills synchronously in Saudi governmental universities?
3. What are the effective strategies for overcoming challenges that hinder teachers' ability to English teach speaking skills during synchronous online classes in the Saudi Arabian context?

This study employs research questions rather than hypotheses as primary inquiry drivers. The three research questions reflect an exploratory, descriptive orientation—using phrasing such as "to what extent" and "what are"—characteristic of discovery-focused inquiry that generates initial insights rather than testing predetermined theoretical

relationships (Babbie, 2021; Swedberg, 2020). The quantitative phases utilize descriptive statistics without engaging in inferential hypothesis testing, while the qualitative phase explores emergent themes from participant perspectives (Maxwell, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This inductive progression prioritizes data-driven understanding over theoretical prediction (Fetters, 2020). Philosophically, the study integrates pragmatism and interpretivism, emphasizing contextually relevant insights and participants lived experiences rather than abstract verification (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Aspers & Corte, 2021). The case study design, grounded in two specific Saudi universities, necessitates depth-oriented, context-bounded inquiry fundamentally distinct from hypothesis testing (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018). A detailed methodological justification is provided in Section 3.2.2.5.

1. 6. Nature and Significance of the Study

This research falls within the pragmatism research philosophy that combines two research paradigms: positivism and interpretivism paradigms. This research is a systematic empirical investigation. It is an exploratory-descriptive case study on Saudi governmental universities. The researcher adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach: quantitative approach in the first phase then qualitative approach in the second phase. Methods associated with the two approaches are used to collect and analyse information.

In the first phase, a random sample of online English teachers from two governmental universities respond to two online Likert scale surveys. These surveys are designed to measure the extent to which online English teachers are aware of and fulfil their required roles as well as to identify the challenges they face when teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes. Statistics are used to analyse the collected data. In the second phase, a purposeful sample of experts in teaching English online is targeted with a standardized (structured) interview with open-ended questions about how to overcome the challenges faced by teachers

to carry on their roles in teaching speaking skills in the Saudi context during synchronous online classes. Thematic analysis is used to make sense of the collected data.

This research is of great significance. It contributes to the body of knowledge related to online education and provides support to increase the effectiveness of the English language teaching process in online environments. The research findings are not limited to the Saudi context but also provide insights and perspectives that may be significantly useful in other similar contexts. This research is conducted mainly for the benefit of:

Teachers: This research benefits English language teachers as it provides them with new insight into their evolving roles for teaching speaking skills online and increases their awareness of these roles in Saudi context. This research confers more adequate solutions to the problems and challenges associated with taking on these roles in order to develop good practice and facilitate teaching and learning speaking online.

Students: When a teacher performs his full required roles, he brings out the best in his students and inspires them to strive for success in online environments. This study helps the online English teacher to be an asset to their students and a reliable guide to their progress in mastering speaking skills.

Professional development bodies: Findings of the research help professional development centres in universities to provide the necessary professional development programs that help teachers of English carry out their required roles and improve their performance during online classes.

Researchers: Communication technology and educational theories are constantly evolving, requiring constant research to help English language teachers keep pace with this evolution and fulfil their required roles. The researcher draws attention to the need for more in-depth studies on teaching speaking online and presents his findings as a fruitful ground that paves the way for further research in this field.

1. 7. Research Structure

Chapter One outlines the context of the research and what it is about. It provides the background to the study and clearly identifies the gap in the literature that will be addressed by the study. The problem statement, research objectives and questions are identified. The significance and limitations of the study are also outlined. Chapter Two reviews the existing literature to identify the required key teachers' roles for an effective online teaching process within the context of the rapid transformations in technology and learning theories. Chapter Three outlines the methodology employed to answer research questions. The adoption of explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative) is justified, and the broader research design is discussed explaining the data collection methods with a particular focus on the scope and population parameters used. Techniques used to analyse the collected are also outlined in this chapter. Chapter Four covers the findings by verifying data trustworthiness, presenting the results, and evaluating their significance, with a focus on maintaining research integrity and accuracy. Chapter Five discusses the research findings, the extent to which they support the literature review, what they add to the findings of previous studies. Implications of this research findings are clearly outlined for online teaching process. Finally, the limitations are identified and recommendations for application and future research are presented.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1. Introduction

Over the past decade, online teaching in higher education institutions has been on the rise in Saudi Arabia (Algethami, 2022; Alshammari, 2022). However, English language learning outcomes still fall short of expectations (Al-Wossabi, 2024). The process of teaching and learning of English in Saudi governmental universities is partially affected by the challenges faced by teachers during synchronous online teaching, which hinder their ability to perform the required roles, especially regarding speaking skills (Alshammari, 2022; Hakim, 2020; Khafaga, 2021; Rahman, 2020). This study examines the extent to which online teachers of English at Saudi governmental universities are aware of and perform their roles to increase the effectiveness of teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes. The researcher also addresses challenges that hinder the teaching of speaking skills and suggests appropriate solutions for overcoming these challenges.

As technology progresses and the internet continues to evolve, numerous online learning theories have emerged, often rooted in fundamental teaching and learning concepts such as behaviourism, cognitivism, and social constructivism (Picciano, 2021). Notable online teaching and learning theories include the Community of Inquiry, connectivism, and Online Collaborative Learning theories. The role of online teachers is considered crucial in the online teaching process, significantly influencing student outcomes. Within the digital realm, teachers shoulder even greater responsibilities. The subtle aspects of this area are elucidated by the predominant viewpoint that to be effective in the online environment, however, online English Language teachers should rethink their roles and address the challenges it presents. They should be aware of their appropriate roles and develop proficiency to facilitate student learning. Online education theorists have proposed various classifications of teacher roles. Facilitator, content

expert, managerial, pedagogical, social, technical, and assessor roles are thought to be central to effective online teaching.

This chapter presents the relevant literature and studies that have been conducted after thorough and in-depth research. This literature review acquaints the reader with the roles of teachers required to teach English speaking skills online. It also allows the researcher to construct a theoretical framework, develop a research methodology, and address gaps in existing research. It is divided into three main sections. The first section reviews literature on the essential online teaching/learning theories, focusing on community inquiry theory, connectivism theory, and online collaborative learning theory. The second section outlines the required roles teachers play for an effective online teaching process that emerged from these theories. Only those roles concerning teaching speaking skills online are introduced in the present study. Finally, the third section discusses studies that explore challenges teachers face to teach speaking skills effectively.

This review relied on peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books published in English from 2015 to 2025. A systematic search was conducted to identify relevant sources across several databases, including Google Scholar, ProQuest, Scopus, and Web of Science, in addition to library catalogues. Search terms included "online teaching," "synchronous online classes," "community of inquiry," "connectivism," "online collaborative learning," "speaking competencies," "teacher roles and challenges in online teaching," and "Saudi Arabia." Both empirical studies—quantitative and qualitative—and scholarly discussions presented in books were included, provided they addressed online educational environments related to English language teaching. Studies specifically focusing on online English language teaching in Saudi Arabia were prioritized to yield insights most relevant to the local context. Sources not meeting these criteria, or those focused exclusively on areas outside online English language teaching, were excluded.

A thematic analysis approach was used to identify key trends, challenges, and recurring themes across the literature, with particular attention to both globally shared and Saudi-specific findings. Efforts were made to minimize bias in the source selection and analysis, though some limitations exist due to the exclusion of non-English publications and the specific databases and catalogues consulted, which may restrict the range of sources. The findings emerging from this literature review provide a foundation for comparing international best practices and challenges with those encountered in Saudi online English language education, with special emphasis on developing English speaking skills in this unique educational setting.

2. 2. Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework helps researchers explain existing knowledge, support the research process, and guide them in their understanding of relationships between variables and concepts. Theoretical frameworks also help researchers interpret and explain their findings. Theoretical frameworks can provide a basis for further research and new ideas. The most widely accepted theories that have redefined the roles of online teachers are the Community of Inquiry, Connectivism, and Online Collaborative Learning, in addition to several frameworks and models, particularly the Ni She et al. framework (Figure 1).

2.2.1. Online Teaching / Learning Theories

2. 2. 1. 1. Community of Inquiry

One of the most influential theories in online education is the community of Inquiry theory. Garrison and Akyol (2013, p. 106) assert that Community of Inquiry is “a group of individuals who collaboratively engage in purposeful critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding.” It should be emphasized that the internet and online learning management systems (LMS) are commonly regarded as a supporting framework rather than the actual learning community (Mthethwa-Kunene, 2020). These systems supply the essential tools and resources that enable educational activities to take

place, but they do not encompass the core of the community. The heart of a learning community lies in the interactions, relationships, and collective experiences of learners and teachers, which are not directly represented by the technological infrastructure itself. Community of Inquiry, as envisioned by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) and more recently by (Das & Madhusudan; 2023; Picciano, 2021; Vaughan & Lee Wah, 2020) is a framework of online learning that considers cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence as key elements of any successful teaching learning process. Day et al. (2013, p. 399) see cognitive presence as “the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through course activities, sustained reflection, and discourse.” Cognitive presence refers to the ability of students to think deeply about the content and to engage in higher order thinking activities, such as problem-solving, analysis and synthesis. Social presence refers to the ability of students to interact with others and collaborate with one another to solve problems and reach a common understanding. Affective expression (the capacity to express one's personality in online settings), open communication (the openness and freedom to communicate), and group cohesion (a sense of connectedness and commitment among the members of the group) are three aspects of social presence (Day et al., 2013). Teacher presence is “the design and facilitation of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing intended outcomes” (Oyarzun et al., 2017, p. 107). It refers to the ability of teachers to guide students through both cognitive and social processes so that they can reach a shared understanding. It is the teacher's ability to facilitate learning through effective use of technology such as video conferencing. Community of Inquiry theory maintains that teachers are facilitators who help students learn by encouraging them to ask questions, to engage with each other, and to develop their own conceptual understanding. Because Community of Inquiry theory emphasizes the importance of collaboration among learners, it sees both teachers and students as "learners" who are teaching and being taught to learn more.

The Community of Inquiry model has been widely used in higher education contexts to promote critical thinking, social presence, and cognitive presence among learners. University teachers can establish a more interactive learning environment that encourages critical thinking, inquiry, and collaboration among students by implementing the Community of Inquiry model. The model is designed to promote active participation and shared meaning-making among students, and it helps to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. While useful in promoting critical thinking and social presence among learners, this framework has some limitations that should be taken into consideration. One major critique is that much of the research on the framework is rooted in an objectivist-rational paradigm rather than a social constructivist one (Annand, 2019). Additionally, the framework may not be universally suitable for all types of learning situations since it was initially designed for higher education contexts. Furthermore, it has been criticized for placing excessive emphasis on cognitive presence, and not enough on affective or emotional presence. Finally, it can also be challenging to implement in practice, particularly in online learning environments. These limitations should be considered by teachers who are contemplating the use of the Community of Inquiry framework in their teaching practice.

2. 2. 1. 2. Connectivism

Connectivism, introduced by Siemens (2005) and Downes (2012) is a theory describing how knowledge is created by making connections with other people and resources. It focuses on the idea that knowledge is stored in interconnected networks and "distributed across a network of connections, and therefore that learning consists of the ability to construct and traverse those networks" (Downes, 2007, para. 1). Downes's (2008, p. 3) also assumes that "through the interaction of different sets of perspectives, a community can arrive at new knowledge." According to Al-Shehri's (2011), connectivism defines knowledge as a continuous stream of information that travels through networks of human and non-human channels,

comprised of various nodes such as individuals, groups, systems, resources, or communities. Learning is not limited to learners' internal construction of knowledge but can be found in external networks as well. Learning occurs when individuals make connections between pieces of information by navigating these networks. These networks can be formed with the use of technological tools like the Internet and databases.

According to connectivism, the terms "nodes" and "links" are commonly used to explain the process of obtaining and connecting information within a network (Herlo, 2017). In this context, students are viewed as nodes in the network, where a node can be anything that is able to connect to other nodes, such as a webpage, a book, a person, or any other object. The underlying principle of connectivism is that learning occurs through the creation of connections or links between different nodes of information, and the ongoing establishment and maintenance of such connections results in the formation of knowledge (Downes, 2022, 2020, 2012, 2008; Peter & Ogunlade, 2023; Picciano, 2021).

Siemens (2005) and Downes (2012) identify eight main principles of connectivism. These principles include the idea that learning is the process of creating connections between ideas and concepts, and that these connections can come from multiple sources, including non-human appliances. Additionally, the ability to recognize and maintain these connections is essential to continuous learning. Connectivism emphasizes that the acquisition of knowledge is more important than simply the memorization of facts. The theory also holds that learning is distributed across networks, and that accurate and up-to-date knowledge is the primary goal of all learners. Ultimately, the ideas behind Connectivism suggest that decision making is a continuous learning process, and that the information we hold to be true today might change tomorrow due to the constantly evolving information landscape.

Learning can occur through many different types of interactions: reading articles online; posting comments on social media sites; participating in online discussions, etc. Connectivism

theory holds that students learn best by interacting with other people (Herlo, 2017). Therefore, the teacher's role is not to provide knowledge, but to help students find information themselves and to connect with others to share their knowledge. The teacher's role is to create a creative, collaborative, relaxed and digitally enabled environment where they act as guides, advisors, and facilitators of networked learning.

As the expansion and transformation of knowledge persists, having access to essential information surpasses the importance of a learner's existing knowledge. Connectivism offers a learning framework that recognizes societal shifts, transforming learning from a solitary, personal endeavour to a more collaborative process. This approach sheds light on the necessary skills and tasks for learners to thrive in today's digital age.

Connectivism is a learning theory that has sparked considerable interest among scholars and researchers in the field of online education. However, not everyone agrees with its principles, and some have expressed criticisms regarding its effectiveness as a learning theory. Verhagen (2006), for instance, argues that connectivism is not a new theory of learning, but rather a "pedagogical view" that fails to provide a precise definition of learning itself. Indeed, some critics have expressed concern over the lack of empirical research supporting connectivism. It is argued, for example, that the assertions made by Downes and Siemens that technology has fundamentally changed the nature of learning are too extreme. According to these critics, technological advances may impact the way learning occurs, but they do not substantially alter its fundamental nature. Additionally, some critics argue that connectivism is too focused on networks and technology, and as a result, overlooks the importance of human interaction and the role of the teacher in the learning process. These criticisms raise important questions about the efficacy of connectivism as a theory of learning and highlight the need for further empirical research that addresses and clarifies these concerns.

The Connectivism theory has its limitations, but it also offers certain benefits. One significant advantage is the flexibility it provides to learners who can choose when to study. Another advantage is that the theory acknowledges and embraces the role of technology in the learning process, promoting that learning can occur through digital platforms such as social media, forums, videos, and blogs. Additionally, it recognizes that decision making is a part of the learning process and that students can learn from their devices at their convenience. Connectivism theory changes the traditional role of teachers in the learning process. In this theory, the teacher is seen as a facilitator rather than a source of knowledge. The teacher's role is to guide students in making connections and to help them develop their own learning networks. The focus is on nurturing and maintaining connections, and the teacher serves as a role model and guide for students**.**

2. 2. 1. 3. Online Collaborative Learning Theory

Online collaborative learning theory, developed by Harasim (2012, 2017) and Bates (2019) is rooted in the principles of constructivist epistemologies, which encourage learner-focused activities and the use of pedagogies and technologies that aim to enhance human intelligence and cognitive abilities through collaboration. Online Collaborative Learning stresses the significance of learning through collaboration, constructing knowledge, and utilizing the internet to revolutionize education. According to Harazim (2012):

> Online Collaborative Learning provides a model of learning in which students are encouraged and supported to work together to create knowledge: to invent, to explore ways to innovate, and, by so doing, to seek the conceptual knowledge needed to solve problems rather than recite what they think is the right answer. (p. 90)

This theory of online collaborative learning highlights the significance of three main stages of knowledge construction through dialogue. The first stage involves generating ideas, essentially brainstorming to gather diverse thoughts within a group. The second stage involves organizing these ideas by comparing, analysing and categorizing them through discussion and

argument. The final stage aims at achieving a level of intellectual synthesis, understanding and consensus, referred to as intellectual convergence (Harasim, 2017). This theory promotes students to collaborate in small groups (two or more students) to maximize their learning and engage them in knowledge building and sharing through active social interaction with other learners, as well as teachers online. Students who engage in collaborative learning develop greater conceptual understanding, problem-solving abilities, participation in class discussions and social skill development (Altowairiki, 2021; Bates, 2019; Harasim, 2017; Nazeef et al., 2024; Picciano, 2021). In online collaborative environments, the teacher plays a key role in providing learning resources, creating activities, guiding students through the learning process, evaluating their work and engaging them to participate actively in class discussions. Teachers play a key role in facilitating, managing, and mentoring students' collaborative learning to enhance outcomes as well as better social skills development among students. The teacher creates a supportive environment for students by encouraging them to work together, share their ideas and opinions, ask questions, and reflect on their experiences. The teacher also provides feedback on the work done by students. Emphasizing the role of the teacher, Harasim (2017, p. 124) assumes that: "the teacher acts as a representative and a gateway to the knowledge community within a particular discipline."

Online Collaborative Learning has received significant attention in recent years but is not immune to criticism. Scholars and researchers have criticized online collaborative learning, citing concerns about ensuring equitable participation among group members. Factors such as limited collaboration skills or a preference for socializing may hinder some students from contributing equally. Dominance by highly skilled students can also make others feel alienated or disengaged. Furthermore, collaborative learning can be time-consuming and less efficient, particularly when group dynamics are weak, or student motivation is low. It may not be suitable for all learners, especially those who prefer independent work. Studies have also shown that

collaborative learning does not always result in better learning outcomes than individual learning. However, proponents of online collaborative learning argue that it can support the development of high-level intellectual skills such as critical thinking, analytical thinking, synthesis, and evaluation.

The advancement of technology is changing the landscape of online collaborative learning in higher education. Modern learning environments now offer multiple media options and provide opportunities for group discussions, which enhance the learning experience and can lead to better performance. A positive relationship has been found between online collaborative learning and students' sense of community, which promotes cooperation, support, and a commitment towards group goals. Online group work can be embedded in teaching, with group objectives and discussions, along with the use of various video conferencing tools. Individual feedback from the teachers is also essential. Adding a variety of media elements such as video, podcasts, text, and interactive media helps to create a rich learning experience (Magen-Nagar & Shonfeld, 2017).

Online learning theories stress that online teachers should adjust to the ever-changing demands of the online learning environment and to use technology effectively. Teachers also need to build positive relationships with their students and create a collaborative and engaging online environment that is conducive to learning. Online teachers should encourage students to explore and discover knowledge for themselves and provide guidance and support when needed. The teacher should also foster a community of learners and provide feedback and assessment to ensure that the students are learning effectively.

2. 2. 2. The Roles of Online Teachers

With the ever-evolving digital revolution, the roles of online teachers are quickly changing. According to the theories of online learning, online teachers should be able to adapt to the ever-changing demands of the online environment (Ammenwerth, 2017). The

Community of Inquiry framework, Connectivism, and Online Collaborative Learning theories all acknowledge the critical role of online teachers in supporting and facilitating student learning in online environments. According to the Community of Inquiry framework, it is important to establish a collective, interactive presence in online education, and the teacher should act as a catalyst for interaction and conversation among learners. In addition, the teacher should participate in the organization and design of learning activities, provide feedback, and model inquiry-based learning techniques. As per Connectivism, teachers act as guides to help learners navigate and connect with diverse online resources, develop critical thinking, network analysis, and problem-solving skills. Online Collaborative Learning theory stresses the value of building a community and promoting collaboration among learners in online settings by fostering social engagement, modelling effective communication, providing feedback, and helping students develop collaborative skills. Overall, distinguished experts in this area frequently share the belief that online teachers should possess the necessary expertise to design and create effective online environments, facilitate communication and collaboration among learners, provide guidance and feedback, and enable deep and meaningful learning.

Researchers have identified various roles for online teachers based on online learning theories. and managerial roles. The roles proposed by Bawane and Spector (2009) consist of professional, pedagogical, social, assessor, administrator, technologist, advisor/adviser, and researcher. Berge (2009) introduces four roles: educational, social, administrative, and technical. The roles identified by Coppola et al. (2002) and Huang (2021) include cognitive, affective, and managerial roles.

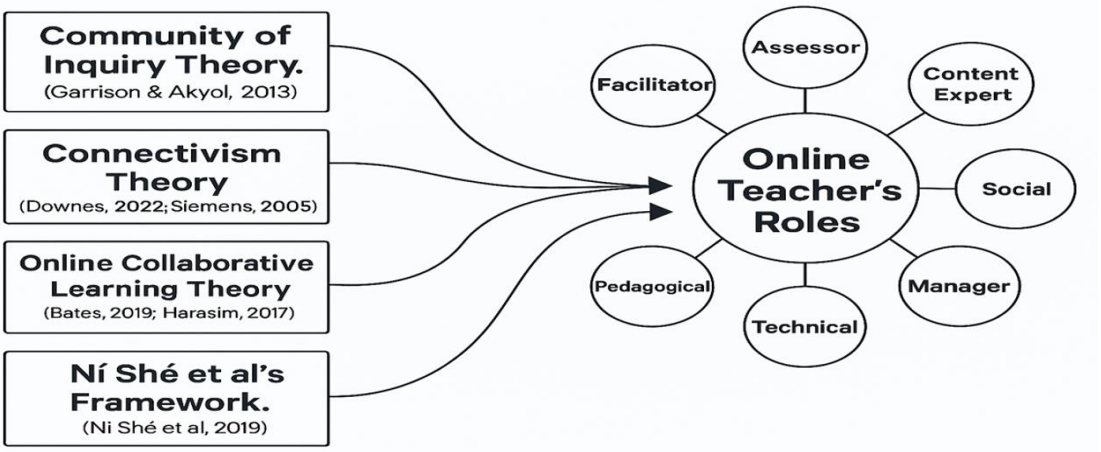
Numerous researchers have concurred that online English teachers should assume a range of roles beyond being merely knowledgeable about English Language. These roles encompass pedagogical, personal, social, and technical roles, as well as roles related to management, design and communication (Baran & Correia, 2014; Palloff & Pratt, 2011).

Albrahim's (2020) categorizes these roles into six interrelated roles: content expert, design, pedagogy, management, institutional, social, communication and technology. The ability to proficiently execute these roles is imperative for online English teachers to be effective in their teaching and supporting of students. The process-oriented framework developed by Abdus (2011) describes online teaching as having three sequential and iterative phases with defined roles: the "before" phase, involving preparation, planning, and design; the "during" phase, focused on facilitation, interaction, and feedback; and the "after" phase, which involves reflection. Ní Shé et al. (2019) outline ten online teacher roles of which they emphasize seven: managerial, pedagogical, social, technical, assessor, facilitator, content expert, instructional designer, researcher, evaluator. Recently, Huang (2020; 2019; 2017) has categorized the roles of online teachers as: cognitive, affective, and administrative. University teachers in Iraq an Oman have a significant role to play in online education, which can be categorized into three categories: professional, pedagogical, and social (Tawafak et al., 2023).

A model of online teachers' roles (Figure 1) proposed by Ní Shé et al. (2019) frames this research and serves as a basis to answer its questions. The model emphasizes roles of any online teacher including teacher of English as a foreign Language. These roles include facilitator role; content expert role; managerial role; pedagogical role; social role; technical role; and assessor role. The model used as the fundamental framework for this research study is from Ní Shé et al. (2019) work, which presents seven categorizations of teachers' roles.

Figure 1

Theoretical Frameworks that Redefined the Roles of Online Teachers



Note. Adapted from *Teaching Online Is Different: Critical Perspectives from the Literature* (p. 27), by C. Ní Shé, O. Farrell, J. Brunton, E. Costello, E. Donlon, S. Trevaskis, & S. Eccles, 2019, Dublin City University. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3479402

2. 2. 3. Teaching of English-Speaking Skills during Synchronous Online Classes

This section explores the nuances of teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes by addressing three crucial aspects: the fundamental speaking competencies required for successful communication, the unique characteristics of synchronous online classes, and the significant roles online teachers undertake to elevate students' speaking abilities within this interactive learning context.

2. 2. 3. 1. Speaking Competencies

Speaking is not just producing sounds, but rather a complex process that involves understanding the context, adhering to social norms, and using language accurately and appropriately. To become proficient in speaking, learners should develop the cognitive skills required to process information quickly and accurately, as well as the physical skills to produce sounds and articulate words correctly. Additionally, social skills are necessary to understand the cultural context of communication and use language in a socially appropriate way. According to Goh (2016, p. 145) speaking "involves dynamic interactions of mental,

articulatory and social processes." Becoming proficient in speaking requires ongoing practice and refinement of the cognitive, physical, and social skills to improve one's ability to communicate effectively in various situations. Burns (2013, p. 1967) suggests that speaking proficiency "involves increasing the ability to use these components in order to produce spoken language in a fluent, accurate and socially appropriate way, within the constraints of a speaker's processing."

Speaking is a multifaceted and intricate process that requires individuals to engage in multiple activities simultaneously. To be proficient, speakers should combine various abilities, knowledge, and procedures that are influenced by the circumstances of the situation. Successful communication involves creating culturally and socially appropriate speech that can be understood by the listener, while also managing real-time reactions and responses to what is being said.

Speaking competencies for learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) involve several components. These include the ability to accurately produce the sounds, stress, and intonation patterns of English, as well as the ability to speak fluently and confidently without frequent pauses, hesitations, or errors. Learners should also possess a wide range of vocabulary and use it appropriately, as well as demonstrate the ability to use English grammar rules and structures correctly when speaking. Additionally, learners should possess the ability to comprehend spoken English at varying speeds and levels of complexity, use English appropriately in different social and cultural contexts, and use appropriate discourse markers, transitions, and cohesive devices to organize ideas and communicate effectively in extended speech. Finally, learners should exhibit strategic competence, such as the ability to use communication strategies to overcome communication breakdowns, including paraphrasing, circumlocution, and clarification. To effectively teach speaking, important thinkers in this field often think alike that teachers should have knowledge of the various components that make up

speaking competence. Burns (2019) maintains that language speaking competence comprises ‘knowledge of language and discourse’, ‘core speaking skills’, and ‘communication and discourse strategies’ (Table 1).

Table 1

Components of Second Language Speaking Competence

	Speaking Competence Elements
Knowledge of Language and Discourse	➢ Being able to pronounce the language intelligibly at segmental and suprasegmental levels), ➢ Knowing the **grammar** and **vocabulary** of the language (spoken structures, grammatical features, lexis) ➢ Understanding how **stretches of connected speech** (discourse, genre) are organised, so that they are socially and pragmatically **appropriate** (register).
Core Speaking Skills	➢ Developing the ability to process speech quickly to increase **fluency** (e.g., speech rate, chunking, pausing, formulaic language, discourse markers). ➢ Being able to **negotiate speech** (e.g., building on previous utterances, monitoring understanding, repairing communication breakdown, giving feedback) ➢ **Managing the flow of speech** as it unfolds (e.g., initiating topics, turn-taking, signalling intentions, opening/closing conversations).
Communication and Discourse Strategies	➢ Developing **cognitive strategies** to compensate for limitations in language knowledge (e.g., circumlocution, paraphrasing, gestures, word coinage, approximation, avoidance) ➢ **Developing metacognitive strategies** (e.g., planning what to say, thinking consciously about how you say something) ➢ **Developing** interaction strategies (e.g., asking for clarification/repetition, reformulating, rephrasing, and checking comprehension).

Newton and Nation (2020) emphasize that an effective approach to teaching speaking should prioritize the development of both accuracy and fluency, while also integrating other language skills. To achieve this, four key aspects should be taken into consideration: meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development.

Meaning-focused input emphasizes providing students with opportunities to listen to and understand authentic language use in various contexts. The aim is to expose learners to a wide range of vocabulary, structures, and functions, helping them develop their speaking abilities. Activities supporting meaning-focused input may involve listening to podcasts or watching videos, followed by comprehension questions or discussions.

Meaning-focused output concentrates on enabling students to produce language that is both meaningful and relevant to their lives. Activities that foster meaning-focused output could include pair or group conversations, during which students share experiences and opinions, as well as role-plays and simulations that require students to use language to complete tasks or solve problems.

Language-focused learning centres on developing students' knowledge of the rules and structures of the language, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Activities assisting language-focused learning might involve guided practice of specific language points, such as verb tenses or idiomatic expressions, and pronunciation and intonation drills.

Fluency development aims to enhance students' ability to use language more quickly and accurately without sacrificing meaning. Activities promoting fluency development could include timed speaking tasks, like delivering short presentations on familiar topics, and more spontaneous speaking activities, such as describing pictures or responding to questions without prior preparation.

To master speaking English as a Second Language, learners should accurately produce English sounds, speak fluently and confidently, possess a rich vocabulary, use correct grammar, and appropriate communication strategies, and effectively communicate in different contexts.

2. 2. 3. 2. Characteristics of Synchronous Online Classes for Teaching Speaking

Synchronous online classes for teaching speaking skills refer to real-time, interactive virtual sessions where both the teacher and students are present simultaneously. According to Finkelstein (2006), the use of real-time interaction in an online learning environment serves a minimum of five crucial functions: 'instruction', which involves a structured approach within a specific online platform to guide learners towards their objectives; 'collaboration', which is the act of working together towards a common goal; 'support', which involves providing assistance and encouragement to learners; 'socialization', which refers to the development of social skills and interactions among learners; and 'expanded reach', which involves the ability to extend the learning experience beyond the traditional classroom setting.

During synchronous online classes designed to teach speaking skills, a variety of tools and resources can be employed to enhance the learning experience. Blau et al. (2017, p. 3) assume that “in recent years, synchronous technologies enable real-time interpersonal

interactions in cyberspace that create a social environment based on online infrastructure." Real-time online communication is made possible through platforms like Blackboard, Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, which serve as effective mediums for practicing speaking skills. Virtual whiteboards, such as Miro and Mural, not only promote collaboration but also enable teachers to present information visually, thereby enriching the learning process. To supplement these online classes, language learning apps like Duolingo and Babbel can be integrated into the curriculum, allowing students to continue practicing speaking skills outside of class. Additionally, speech-to-text software like Dragon NaturallySpeaking and Google Docs Voice Typing can be used to help students refine their pronunciation and speech clarity. Lastly, a wealth of materials for practicing and developing speaking skills can be found on websites such as BBC Learning English, EngVid, and TED Talks. Synchronous Online classes for teaching speaking skills have both advantages and disadvantages.

Synchronous online classes offer several advantages for teaching speaking skills, including real-time interactions that enable teachers to communicate instantly with students. Blau et al. (2017, p. 2) state that: "the main strength of synchronous e-learning lies in the real-time interactions it enables between the teacher and students and among peers." This fosters quick feedback and helps students improve their speaking abilities on-the-go by correcting mistakes. Various interactive virtual classroom features such as polls, chats, and breakout spaces enhance student engagement and enable active learning (Fernandez et al., 2022). Additionally, such online classes allow teachers to design personalized curriculums to cater to individual student needs. A sense of community is also fostered through teamwork and collaborative learning. Synchronous learning enables students to avoid feelings of loneliness or detachment, as they maintain constant interaction with others during the learning process (Xie et al., 2018). Moreover, the flexibility of online learning supports self-paced learning from any location, making it easier for teachers to connect with students from diverse backgrounds

(Martin & Parker, 2014). Furthermore, Synchronous online classes can reduce anxiety for learners who might be self-conscious or anxious about their speaking skills by providing a virtual environment that fosters more comfortable and relaxed practice (Zhang & Rahimi, 2014). Lastly, by teaching in an online environment, teachers can obtain immediate feedback on their teaching methods, allowing them to refine their teaching. Furthermore, virtual classroom platforms offer a wealth of real-time data and insights, including attendance tracking, chat participation, recorded sessions, and measures of student focus. This enables teachers to tailor their teaching styles to better meet their students' needs, ultimately enhancing the learning experience and fostering greater success. In addition, synchronous online classes offer a dynamic and flexible learning environment that enhances learners' speaking proficiency and reinforces their collaboration and teamwork skills.

However, there exist certain challenges associated with using synchronous online classes to teach speaking skills. One of the primary challenges is technical issues that may arise due to poor internet connectivity, software or hardware problems, and system crashes, which can disrupt the flow of the lesson and make it challenging to sustain learner engagement during online classes.

Secondly, online classes often have a limited time frame, which can present a challenge for teachers to cover all the necessary topics adequately. This may lead to course content being rushed, inadequate practice time for learners, and incomplete coverage of the required material.

Thirdly, synchronous online classes can restrict speaking opportunities for learners, as they may have fewer chances to participate in speaking activities due to limited interaction and discussion opportunities. This can also present challenges for teachers who need to evaluate speaking proficiency and provide targeted feedback.

Fourthly, synchronous online classes lack the personal interaction characteristic of traditional face-to-face classroom settings, making it difficult for teachers to establish rapport

and create a sense of community within the class. This can impede the creation of a supportive learning environment and negatively affect the learning experience. According to Fernandez et al. (2022), the fixed schedule and extended computer screen time associated with synchronous learning can cause stress. Additionally, low network connectivity and unstable internet can interrupt continuous learning, rendering this method less efficient. Finally, synchronous learning may suffer from inflexibility.

In conclusion, synchronous online classes for teaching speaking skills have many advantages, including real-time interaction, convenience, collaborative learning, engagement, and reduced anxiety. However, they also have some disadvantages, including technical issues, limited time, limited speaking opportunities, and lack of personal interaction. Teachers should be aware of these advantages and disadvantages while planning their lessons and use strategies to overcome the challenges. By incorporating the advantages and overcoming the disadvantages, synchronous online classes can be an effective way to learn and improve speaking skills.

2. 3. Online Teachers' Roles for Improving Speaking in Synchronous Online Classes

Due to the rapid advancement of technology, Synchronous online classes have become an essential means for teaching English Language and the development of speaking skills. Experts in this field usually agree that successful online teachers should master a range of roles to effectively teach speaking skills during synchronous online classes, including the facilitator, content expert, managerial, pedagogical, social, technical, and assessor roles.

2. 3. 1. Facilitator Role

As facilitators, online teachers play a crucial role in creating an engaging and interactive learning environment. This involves encouraging open communication and active participation among students. Online teachers expertly establish networks, foster connections between students and valuable learning resources, and encourage collaborative engagement and

interaction (Singh & Engeness, 2021). Teachers can use icebreakers and warm-up activities to help students feel comfortable and willing to share their thoughts. Establishing clear guidelines for group discussions and activities is essential, as well as monitoring interactions, providing feedback, and intervening when necessary. To promote a positive and inclusive learning environment, teachers can set up group activities that require discussion and collaboration among students. The facilitator role also includes fostering a sense of community among students, encouraging them to ask questions and provide feedback to one another (Bigné, 2018; Bogart, 2023).

2. 3. 2. Content Expert Role

As a content expert, Ní Shé et al. (2019, p. 32) assume that online teachers "Keep current in the content area to facilitate learning; selection and use of appropriate resources to match content and learning outcomes." Online teachers should possess a deep understanding of the subject matter, including language rules, pronunciation, and common mistakes. As content experts, they should prepare relevant and engaging materials, such as presentations, videos, and articles to supplement learning. Using real-life examples and practical exercises can help students better apply what they learn. Experts in this field usually agree that teachers should stay current with the latest trends and research in teaching speaking skills and use various teaching resources to enhance students' understanding of the subject matter. Authentic materials, such as news articles and podcasts, can be used to help students practice speaking skills in real-life contexts (Bigné, 2018; Bogart, 2023).

2. 3. 3. Managerial Role

Effective online teachers should be skilled managers, planning and organizing lessons to cover the necessary content and skills (Huang, 2021). Setting clear expectations and learning objectives for each class is essential. Teachers should manage time effectively, allocating sufficient time for practice and feedback. Monitoring student progress and adjusting teaching

strategies as needed is vital, as is maintaining accurate records and documentation (Bogart, 2023). The managerial role involves the efficient ‘organization’ and administrative management of the online learning process. In synchronous online environments, managerial skills are especially vital due to the constraints on instructional time and the simultaneous deployment of numerous technological tools (Grammens et al., 2022). Online tools, such as calendars and scheduling software, can aid in tracking assignments, deadlines, and class schedules. Regular communication with students about class progress and upcoming assignments is also crucial.

2. 3. 4. Pedagogical Role

The online English teacher's pedagogical role centres on interactive pedagogies and cognitive support, ensuring comprehensive learning experiences for students. Interactive pedagogies involve teaching strategies that promote communication, collaboration, and active participation, employing digital tools and platforms to create dynamic virtual environments. Cognitive support focuses on fostering students' mental processes and higher order thinking skills, essential for language comprehension, production, and evaluation (Martin et al., 2019, 2021). By carefully balancing these aspects, online English teachers can create engaging learning experiences that develop proficient language users.

In their pedagogical role, online teachers should employ a variety of teaching methods, such as direct instruction, guided practice, and collaborative learning. The integration of technology and multimedia resources can enhance learning experiences. Providing clear instructions and explanations, breaking down complex concepts into manageable steps, is essential for student comprehension (Bogart, 2023). Most research results support the thought that teachers should offer constructive feedback and encourage self-assessment, adapting teaching approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles and needs. Formative assessments, such as quizzes and surveys, can be used to gauge student understanding and

adjust teaching strategies accordingly. Summative assessments, such as presentations and essays, can evaluate students' mastery of speaking skills. To carry out their pedagogical roles, Tawafak et al. (2023, p. 8) propose that online teachers “design and prepare instructional strategies for the students, develop and use appropriate learning resources, use instructional methods in teaching, encourage participation among students, work on increasing students’ motivation and work on facilitating the study material.”

2. 3. 5. Social Role

Building rapport with students is a critical aspect of the social role of online teachers. Showing genuine interest in students' lives and experiences can encourage a sense of community and collaboration among students. Teachers in synchronous online settings should prioritize fostering social connections and cultivating genuine, long-lasting relationships with and among students. If not, students may become disengaged and decide to withdraw from the course (Bogart, 2023; Grammens et al., 2022). Teachers should address any issues of conflict or miscommunication promptly and fairly while modelling appropriate online etiquette and behaviour. Humour and storytelling can create an engaging and enjoyable learning experience. Most research results support the thought that teachers should create a safe and respectful learning environment where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions. Encouraging students to work in pairs or small groups for practice and collaboration is essential for developing speaking skills.

Establishing a sense of social presence in online classes calls for intentional efforts from the teacher to create a learning atmosphere that encourages inquisitive discussions, critical thinking, and idea sharing. Social presence can be broken down into three main components: affective communication, open communication, and group cohesion. Affective communication mainly relies on personal revelations, and humour. Open communication involves acknowledging, appreciating, and engaging with others' inquiries and input (Bigné, 2018). This

aspect of communication is closely tied to group cohesion, where members associate with a collective identity using names and inclusive language. Research has demonstrated a link between social presence and higher levels of student satisfaction (Conklin & Garrett Dikkers, 2021).

2. 3. 6. Technical Role

Findings from many studies suggest that online teachers should possess the technical skills necessary to assist students in navigating technology and ensuring their comfort (Martin et al., 2021). An effective online teaching platform, incorporating features such as screen sharing, chat, and breakout rooms, is essential for a successful learning experience. Troubleshooting technical issues promptly and efficiently is crucial to maintaining an effective learning environment. Teachers should provide clear instructions for students on using the platform and its tools, staying up to date with new technologies, and incorporating them into teaching practice. This technical role assumes that teachers can proficiently employ video-audio tools and chat discussion platforms to create accessible courses and resources that enhance the learning experience for students. Ensuring a stable internet connection and having a backup plan in case of technical difficulties is essential. Before each class, teachers should test the online teaching environment to ensure that everything is working correctly. Providing technical support to students who are having difficulty accessing or using the online platform is also necessary (Bigné, 2018; Bogart, 2023).

2. 3. 7. Assessor Role

The assessor's role includes the assessment and feedback provided to students. As assessors, online teachers should develop and implement assessment tools, such as quizzes, presentations, and self-assessments. Providing timely and constructive feedback on students' performance is essential. Many studies indicate the notion that teachers should track student progress, identify areas for improvement, and use assessment data to inform future lesson

planning and teaching strategies (Bogart, 2023; Grammens et al., 2022). Encouraging students to reflect on their learning and set personal goals for improvement is vital. Teachers should use rubrics and criteria to ensure fair and objective assessments. Ní Shé et al. (2019, p. 27) state: “In this role the online teacher creates a student-centred learning environment and encourages students to take ownership of their learning. The facilitator monitors and guides student interaction.” Employing a variety of assessment methods, such as self-assessments, peer assessments, and teacher assessments, can provide a comprehensive evaluation of students' speaking skills.

The effective teaching of speaking skills in synchronous online classes relies on developing essential speaking competencies, understanding the unique characteristics of such learning environments, and recognizing the critical roles played by online teachers (Table 2). By incorporating these aspects, teachers can create a comprehensive and engaging approach to enhance students' speaking abilities, ultimately fostering successful communication within synchronous online classes.

Table 2

Online Teachers' Roles for Improving Speaking Skills in Synchronous Online Classes

Online Teachers' Roles	Online Strategies
Facilitator Role	➢ Encourage open communication and active participation among students. ➢ Use engaging icebreakers and warm-up activities to help students feel comfortable. ➢ Establish clear guidelines for group discussions and activities. ➢ Monitor interactions, provide feedback, and intervene when necessary. ➢ Promote a positive and inclusive learning environment. ➢ Set up group activities that require discussion and collaboration among students. ➢ Encourage students to ask questions and provide feedback to each other. ➢ Foster a sense of community among students.
Content Expert Role	➢ Have a deep understanding of the subject matter being taught, including language rules, pronunciation, and common mistakes. ➢ Prepare relevant and engaging materials, such as presentations, videos, and articles. ➢ Use real-life examples and practical exercises to help students apply what they learn. ➢ Regularly update and expand your knowledge to stay current with the latest trends and research in teaching speaking skills. ➢ Use teaching resources, such as textbooks, audio, and video clips, and learning management systems, to enhance students understanding of the subject matter. ➢ Use authentic materials, such as news articles and podcasts, to help students practice speaking skills in real-life contexts.
Managerial Role	➢ Plan and organize lessons, ensuring they cover the necessary content and skills. ➢ Set clear expectations and learning objectives for each class. ➢ Manage time effectively, allocating sufficient time for practice and feedback. ➢ Monitor student progress and adjust teaching strategies as needed. ➢ Maintain accurate records and documentation. ➢ Use online tools, such as calendars and scheduling software, to keep track of assignments, deadlines, and class schedules. ➢ Communicate with students regularly, providing updates on class progress and upcoming assignments.
Pedagogical Role	➢ Employ a variety of teaching methods, such as direct instruction, guided practice, and collaborative learning. ➢ Use technology to enhance learning, including multimedia resources and interactive tools. ➢ Provide clear instructions and explanations, breaking down complex concepts into manageable steps. ➢ Offer constructive feedback and encourage self-assessment. ➢ Adapt teaching approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles and needs. ➢ Use formative assessments, such as quizzes and surveys, to gauge student understanding and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. ➢ Use summative assessments, such as presentations and essays, to evaluate students' mastery of speaking skills.
Social Role	➢ Build rapport with students by showing genuine interest in their lives and experiences. ➢ Encourage a sense of community and collaboration among students. ➢ Address any issues of conflict or miscommunication promptly and fairly. ➢ Model appropriate online etiquette and behaviour. ➢ Use humour and storytelling to create an engaging and enjoyable learning experience. ➢ Create a safe and respectful learning environment where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions. ➢ Encourage students to work in pairs or small groups to practice speaking skills and collaborate with each other.
Technical Role	➢ Master the online teaching platform and its features, such as screen sharing, chat, and breakout rooms. ➢ Troubleshoot technical issues promptly and efficiently. ➢ Provide clear instructions for students on how to use the platform and its tools. ➢ Keep up to date with new technologies and incorporate them into your teaching practice. ➢ Ensure a stable internet connection and backup plan in case of technical difficulties. ➢ Test the online teaching environment before the start of each class to ensure that everything is working correctly. ➢ Provide technical support to students who are having difficulty accessing or using the online platform.

2. 4. Roles of Online Teachers to Enhance Speaking Competencies

Online teachers play a critical role in fostering students' speaking competencies through synchronous online classes by assuming seven roles (facilitator role, content expert role, managerial role, pedagogical role, social role, technical role, assessor role). Each role contributes to enhancing students' knowledge of language and discourse, core speaking skills, and communication strategies.

As facilitators, online teachers encourage students to engage in vocabulary brainstorming sessions or grammar-focused discussions to strengthen their language knowledge. They create opportunities for students to practice pronunciation by conducting pronunciation drills or utilizing online resources. Teachers can use role-plays, simulations, or debates to increase students' fluency and the ability to negotiate speech. For managing the flow of speech, they may facilitate turn-taking exercises or encourage students to use conversation-cuing phrases. By facilitating group discussions and problem-solving tasks, teachers help students develop cognitive strategies, such as organizing information and adapting messages. To practice metacognitive strategies, they guide students through self-reflection after an activity (Huang, 2021). For interaction strategies, they create opportunities for students to practice clarification requests, paraphrasing, or backchanneling.

As content experts, teachers provide clear explanations, examples, and resources related to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. They may offer mini lessons on idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, or tense usage to deepen students' understanding. Teachers can model effective speaking practices, such as using appropriate pacing, intonation, or filler words. They can share tips on managing the flow of speech or negotiation techniques. Teachers can share examples of effective cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies in real-life contexts. They can offer insights on how to plan, monitor, and evaluate one's speaking

performance, as well as how to adapt to different communication situations (Huang, 2021; Martin et al., 2021).

In their managerial role, online teachers establish guidelines and objectives for language-focused activities, such as vocabulary quizzes, grammar exercises, or pronunciation practice sessions. They can assign specific language goals for students to achieve. Teachers organize and monitor speaking activities that promote fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech. They can assign roles to students during group discussions or debates, ensuring equal opportunities for speaking practice. Teachers schedule time for students to practice and reflect on their cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies. They may create a speaking strategies checklist for students to track their progress (Huang, 2021).

In their pedagogical role, teachers design activities that target vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, such as vocabulary-building games, sentence transformation tasks, or pronunciation-focused listening exercises. Teachers employ instructional strategies that focus on fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech. They may use timed speaking drills, conversation role-plays, or impromptu speeches to target these skills. Teachers incorporate activities that encourage students to practice cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies. They may use think-aloud protocols, self-assessment tools, or peer feedback sessions to help students develop these strategies (Martin et al., 2019, 2021; Tawafak et al., 2023).

To carry out their social role, numerous research outcomes highlight the concept that online teachers should foster a supportive and inclusive environment that enables students to feel comfortable discussing various language aspects, such as vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation. Teachers use icebreakers, team-building activities, or informal conversations to create opportunities for students to practice fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech. Teachers encourage students to share their cultural backgrounds and experiences,

promoting cultural awareness and empathy, and enhancing their ability to adapt cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies in diverse situations (Nordin et al., 2022).

In their technical role, teachers utilize multimedia resources, such as videos or interactive games, to engage students and enhance their language knowledge (Martin et al., 2021; Tawafak et al., 2023). Teachers use online tools like Flipgrid or VoiceThread to create speaking practice opportunities, targeting fluency, negotiation, and speech management. Teachers incorporate digital collaboration tools, such as Padlet or Google Docs, for students to practice cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies in an online setting.

As assessors, teachers use rubrics, checklists, or self-assessment tools to evaluate students' language knowledge, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. They assess students' ability to organize socially and pragmatically stretches of connected speech. Teachers assess students' fluency, negotiation, and speech management skills through speaking tasks, performances, and presentations. They provide feedback on areas of improvement and strategies for enhancing these skills. Teachers assess students' use of cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies through self-reflection, peer feedback, or evaluation rubrics. They provide targeted feedback to help students develop these strategies (Martin et al., 2019, 2021)

Online teachers assume multiple roles to enhance students' speaking competencies through synchronous online classes. By acting as facilitators, content experts, managers, pedagogues, social guides, technicians, and assessors, teachers create an engaging and supportive learning environment (Table 3). Through these roles, they enhance students' knowledge of language and discourse, core speaking skills, and communication strategies, ultimately empowering them to become effective and confident speakers.

Table 3

Roles of Online Teachers to Enhance Speaking Competencies

Online Teacher's Roles	Speaking Competencies	Strategies Examples to Enhance Speaking Competencies
Facilitator Role	Knowledge of language and discourse	➢ Encouraging students to engage in a vocabulary brainstorming session or a grammar-focused discussion to strengthen their language knowledge. ➢ Creating opportunities for students to practice pronunciation by conducting pronunciation drills or utilizing online resources.
	Core Speaking Skills	➢ Using role-plays, simulations, or debates to increase students' fluency and the ability to negotiate speech. ➢ Managing the flow of speech, the teacher may facilitate turn-taking exercises or encourage students to use conversation-cuing phrases.
	Communication and Discourse Strategies	➢ Facilitating group discussions and problem-solving tasks, the teacher helps students develop cognitive strategies, such as organizing information and adapting messages. Guiding students through self-reflection after an activity to practice metacognitive strategies. ➢ Creating opportunities for students to practice clarification requests, paraphrasing, or backchanneling to enhance interaction strategies.
Content Expert Role	Knowledge of language and discourse	➢ Providing clear explanations, examples, and resources related to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. ➢ Offering mini lessons on idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, or tense usage to deepen students' understanding.
	Core Speaking Skills	➢ Modeling effective speaking practices, such as using appropriate pacing, intonation, or filler words. ➢ Sharing tips on managing the flow of speech or negotiation techniques.
	Communication and Discourse Strategies	➢ Sharing examples of effective cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies in real-life contexts. ➢ Offering insights on how to plan, monitor, and evaluate one's speaking performance, as well as how to adapt to different communication situations.
Managerial Role	Knowledge of language and discourse	➢ Establishing guidelines and objectives for language-focused activities, such as vocabulary quizzes, grammar exercises, or pronunciation practice sessions. ➢ Assigning specific language goals for students to achieve.
	Core Speaking Skills	➢ Organizing and monitoring speaking activities that promote fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech. ➢ Assigning roles to students during group discussions or debates, ensuring equal opportunities for speaking practice.
	Communication and Discourse Strategies	➢ Scheduling time for students to practice and reflect on their cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies. ➢ Creating a speaking strategies checklist for students to track their progress.
Pedagogical Role	Knowledge of language and discourse	➢ Designing activities that target vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, such as vocabulary-building games, sentence transformation tasks, or pronunciation-focused listening exercises.
	Core Speaking Skills	➢ Employing instructional strategies that focus on fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech. ➢ Using timed speaking drills, conversation role-plays, or impromptu speeches to target these skills.
	Communication and Discourse Strategies	➢ Incorporating activities that encourage students to practice cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies. ➢ Using think-aloud protocols, self-assessment tools, or peer feedback sessions to help students develop these strategies.
Social Role	Knowledge of language and discourse	➢ Fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, the teacher enables students to feel comfortable discussing various language aspects, such as vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation.
	Core Speaking Skills	➢ Uses icebreakers, team-building activities, or informal conversations to create opportunities for students to practice fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech.
	Communication and Discourse Strategies	➢ Encouraging students to share their cultural backgrounds and experiences. Promoting cultural awareness and empathy. ➢ Enhancing their ability to adapt cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies in diverse situations.
Technical Role	Knowledge of language and discourse	➢ Utilizing multimedia resources, such as videos or interactive games, to engage students and enhance their language knowledge.
	Core Speaking Skills	➢ Using online tools like Flipgrid or VoiceThread to create speaking practice opportunities, targeting fluency, negotiation, and speech management.
	Communication and Discourse Strategies	➢ Incorporating digital collaboration tools, such as Padlet or Google Docs, for students to practice cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies in an online setting.
Assessor Role	Knowledge of language and discourse	➢ Using rubrics, checklists, or self-assessment tools to assess students' language knowledge, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. ➢ Evaluating students' ability to organize socially and pragmatically stretches of connected speech.
	Core Speaking Skills	➢ Assessing students' fluency, negotiation, and speech management skills through speaking tasks, performances, and presentations. ➢ Providing feedback on areas of improvement and strategies for enhancing these skills.
	Communication and Discourse Strategies	➢ Assessing students' use of cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies through self-reflection, peer feedback, or evaluation rubrics. ➢ Providing targeted feedback to help students develop these strategies.

Finally, it is crucial for teachers to recognize and acknowledge the unique challenges associated with teaching speaking skills online. These challenges involve modifying teaching techniques and resources to suit the virtual platform, technical problems that may arise during the virtual class, limited time for interaction, restricted communication opportunities, struggles in keeping students engaged, and accurately evaluating their spoken language proficiency.

According to Richards and Thompson (2023), one of the main challenges for online teachers is ensuring that all students are able to participate in discussions, rather than having a few individuals dominate the conversation. To address this, teachers need to intentionally manage online interactions and carefully balance their digital presence so that every student is encouraged to contribute, and a supportive, inclusive learning environment is maintained.

A lot of studies show the idea that teachers should be aware of these challenges and be prepared to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the needs of their students. For example, they can use visual aids and other multimedia resources to help students understand key concepts and ideas. They can also provide clear instructions and use technology to make it easier for students to communicate with each other. Additionally, teachers can set aside time for one-on-one interactions with students to help them overcome any obstacles they are facing. By understanding the unique challenges of teaching speaking skills online, teachers can help their students achieve their full potential.

In conclusion, Online teachers assume seven distinct roles – facilitators, content experts, managers, pedagogues, social guides, technicians, and assessors – to foster students' speaking competencies in synchronous online classes. Each role contributes to enhancing students' language knowledge, speaking skills, and communication strategies. Teachers are responsible for creating an engaging and supportive learning environment and adapting their teaching methods to address the unique challenges of teaching speaking skills online. The evidence from most studies point to the idea that teachers should recognize and adapt to challenges in teaching speaking skills online, such as modifying techniques, addressing technical issues, and ensuring student engagement. By carrying out their required roles, teachers can help their students develop their speaking skills and become more confident communicators in both academic and real-life settings.

2. 5. Challenges of Teaching Speaking Skills in Synchronous Online Classes

Teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes presents teachers with a multifaceted array of challenges that are recognized by scholars and in the literature. These factors can significantly hinder the instructional process and understanding them is essential for teachers to recognize the specific obstacles—ranging from students' low language proficiency and psychological barriers to systemic technological issues—that impact effective communication. Furthermore, the literature highlights that teachers must navigate a complex landscape involving a lack of engagement, limited personal interaction, social and cultural obstacles, and severe time constraints. These collective difficulties, including significant assessment challenges and environmental distractions, underscore the comprehensive intervention needs required to foster a productive online learning environment.

2. 5 .1. Low Language Proficiency

Low language proficiency refers to students' limited capacity to produce fluent, accurate, and socially appropriate spoken English. It includes pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and discourse organization. These are core components of second language speaking competence (Burns, 2019; Goh & Burns, 2012). Low proficiency creates barriers in online synchronous speaking. Learners face increased cognitive load, limited real-time correction, and reduced opportunities for practice. This often leads to frustration and avoidance of oral tasks (Kohnke, 2023; Phan, 2022).

Within governmental Saudi universities, students' low language proficiency presents an obstacle for teachers who conduct online speaking classes. Learners consistently show deficiencies in grammar accuracy, vocabulary range, and phonological control. These undermine their oral production capabilities (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Mahdi, 2024). These foundational weaknesses appear as repeated grammatical mistakes, limited lexical variety, and inadequate pronunciation. They severely restrict students' engagement in synchronous

speaking exercises and live discussions. In large virtual classrooms typical of public Saudi institutions, teachers struggle to facilitate meaningful interaction. Basic proficiency gaps prevent effective use of digital platforms for authentic communicative practice and fluency development (Al-Hassaani & Al-Saalmi, 2022; Alshammari, 2022).

Saudi students' limited English exposure prior to university compounds these proficiency challenges during online instruction. Secondary school curricula emphasize reading and grammar over oral skills. This leaves learners unprepared for spontaneous speaking demands (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Latif, 2023). Additionally, insufficient opportunities for real-world English practice outside the classroom, limited use of spoken English in everyday personal and professional contexts, and persistent speaking anxiety stemming from fear of making mistakes, shyness, and low confidence contribute to low language proficiency (Alrabai, 2016; Mahdi, 2024). The dominance of Arabic as the first language and medium of everyday communication, along with negative transfer or first language interference from Arabic structures—such as differences in syntax, phonology, and morphology—further restricts exposure and contributes to foundational weaknesses in oral production (Alrabai, 2016; Alfaifi & Saleem, 2024).

2. 5. 2. Psychological Obstacles

Psychological obstacles are internal emotional, cognitive, and behavioural barriers that negatively affect learners' willingness and ability to participate in learning tasks. In the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly for speaking skills in synchronous online classes, these obstacles include fear of making mistakes, language anxiety, lack of confidence, shyness, peer pressure, and low self-regulated learning. These factors limit students' effective engagement in speaking activities (Alrasheedi, 2020; Alharbi, 2025). In broader EFL settings, online environments intensify these challenges. Reduced physical interaction, limited non-verbal cues, and lack of immediate teacher feedback increase apprehension. The visibility on cameras heightens self-awareness, making learners more

hesitant to speak (Liu & Wang, 2023; Bárkányi & Brash, 2025). In Saudi universities, these elements further limit students' engagement during synchronous speaking sessions.

A persistent obstacle among English as a foreign language learners is the fear of making mistakes. This fear often stems from perfectionist attitudes or prior negative experiences where errors led to criticism. As a result, students become reluctant to speak. They prefer silence or excessive caution, which deprives them of opportunities for authentic communication and linguistic growth (Cancino & Cabello, 2024; Bárkányi & Brash, 2025). This fear leads to avoidance behaviours. It is especially pronounced when online sessions are recorded or visible to peers (Bárkányi & Brash, 2025; Wang & Zhang, 2021). In Saudi university contexts, this fear is more entrenched. Language learning is often performance-based, and students associate mistakes with social weakness or academic failure (Al-Mohanna, 2024; Alrasheedi, 2020; Mahdi, 2024).

Closely linked to this is language anxiety. This affective factor significantly hinders learners' expressive abilities. Anxious students struggle to retrieve vocabulary, organize ideas, and form coherent sentences. In synchronous online classes, the pressure of being visible and audible through cameras heightens self-awareness and emotional tension. This leads to avoidance, particularly among those fearful of public embarrassment or inaccuracy. Research in broader contexts indicates that online formats amplify anxiety due to social isolation, cognitive load, and reduced enthusiasm (Zhao, 2022; Wang & Zhang, 2021). In Saudi university contexts, physical symptoms such as shaking, sweating, or accelerated heartbeat further impair speech production (Alharbi, 2025; Alnefaie, 2024).

Another major challenge is lack of confidence. This impacts students' willingness to participate and accept constructive criticism. The result is a cycle of silence and inhibited practice that restricts oral proficiency development and reinforces inadequacy. Broader studies confirm that low confidence exacerbates hesitation in online speaking. It is often linked to

perceived incompetence or fear of evaluation (Bárkányi & Brash, 2025; Liu & Wang, 2023). In Saudi universities, learning environments emphasize correctness and authority. Confidence is tested more severely here. Learners' limited trust in their linguistic competence discourages spontaneous contributions during online interactions. Students with low confidence often overestimate judgment from teachers and peers. This leads to hesitation and reduced engagement (Alenezi & Mugaddam, 2023; Mahdi, 2024).

Shyness is another prominent emotional barrier. Shyness often manifests as reluctance to activate cameras or speak spontaneously in synchronous sessions because learners feel constantly observed. International research shows that shy English as a foreign language students in virtual classes frequently choose silence to avoid real-time judgment and heightened self-consciousness (Rahmi, (2024); Cancino & Cabello, 2024). Shyness hinders online participation. Learners report heightened self-consciousness in virtual settings (Zhao, 2022; Resnik et al., 2022). In a culturally conservative context like Saudi Arabia, modesty and social restraint are valued traits. Shy learners avoid direct participation in online discussions or speaking tasks. They fear misinterpretation or disapproval. This avoidance reduces practice frequency and limits feedback opportunities. Over time, the lack of speaking experience erodes interactive confidence and restricts improvement. When combined with the isolated nature of online learning, shyness can lead to disengagement. This diminishes exposure to authentic communicative situations (Alrasheedi, 2020; Al-Mohanna, 2024).

Peer pressure is a further psychological barrier with deep social roots. In synchronous online classes, webcam visibility and the potential for recorded sessions intensify students' fear that imperfect pronunciation, accent, or fluency will attract ridicule or judgment from classmates. This social pressure results in performance anxiety and silence during tasks. Peer judgment in online classes intensifies similar fears and contributes to reduced willingness to speak (Liu & Wang, 2023; Resnik et al., 2022; Rahmi, (2024). This challenge is particularly

acute in Saudi governmental universities. Collective classroom dynamics and face-saving norms heighten sensitivity to peer evaluation (Alrasheedi, 2020). In online settings, webcam visibility amplifies this fear. Recorded sessions make students feel scrutinized long after class ends. Consequently, peer pressure discourages linguistic risks and limits spontaneous communication (Alenezi & Mugaddam, 2023; Al-Mohanna, 2024).

Another contemporary obstacle in online English teaching is low self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning refers to learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their performance autonomously while maintaining motivation and accountability. In synchronous online English as a foreign language class, low self-regulated learning causes difficulties in managing time during live sessions, sustaining attention in speaking tasks, and self-monitoring oral output without constant teacher support. This deficit weakens persistence and amplifies emotional stress (Karacan, 2022; Apridayani et al., 2023). In Saudi synchronous settings, students with low self-regulated learning often fail to manage time, set goals, or sustain concentration in online lessons. This reduces oral practice and engagement. The deficit weakens persistence and amplifies emotional stress, especially without immediate teacher support (Alharbi, 2025; Al-Mohanna, 2024).

2. 5. 3. Lack of Engagement

Lack of engagement occurs when students exhibit reduced behavioural, cognitive, and social participation in learning activities. This reduction significantly hinders the development of speaking skills in synchronous online classes, where active involvement is indispensable for oral practice, immediate feedback, and progressive improvement. In synchronous environments, which enable real-time interaction akin to face-to-face communication, learners require sustained participation to engage in spontaneous dialogue, receive on-the-spot corrections from instructors or peers, and iteratively refine their pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Without sufficient participation, learners miss repeated opportunities to produce

spoken English in authentic contexts, thereby impeding the building of fluency and confidence in English communication.

Behavioural engagement encompasses observable actions, such as participating in discussions, completing assigned tasks, and maintaining focus during lessons. In English as a Foreign Language research context, behavioural engagement manifests as students actively joining speaking activities, responding promptly to conversational prompts, or persisting with pronunciation practice despite common distractions such as poor internet connectivity or technical glitches (Fredricks et al., 2004; Wang & Hofkens, 2020). Low behavioural engagement frequently manifests in prolonged silence, passive observation, or minimal verbal contributions, which severely limits speaking development by reducing the volume and quality of oral output essential for skill automatization.

Cognitive engagement involves deliberate mental effort to achieve deep understanding of the material, apply effective learning strategies, and continuously monitor one's own comprehension. This dimension includes learners critically analysing English dialogues, employing self-regulation techniques to facilitate vocabulary recall during real-time exchanges, or systematically reflecting on grammatical errors produced in virtual role-plays and interactive tasks. High cognitive engagement supports deeper processing of linguistic input and output, as well as the strategic deployment of communication strategies, thereby advancing speaking proficiency; in contrast, low cognitive engagement results in superficial processing, passive reception of content, and consequently reduced progress in oral language skills (Sinatra et al., 2015; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012).

Social engagement refers to the processes of building interpersonal relationships and experiencing a sense of connection through collaborative interactions with peers and instructors. It encompasses forming bonds during structured group speaking tasks, sharing cultural insights in online breakout rooms or discussion forums, and providing mutual

encouragement and constructive feedback during interactive sessions. Strong social engagement cultivates a supportive classroom community that fosters a sense of belonging, reduces inhibition, and motivates greater participation in speaking activities; however, the inherent isolation of virtual settings can weaken these relational ties, leading to diminished motivation and reluctance to engage orally (Fredricks et al., 2019; Wang & Hofkens, 2020).

The vulnerability of speaking skill development in synchronous online classes stems from the mode's reliance on immediate, reciprocal interaction—elements that are indispensable for practicing pragmatic competence, turn-taking, negotiation of meaning, and real-time error correction. Disengagement in these settings not only curtails individual practice but also deprives learners of exposure to varied models of spoken English from classmates, limiting the naturalistic input and output cycles that are critical for fluency, accuracy, and communicative effectiveness.

In Saudi governmental universities, students frequently encounter substantial difficulties in participating in online speaking activities, attributable to pervasive home-based distractions, diminished intrinsic motivation, and discomfort with virtual interaction formats that may feel less natural or more exposing than traditional classrooms. These persistent issues occur despite certain positive experiences with online learning tools and platforms. Compounding factors include excessively large class sizes—where groups of 30–50 students exceed the optimal 8–12 range for speaking practice—which restrict individual speaking turns and personalized feedback. These are joined by cultural preferences that favor direct, face-to-face interaction over mediated virtual exchanges, all of which collectively exacerbate reduced engagement in synchronous English classes (Alutaybi & Alfares, 2024; Al Shlowiy, 2021; DeKeyser, 2007; Sieber, 2005; Tomei & Nelson, 2019).

2. 5. 4. Lack of Personal Interaction

Lack of personal interaction constitutes the limited face-to-face communication and absence of non-verbal cues in synchronous online English-speaking classes, creating significant obstacles for effective teaching and learning. In English as a foreign language context, this absence reduces interaction quality and complicates real-time teaching (Apridayani et al., 2024; Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2022). In governmental Saudi universities, teachers face difficulty gauging students' understanding and engagement during speaking activities without facial expressions, gestures, or immediate physical responses. This absence frequently leads to misinterpretations and confusion, hindering clear communication and the learning process. Saudi teachers often struggle to read subtle signs of comprehension or confusion through screens, making real-time adjustments to instruction challenging in large virtual classrooms (Al Mahmud, 2022; Hamad & Dafaallah, 2024).

The lack of personal interaction also makes it challenging for teachers to provide immediate feedback, which impedes students' progress in developing speaking skills. In foreign language contexts, the absence of non-verbal cues similarly reduces interaction quality, increases learner anxiety, and complicates feedback delivery, often leading to diminished speaking participation and motivation (Guo & Asmawi, 2024; Apridayani et al., 2024). In Saudi governmental universities, where direct teacher guidance remains culturally expected, delayed corrections limit learners' ability to improve pronunciation, fluency, and confidence during online sessions (AbdAlgane, 2024; Alhaider, 2023; Alharbi, 2024).

Reduced rapport building presents another barrier in online English as a foreign language context, where trust between teachers and students forms the foundation for confident speaking practice. Limited rapport exacerbates hesitation and disengagement, with learners reporting feelings of isolation and reluctance to speak without established interpersonal bonds (Resnik et al., 2022; Zhao, 2022). Without personal interactions, students hesitate to share ideas

or take linguistic risks, particularly in large governmental university classes like in Saudi universities characterized by hierarchical dynamics (Alzain, 2025).

2. 5. 5. Social and Cultural Obstacles

Social and cultural obstacles encompass large class sizes, limited interaction time, social isolation, cultural communication differences, language barriers, cultural sensitivities, excessive mother tongue use, negative attitudes toward English, and limited English conversations that hinder effective teaching of English-speaking skills in synchronous online classes (Sieber, 2005; Liu et al., 2010). In governmental Saudi universities, large class sizes of 30-50 students exceed the optimal 8-12 range for speaking practice, making pair work or breakout rooms impractical. This restricts individualized feedback, causing weaker students to struggle while technical difficulties in oversized virtual groups reduce individual speaking time and engagement (Alutaybi & Alfares, 2024).

Excessive use of Arabic represents a pervasive social-cultural obstacle in Saudi online English as a foreign language speaking classes, where students default to their native language during discussions despite English-only instructions. This tendency emerges strongly when encountering difficult vocabulary, complex ideas, or emotional topics, as Arabic provides comfort and fluency. In governmental universities, where students share linguistic backgrounds, entire breakout rooms often revert to Arabic conversations, minimizing English practice opportunities. Teachers observe rapid code-switching during challenging tasks, with students explaining concepts to peers in Arabic rather than practicing target language negotiation (Alshehri, 2025).

Students in Saudi online classes often feel isolated, making it difficult to form peer connections essential for language learning motivation and support (Gillett-Swan, 2017; Al Mahmud, 2022). In governmental universities where communal learning prevails, this social disconnection reduces willingness to practice speaking skills. Saudi students accustomed to

face-to-face peer encouragement experience heightened isolation through screens, diminishing collaborative dialogue opportunities. Teachers should implement structured peer pairing, virtual study groups, and regular check-ins to combat isolation and foster social bonds necessary for sustained speaking practice and confidence development (Jeon & Lee, 2023). In broader international English as a foreign language context, online isolation similarly leads to reduced motivation and participation in speaking tasks, with learners reporting emotional disconnection and lower willingness to engage verbally without strong peer ties (Resnik et al., 2022; Zhao, 2022).

Negative attitudes toward English among Saudi university students arise from several interconnected factors. Broader social influences, such as limited family support for out-of-class practice and societal expectations that prioritise exam success over communicative competence, restrict English to a mere school subject and reduce enthusiasm (Daif-Allah, 2020; Qurban & Meccawy, 2023). Misalignment between university instruction level and students' actual proficiency—stemming from school backgrounds with minimal communicative practice—leads to feelings that English is "beyond their ability". Limited real-world exposure and highly artificial classroom tasks (controlled dialogues and exam drills) make the language feel disconnected from daily life (Kikuchi, 2015). Narrow instrumental motivation focused on passing exams or securing jobs, rather than intrinsic interest or enjoyment, results in minimal effort and rapid frustration (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Persistent high-stakes assessment pressure and repeated low achievement intensify anxiety, avoidance of speaking/listening, and the belief that English is "too hard" (Alnefaie, 2024), while course materials irrelevant to students' majors or everyday lives reinforce perceptions of English as an imposed academic hurdle (Qurban & Meccawy, 2023).

Cultural differences significantly impact speaking instruction in diverse Saudi university classrooms. Understanding communication styles—direct versus indirect, formal

versus informal—and recognizing cultural sensitivities proves essential for inclusive learning environments (Liu et al., 2010; Kim & Lee, 2023). Saudi students often prefer indirect communication and avoid confrontation, creating challenges when practicing direct English discourse. Teachers must adapt methods using mixed language approaches, provide clear instructions, and offer multiple clarification opportunities. Cultural awareness training equips teachers to navigate these differences effectively during synchronous speaking activities (Al-Qahtani & Al-Zahrani, 2023). Globally, cultural mismatches in online English as foreign language classes lead to misunderstandings and reduced speaking participation, with learners from high-context cultures facing similar barriers to direct expression and risk-taking (Guo & Asmawi, 2024).

Limited prior English conversations represent a foundational social obstacle for Saudi English as a foreign language students entering university level, where most have minimal real-world speaking exposure beyond rote textbook dialogues (Alaraj, 2024). This scarcity creates anxiety during spontaneous online discussions requiring authentic language negotiation, topic development, and conversational repair strategies. Students freeze when encountering unfamiliar topics or unexpected questions, lacking experience navigating natural discourse flow (Alamri & Qasem, 2024).

The challenge of language barriers in the English as a Foreign Language context is a multifaceted construct. Jamshidnejad (2020) conceptualises these barriers as a combination of linguistic gaps—specifically in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar—psychological inhibitions such as anxiety and the fear of making mistakes, and sociocultural mismatches that collectively obstruct spontaneous oral communication. These barriers become acutely pronounced when teaching speaking skills lively online to English students in Saudi governmental universities. Synchronous sessions on platforms like Blackboard or Zoom amplify the issues through absent non-verbal cues, delayed corrections, and reduced teacher-

student rapport—elements culturally expected in hierarchical Saudi classrooms—leading to student hesitation, freezing on unfamiliar topics, and diminished fluency and confidence (Alhaider, 2023; Alzain, 2025; Faqihi, 2024).

Cultural sensitivities demand careful navigation during speaking activities to maintain Saudi students' comfort and participation. Teachers must avoid controversial topics, respect cultural taboos, and use inclusive language appropriate for conservative university contexts (Kim & Lee, 2023). Gender dynamics, religious references, and social hierarchy awareness prove particularly crucial in mixed Saudi classrooms. Creating safe spaces through ground rules, topic pre-selection, and sensitivity training fosters open communication. By modelling cultural respect, teachers build trust essential for risk-taking in speaking practice (Al-Rashid, 2024). In non-Saudi English as a Foreign Language setting, cultural sensitivities similarly inhibit open speaking, with learners avoiding topics due to taboos or hierarchy, leading to reduced participation unless teachers foster inclusive, culturally responsive environments (Liu et al., 2010; Apridayani, 2024).

2. 5. 6. Technological Challenges

In the contemporary digital era, the shift to online learning—particularly in the delivery of English-speaking skills through synchronous online classes—presents a distinct set of technological challenges that significantly affect both students and instructors (Al Mahmud, 2022; Cambridge University Press, 2018; Nordin et al., 2022; Zalat et al., 2021).

A primary challenge encountered by students and teachers is the absence of adequate infrastructure. Many individuals lack access to the essential hardware and software necessary for synchronous online classes focused on speaking practice, including computers, headphones, microphones, or up-to-date software and operating systems. To mitigate these impediments, educational institutions should endeavour to furnish requisite resources and

assistance, thereby guaranteeing equitable access to appropriate technology for all students and teachers involved in online English-speaking instruction.

Another prominent technological barrier is unreliable internet connectivity. Unstable or sluggish internet connections frequently cause interruptions in audio and video during synchronous online sessions, impeding students' effective participation in speaking activities. Such disruptions often engender frustration, disengagement, and diminished opportunities for oral practice essential to developing English speaking proficiency. To counteract this issue, scholars in the field generally concur that instructors should incorporate asynchronous activities, enabling students to develop speaking skills independently of a stable, real-time connection. Furthermore, educational institutions can allocate resources to enhance internet infrastructure, thereby fostering greater reliability (Nordin et al., 2022, p. 412).

Limited access to personal devices—such as laptops, tablets, or smartphones—constitutes an additional obstacle that restricts students' participation in synchronous online classes designed for English speaking practice. This digital divide disproportionately impacts learners from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby potentially intensifying pre-existing educational inequalities in language skill acquisition. To alleviate this concern, schools and universities may investigate provisions for supplying devices to disadvantaged students or forge collaborations with community organizations to facilitate broader technology access.

Finally, insufficient teacher training represents a substantial impediment to efficacious online instruction in English speaking skills during synchronous sessions. Delivering speaking instruction online demands pedagogical approaches distinct from those employed in traditional face-to-face classrooms. Instructors lacking comprehensive preparation in online teaching methodologies and digital tools may encounter difficulties in designing effective speaking lessons and sustaining student engagement in oral production tasks. Accordingly, educational institutions should prioritize investment in robust professional development programs to equip

teachers with the requisite competencies for addressing the complexities of teaching speaking skills in an online synchronous environment.

In the context of Saudi governmental universities, Vision 2030 has facilitated the establishment of advanced technological infrastructure, evidenced by the widespread implementation of learning management systems such as Blackboard, provision of device subsidies, and expansion of digital resources (O'Keefe, 2020; Qurban & Meccawy, 2023). Notwithstanding these developments, persistent challenges undermine the efficacy of synchronous speaking sessions for English language learners. Notably, limited proficiency in utilizing sophisticated interactive tools for real-time feedback and student engagement constrains the facilitation of productive speaking activities (Nazim & Alzubi, 2025; Al-Khresheh, 2025; Almijiwl, 2022). Specific difficulties, including the management of breakout rooms and the monitoring of oral participation, diminish the overall quality of interaction and student involvement in developing speaking skills (Alfares, 2024; Alharbi, 2025).

2. 5 .7. Time Constraints

Time constraints hinder effective synchronous online English-speaking instruction. These barriers include limited class duration and large enrolments. Instructors struggle with insufficient time for speaking practice. Often, this practice lasts less than 15–30 minutes per session. Educators face difficulties balancing content delivery with interactive activities. Students also receive inadequate opportunities for individualized feedback (DeKeyser, 2007; Mounika & Thamarana, 2018; Sieber, 2005; Tomei & Nelson, 2019).

In governmental Saudi universities, these issues are especially pronounced. Class sizes are typically large. They often exceed 30–40 students. Semester schedules are also rigid. Fixed 50-minute sessions must cover several areas. These include lesson introduction and content delivery. They also include practice activities, assessment, and technical setup. This leaves

minimal time for extended oral interaction. It also restricts meaningful speaking practice (Alharbi, 2024; Alhaider, 2023; Aloud, 2022; Al-Wossabi, 2024).

Traditional lecture-based approaches compound this structural challenge. These methods prioritize content coverage over communicative production. This creates ongoing instructional tension. It further restricts oral proficiency development (Alhaider, 2023). Ultimately, these constraints hinder students' fluency and confidence. They also contribute to teacher burnout. Instructors struggle to balance essential material delivery with interactive speaking tasks. These struggles occur in overcrowded virtual environments (Mounika & Thamarana, 2018; Tomei & Nelson, 2019).

Time constraints severely limit individualized feedback and assessment during Saudi governmental university speaking classes. With 30-50 students per session, comprehensive oral evaluation proves impractical within fixed timeframes (Aloud, 2022; Alhaider, 2023; Al-Wossabi, 2024). In large online synchronous classes at Saudi universities, teachers struggle to provide meaningful, personalized feedback on speaking due to high enrolments (often exceeding 30–85 students) and short session durations. This results in collective rather than individual corrections, reduced oral assessment depth, and challenges in monitoring student progress effectively.

2. 5. 8. Distractions

Distractions challenges refer to environmental and behavioural interruptions—social media notifications, background noises, and multitasking—that hinder students' concentration and active participation in synchronous online English-speaking practice (Ramakarsinin & Baskaran, 2021; Kao, 2023). In Saudi governmental universities, when students join classes from home environments, these distractions prove particularly disruptive during speaking activities requiring sustained focus. Family members, household chores, television sounds, and mobile notifications frequently interrupt oral practice, reducing engagement and fluency

development. Saudi teachers face heightened challenges managing diverse home settings lacking dedicated learning spaces characteristic of traditional university classrooms (Al Shlowiy, 2021; Abdel Latif & Alhamad, 2023).

Social media notifications represent a primary distraction source during Saudi online English as a foreign language speaking classes, constantly diverting students' attention through message alerts, application updates, and platform pings. This digital interference disrupts speaking flow, causing mid-sentence pauses and fragmented discourse as learners instinctively check phones. In governmental universities serving tech-savvy youth, smartphone addiction compounds concentration difficulties during live discussions (Al Shlowiy, 2021).

Background noises such as family conversations, television audio, cooking sounds, or neighbourhood disturbances significantly disrupt Saudi students' concentration during online speaking activities. Home learning environments typical in governmental university contexts lack soundproofing, with multiple household members sharing limited spaces. These persistent interruptions break speaking rhythm, increase anxiety, and reduce participation confidence (Al Shlowiy, 2021; Abdel Latif & Alhamad, 2023).

Multitasking emerges as another pervasive distraction in Saudi online English as a foreign language classes, where students simultaneously handle emails, other coursework, messaging, or browsing while attempting speaking tasks. This divided attention prevents full engagement with oral activities, producing shallow participation and mechanical responses lacking authentic communication. Governmental university students balancing heavy academic loads across multiple courses prove particularly susceptible to task-switching behaviours (Al Shlowiy, 2021).

2. 5. 9. Assessment Challenges

Assessment challenges involve technical issues, limited non-verbal cues, time constraints, and difficulties detecting spontaneous speech that hinder accurate evaluation of

students' speaking abilities in synchronous online classes (Rohadi, 2023; Nordin et al., 2022). Poor audio and video quality and platform delays frequently disrupt online speaking assessments for Saudi university learners, leading to frustration and increased anxiety over performance. Such technical failures also hinder accurate pronunciation and fluency evaluation, weakening assessment validity. Additionally, large class sizes make thorough oral monitoring and timely feedback difficult within the rigid timeframes of Saudi higher education online courses (Al-Nofaie, 2020).

In the Saudi online English language assessment context, the absence of nonverbal cues represents a challenge for teachers evaluating speaking skills. Teachers cannot observe students' facial expressions, body language, or eye contact, which are essential indicators for assessing learners' confidence, comprehension, and engagement during speaking tasks. This visual limitation is compounded by students frequently keeping their cameras off and muting their microphones (or taking excessive time to unmute when called upon), which further restricts teachers' ability to interpret hesitation, judge understanding, or gauge emotional states through screen-based interaction. Many students refuse to activate their cameras due to privacy concerns, cultural factors, or discomfort, while opting for chat-based responses instead of verbal participation, leading to "black box" classes with minimal real-time feedback (Almekhled & Petrie, 2024; Al-Jarf, 2021). These combined factors may lead to misinterpretations and incomplete evaluations of speaking proficiency (Aladsani, 2022). The visual and participatory barriers particularly affect assessment accuracy, as teachers lose critical nonverbal and engagement cues that are readily available in face-to-face settings (Nordin et al., 2022; Fauziah & Anisah, 2022).

Strict time limits in synchronous Saudi university classes prevent comprehensive speaking assessment, forcing teachers to prioritize content delivery over thorough oral evaluation. Standard 50-minute sessions leave insufficient time for individual student

assessments, resulting in superficial fluency and accuracy checks rather than detailed proficiency analysis. This rushed evaluation hinders targeted feedback essential for skill improvement, particularly affecting weaker speakers who require extended practice (Rohadi, 2023).

Evaluating spontaneous speech proves particularly challenging in Saudi online environments, where teachers struggle to distinguish authentic responses from pre-prepared answers during live speaking tasks. Students can easily access notes, translations, scripts, or external assistance off-camera—often due to the lack of direct supervision and screen-sharing limitations—which undermines the assessment of true communicative competence and fluency (Jalilzadeh et al., 2024). This issue is exacerbated by high cheating prevalence in online assessments, as reported in Saudi higher education, where non-invigilated settings facilitate such behaviours and compromise evaluation authenticity (Alsaedi, 2024; Al Roomy, 2022). Recent studies highlight that these challenges persist post-COVID, affecting the reliability of speaking proficiency judgments and prompting calls for innovative, integrity-focused assessment designs (Alzubi & Nazim, 2025).

Group speaking assessment presents monitoring challenges in large Saudi online classes, where teachers cannot effectively track individual contributions, manage dynamics, or ensure equitable participation. Breakout room supervision proves logistically difficult with 30-50 students divided across multiple virtual spaces simultaneously. Governmental university teachers facing these constraints implement structured rotation schedules, contribution tracking sheets, peer evaluation forms, and representative reporting protocols. Digital tools recording group interactions supplement teacher observation, though technical limitations persist. These systematic approaches ensure fair assessment despite overwhelming monitoring demands characteristic of Saudi public higher education contexts (Al-Ghamdi, 2022).

As shown in Table 4, teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes in Saudi contexts faces multiple challenges. These include low language proficiency (limited vocabulary, grammar difficulties, mispronunciation of words, and inability to understand or organize connected stretches of speech), psychological obstacles (anxiety, fear of committing mistakes, lack of confidence, shyness, and peer pressure), lack of engagement (behavioural, cognitive, and social), lack of personal interaction (misinterpretation of responses, limited opportunities for providing immediate feedback, reduced rapport building, and fewer practice chances), social and cultural obstacles (limited English conversation opportunities, inadequate individual attention in large classes, and cultural barriers), technological challenges (poor internet infrastructure, lack of connectivity, inadequate access to devices), time constraints, distractions, and assessment challenges (limited non-verbal cues, difficulty detecting spontaneous speech, group assessment issues, unfair evaluation, assistance from others, and plagiarism).

Table 4

Challenges of Teaching Speaking Skills in Synchronous Online Classes

Challenges / Difficulties	Description
Low Language Proficiency	➢ Limited vocabulary ➢ Grammar difficulties ➢ Mispronouncing words ➢ Inability to understand or organize connected stretches of speech ➢ Inability to compensate limitations in language knowledge
Psychological Obstacles	➢ Fear of committing mistakes ➢ Anxiety ➢ Lack of confidence ➢ Shyness ➢ Peer pressure
Lack of Engagement	➢ Lack of behavioural Engagement ➢ Lack of cognitive Engagement ➢ Lack of social Engagement
Lack of Personal Interaction	➢ Misinterpretation of responses ➢ Difficulty in providing immediate feedback ➢ Limited opportunities for Practice ➢ Reduced rapport building ➢ Technical issues
Social and Cultural Obstacles	➢ Limited English conversation opportunities ➢ Attitude towards English ➢ Use of mother tongue ➢ Insufficient opportunities for individualized attention in large classes ➢ Inadequate social integration ➢ Different cultures with varying communication styles ➢ Encouraging cultural exchange ➢ Addressing language barriers ➢ Recognizing cultural sensitivities
Technological Challenges	➢ Lack of proper infrastructure ➢ Poor internet connectivity ➢ Limited access to devices ➢ Inadequate teacher training
Time Constraints	➢ Large class size ➢ Limited class time ➢ Balancing content and practice ➢ Providing individualized feedback and assessment
Distractions	➢ Maintaining student engagement ➢ Monitoring student participation ➢ Balancing flexibility and structure
Assessment Challenges	➢ Technical issues ➢ Limited non-verbal cues ➢ Time constraints ➢ Difficulty in detecting spontaneous speech ➢ Group assessment challenges ➢ Ensuring a fair and consistent assessment ➢ Unauthorized resources ➢ Assistance from others ➢ Plagiarism

2. 6. Teaching English Speaking Skills Online in Saudi Governmental Universities

2. 6. 1. English Language in Governmental Saudi Universities

English language proficiency in Saudi universities has become a topic of immense importance in recent years. Focus is placed on improving English language proficiency, given its crucial role in communication and collaboration in today's globalized, technology-oriented world. The Saudi government and the Ministry of Education have implemented several measures to enhance English language proficiency among university students. These measures include the establishment of language centres and institutes in universities, mandatory English courses for university students, providing professional development, collaborating with international institutions, and implementing technology-based language learning.

One of the measures is the establishment of language centres and institutes in universities across the country. These centres provide students with access to language resources, such as books, audio and video materials, and language software. They also offer language courses and workshops to help students improve their language skills. Another measure is the implementation of mandatory English courses for university students. These courses are designed to provide students with a solid foundation in English language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The courses are integrated into the curriculum of many academic programs, ensuring that all students can develop their language skills.

Professional development is also provided to university faculty members to enhance their English language proficiency. This includes training programs, workshops, and seminars that focus on improving their language skills and teaching methods. This ensures that faculty members are equipped with the necessary skills to effectively teach English language courses to students.

Collaboration with international institutions is another measure taken to enhance English language proficiency among university students. This includes partnerships with universities and language institutes in other countries to provide students with opportunities to study abroad and participate in language exchange programs. These collaborations also provide opportunities for faculty members to engage in research and professional development activities.

Even with the growing government backing for English education in Saudi Arabia, the actual progress in English language learning falls short of expectations. It is observed that when Saudi students take English proficiency tests like TOEFL or IELTS, their performance tends to be unsatisfactory (Alrabai, 2016; Alqahtani, 2019; Akhter, 2020; Alsiyat, 2021). Recent studies indicate that university students in Saudi Arabia continue to struggle with achieving the desired level of proficiency. Recent research has shown that the low level of proficiency in speaking English among Saudi university students has become a major concern among teachers, policymakers, and stakeholders in the country. Despite spending years studying English, Saudi students still struggle with English speaking skills (Alrasheedi, 2020; Alshammari, 2022; Zrekat and Sohbani, 2022).

Despite various efforts to improve the English language proficiency in Saudi Arabia, the level of English has not changed much in the past decade. The country's ranking on the EF English Proficiency Index (EPI) has remained in the "low proficiency" category in recent years. The EPI is a global index that measures the proficiency of individuals in countries around the world in the English language. It is based on test and survey data respondents from more than 100 countries. According to the EF English Proficiency Index (EPI), Saudi Arabia was ranked 102nd out of 111 countries in 2022, 108th out of 113 countries in 2023, and 105th out of 116 countries in 2024 in terms of English language proficiency.

2. 6. 2. Importance of Speaking Skills for Saudi Governmental University Students

Strong English language communication skills are crucial for attaining academic and professional success as English serves as the predominant language for sharing various forms of knowledge worldwide. Speaking skills is one of the critical elements of communication that enables individuals to effectively express their thoughts and ideas to diverse audiences in various contexts. Speaking is one of the most important skills Saudi university students need to develop because it not only paves the way for academic success but also opens doors to promising career prospects in the future (Ali et al, 2019; Alzamil, 2021).

Effective speaking skills are essential for academic success in universities across Saudi Arabia. Given that most governmental universities use English as the language of instruction,

students who can speak English proficiently are more likely to excel academically. Presentations are a common requirement in many courses and serve as a critical component of academic work. The ability to speak with confidence and clarity is necessary to deliver an effective presentation and convey the intended message accurately. Active participation in class discussions is an integral part of the learning process, and students with effective speaking skills can articulate their ideas and engage with their peers, resulting in a more profound understanding of the course material. Group work / projects are also a regular feature in universities, and effective communication is crucial to the success of the group. Students with strong speaking skills can communicate their ideas and opinions clearly and effectively to their team members, leading to enhanced collaboration. Goh and Burns (2012) emphasize the need for students to master speaking, stating:

> Through the medium of English, being able to speak (and listen) in the language of instruction will greatly facilitate students' participation in class and the learning of the subject matter… Learners need to learn how to initiate and maintain conversations, to sustain group discussions, describe feelings and give reasons in an acceptable manner, and ask for more information or assistance. (p. 21)

Therefore, it is imperative for Saudi Arabian university students to develop and improve their speaking skills to achieve academic success.

Furthermore, speaking skills are also a critical element for professional success in Saudi Arabia. In today's fast-paced and interconnected world, individuals who excel in oral communication are highly valued in the workplace. The World Economic Forum (2016) reports: "communication skills, including speaking, are among the top ten skills required for employment in Saudi Arabia.” Saudi university students who can articulate their ideas proficiently through speaking will have an advantage in the job market (Al-Hazmil, 2017). Effective communication through speaking is crucial for success in diverse professional contexts, including meetings, presentations, negotiations, and collaborations. Being adept at speaking enables speakers to inform, convince, and influence their audience. Competent

communicators are not only effective in expressing their ideas but can also achieve recognition and esteem for their capabilities. Thus, it is necessary for university students to enhance their proficiency in English speaking.

Possessing strong speaking skills is a critical factor in achieving success, both in academics and the professional world. Saudi Arabian university students should focus on improving their speaking abilities to excel academically and stand out in the competitive job market.

2. 6. 3. Previous Studies Dealing with Teaching Speaking skill Online in Saudi Governmental Universities

A range of studies has explored the multifaceted experience of teaching and learning English speaking skills online in Saudi universities, revealing both converging and diverging findings across several key themes.

In their study, Alahmadi and Alraddadi (2020) found that female students in virtual English language classes reported a high level of communication and interaction and claimed that they enjoyed learning in the online environment. Conversely, Rahman (2020) reported challenges for both teachers and students in online courses, including lack of interaction, connectivity issues, infrequent attendance, and lack of motivation. Rahman (2020) provided an interesting contrast to Alahmadi and Alraddadi (2020) and provided a rationale for better understanding the conditions under which positive feelings result in ongoing participation and effective language acquisition.

Al Shlowiy (2021) emphasized the challenges faced by teachers and their students after a sudden transition to online learning, owing to technology problems, internet connectivity issues, large online class sizes (averaging 35 students per class), and limited interaction. Al-Hassaani and Al-Saalmi (2022) report that the majority of Saudi learners cited insufficient class time for speaking practice, as teachers rushed through weekly syllabi amid large class sizes.

These conditions exceed optimal class sizes of 8–12 students (Sieber, 2005; Tomei & Nelson, 2019) and 15–30 minutes of daily practice (DeKeyser, 2007), thus confirming persistent challenges in Saudi English as a foreign language context. Likewise, Ta'amneh (2021) indicated that even though first-year students at Taibah University generally held positive views on online English classes, they dealt with ongoing pedagogical, technical, and other personal issues. This indicates a long-standing gap between opportunities and reality with online platforms in Saudi higher education.

According to Alzamil (2021), second-year male students acknowledged the value of speaking English and positively acknowledged the benefits of online learning but did not believe it would serve as a substitute for face-to-face learning. Al-Qahtani (2022) also identified the students hold favourable views on learning receptive skills (reading and listening) with online learning, however the students had unfavourable views towards online learning in regard to productive skills (writing and speaking). This inconsistency serves to show limitations of online learning to support speaking and speaking development.

In his study, Mohammed (2021) examined English as a Foreign Language learners' online, speaking skills development at the University of Bisha, as well as attitudes toward developing their oral coherence using a range of strategies, including some memory strategies. All of which was generally positive. Meanwhile, Alshumaimeri (2021) noted that students felt that virtual classrooms could benefit oral communication, however the students also experienced a lack of confidence or fear of making mistakes, as well as a limited vocabulary due to no in-person interaction, thus indicating a need to research further how online environments are structured to help build learner confidence and examine the affective barriers to their study.

Albaqami and Alzahrani (2022) stated that while teachers of English at universities acknowledged the value of online resources, many did not feel prepared or felt they lacked

adequate digital skills to fully embrace the new tools in a limited time. Similarly, Abdel Latif and Alhamad (2022) determined teachers experienced significant challenges in terms of remote assessment, especially for writing, and felt a strong need for more professional development with regard to the online assessment of writing and managing an online classroom. The importance of professional development to support teacher capacity in a digital learning space is still clear.

Alharbi (2022) indicated that factors such as feedback, cultural context, and motivation affected student agency in online classes, suggesting that teachers should promote autonomous learning. On the other hand, Abed et al. (2022) indicated that sudden changes in learning mode and assessment, as well as individual issues in students' lives, decreased students' agency to learn, highlighting the importance of open communication between teacher and students. Al-Ghamdi (2022) stated that, in addition to being supportive of the flexibility and interactivity of online learning, students continued to experience issues related to technology and the ineffectiveness of their devices.

Aldayel (2024) identifies key challenges faced by Saudi English as a foreign language teachers teaching English online during COVID-19, including low student engagement, technical difficulties (poor internet, lack of devices), communication barriers due to unnatural online interaction patterns, emotional stress affecting both teachers and students, and unfamiliarity with online platforms requiring extensive lesson planning adjustments. According to Algethami (2022), teachers had ongoing challenges with student engagement, assessment reliability, and classroom management, despite sufficient resources and technical support in online settings. Some teachers believed that online assessments were less reliable than in-person assessments and indicated that technical challenges due to students refusing to turn on their cameras, teaching large classes, and less familiarity with technology were difficulties. In line with this, Abdel Latif and Alhamad (2022) pointed out that teachers

indicated struggling more with remote assessment than remote teaching, particular to student engagement and motivation.

Al-Oqaily et al. (2022) investigated the potential of using Blackboard to develop speaking skills in English. The results indicated that students past experiences with Blackboard positively impacted their perceptions and may have augmented their speaking ability. This implies that public familiarity with certain online tools may be associated with learning outcomes.

According to Alzahrani (2022), students tended to perform better in online learning when classroom activities were effectively integrated and technology was adopted well. Nevertheless, limited teacher-student interaction and an inadequate amount of feedback emerged to be perpetual obstacles. In an article, Al-Awaid (2022) describes that English teachers at Jazan University possessed digital literacies and capabilities to assess students in online learning. Al-Ewaid suggested these teachers continued to adapt to teaching practices in order to meet the evolving needs of the digital learning students.

Although a range of research has been conducted in the area, only a handful of studies have focused on the particularized roles and approaches for online teachers when developing speaking skills in synchronous contexts. The research that exists has addressed attitudes, technological issues, or instructional issues generically; however, studies that have carefully examined teachers' practices in a synchronous context regarding their support of learners' oral proficiency in online classrooms do not adequately exist. This affirms the need for further empirical research regarding online synchronous teacher strategies that help facilitate authentic interaction and communicative competence.

While the literature demonstrates both opportunities and challenges in online English language teaching in Saudi universities, the studies and findings do not always align in terms of the effectiveness of online platforms for speaking skills, teacher preparedness, or student

engagement. These findings provide an opportunity for future and much-needed studies related to synchronous speaking instruction for oral language development as there continue to lack studies that specifically focus on online pedagogical practices in the teaching of speaking. findings often diverge regarding the effectiveness of online modalities for speaking skills, teacher preparedness, and student engagement. The lack of targeted studies on synchronous speaking instruction points to an urgent need for comprehensive research into effective online teaching practices for oral language development.

2. 7. Research Gaps

The widespread adoption of digital technology and the increasing accessibility of the internet have significantly contributed to the proliferation of synchronous online classes worldwide. This development has generated considerable scholarly interest in understanding the various roles of online teachers, particularly in the context of teaching speaking skills. In Saudi universities, this issue holds critical importance as online teachers contend with the complexities of adapting to the online learning environment. This section examines the research gaps associated with online teachers' roles in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes in Saudi universities, drawing on a comprehensive literature review and the researcher's extensive experience in online teaching.

A major research gap concerns the comprehensive understanding of online teachers' roles in fostering speaking skills within synchronous online classes in Saudi universities. Online teachers are expected to fulfil multifaceted roles, including those of facilitator, assessor, pedagogical leader, and manager, among others. However, the extant literature lacks a clear and comprehensive framework that delineates these roles and their specific responsibilities in the context of speaking skills instruction. Addressing this gap is essential for developing effective online speaking courses and designing appropriate teacher training programmes (Jeon & Lee, 2023).

A critical gap in the literature concerns the insufficient documentation and analysis of the specific challenges encountered by online teachers in Saudi universities when teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes. Although it is widely acknowledged that challenges such as technological barriers, time management difficulties, and sustaining student engagement exist in online education generally, there remains a lack of systematic investigation into how these challenges manifest themselves within the Saudi university context. Identifying and examining these context-specific obstacles is crucial for understanding the complexities faced by teachers and for informing the development of targeted support and interventions to enhance the effectiveness of online speaking classes in Saudi higher education.

Another notable research gap pertains to the exploration and examination of teaching strategies and methods for synchronous online classes. While inclusive teaching practices are crucial for addressing the needs of diverse learners, research remains limited regarding specific approaches that online teachers can utilise to create inclusive learning environments for students in Saudi universities (Palvia et al., 2018). Although numerous studies have discussed teaching strategies for online learning in general, there is a paucity of research focused on identifying the most effective strategies for enhancing speaking skills among Saudi students in synchronous online settings. Investigating and implementing the most suitable approaches has the potential to significantly improve learning outcomes and overall student experiences.

While collaborative learning has demonstrated effectiveness in supporting speaking skills development, its application and impact in synchronous online classes within Saudi universities remain under-researched (Alkhannani, 2021). Further investigation is needed to determine optimal approaches for integrating collaborative learning into these courses.

A methodological gap exists in the limited adoption of explanatory sequential mixed methods for researching online teaching of speaking skills in Saudi universities. Most existing studies employ either quantitative or qualitative approaches in isolation, with few integrating

both sequentially. This mixed method—collecting quantitative data first and then using qualitative data to interpret results—can yield richer, more comprehensive insights. However, its limited use in this context restricts methodological rigor and depth in the current body of research.

Finally, teacher training and professional development are indispensable for high-quality online teaching. There remains, however, a gap in identifying the specific professional development needs of online teachers in Saudi universities as they teach speaking skills in synchronous online settings. Addressing this gap is pivotal for equipping teachers to deliver more effective and confident instruction (Efriana, 2021).

By systematically addressing these research gaps, a more comprehensive understanding of the roles and responsibilities of online teachers in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes in Saudi universities can be achieved. Such understanding will ultimately contribute to more effective teaching practices, enriched learning outcomes for students, and the overall advancement of online education in the region.

2. 8. Conclusion

This literature review presents a comprehensive exploration of the various aspects of teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes, with a specific focus on Saudi governmental universities. The discussion begins with an overview of the theoretical framework, which includes the Community of Inquiry Theory, Connectivism Theory, and Online Collaborative Theory. These theories provide a strong foundation for understanding the dynamics of online learning and the importance of interaction and collaboration in this environment.

The roles of online teachers are examined in detail, highlighting their responsibilities as facilitators, content experts, managers, pedagogues, social mediators, technicians, and

assessors. These roles are crucial for fostering speaking competencies and addressing the challenges that arise in online synchronous language classes.

The challenges of teaching speaking skills in online synchronous online classes are also discussed, covering issues such as poor language knowledge, psychological obstacles, lack of engagement, insufficient personal interaction, social and cultural obstacles, technological challenges, time constraints, distractions, and assessment challenges. The identification of these challenges underscores the need for effective strategies and approaches to overcome them and create a supportive learning environment.

The specific context of teaching speaking skills online in Saudi governmental universities is analysed, emphasizing the significance of English language proficiency and the role of speaking skills for Saudi students. A review of previous studies on this topic reveals the research gaps and areas that require further investigation.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. 1. Introduction

This chapter centres on research methodology, offering a thorough examination of the various components that ensure the robustness of the research. The researcher initiates this chapter with an exploration of the 'research approach and design', detailing the underlying 'theoretical framework' and strategies employed to realize the objectives of the research. Subsequently, the population and sample of the research are discussed, including the selection criteria and sampling techniques utilized. The materials and instrumentation of research tools are then investigated, highlighting the development, validation, and application of the instruments. The operational definition of variables is outlined, clarifying the essential concepts and constructs under investigation. Furthermore, the study procedures and ethical assurances are scrutinized, emphasizing the importance of responsible and ethical research practices.

3. 2. Research Approach and Design

In this part of the research, the researcher outlines the approaches and design that underpin the entire study. Various research philosophies that underpin this study are discussed, such as positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism, examining their principles, criticisms, and applications in the research process. Additionally, the researcher delves into the explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, examining its advantages and disadvantages, and illustrating its application within this study. Lastly, the present the research design chosen for this project is presented, which is a case study.

3. 2. 1. Research Philosophy

The research philosophy "shapes how we formulate our problem and research questions to study and how we seek information to answer the questions" (Creswell, 2013, p. 17). Mills et al. (2006, p. 2) assume that: "To ensure a strong research design, researchers should choose a research paradigm that is congruent with their beliefs about the nature of reality." Willis

(2007, p. 8) contends that research paradigm as “a comprehensive belief system, worldview or framework that guides research and practice in a field.” A paradigm can be described as a widely accepted and shared set of ideas, beliefs, and principles among a group of researchers that shapes their understanding of the world and informs their knowledge creation process. A research paradigm is shaped by four fundamental components: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Ontology delves into the nature of reality, questioning the existence of a single, objective truth or multiple subjective realities. Epistemology focuses on how knowledge is acquired and questions the validity of human knowledge. Methodology provides a detailed plan for conducting research, ensuring reliable and valid results. Axiology addresses ethical principles and values in research, considering the impact on society and individuals (Cohen et al., 2018). Together, these components guide the research process and ensure its rigor and integrity. The paradigms of positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism offer diverse perspectives on the nature of knowledge and guide the methodological approaches used in this research.

3. 2. 1. 1. Positivism Paradigm

Positivism, as a philosophical and methodological approach, is significantly shaped by the core components of ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. In terms of ontology, positivism adopts a realist outlook, asserting that a singular, objective reality exists independently of human interpretation. From the epistemological perspective, positivism believes that this reality can be comprehended through objective observation and logical reasoning, often favouring quantitative methods. In terms of methodology, positivism promotes the use of scientific approaches to gather and analyse data, aiming to discover universal laws. Axiologically, positivism upholds the idea of value-neutrality, suggesting that the researcher's personal beliefs or values should not interfere with the scientific investigation (Kivuna & Kuyini, 2017).

Positivism paradigm highlights the importance of empirical observation, scientific methods, and objective analysis. It is founded on the belief that the only authentic knowledge is scientific knowledge, which can be obtained through observation, experimentation, and logical reasoning. This paradigm maintains that human knowledge should be grounded in facts and evidence. Cohen et al. (2018, p. 51) argue that: "Positivism strives for objectivity, measurability, predictability, controllability, patterning, the construction of laws and rules of behaviour, and the ascription of causality." The positivism paradigm has been widely adopted in various disciplines, particularly in the natural and social sciences, where it has shaped the development of research methodologies and theories.

3. 2. 1. 1. 1. Positivism Principles

There are several key principles that underpin the positivism paradigm. ***Empiricism*** is a central tenet of this paradigm, asserting that knowledge is primarily derived from sensory experience and observation. Researchers adhering to these principles place significant emphasis on the collection of empirical data through various methods, such as observation and experimentation, to ensure that their findings are grounded in tangible evidence.

Objectivity is another crucial aspect of the positivism paradigm, as it calls for researchers to maintain neutrality and impartiality in their observations and analysis. By eliminating personal opinions or biases that may influence their findings, researchers can ensure that their conclusions are based solely on the empirical data collected. According to Park et al., (2020, pp. 691-692) objectivity is the: "absence of bias due to researcher influences, flaws in experimental design, or outliers in data."

The principle of 'deductivism' guides researchers to employ deductive reasoning. This approach involves formulating hypotheses based on existing theories and subsequently testing them through empirical observation. Leavy (2017, p. 9) posits that quantitative research "is characterized by deductive approaches to the research process aimed at proving, disproving, or

lending credence to existing theories." Deductivism allows researchers to build upon established knowledge and refine theories based on new empirical evidence. Positivists view deductive reasoning as the primary tool for establishing scientific knowledge, as it provides a more rigorous and systematic approach to testing hypotheses and theories.

Quantitative methods are highly valued in the positivism paradigm, as they emphasize the importance of collecting and analysing numerical data. By utilizing statistical methods and mathematical models, researchers can systematically analyse and interpret their data, leading to more reliable and accurate conclusions.

Lastly, generalization is a key principle that aims to ensure that research findings are applicable to a wide range of situations and contexts. By identifying patterns and trends in the data, researchers can draw conclusions that are generalizable to the larger population, thus enhancing the overall impact and relevance of their research (Park et al., 2020).

By adhering to these principles, researchers operating within the positivism paradigm can produce robust, unbiased, and generalizable findings that contribute to the advancement of human knowledge.

3. 2. 1. 1. 2. Criticism of Positivism

Although the positivism paradigm has been widely adopted in research, it has also faced several criticisms that highlight potential limitations and drawbacks.

One major criticism is that positivism's emphasis on objectivity and generalization can result in an insufficient consideration of context and understanding of and the complex nature of human behaviour and social phenomena (Alhoussawi, 2023; Queiros et al., 2017; Tracy, 2020). By prioritizing generalizable findings, researchers may overlook the nuances and unique aspects of specific situations, which can be crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Critics also argue that the positivism paradigm's focus on quantitative methods can overshadow the importance of qualitative data. Qualitative data can provide richer insights into human experiences and social phenomena by capturing the depth and complexity of individual perspectives, which may be lost when relying solely on numerical data (Biesta, 2021).

Another criticism of positivism is its tendency towards ‘reductionism’. By relying on empirical data and scientific methods, positivism can lead to an oversimplified view of reality that disregards the influence of subjective experiences and interpretations (Alhoussawi, 2023; Cohen et al., 2018). This reductionist approach may hinder researchers from fully understanding complex phenomena and their underlying causes.

Critics argue that the positivism paradigm is not well-suited to address subjective experiences and emotions, which are essential aspects of human behaviour and social phenomena. By prioritizing objectivity and empirical data, researchers may neglect the importance of personal experiences and emotional aspects that shape human behaviour and decision making (Bryman et al., 2021).

Lastly, the positivism paradigm's emphasis on objectivity and detachment can lead to ethical concerns. Critics argue that this approach may encourage researchers to treat human subjects as mere objects of study, potentially leading to dehumanization and a disregard for the well-being of research participants (Kalelioğlu, 2020).

Considering these criticisms, it is essential for researchers to critically evaluate the appropriateness of the positivism paradigm for their specific research questions and to consider alternative or complementary approaches that may better address the complexities of human behaviour and social phenomena. The criticisms levelled against the positivism paradigm have also led to the emergence of alternative research paradigms, such as interpretivism, and pragmatism, which seek to address some of the limitations of the positivist approach. By embracing a diverse range of perspectives and approaches, researchers can contribute to the

development of more effective strategies and interventions that can enhance the quality of life and address pressing social issues.

3. 2. 1. 2. Interpretivism Paradigm

Interpretivism constitutes a philosophical and methodological paradigm distinguished by its unique positions regarding ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Ontologically, interpretivism endorses a relativistic viewpoint, acknowledging multiple realities that are constructed by human experiences and societal contexts. Epistemologically, it leans towards subjectivism, recognizing that knowledge is not merely observed but is interpreted based on these human experiences. Methodologically, interpretivism tends to favour qualitative research methods, aiming to understand the subjective interpretations of individuals or groups. In terms of axiology, interpretivism accepts that the researcher's values and biases inevitably influence the research, and these values are considered an integral part of the research process (Ryan, 2018).

Interpretivist paradigm underscores the significance of understanding the subjective experiences, meanings, and individuals' interpretations within their social context. This paradigm recognizes the fundamental distinction between the social and natural worlds, suggesting that the examination of human behaviour and social phenomena requires a separate set of methodological principles, unlike those utilized in the natural sciences. As argued by Denzin and Lincoln (2017, p. 22), interpretivist research "is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied." Interpretivism embraces a relativist view of reality, recognizing that there are multiple interpretations of the world, each shaped by individual experiences and perceptions. Knowledge is not a static entity to be acquired but an active process of co-creation between the knower and the known. Research methodologies within this framework are grounded in the natural world, emphasizing exploration and understanding rather than seeking absolute truths.

3. 2. 1. 2. 1. Interpretivism Principles

Interpretivism seeks to comprehend the world by examining the subjective experiences, interpretations, and meanings that individuals attribute to their actions and the social phenomena around them. Interpretivism, as summarized by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), emphasizes the importance of context, researcher-participant interaction, and individual understanding. It acknowledges multiple realities, values within knowledge, and mutual interdependence between causes and effects. The key principles of the interpretivism paradigm encompass subjectivity, context, inductivism, qualitative methods, and reflexivity.

One of the fundamental principles of the interpretivism paradigm is the recognition of the role of subjectivity in shaping human behaviour and social phenomena. Interpretivists argue that individuals' actions are influenced by their personal beliefs, values, and emotions, making it essential for researchers to understand and acknowledge these subjective elements. In this manner, interpretivists seek to uncover deeper insights into the personal perspectives and life experiences of people, thereby fostering a more intricate and nuanced perception of societal dynamics.

Another key principle of the interpretivism paradigm is the importance of context in understanding human behaviour and social phenomena. Interpretivists believe that individuals' actions and experiences can only be fully understood when considered within the specific social, cultural, historical, and environmental factors that shape them. By examining the complex interplay of these factors, interpretivists can develop a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple dimensions that influence individual experiences and actions.

Inductivism is a core principle of the interpretivism paradigm, emphasizing the use of inductive reasoning to develop theories and explanations based on empirical observations. Interpretivists collect detailed, qualitative data to identify patterns, themes, and relationships that can inform the development of theoretical frameworks. This approach contrasts with the

deductive reasoning often used in positivist research, which involves testing pre-existing theories and hypotheses using quantitative data.

The interpretivism paradigm is strongly connected to qualitative research methods, which focus on collecting and analysing non-numerical data, such as text, images, or audio recordings. Interpretivists prefer using qualitative research methods like interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and document analysis. They believe that these methods allow researchers to gain a richer understanding of individuals' personal experiences and interpretations. By using qualitative methods, interpretivists aim to capture the richness and complexity of human behaviour and social phenomena, which may be lost when relying solely on quantitative data.

Finally, reflexivity is a crucial principle of the interpretivism paradigm, emphasizing the need for researchers to critically reflect on their own role in the research process and the potential influence of their personal beliefs, values, and biases on their findings. that researchers are not detached spectators but rather engaged contributors in the research endeavour, with their own subjectivity influencing data collection methods and interpretation. By engaging in ongoing self-reflection and being transparent about their positionality and the limitations of their study, interpretivists can enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of their research.

3. 2. 1. 2. 2. Criticism of Interpretivism

Despite its contributions to the understanding of human behaviour and social phenomena, the interpretivism paradigm has faced several criticisms including concerns about objectivity, generalizability, predictive power, and the resource-intensive nature of qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Mertens, 2023; Tracy, 2020).

A common critique of interpretivism is the perceived deficiency in objectivity. Critics argue that the focus on subjectivity and the use of qualitative methods can result in research

findings influenced by personal biases, opinions, and the researcher's values. Consequently, this can affect the trustworthiness and dependability of the results, leading to concerns about the overall rigor of interpretivist research (Birt et al., 2020; Nowell et al., 2022).

Interpretivists often counter this criticism by emphasizing highlighting the significance of reflexivity, a practice that entails researchers deeply reflect on their participation in the research and the potential influence of their personal views and biases might impact their research outcomes (Junjie & Yingxin 2022). By engaging in reflexivity, interpretivists argue that they can increase the validity and rigor of their research.

Another criticism of the interpretivism paradigm is the difficulty in generalizing research findings to broader populations or settings. Due to the focus on context and individual experiences, interpretivist research often produces findings that are highly specific to the particular circumstances under study (Junjie & Yingxin 2022). Critics argue that this limits the applicability of interpretivist research in informing policy and practice, as the insights gained may not be transferable to other contexts. Interpretivists acknowledge the challenge of generalization but argue that the rich, contextualized understanding provided by their research can still offer valuable insights and contribute to the development of context-specific policies and interventions.

The interpretivism paradigm's emphasis on understanding the complexity of human behaviour and social phenomena has also been criticized for its limited predictive power. Critics argue that interpretivist research often focuses on exploring and describing social phenomena rather than identifying causal relationships or making predictions. This can make it difficult for interpretivist research to contribute to the development of interventions or strategies to address social issues. Interpretivists argue that their approach provides a deeper understanding of the underlying processes and mechanisms that shape human behaviour and

social phenomena, which can, in turn, inform the development of more effective and contextually appropriate interventions.

Finally, the use of qualitative methods in interpretivist research has been criticized for being time-consuming and resource intensive. Qualitative research often involves the collection and analysis of large amounts of detailed, non-numerical data, which can be challenging for researchers, particularly in large-scale studies or settings with limited resources. Interpretivists acknowledge this challenge but argue that the depth and richness of the insights gained through qualitative research justify the investment of time and resources. They also highlight the potential for using innovative methods for collecting and analysing data, such as digital ethnography or 'computer-assisted' qualitative data analysis software, to streamline the research process (Borkovich, 2022).

3. 2. 1. 3. Pragmatism

The pragmatic philosophy has a unique relationship with the four core components: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Pragmatism sees reality as an ever-changing entity shaped by our interactions and experiences. It is not fixed but fluid (ontology). From a pragmatic perspective, knowledge isn't about finding the ultimate truth, but about what is useful and works in a particular situation (epistemology). Pragmatism values practical and effective methods over strict adherence to specific procedures. The focus is on what brings about the best results (methodology). Pragmatism believes that our values are not inherent but are shaped and developed through our experiences (axiology) (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Creswell & Clark, 2018; Saunders et al., 2009).

The pragmatic worldview is marked by its emphasis on applying knowledge to real-life situations, the idea that truth is subject to change, and the notion that knowledge should be assessed based on its practical consequences. Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle (2006) maintain that:

> Knowledge arises from examining problems and determining what works in a particular situation. It does not matter if there is a single reality or multiple realities as long as we discover answers that help us do things that we want to do. (p. 9)

3. 2. 1. 3. Principles of Pragmatism Paradigm

The pragmatism paradigm is a research approach that is grounded in several fundamental principles, which guide its focus on practicality, real-world applications, and problem-solving.

At the core of pragmatism is the emphasis on practical implications and applications of research. Pragmatists are more concerned with the usefulness of ideas, theories, and methods in addressing real-world problems, rather than focusing on abstract or theoretical foundations. This principle guides researchers to prioritize the practical value of their work and to ensure that their findings have tangible benefits.

Pragmatism embraces pluralism, which means it is open to multiple perspectives, methodologies, and ways of understanding the world. Pragmatists recognize that different research approaches can be valid and useful, depending on the context and the specific research question being addressed. This principle encourages researchers to be flexible and adaptable in their approach, considering various perspectives and methods to obtain a thorough understanding of the issue at hand.

The pragmatism paradigm acknowledges knowledge and truth as dynamic rather than static, subject to continuous refinement through experience, new evidence, insights and inquiry. This principle encourages researchers to be open to change and to continually refine their understanding of the world as new information becomes available.

The pragmatic philosophy emphasizes the importance of experience and learning from experience. It values knowledge that is grounded in real-world situations and contexts, rather than abstract or theoretical knowledge. This fundament guides researchers to focus on

empirical evidence and to draw insights from real-life experiences and observations (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

This practice-oriented worldview focuses on finding solutions to practical problems and dealing with actual challenges encountered in the real world. This principle encourages researchers to focus on identifying and addressing specific issues, rather than pursuing abstract or theoretical inquiries. By concentrating on practical problems, researchers can develop solutions that have direct and meaningful impacts on the world.

Finally, pragmatism seeks to integrate theory and practice, recognizing that both are essential to the development of useful knowledge. This principle encourages researchers to apply theoretical concepts and frameworks to real-world situations and to use empirical evidence to inform and refine their theories. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, researchers can develop a more comprehensive understanding of the issues they are studying and contribute to the development of practical solutions.

3. 2. 1. 3. 2. Drawbacks of Pragmatism Paradigm

The pragmatism paradigm has gained considerable traction in various fields of research due to its focus on practicality, pluralism, and problem-solving. However, despite its many strengths, this paradigm has also been subjected to numerous criticisms (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

One of the most significant criticisms of the pragmatism approach is that it lacks a coherent and consistent philosophical basis. Critics claim that the pragmatism approach to inquiry prioritizes what is practical and useful, thus disregarding the significance of core philosophical issues and debates. It is therefore understandable that research can lack a solid philosophical basis, which may result in research that is superficial or shallow, and this may impact the trustworthiness and applicability of findings. Recent research indicates that a focus

on utility rather than foundation theory about what pragmatic is, can lead to vagueness and methodological inconsistency (Gillespie, 2024; Shields & Rangarajan, 2024).

Another criticism of the pragmatism paradigm is that it may lead to relativism. With the focus on truth being provisional and pluralism, pragmatism may unintentionally promote the perception of all perspectives and claims to knowledge to be equally valuable. This growing relativism can make it more difficult to identify criteria for objectively evaluating the quality and/or validity of research, potentially undermining knowledge generation in an area of study. As seen in recent discussions, extreme relativism that is associated with pragmatism, can undermine the ability to differentiate high quality from low quality research, and can even enable the spread of misinformation (Gillespie, 2024; Cambridge University Press, 2024).

Critics also argue that the pragmatism paradigm's focus on practicality and problem-solving can lead to a narrow instrumentalism. This perspective prioritizes research driven primarily by its potential applications and usefulness, rather than by a genuine desire to understand and explain the world. Such an approach may limit the scope of inquiry, potentially resulting in research that is overly focused on short-term gains and neglectful of broader theoretical concerns. This instrumentalist tendency is noted in recent methodological discussions, where the risk of reducing research to immediate utility is seen as limiting its theoretical contribution (Gillespie, 2024; Shields & Rangarajan, 2024).

Some critics contend that the pragmatism paradigm can lead researchers to uncritically accept and work within dominant paradigms and frameworks, rather than challenging and questioning them. This uncritical acceptance may limit the potential for innovative and transformative research, as researchers may be less inclined to explore alternative perspectives or question established norms. Recent scholarship suggests that the pragmatic focus on what works can inadvertently reinforce prevailing norms and discourage critical reflection (Gillespie, 2024; Shields & Rangarajan, 2024).

Finally, critics have claimed that the emphasis on pluralism and the use of mixed methods within the pragmatism paradigm has the potential to lead to a shallow and uncritical blending of methodologies, especially when there is no clear rationale or purpose for blending methodologies, which might lead to methodological eclecticism that detracts from the clarity and integrity of the research. Recent critiques of methodology noted that eclecticism will unintendedly result in inconsistency and superficiality (Gillespie, 2024; University of Cambridge Press, 2024).

3. 2. 2. The Application of Mixed Methods Research

The application of mixed methods research is greatly influenced by pragmatism, as it emphasizes the importance of utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods in research. (Leavy, 2017). By emphasizing the importance of practicality and flexibility in research, pragmatism encourages researchers to use the most appropriate methods for their specific research question, regardless of whether they are quantitative or qualitative. This approach empowers researchers to utilize the strengths of both approaches while addressing their limitations, thereby achieving more detailed and stronger findings (Cohen et al., 2018). Furthermore, employing mixed methods research facilitates a more profound comprehension of complex phenomena, as it combines the objective measurements of positivism with the subjective insights of interpretivism.

By focusing on the practical application of research findings, pragmatism ensures that research is conducted with the aim of solving real-world problems and improving human experiences. This emphasis on practicality helps to ensure that research is relevant and impactful, as it addresses the issues that matter most to individuals and society. Moreover, pragmatism encourages researchers to consider the implications of their research for policy and practice, fostering a more direct connection between research and its potential to bring about positive change.

Pragmatism's emphasis on problem-solving and flexibility in research methods encourages collaboration and interdisciplinary research. By recognizing the value of diverse perspectives and approaches, pragmatism fosters an environment in which researchers from different disciplines can work together to address complex research problems. This collaborative approach can lead to more innovative and effective solutions, as it draws on the expertise of researchers from various fields. In addition, interdisciplinary research can contribute to the development of new theories and methods, as researchers from different backgrounds bring their unique insights and perspectives to the research process.

3. 2. 2. 1. Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Methods Approach

The explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach is a widely used research design that employs a two-phase process: a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. The primary purpose of approach is to utilize qualitative data to help elucidate or interpret the findings of the quantitative phase (Creswell, 2012). the qualitative phase serves to delve deeper into the findings from the quantitative phase, offering a richer comprehension of the research problem. The explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach is particularly useful when researchers want to investigate complex research questions or phenomena that cannot be fully understood through quantitative methods alone. By incorporating qualitative research, researchers can gain insights into the underlying reasons, motivations, and contextual factors that may influence quantitative results.

In the first phase of the explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, researchers collect and analyse quantitative data to identify patterns, trends, and relationships. This phase typically involves the use of surveys, experiments, or other methods that produce numerical data. The quantitative data collected can help researchers establish a foundation for their study, as well as provide initial insights into the research problem. Once the quantitative analysis is complete, researchers can identify areas that require further investigation or clarification. This

phase is crucial for setting the stage for the subsequent qualitative phase, as it helps researchers pinpoint areas where deeper exploration is needed.

The second phase of the explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach entails gathering and analysing qualitative data. This phase is designed to provide a deeper understanding of the quantitative findings by exploring the experiences, perspectives, and context of the research participants. Methods commonly used in this phase include interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis. The qualitative data is then analysed to identify themes, patterns, and explanations that can help to further illuminate the quantitative findings. This phase allows researchers to delve into the complexities of the research problem and gain a more nuanced understanding of the factors that may have contributed to the observed patterns and trends.

3. 2. 2. 2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Using a Mixed Research Approach (Mixed-Methods Research)

The mixed research approach has become increasingly favoured by researchers in various fields due to its ability to offer a fuller insight into intricate research questions. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods in mixed-methods research offers several advantages and disadvantages that researchers should consider when designing their studies. This integration allows for a deeper exploration of complex phenomena that single methods might overlook, providing researchers with robust tools to address multifaceted issues effectively and generate stronger inferences overall (Sardana et al., 2023; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Wasti et al., 2022).

One of the primary advantages of a mixed research approach is its ability to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. By integrating the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, researchers can explore different aspects of the research problem and generate a more in-depth understanding of the topic. This combination

captures both breadth through statistical patterns and depth through contextual narratives, resulting in richer insights that enhance the overall description and explanation of phenomena under study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Lall, 2021).

Mixed research approach offers flexibility in the research design, allowing researchers to address various research questions and adapt their approach as needed. This flexibility enables researchers to tailor their study to the specific needs of their research problem, ensuring that the most appropriate methods are used to address the research questions. Researchers can shift between sequential or concurrent designs, responding dynamically to emerging findings and refining procedures throughout the process to fit unique contextual demands (Oranga et al., 2025; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Combining quantitative and qualitative data can increase the credibility of the research findings, providing a more comprehensive insight into the research problem. By using both types of data, researchers can identify patterns and trends while also exploring the underlying reasons and contextual factors that may influence these patterns. This dual lens strengthens validity by offsetting weaknesses inherent in single approaches and produces more nuanced, transferable results applicable across diverse settings (Lall, 2021; Wasti et al., 2022).

Mixed-methods research enables the triangulation of findings, a process of verifying and strengthening conclusions by drawing upon multiple data sources and methodologies. This helps to increase the credibility and reliability of the research findings, as it reduces the likelihood of bias and ensures that the results are consistent across different data sources. Convergence of evidence from varied strands confirms interpretations and mitigates threats to internal validity effectively (Cohen et al., 2018; Greene et al., 1989).

On the other hand, a mixed research approach is accompanied by several drawbacks. One of its main disadvantages is its complexity. Performing a mixed-methods study can be more intricate and time-intensive than utilizing a single research method, as it involves

collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data. This complexity can make it more challenging for researchers to design and execute their studies, as well as interpret the findings across integrated phases (Guetterman & Creswell, 2020; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2022; Oranga et al., 2025).

Mixed-methods research often requires more resources compared to single-method research, as it requires expertise in both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This may necessitate additional training for researchers, as well as increased time and financial resources to conduct the study. Teams may need collaborative specialists or extended budgets to handle dual data streams without compromising quality or timelines (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2022; Hong et al., 2022; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Combining and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data can be challenging, as researchers should ensure that their findings are coherent and meaningful. This requires careful consideration of how the different data sources relate to one another and the development of strategies for integrating the data in a way that provides a clear and accurate representation of the research problem. Integration demands explicit meta-inferences to avoid fragmented or inconsistent conclusions (Hong et al., 2022; Guetterman & Creswell, 2020; Amini Farsani & Saedi, 2025).

3. 2. 2. 3. Why an Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Methods Approach?

The explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach is highly suitable for the study investigating teachers' roles in teaching speaking skills to learners of English as a foreign language online for several reasons:

a. Addressing Multiple Dimensions of Research Questions

Research questions in this study involve multiple dimensions, including teachers' awareness and practices, challenges faced, and potential solutions. The explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach allows researchers to address each of these dimensions effectively by

combining the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods enable the researchers to measure teachers' awareness and practices and identify specific challenges, while qualitative methods provide in-depth insights into the reasons behind these challenges and potential solutions.

b. Strengthening the Validity and Reliability of Results

By employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach enhances the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research findings.

Quantitative methods provide objective, numerical data that can be statistically analysed to identify patterns and trends, while qualitative methods offer rich, contextualized information that helps explain the reasons behind these patterns and trends. Combining these methods allows researchers to cross-validate their findings, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are more robust and trustworthy.

c. Generating Comprehensive and Holistic Understanding

The explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach empowers researchers to gain a thorough and multifaceted understanding of the phenomenon being studied. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the researchers can develop a more nuanced understanding of teachers' roles in teaching speaking skills online, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they follow to overcome these challenges. This comprehensive understanding is essential for informing policy and practice in the field of online teaching of English, particularly in the Saudi Arabian context.

3.2.2.4. Application of the Sequential Mixed-Methods Approach to this Study

The explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach was employed in this study through the following phases (Figure 2):

Phase 1: Quantitative Data Collection

The first phase of the study involved a measurement of online English teachers' awareness and adherence to their required roles while teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes within the Saudi Arabian context. Quantitative data were gathered through a questionnaire employing closed-ended questions and a frequency Likert scale. This data was then subjected to statistical analysis to determine the extent to which teachers were aware of and adhered to the essential roles required for effective online speaking skills instruction.

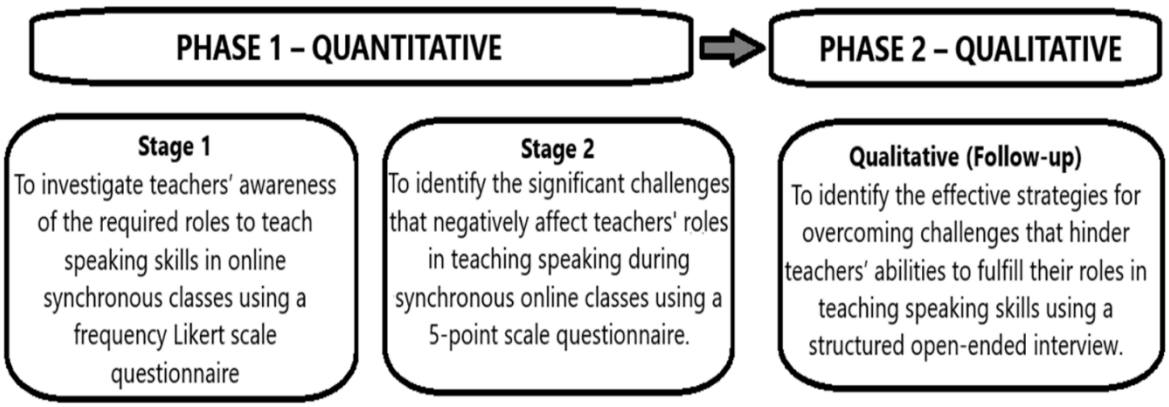
Additionally, quantitative data were collected to evaluate the severity of the specific challenges encountered by online English teachers while teaching speaking skills in the Saudi Arabian context. Questionnaires incorporating 5-point ordinal scales were utilized to gather data from teachers, prompting them to rate the severity of various challenges. This data was then subjected to statistical analysis to identify the most prevalent challenges and provided valuable insights into the obstacles faced by online English teachers when facilitating speaking skills in synchronous online classes within the Saudi Arabian context.

Phase 2: Qualitative Data Collection

After the quantitative data were analysed, the study proceeded to the qualitative phase to investigate potential solutions to the challenges faced by English language teachers in teaching speaking skills online. Standardized (structured) open-ended interviews were conducted, allowing teachers to share their experiences, opinions, and suggestions for addressing the challenges they encountered in fostering speaking skills during synchronous online classes. The qualitative data was then analysed using thematic analysis, enabling the researcher to identify common themes and insights related to the challenges faced by online English teachers in Saudi Arabia.

The explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach allowed the researcher to address each aspect of the research questions effectively, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the study generated valuable insights into teachers' roles in teaching speaking skills online, the challenges they face, and potential strategies for overcoming these challenges in the Saudi Arabian context.

Figure 2
Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Methods Approach



3. 2. 2. 5. Rationale for Research Questions Rather than Hypotheses

Given the explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach and the pragmatic-interpretivist philosophical stance underpinning this research, the formulation of hypotheses is methodologically inappropriate. Instead, research questions serve as the primary drivers of inquiry. This section elucidates the reasons for adopting research questions rather than hypotheses, grounded in the study's design, philosophical orientation, and research purpose.

Exploratory and Descriptive Nature of the Inquiry

The three research questions guiding this study are fundamentally exploratory and descriptive in nature. Research Question 1 inquires, "To what extent are university teachers in Saudi Arabia aware of their roles in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online

classes?" This question seeks to describe the current state of teachers' awareness rather than to test a prediction about awareness levels. Similarly, Research Question 2 asks, "What are the significant challenges that negatively affect teachers' roles in teaching speaking during synchronous online classes in Saudi context?" This question aims to identify and characterize challenges without predicting whether specific relationships exist between variables. Research Question 3, "What are the effective strategies for overcoming challenges that hinder teachers' ability to fulfill their roles in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes in the Saudi Arabian context?" adopts a qualitative exploratory approach to understand phenomena as they are experienced in context.

The linguistic structure of these questions—beginning with "to what extent," "what are," and employing open-ended qualitative inquiry—reflects the exploratory orientation characteristic of discovery-focused research (Babbie, 2021; Swedberg, 2020). The quantitative phases employ descriptive statistics (frequency distributions and weighted averages) to establish patterns in teachers' awareness and challenge severity, rather than employing inferential statistics to test hypothetical relationships or differences between groups (Babbie, 2021). Hypothesis testing presupposes that the researcher has sufficient theoretical knowledge to formulate directional predictions; exploratory research, by contrast, begins from a position of limited understanding and seeks to generate initial insights (Blaikie & Priest, 2019; Swedberg, 2020). Consequently, hypotheses are methodologically incongruent with an exploratory research purpose designed to elaborate understanding of underexplored phenomena.

Inductive Logic and the Explanatory Sequential Design

Hypothesis testing is logically dependent upon deductive reasoning, wherein the researcher moves systematically from general theoretical principles toward specific empirical

evidence, culminating in either confirmation or refutation of predetermined propositions (Blaikie & Priest, 2019; Trochim, 2020; Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2024). This study's explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, by contrast, operates according to an inductive rather than deductive logic.

In Phase 1, quantitative data collection produces descriptive characterizations of teachers' role awareness and identifies challenges of varying severity. This phase does not begin with theoretical hypotheses; instead, it observes and documents existing patterns and conditions within the context of Saudi Arabian university settings. Phase 2 subsequently takes these quantitative findings as a foundation for deeper qualitative exploration. Through interview data, the study inductively identifies emergent themes, contextual factors, and explanatory patterns that arise from participants' professional experiences and perspectives (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Rather than confirming or refuting predetermined hypotheses, the qualitative phase constructs explanatory understanding from data-driven discovery (Fetters, 2020; Younas et al., 2025).

This inductive progression—from quantitative description to qualitative contextualization—exemplifies inductive reasoning, whereby knowledge is constructed organically from empirical observations and participants' voices rather than deductively proven through hypothesis testing (Maxwell, 2013; Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2024). Inductive reasoning is particularly well-suited to this study's explanatory purpose: to explain how and why phenomena occur within a specific context, rather than to test narrowly defined theoretical predictions across generalized settings (Toyon, 2021; Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2021).

Pragmatic and Interpretivist Philosophical Alignment

The study integrates pragmatism, interpretivism, and limited elements of positivism—a philosophical pluralism that renders hypothesis-driven deductive methodology unsuitable.

Pragmatism, as a guiding epistemology, prioritizes practical problem-solving and the generation of contextually relevant insights over abstract theoretical verification (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Morgan, 2014). Within the Saudi Arabian university context, pragmatism emphasizes identifying actionable strategies and understanding that will serve the professional needs of teachers and institutional leaders, rather than testing universal theoretical propositions (Biesta, 2022). Hypothesis testing, with its focus on confirming or refuting predetermined theoretical relationships, is fundamentally misaligned with a pragmatic commitment to real-world applicability and contextual responsiveness.

Interpretivism, central to the study's qualitative components, emphasizes the exploration of participants' subjective meanings, professional values, and lived experiences within specific social and institutional contexts (Aspers & Corte, 2021). This philosophical stance recognizes that reality is socially constructed and that understanding emerges through sustained, responsive engagement with participants rather than through predetermined theoretical frameworks. An interpretivist approach mandates openness to emergent meanings and themes; hypothesis-driven research, which presumes predetermined answers, contradicts this epistemological commitment to discovery and responsiveness (Aspers & Corte, 2021).

The quantitative phase, while incorporating measurable variables and descriptive statistical analysis consistent with positivist interests in observable phenomena, deliberately employs descriptive rather than inferential statistics (Babbie, 2021). This methodological choice reflects pragmatic flexibility prioritized over conventional hypothesis-testing procedures such as significance testing or between-group comparisons. The integrated philosophical approach collectively justifies a flexible, inquiry-driven methodology rather than rigid hypothesis-driven research (Biesta, 2022; Morgan, 2014).

Case Study Methodology and Context-Bounded Inquiry

This research adopts a case study design focused on two specific Saudi Arabian universities (Jazan University and King Khalid University). Case study methodology is fundamentally distinct from experimental and correlational research precisely because it prioritizes in-depth, contextual understanding of bounded systems rather than the decontextualized generalization or testing of abstract theoretical propositions (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018; Thomas, 2022). The analytical framework of case studies is inherently contextual and interpretive; hypothesis testing, which assumes that relationships between variables hold consistently across diverse contexts, fundamentally contradicts the case study commitment to particularity, depth, and nuanced understanding of complex real-world phenomena (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018).

Case study research functions to elaborate and explain phenomena within specific bounded contexts and to identify patterns that may inform future theory-testing research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). The present study contributes to this theory-building role: it investigates teachers' roles, challenges, and strategies within the specific institutional and cultural contexts of Saudi universities. Rather than testing preformulated theoretical relationships through hypothesis verification, the case study approach generates grounded, context-sensitive insights that reflect the actual realities of teachers' professional work in this setting (Stake, 2006; Thomas, 2022).

Data analysis emphasizes validity and reliability measures—including exploratory factor analysis, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, and comprehensive qualitative coding schemes—to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The focus on construct validity, triangulation, and thick description of phenomena, rather than on

statistical significance or formal hypothesis rejection, further demonstrates that hypotheses are methodologically incongruent with case study inquiry (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018).

Addressing a Documented Research Gap

The literature review (Chapter 2) identifies a significant knowledge gap: limited research exists regarding the specific roles Saudi Arabian university teachers enact when teaching speaking skills in synchronous online environments, the contextual challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ within Saudi educational, cultural, and technological contexts. Addressing such a knowledge gap requires elaborating and explaining underexplored phenomena specific to this context, rather than testing preconceived theoretical expectations (Miles, 2017; Robinson, 2023; Sandelowski, 2024).

Gap-addressing research is appropriately exploratory in nature because the very existence of a documented gap indicates insufficient existing knowledge to support robust hypothesis formulation (Miles, 2017). Open-ended exploration guided by research questions is the methodologically appropriate response to knowledge gaps, as it permits researchers to remain sufficiently flexible and responsive to emergent phenomena rather than constrained by predetermined theoretical predictions (Blaikie & Priest, 2019; Swedberg, 2020). Hypothesis-driven research designs assume existing theoretical frameworks are sufficiently mature to generate specific, testable predictions; by contrast, research addressing knowledge gaps must remain intentionally open to allow new understanding to emerge organically from data (Miles, 2017; Swedberg, 2020).

The three research questions guiding this investigation represent a methodologically coherent choice reflective of the study's exploratory and explanatory purpose, its inductive sequential logic, its pragmatic and interpretivist philosophical foundations, and its case study design focused on a specific geographic and institutional context. Rather than testing

predetermined theoretical predictions through hypothesis verification, this research seeks to describe, explore, and explain how Saudi Arabian university teachers understand and enact their roles in teaching speaking skills online, what challenges they encounter, and what strategies they employ to overcome these challenges. The research questions serve as appropriate drivers of systematic inquiry designed to generate comprehensive, contextually grounded understanding that contributes meaningfully to the existing knowledge base on online English language teaching in Saudi educational contexts.

3. 2. 3. Research Design: Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Methods Case Study Design

The research study employed a case study framework, utilizing a combination of descriptive and explanatory research methodologies to achieve a thorough comprehension of the topic. The research was conducted in two distinct yet interconnected phases, each playing a crucial role in achieving the research objectives.

A case study is a research methodology that involves a comprehensive, in-depth examination of a specific subject, phenomenon, or situation to gain a deeper understanding of its various aspects. A case study "explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information… and reports a case description and case themes" Creswell (2013, p. 97). This approach is commonly used in fields such as social sciences, education, and business research to explore complex issues, identify underlying patterns, and develop hypotheses for future investigation. Case studies commonly employ various data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, to gain a thorough understanding of the problem.

This research is considered a case study for the following reasons: The study was centred on a particular context: teaching of speaking skills to online learners of English as a

foreign language in Saudi Arabia. This focus enabled a detailed examination of the unique challenges and opportunities that teachers encountered within this specific environment.

Beyond this contextual specificity, the research also examined multiple dimensions of online teaching practice. It delved into multiple aspects of online teaching in the Saudi context, including teachers' roles, their awareness of these roles, and the obstacles they faced. Such an investigation necessitated a deep understanding of the subject matter and its contextual backdrop, which is a defining attribute of case studies.

In line with this in-depth approach, the methodology incorporated a mixed-methods design. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, amalgamating quantitative and qualitative data to address distinct research questions. Utilizing multiple data sources facilitated a more exhaustive understanding of the research problem and aided in corroborating the findings, which is a typical aspect of case studies.

This comprehensive design enabled a targeted assessment of teachers' role awareness and contextual challenges. The investigation measured the degree of teachers' awareness regarding their roles in online speaking skills instruction and the specific challenges they confronted within the Saudi context. This assessment entailed the collection and analysis of numerical data, such as questionnaire responses. Those quantitative components were consistent with case study methodology, as they offered a more objective and quantifiable perspective on the research problem.

Additionally, the study explored potential strategies that teachers could employ to surmount the challenges they faced while teaching speaking skills online in the Saudi context. This exploration required the collection of qualitative data, such as interviews, to glean insights into the participants' experiences, perspectives, and tactics. This qualitative aspect was a vital component of case studies, as it contributed to a richer and more nuanced understanding of the research problem.

In the initial phase, descriptive research methodologies were employed answer the "what" to assess two key aspects: the extent to which teachers are aware of their roles in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes and the degree of severity of the challenges they encountered in this regard. The second phase of the study adopted an explanatory research approach, focusing on gathering insights from experts to find potential solutions and "how" to address and overcome the challenges encountered in teaching speaking skill in synchronous online classes.

3. 3. Population and Sample of the Research

In this section, the study population and sample are described in detail. The characteristics of the population, the sampling methods and techniques adopted, and the sample selected for the study are presented.

3. 3. 1. Population and Sampling Methods and Techniques

Population and sample selection are crucial components of any research study. The population is the entire group being studied, while the sample is the subgroup selected for detailed investigation. Sekaran (2000, p. 266) defines population as: "The entire group of people, events, or thing of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate." In research, instead of collecting data from the entire population, which can be time-consuming, costly, and resource-intensive, researchers often collect data from a representative subset of the population known as a sample. A sample is a portion or subset of a population that researchers select for examination or study (Bryman & Bell, 2003). By studying this sample, researchers can draw conclusions and make inferences about the larger population.

Sampling is a pivotal aspect of research that plays a significant role in determining the quality of research results. Simply put, sampling is the process of carefully selecting a representative group of individuals from a larger population to study. The standard definition of sampling given by (Gay et al., 2012; Aaker et al, 2004) is centred around the idea that the

individuals selected should be chosen in a way that makes them a good representation of the overall group they are taken from. This is essential to ensure that the study's findings and conclusions are accurate and reliable.

Sampling methods are categorized into two main types: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling involves randomly selecting individuals from the population, ensuring that each person has an equal chance of being chosen. This method is often employed in quantitative research studies. Conversely, non-probability sampling involves purposefully selecting individuals without any randomization process. This approach is typically utilized in qualitative research studies.

Researchers have a variety of sampling techniques to choose from, and they typically select the technique that best fits their research requirements. In quantitative research, simple random sampling is commonly favoured because it ensures that every individual within the population has an equal chance of being selected for the study, thereby minimizing potential biases and inaccuracies in the research results (Bryman & Bell, 2003; Cohen et al., 2018). When collecting qualitative data, a purposive sampling technique is utilized to select individuals based on their specific characteristics or qualities that make them ideal representatives of the population being studied. The researcher's decision on the appropriate sampling technique can help to ensure that their research findings are both statistically accurate and contextually relevant.

In quantitative studies, the size of the sample plays a significant role in its representativeness and the generalizability of the research findings. Generally, a larger sample size increases the likelihood of obtaining results that are applicable to the larger population. Researchers have several methods to determine the appropriate sample size for quantitative studies, including using lottery methods or accessing online calculators designed for this purpose. Additionally, researchers can rely on software tools like SPSS or Excel to generate

random samples, ensuring that the selection process is unbiased and random. These tools aid in achieving reliable and statistically significant results for quantitative research.

In qualitative research non-probability sampling is commonly employed as the preferred method of sampling. In this approach, participants are intentionally selected instead of relying on random sampling techniques. The reason behind this choice is that random samples may not sufficiently capture individuals who possess the desired qualities for qualitative research, such as being knowledgeable, articulate, reflective, and willing to engage in in-depth conversations with researchers. By utilizing non-probability sampling, participants who are best suited for the research objectives can be purposively selected. A purposive sampling technique is used to carefully select individuals based on their specific characteristics or qualities that make them ideal representatives of the population being studied. As stated by Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2014, p. 151), "When using purposive sampling, the researcher specifies the characteristics of the population of interest and then locates individuals who match the needed characteristics." This method allows researchers to intentionally identify and select participants who possess specific qualities or characteristics that are relevant to the research topic or objectives. By employing purposive sampling, valuable insights and experiences can be contributed by the chosen individuals to enhance the overall understanding of the research area.

Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative research often involves smaller sample sizes, and there are no universally accepted rules for determining the optimal sample size. Gay et al., (2012, p. 145) highlight: "No hard-and-fast rules specify a correct number of participants…qualitative studies with more than 20 or so participants are rare, and many studies will have fewer." Therefore, the determination of the sample size in qualitative research is guided by the research objectives, the nature of the phenomenon being studied, and the depth of data required.

3. 3. 2. Population and Sample under Study

This research study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, comprising two distinct phases of data collection. The first phase employs a quantitative method and utilizes simple random sampling as the sampling technique. The second phase uses a qualitative method, with purposive sampling being utilized as the sampling technique. By utilizing these two complementary methods, this study aims to gather comprehensive and robust data to gain deeper insights into the research topic.

3. 3. 2. 1. Phase 1

In the first phase, the population consisted of approximately 190 in-service online English teachers who had taught English in synchronous online classes at Jazan University and King Khalid University. From this population, a sample of 100 ordinary practitioners (aged 30–60)—in-service online English teachers from the same two government universities—was randomly selected to complete two online Likert-scale questionnaires serving as quantitative data collection instruments. These questionnaires aimed to measure the extent to which online teachers of English are aware of their roles and the challenges they face in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes. The participants represented both male and female teachers across various academic ranks (language teachers, lecturers, and assistant professors) and included Saudi nationals as well as expatriate teachers who had been involved in the Saudi higher education context for several years. All participants were actively engaged in undergraduate-level English language programs and regularly taught oral communication and speaking courses using institutional Learning Management Systems (such as Blackboard Collaborate). The students taught by these teachers were Saudi undergraduates whose native language is Arabic. Their engagement ensured that the sample reflected a diverse yet representative cross-section of practitioners delivering online English instruction within the Saudi higher education context. Using Yamane's (1967) equation for finite populations, where

N the total population and *e* the acceptable margin of error, a sample size was calculated based on a 95% confidence level and a 7% margin of error. This calculation indicated that at least 98 participants were required, which falls within the 4–8% margin considered an appropriate balance between precision and practicality in social science and education studies (Bartlett et al., 2001; Singh & Masuku, 2014).

To strengthen the credibility of the research and reduce potential non-response bias, the sample size was increased to 100 teachers, representing more than half of the total population. This number surpasses standard recommendations for studies with similar population sizes (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure fair representation across both institutions, consistent with best practices linking sample design to the study's aims, population characteristics, and research conditions (Bartlett et al., 2001; Singh & Masuku, 2014; Daniel et al., 2025).

This phase was divided into two stages, both of which involved the same group of 100 online English teachers. In the first stage, participants were required to complete a frequency Likert scale to measure their level of awareness of their roles in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes. In the second stage, participants were required to complete a 5-point ordinal scale survey to identify the challenges they faced during the teaching of speaking skills in online live classes. By having the same participants complete both surveys, the researcher was better equipped with a comprehensive understanding of the level of awareness and the difficulties they encountered while teaching speaking skills in online classes.

3. 3. 2. 2. Phase 2

In the second phase of this research, the researcher adopted a nonprobability sampling method known as purposive sampling, specifically utilizing the technique of expert sampling. This technique involved selecting experts in a specific field as subjects for the research (Etikan et al., 2016). In this case, the population under study consisted of expert online teachers and

teachers who possessed a high level of skills and knowledge in teaching English Language in Saudi universities.

The purposive sampling technique was chosen to gather qualitative data, focusing on the challenges faced by university online teachers when teaching the speaking skills in synchronous online classes in Saudi Arabia. The researcher aimed to gain further insights into these challenges and identify potential solutions that could be applied in the Saudi context. This technique generally involved selecting a relatively small number of participants who possessed the desired expertise and knowledge.

The population in this phase therefore consisted of experts—both Saudi and non-Saudi—who had been involved in the Saudi university context and met the eligibility requirements for expertise in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and online education. From this population, a purposive sample of fifteen (15) experts and experienced online English language practitioners (aged 30–65) was selected based on the following inclusion criteria: a minimum of ten (10) years of experience in TEFL, at least five (5) years in online instruction, a documented record of professional development, specialized qualifications (e.g., CELTA, TEFL), and relevant publications in the field. The selected experts had extensive involvement in curriculum design, teacher training, and online pedagogical innovation.

The participants were invited to take part in a standardized (structured) open-ended interview. This type of interview enabled them to provide detailed responses and to share their experiences, insights, and strategies for addressing the challenges associated with teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes in Saudi Arabia.

By utilizing the nonprobability purposive sampling method and expert sampling technique, the researcher hoped to gather valuable qualitative data from the selected participants. This approach ensured that the insights and solutions gained from this study would

be informed by the experiences and expertise of the expert online teachers and educators in the Saudi context. his research aimed to address the challenges faced by online teachers in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes in Saudi Arabia and to identify the most essential roles for effective teaching of speaking skills in this context. The study excluded individuals with mental disabilities or disorders, participants who were under 30 or over 65 years of age, and teachers who had not taught English online.

3. 4. Data Collection Tools

The present research study employed a diverse array of data collection tools to thoroughly address the three overarching research questions. The selection of the right tool for collecting data is primarily dependent on the type of research questions involved. The three most commonly used types of research questions are quantitative, and qualitative inquiries. It is essential to identify and utilize the appropriate data collection tools to ensure accurate and comprehensive results that can effectively address the research problem. The research employed main data collection tools, each designed to address a specific research question. By aligning the chosen method with the research questions, researcher can increase the validity and reliability of their findings.

3. 4. 1. Addressing Research Question 1

To address the first research question, a Frequency Likert Scale was utilized. This instrument consists of self-developed questions on a focused topic, formulated in clear, comprehensible English to ensure participant understanding. Each question is paired with response options such as "Never," "Rarely," "Sometimes," "Often," and "Always," with each option assigned a specific point value. Participants' total scores are calculated by summing these point values, providing a numerical representation of their responses (Gay et al., 2012). The responses are coded numerically, which enables statistical analysis and helps convert qualitative information into quantifiable data. This design allows for calculating means,

standard deviations, and conducting various other statistical evaluations, making it a valuable tool for quantitative analysis. Additionally, the Frequency Likert Scale streamlines both data collection and analysis, allowing researchers to gather and process substantial data efficiently (Alkharusi, 2022; Harpe, 2015).

The Frequency Likert Scale was chosen to examine how aware governmental university teachers in Saudi Arabia are of their evolving roles in teaching speaking during synchronous online classes. First, the scale made it possible to gauge teacher awareness and performance by measuring the frequency of specific behaviours, thus helping to compare results and identify where additional training or support might be needed. Second, analysing the frequency of teacher responses revealed common patterns, such as misconceptions or challenges, and highlighted areas for potential improvement. Third, the quantitative insights gained could inform policy decisions, curriculum development, and professional growth strategies in Saudi universities. This approach allowed for data-driven interventions aimed at enhancing teaching practices and supporting better outcomes in students' speaking proficiency.

3. 4. 2. Addressing Research Question 2

To address the second research question, the researcher selected a 5-point ordinal scale as the primary method for collecting quantitative data. This scale is commonly used in surveys because it provides participants with clear and ordered response options—such as levels of agreement or degrees of challenge—making it straightforward for individuals to indicate their opinions or experiences. The 5-point ordinal scale qualifies as a rank-order measurement tool, as it arranges responses in a specific sequence according to the variable being studied (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

This scale is advantageous because its straightforward format encourages greater understanding among participants, resulting in more accurate and comprehensive responses. Its flexibility also allows it to be customized for a variety of research topics. By converting

participant feedback into numerical values, the 5-point scale facilitates efficient analysis, allowing researchers to identify major themes and draw comparisons within the data set.

In this study, a set of self-developed questions was included in the 5-point ordinal scale to probe the significant challenges affecting teachers' roles in teaching speaking during synchronous online classes at Saudi governmental universities. The scale ranged from 1 ("Not a challenge") to 5 ("Extremely challenging"), enabling teachers to rate the level of difficulty associated with different aspects of their teaching. These numerical ratings make it possible to conduct statistical analyses—such as finding average scores and identifying emerging patterns.

Including an open-ended question in the survey gave teachers space to mention additional obstacles not captured by the main items. Analysing these responses enabled the researcher to determine which issues were most prominent and to recognize where teachers need further support or resources. This approach supports an inclusive investigation and promotes data-driven solutions for improving the online teaching context.

To prepare for data collection, the researcher reviewed literature and consulted experts to identify relevant factors and challenges. Clear and focused self-developed questions were then incorporated into the survey, each utilizing the 5-point ordinal scale. The finalized survey was distributed to a broad group of teachers from various Saudi governmental universities to ensure comprehensive representation.

Reliability and Validity of Scales

The Likert scales used in this study were relatively simple to develop and administer, allowing for data collection from many participants. However, it was imperative to ensure their reliability and validity before using them in the research.

Reliability, which refers to the consistency of a measurement tool, is crucial for ensuring that a scale produces stable and similar results under consistent conditions. One key aspect of reliability is internal consistency, which assesses how well the items on a scale work together

to measure the same construct. A widely used statistic for evaluating internal consistency is Cronbach's Alpha, with values above 0.7 generally indicating an acceptable level of reliability (Cohen at al., 2018; Taber, 2018). This metric helps researchers ensure that their scales are dependable and that the items within them are coherently aligned to measure the intended concept.

Ensuring the validity of scales is essential for generating accurate and credible research results, as validity reflects the extent to which a scale measures what it is intended to measure. Face validity, although a basic form of validity, is important because it ensures that a scale appears appropriate and relevant to both respondents and researchers, enhancing engagement and perceived legitimacy (Taherdoost, 2016). Content validity, on the other hand, involves a more thorough process where experts review the scale to ensure it comprehensively covers all aspects of the construct being measured, a practice crucial for avoiding biases and ensuring cultural and contextual relevance (Polit & Beck, 2021). Finally, construct validity, often evaluated through techniques like Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), is critical for confirming that the scale accurately captures the theoretical construct, particularly in the initial stages of scale development (Osborne, 2019).

Pilot testing is a critical step in research that involves administering the study protocol or data collection tools to a small group of participants who closely resemble those in the main study. This preliminary trial serves two primary purposes: identifying and addressing potential issues with the study design, tools, or procedures, and improving the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments. According to Cohen et al. (2018), pilot testing is vital for ensuring the practicality, reliability, and validity of these tools. It allows researchers to carefully examine the wording, clarity, and comprehensiveness of the tool's items, ensuring that questions are understood as intended and generate accurate responses.

Additionally, it helps identify unclear or ambiguous answer choices that could lead to misinterpretations or inconsistent answers. During the pilot phase, a small sample from the main study population completes the questionnaires, and their responses are analysed to detect any potential problems, such as confusing wording or insufficient comprehensiveness. Participants also provide feedback on the clarity, relevance, and difficulty of the questions, which is invaluable for refining the instruments before they are used in the main study.

3. 4. 3. Addressing Research Question 3

To explore the third research question, one-hour, one-on-one standardized (structured) open-ended interviews were conducted in English with a purposive sample of 15 experts. A face-to-face modality was employed for 13 of these sessions to facilitate rich interpersonal interaction and to capture non-verbal cues, thereby enhancing the quality and depth of the qualitative data. However, due to participants' significant scheduling constraints, the remaining two interviews were conducted online. In these online sessions, the interviewer used deliberate rapport-building, careful listening to paralinguistic cues (e.g., tone shifts, pauses, hesitations, and iterative probing to preserve the depth and quality of the data.

This qualitative approach involves presenting every participant with the same set of open-ended questions in a specific, predetermined sequence. Such consistency provides structure and allows for comparability across interviews, while the open-ended nature of the questions encourages detailed, thoughtful responses. As Patton (2002, p.249) notes, "The exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order. Questions are worded in a completely open-ended format." This method is especially suited to research in education and the social sciences, where understanding attitudes and lived experiences is essential (Cohen et al., 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2024; Patton, 2015; Turner, 2022

). The standardized (structured) open-ended interview excels at capturing complex insights and generating rich narrative data, revealing patterns and themes that might not be anticipated in advance.

In this study, a standardized structured open-ended interview was employed to address the research question: “What are the effective strategies for overcoming challenges that hinder teachers’ ability to teach speaking skills during synchronous online classes in the Saudi Arabian context?” Each expert responded to a consistent set of self-developed questions, presented in identical wording and sequence. These questions explored key areas such as student engagement and interpersonal interaction. The standardized format enhanced comparability of responses, minimized interviewer-induced bias, and facilitated systematic cross-participant analysis—an approach particularly valuable for eliciting targeted insights from specialists in online English Language instruction (Cohen et al., 2018). At the same time, the open-ended nature of the interview allowed participants to elaborate freely on the challenges they faced and the strategies they employed, providing nuanced understanding of effective, ineffective, and potential alternative approaches.

For the online English Language teaching experts involved in this study, the fixed interview structure ensured thorough and consistent coverage of all critical domains. Every specialist addressed the same set of issues, enabling precise cross-case comparisons without the variability that often accompanies semi-structured designs (Patton, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018). The identical wording and sequencing allowed direct comparisons across experts, revealing distinctive strategy patterns that might otherwise remain obscured by interviewer flexibility. Moreover, the use of a fixed protocol minimized researcher influence, ensuring that differences among responses reflected authentic expert perspectives rather than variations in probing depth or emphasis. This standardized design also guaranteed that all key challenges

specific to the Saudi context were systematically addressed, allowing for the synthesis of highly focused insights across multiple experts within clearly defined research domains.

While Elhami et al. (2024) advocate semi-structured interviews for exploratory doctoral work due to their conversational flexibility, this study's need for systematic multi-expert comparison across predefined topics makes structured open-ended interviews the more methodologically appropriate choice. They balance uniformity for dependability with openness for nuanced reflections, optimizing methodological rigor for synthesizing targeted strategies within the specific Saudi online teaching context (Patton, 2015).

The selection of expert participants for the interviews was carried out using professional networks and institutional directories, specifically targeting individuals with substantial expertise in online English teaching. Each expert received a clear, detailed invitation explaining the purpose of the research, the reasons for their selection, and what their participation would entail. The invitation made sure that the participants fully understood the study's goals and their role in it. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation, ensuring that all ethical requirements were met and that participation was voluntary.

The responses gathered through these interviews provided a thorough picture of effective strategies in teaching speaking skills online in Saudi universities. The expert insights collected in this way enabled the researcher to identify practical and innovative solutions, as well as to clarify the essential roles for teachers aiming to improve synchronous online English language instruction in the Saudi context.

Several important factors were considered to enhance the rigor and reliability of the standardized (structured) open-ended interview as a qualitative tool. First, a detailed and systematic interview protocol was developed to ensure robustness in the data collection process. An authentic and trustworthy environment that encouraged honesty and genuine responses was created through active listening, empathy, and a non-judgmental attitude. The

researcher was transparent about the study purpose, respected the participants' privacy and confidentiality, and ensured that their responses were accurately recorded to establish their trust. Additionally, an atmosphere that represented a natural conversation rather than a formal script was created to promote naturalism. The research methodology and context were thoroughly described to illustrate the potential transferability of the study's findings (believability from the participant's point of view). The Research maintained consistency in their approach to ensure dependability (the ability to account for changes in the research context over time). Reflexivity was used to achieve confirmability (the researcher's ability to remain unbiased and independent). Member checking was used to enhance trust and ensure that data was reliable. Triangulation, which involves using multiple sources of data to corroborate findings, was another important concept that strengthened the rigor and reliability of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Mertler, 2019).

Running standardized (structured) open-ended interviews to uncover what was holding back Saudi university teachers in the synchronous online teaching of speaking skills could present some challenges. One obstacle could be trying to schedule interviews with experts who had busy schedules or were in different time zones. Another challenge could be ensuring the confidentiality of participants, given the personal nature of their professional experiences and challenges. The qualitative aspect of the interviews could also introduce a degree of subjectivity when analysing and interpreting data, so the researcher needed to stay aware of any biases that might arise.

3. 5. Operational Definition of Variables

In this research study, the researcher investigated university teachers' roles in teaching speaking skills in online live classes in Saudi Arabia, specifically at Jazan University and King Khalid University. This study explored the extent to which teachers were aware of their required roles, the degree of severity of the challenges they faced in fulfilling these roles, and

the potential ways of overcoming these challenges. Quantitative and qualitative variables were employed in the study to gather comprehensive data. Quantitative variables, being numerical in nature, allowed for precise measurement and analysis, enabling the identification of trends, correlations, and statistical significance. On the other hand, qualitative variables, representing non-numerical attributes or characteristics, provided in-depth insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours. This multifaceted approach to data collection ensured a thorough understanding of the research questions.

3. 5. 1. Independent Variables

Independent variables are the modifiable factors that researchers purposely manipulate or control to observe their influence on the outcomes being measured. In simpler terms, they are like the "controllable knobs" that researchers turn to see how they affect the "output" of their study (Christensen et al., 2014). These variables are often identified through a comprehensive literature review.

The independent variables in this study, encompassed the multifaceted roles that university teachers play in fostering speaking skills in synchronous online classes. These roles include the facilitator, content expert, manager, pedagogue, social, technical, and assessor roles. This study also delved into the challenges that university teachers face in this context, including students' low language proficiency, psychological obstacles, social obstacles, insufficient student engagement, limited personal interaction, cultural differences, technological hurdles, time constraints, distractions, and assessment challenges.

3. 5. 2. Dependent Variables (Quantitative Variables)

Dependent variables are the responses or reactions that are measured and observed after the manipulation of the independent variables. These variables are presumed to depend on the independent variables (Creswell, 2012). The study employed two dependent variables to gauge

teachers' awareness of their required roles and the severity of challenges they encounter in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes.

Extent of Awareness of Teachers' Required Roles: This variable measured the level of awareness that university teachers held regarding their required roles in teaching speaking skills online. It was assessed through an online questionnaire that utilized a frequency Likert scale, ranging from "Always" to "Never" as the response options. A weighted average score of 3.40 or higher was considered to be a high level of extent of awareness (Table 5). The questionnaire comprised questions pertaining to the organization and monitoring of speaking activities that aimed to promote fluency, negotiation, and the management of speech flow.

Table 5

Weighted Average of Awareness Levels of the Roles

Responses	Weighted Average	Weighted Average %	Extent of Awareness	Roles
Never	1.00 to 1.79	1% to 9.88%	Low	
Rarely	1.80 to 2.59	9.89% to 29.87%		
Sometimes	2.60 to 3.39	29.88% to 49.88%	Medium	
Often	**3.40 to 4.19**	**49.89% to 69.88%**	**High**	
Always	**4.20 to 5.00**	**69.89% to 100%**		

Degree of Significance of the Challenges Faced: This variable measured the severity of the challenges encountered by university teachers in fulfilling their roles in teaching speaking skills online. Significance levels were measured using a questionnaire featuring a 5-point ordinal scale. Response options spanned from "Not a challenge" (1) to "Extremely challenging" (5). Challenges with a weighted average between 3.40 and 5.00 were considered of high severity (Table 6). The questionnaire asked teachers to rate the degree of severity of challenges they faced while teaching speaking skills online, such as students' low language knowledge, students' low social engagement, and other difficulties experienced during synchronous online classes.

Table 6

Weighted Average Challenge Severity

Responses	Weighted Average	Weighted Average %	Degree of Significance of Challenges	Challenges
Not a challenge	1.00 to 1.79	1% to 9.88%	Low	
Slightly challenging	1.80 to 2.59	9.89% to 29.87%		
Moderately challenging	2.60 to 3.39	29.88% to 49.88%	Medium	
Very challenging	**3.40 to 4.19**	**49.89% to 69.88%**	**High**	
Extremely challenging	**4.20 to 5.00**	**69.89% to 100%**		

3. 5. 3. Qualitative (Categorical) Variables: Solutions to Challenges

Categorical (qualitative) variables are characterized by their qualities or categories rather than numerical values. They represent the categories, concepts or themes that arise from the data and are relevant to the research questions. Their classifications are often subjective and open to interpretation.

The variable "Solutions (strategies) to overcome the Significant Challenges Faced by Teachers in Carrying out their Required Roles in Teaching Speaking Skills in Synchronous Online Classes" encompasses a comprehensive collection of strategies proposed by experts and experienced teachers to overcome the challenges they face in teaching speaking skills online in Saudi Arabian Universities. This variable captures the diverse range of approaches and techniques employed by experts in online English language teaching to address the unique difficulties posed by teaching speaking online. The solutions, strategies, and techniques suggested by these experts provide valuable insights into the most crucial roles teachers need to fulfil to effectively teach speaking online.

The data collection tool used for this variable is a standardized (structured) open-ended interview. This type of interview combines the flexibility of open-ended questions with the structure of a standardized process. The open-ended nature allows experts and educators to fully express their thoughts and experiences without feeling constrained, while the structure ensures that all essential topics are covered. This method yields rich, detailed responses that provide deep insights into the challenges teachers face and the solutions they propose.

One challenge that teachers may face in synchronous online classes is the "Lack of Social Engagement." This challenge can hinder student participation, motivation, and overall learning outcomes. Several solutions to this challenge can be proposed by expert teachers, including icebreakers and introductions, incorporating collaborative projects, and establishing communication channels.

3. 6. Study Procedures and Data Analysis Techniques

In this study, a sequential mixed methods design was used to analyse the data. It consisted of two phases: initially, quantitative data analysis methods were used, followed by qualitative data analysis techniques in the second phase. The aim was to delve deeper into the quantitative findings, examining their significance and context to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon.

In the first phase, two quantitative data collection instruments were employed: a frequency Likert scale and a 5-point ordinal scale. The frequency Likert scale was employed to measure the level of awareness of online teachers of their required roles to teach speaking skills in synchronous online classes. The 5-point ordinal scale was used to measure the degree of severity of the challenges faced by teachers in teaching speaking skills in synchronous virtual classes.

For analysing the gathered data, the researcher employed quantitative data analysis techniques, which involve examining numerical data using statistical methods. The objective was to summarize, describe, and interpret the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of its descriptive statistics, a commonly used technique in quantitative data analysis, was utilized. It entailed summarizing the data through measures such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and range (Burns & Grove, 2005).

IBM® SPSS® Statistics (https://www.ibm.com/products/spss-statistics) is a powerful tool for data exploration and analysis. Its user-friendly interface and comprehensive features

empower users to uncover hidden insights and make informed decisions. SPSS software was used to analyse data collected through two Google Forms questionnaires: a frequency Likert scale and a 5-point ordinal scale. The Google Forms questionnaire data was exported as a CSV file and then imported into SPSS for analysis. The various tools and features available in SPSS were used to analyse the data.

A descriptive statistical analysis was performed by following several steps. First, the data was collected by gathering relevant numerical data. Next, data cleaning was conducted to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the collected data. The data was then organized systematically to facilitate analysis. Subsequently, descriptive statistical measures such as mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha were calculated to provide insights into the central tendency and variability of the data. Finally, the obtained results were interpreted, leading to conclusions and implications for the research.

To measure the level of awareness of online teachers of their required roles, a frequency Likert scale (Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never) was used. The following statistical measurements were utilized: The mean was calculated as the average of all the responses to the Likert scale items. The standard deviation was calculated as a measure of the variability of the responses and Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the Likert scale.

To measure the degree of severity of challenges encountered by online teachers in carrying out their required roles, an online Google Form questionnaire (A 5-point Ordinal Scale) was conducted. The same descriptive statistical analysis steps were followed. To gauge the severity of challenges experienced by online teachers when teaching speaking skills online, a 5-point Ordinal Scale was employed, offering response options ranging from "Not a challenge" to "Extremely challenging." Subsequently, the Mean was computed to ascertain the overall severity level of these challenges. A higher mean indicated a higher level of severity.

The Standard Deviation was calculated to measure the variability of the responses. A higher standard deviation suggested more variability in the severity of challenges faced by online teachers. Cronbach's Alpha was computed as a measure of the internal consistency of the Likert scale. A higher Cronbach's alpha indicated that the Likert scale items were more consistent in measuring the level of severity of challenges faced by online teachers.

In the second phase, a qualitative data analysis technique was employed to analyse non-numerical data: standardized (structured) open-ended interviews transcripts. The interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed word for word to faithfully retain the participants' authentic spoken responses. The resulting transcripts were generated using the Microsoft Word converter to ensure an accurate representation of what was said. The analysis focused on understanding the meaning, patterns, and themes present in the data. Qualitative analysis methods included coding, categorization, thematic analysis, and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006,). It aimed to gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena, human experiences, and perspectives by exploring the context, relationships, and interpretations in the data.

Taguette (https://www.taguette.org/) is a qualitative research software for importing, highlighting, tagging, and exporting quotes and research materials. Taguette was used to aid in organizing and analyzing qualitative data: the standardized (structured) open-ended interview. This tool collected information on how online teachers overcame challenges that impeded them from effectively fulfilling their required roles in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes. Qualitative data analysis focused on non-numerical data, aiming to identify patterns, themes, and significance embedded within the data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Thematic analysis, a prevalent qualitative data analysis method, entailed a comprehensive examination of the data.

The thematic analysis process comprised several steps. The researcher familiarized himself with the data by reading and re-reading it to gain a comprehensive understanding of its content. Coding was then conducted, assigning labels or codes to meaningful units or segments of the data. These codes captured the essence of the data, whether descriptive or conceptual. After coding, similar codes were grouped together to form themes, representing patterns or concepts that emerged from the data. The researcher reviewed and refined the themes and codes, ensuring their accuracy and alignment with the data. Finally, the themes were analysed to gain a deeper understanding of the data, leading to the interpretation of findings, and drawing meaningful conclusions.

To analyse the qualitative data collected through standardized (structured) open-ended interviews, TAGUETTE software was employed. The software assisted in organizing and analysing the data efficiently. Using thematic analysis, the researcher identified patterns and themes that emerged from the responses. This in-depth exploration of the data provided a deeper understanding of how online teachers overcame challenges in fulfilling their required roles.

3. 7. Ethical Considerations

The research study that investigated university teachers' roles, their awareness of these roles, the challenges they faced, and potential solutions in teaching speaking skills online in Saudi Arabia. The case study specifically focused on teachers from Jazan University and King Khalid University. Various ethical considerations were implemented to ensure the ethical assurance of this research study.

The research tools used in the study were carefully designed to collect the necessary data while preserving ethical considerations. Online questionnaires and standardized (structured) open-ended interviews were utilized to gather information. The frequency Likert scale was employed in the online questionnaire to assess the frequency of teachers

implementing the strategies that promote students' speaking skills development, with the aim of measuring teachers' awareness levels of their roles in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes in Saudi Arabia. The severity of challenges faced in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes was rated using a 5-point ordinal scale in the questionnaire, with a focus on areas such as students' low language knowledge and their insufficient engagement in live classes. The standardized (structured) open-ended interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of how teachers created opportunities for students to practice their speaking skills in an online setting.

The necessary approvals from the relevant authorities were obtained before the commencement of the study. The Unicaf Research and Ethics Committee (UREC) fully approved the Research Ethics and Approval Form (REAF), the instruments for data collection, and the forms for obtaining informed consent (Appendices E & F). This endorsement is vital as it verifies that the research complies with the necessary genuine and ethical research norms. UREC's approval indicates that every facet of the research, including the techniques for data collection and the procedure for gaining informed consent from participants, were meticulously examined and deemed to be ethical and authentic. This approval mechanism ensures that the research follows the set ethical guidelines, protects participant rights, and preserves the validity of the research outcomes.

Both Jazan University and King Khalid University granted permissions for the conduct of questionnaires and interviews with their respective faculty members (Appendix G). The research process was conducted in strict accordance with the ethical guidelines and regulations set forth by these institutions. This adherence to institutional guidelines ensured that the research was carried out in a manner that respected the rights and privacy of the participants (National Committee of Bioethics in Saudi Arabia, 2022). The strict compliance with these guidelines not only facilitated the smooth progression of the research but also ensured that the

research received the necessary institutional approval. This approval is a testament to the research's ethical conduct and adherence to the established norms and regulations.

Informed consent was sought from all participants. Detailed information regarding the purpose of the study, its procedures, potential risks, and benefits were provided to the participants. They were given the choice to participate voluntarily and were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences (British Educational Research Association, 2024). Informed consent for the online questionnaires was obtained electronically through the questionnaires themselves (Appendices A, B, C, & D). In order to conduct standardized (structured) open-ended interviews, participants were asked to provide written consent, indicating their agreement to participate. This step was taken to ensure that participants fully understood the implications of the study and were willing to be involved before their participation.

Participant confidentiality and anonymity were considered paramount in this study. The identities and personal information of the participants were kept confidential throughout the entire research process. Pseudonyms or participant codes were used instead of real names in research publications or presentations to protect their identities and maintain their privacy. Privacy and data protection were also considered. The data collected during the study was handled with utmost care to ensure the privacy and protection of participants' information. Only the researcher had access to the data, and it was stored securely. The data was anonymized and aggregated to protect individual privacy. Access to the data was restricted to the research team, and it was stored for the duration specified by the institutional guidelines (British Educational Research Association, 2024).

Cultural sensitivity was a crucial aspect of this research study. The research team approached the study with cultural sensitivity, considering the values and beliefs of the participants in the cultural context of Saudi Arabia. The data collection tools, such as

questionnaires and interviews, were developed and conducted in Arabic, the native language of the participants. Throughout the study, measures were implemented to ensure that the cultural values and traditions of the participants were treated with consideration and respect (British Educational Research Association, 2024).

In terms of potential risks and benefits, the study entailed minimal risks for the participants, as it primarily focused on their roles, challenges faced, and potential solutions in teaching speaking skills online. The potential benefits of the study included insights into enhancing online teaching practices and contributing to the field of education. Participants may have experienced some level of discomfort while reflecting on the challenges they encountered; however, efforts were made to minimize any potential negative effects on participants.

Researcher integrity was also maintained throughout the study. The research team upheld principles of integrity, honesty, and respect. The data collected was represented accurately, and the findings were analysed objectively. There was no bias or manipulation of data and any potential conflicts of interest were disclosed to ensure transparency and maintain the trustworthiness and integrity of the study.

3. 8. Conclusion

This study meticulously examined the roles of university teachers in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes in Saudi Arabia through a comprehensive research methodology. The adoption of a case study approach enabled an in-depth exploration of the challenges and opportunities faced by teachers within the Saudi context. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in a sequential data collection aimed to give a complete understanding of the research questions. To enrich the findings, a diverse range of data collection tools was employed, encompassing literature review, Frequency Likert Scale, 5-point ordinal scale, and standardized (structured) open-ended interviews. Seven independent variables representing the different roles teachers play in online teaching were identified, along

with two dependent variables measuring teachers' awareness of their roles and the severity of challenges faced. The study emphasized ethical considerations, adhering to informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, cultural sensitivity, and researcher integrity. The findings and solutions informed by the experiences and expertise of expert online teachers and educators will contribute valuable insights to educational practice in Saudi Arabia and beyond.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This research aims to enhance the effectiveness of online English language teaching in Saudi universities by focusing on teachers' awareness and implementation of their evolving roles. Specifically, it investigates Saudi university teachers' awareness of their changing roles in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes. The study seeks to identify and address specific challenges that hinder effective online teaching, with the ultimate goal of developing evidence-based strategies to overcome these obstacles and help teachers fulfil their required roles.

Chapter 4 is organized around the research questions. It begins with an exploration of the trustworthiness of the data, detailing the processes used to ensure the validity and reliability of the quantitative instruments and the methods employed to maintain the integrity of qualitative data. Following this, the chapter presents the results, discussing the extent of teachers' awareness of their roles, the significant challenges they face, and the strategies identified to address these challenges. The evaluation of findings section offers a thorough analysis, highlighting the implications and significance of the results for enhancing online English language teaching in Saudi universities. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the study's outcomes.

4. 1. Trustworthiness of Data

4. 1. 1. General Process for Quantitative Instruments Validation

To ensure that a questionnaire or measurement tool was both valid and reliable, the following process was used for instrument validation. This process involved several key steps: face validation, content validity, pilot testing, reliability assessment, and construct validity. Each step had a specific purpose and built on the previous one, creating a comprehensive validation process.

The first step, face validation, involved reviewing the questionnaire items for appropriateness and relevance by non-experts, such as potential respondents or stakeholders. According to Mackey and Gass (2021, p. 394) it "refers to the familiarity of an instrument and the ease with which the validity of the content is recognized." This step was crucial for the acceptability and credibility of the instrument. Informal reviews were conducted to gather feedback on whether the items appeared relevant and understandable. This initial assessment helped identify obvious issues early on, making it a foundational step that ensured the instrument was acceptable to its intended audience.

Following face validation, Content Validity was ensured. Creswell and Guetterman (2021, p. 617) define content validity as "the extent to which the questions on the instrument and the scores from these questions are representative of all the possible questions that could be asked about the content or skills." This step involved experts in the field reviewing the items to confirm they accurately represented the construct, such as teachers' awareness of their roles or the severity of challenges they faced. This detailed review was crucial because if the items did not adequately cover the construct, subsequent validation steps would have been less meaningful. Content validity ensured that the instrument had a solid theoretical foundation and included all necessary dimensions of the construct.

Next, pilot testing was conducted to identify any problems with the questionnaire items, such as clarity, relevance, and usability, before large-scale data collection. A small-scale pilot test with a group of online teachers of English provided preliminary data and feedback, allowing the researcher to refine the instrument. Creswell and Guetterman (2021, p. 625) state that a "pilot test of a questionnaire or interview survey is a procedure in which a researcher makes changes in an instrument based on feedback from a small number of individuals who complete and evaluate the instrument." This step was important for practical reasons, ensuring

that the questionnaire functioned well in real-world settings and that any issues were addressed early.

Reliability assessment followed pilot testing to ensure that the instrument consistently measured what it was intended to measure (Mackey & Gass, 2021). This step involved calculating internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha. Cohen et al. (2018, p. 270) uphold that "Cronbach alpha, frequently referred to simply as the alpha coefficient of reliability, or simply the alpha. The Cronbach alpha provides a coefficient of inter-item correlations, i.e. the correlation of each item with the sum of all the other relevant items." Reliable measures were essential for the overall validity of the instrument, as they ensured that the findings were consistent and reproducible.

Finally, Construct validity was confirmed to ensure that the items accurately measured the intended constructs. As claimed by Creswell and Guetterman (2021, p. 618), it is "a determination of the significance, meaning, purpose, and use of scores from an instrument." This involved using exploratory factor analysis or confirmatory factor analysis to verify that the items were grouped together as expected according to the theoretical framework. As asserted by Mackey, and Gass (2021, p. 394), exploratory factor analysis is "a means of determining common factors that underlie measures that test different (possibly related) variables. It allows the researcher to take a larger number of variables and reduce them to a smaller number of factors." This step was critical for ensuring that the instrument accurately reflected the theoretical constructs it aimed to measure, providing a deep validation of the questionnaire's structure. Table 7 presents a five-step process for validating quantitative instruments: face validation, content validity, pilot testing, reliability assessment, and construct validity. Each step enhances the instrument's accuracy, reliability, and theoretical soundness prior to large-scale application.

Table 7

General Process for Quantitative Instruments Validation

Step	Rationale	Action
Face Validation	Ensures that the questionnaire items look appropriate and relevant to respondents and stakeholders. It involves a superficial assessment by non-experts. This initial check is important for the acceptability and credibility of the instrument.	Conduct informal reviews with a few individuals, such as potential respondents, stakeholders, or colleagues, to gather feedback on whether the items seem appropriate and relevant.
⇩		
Content Validity	Ensures all items encompass all relevant aspects of the construct being measured. This is crucial because if the items don't adequately cover the concept, the rest of the validation process is less effective.	Engage experts to review the questionnaire items to confirm they accurately and thoroughly represent the concept (e.g., teachers' awareness of their roles or the degree of challenges they face).
⇩		
Pilot Testing	Identifies any problems with the questionnaire items such as clarity, relevance, and usability. This step is important for refining the instrument before it is used on a larger scale.	Conduct a small-scale pilot test with a small group of teachers to gather preliminary data and refine the items based on their feedback, making necessary adjustments to the questionnaire.
⇩		
Reliability Assessment	Ensures that the instrument consistently measures what it is supposed to measure. Reliable measures are essential for the overall validity of the instrument.	Internal Consistency: Use Cronbach's alpha to check if the items are consistently measuring the same construct. Test-Retest Reliability: If possible, administer the questionnaire at two different times to check for stability.
⇩		
Construct Validity	Confirms that the items are measuring the intended concepts accurately. This step involves examining the theoretical structure of the concepts being measured.	Use exploratory factor analysis to verify that the items group together as expected according to the theoretical framework.

4. 1. 2. Validity and Reliability of Quantitative Data (Phase 1)

4. 1. 2. 1. Face validation

In the context of this study, face validation was administered for two specific questionnaires aimed at assessing teachers' awareness of their roles in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes and the challenges they face.

Phase 1, stage 1 involved assessing the extent of awareness of teachers' required roles in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes. This assessment was carried out using an online questionnaire that utilized a frequency Likert scale, with response options ranging from "Always" to "Never." To perform face validation for this questionnaire, a small

group of colleagues and acquaintances who were familiar with online teaching contexts were selected. These individuals were asked to review the questionnaire and provide feedback on its relevance and appropriateness for measuring teachers' awareness of their roles. Their feedback focused on several aspects, including the clarity of the items, the relevance of the questions to the intended construct, and the appropriateness of the response options. For instance, reviewers evaluated whether terms used in the questions were understandable and if the response scale was suitable for capturing the frequency of teachers' actions. Based on the feedback collected, the questionnaire was refined. This process might have involved rewording items for better clarity, adding or removing questions to ensure comprehensive coverage of the construct, or adjusting the response options to better fit the context.

Phase 1, stage 2 focused on measuring the degree of severity of the challenges faced by teachers in teaching speaking skills online. This was done through an online questionnaire that utilized a 5-point ordinal scale, with response options ranging from "Not a challenge" (1) to "Extremely challenging" (5). Like Stage 1, face validation for this questionnaire involved selecting colleagues and acquaintances who were familiar with the challenges of online teaching. These reviewers were asked to evaluate whether each item in the questionnaire was appropriate for assessing the challenges teachers face in the online teaching environment. Feedback was collected on the clarity and relevance of the items, as well as whether the questions comprehensively covered the various challenges teachers might encounter. Additionally, reviewers assessed whether the response options accurately reflected the severity of these challenges. For example, they considered whether the scale provided sufficient gradation to capture different levels of difficulty experienced by teachers. Based on their feedback, necessary refinements were made to the questionnaire. This could involve clarifying item wording, ensuring that all potential challenges were included, and adjusting the response scale if necessary to better capture the severity of challenges.

4. 1. 2. 2. Content Validity

Phase 1, stage 1 questionnaire, which assessed the extent of awareness of 100 university teachers' required roles, an online questionnaire was utilized with a frequency Likert scale ranging from "Always" to "Never." Phase 1, stage 2 questionnaire focused on measuring the severity of challenges faced by 100 university teachers in teaching speaking skills online, utilizing a 5-point ordinal scale with response options from "Not a challenge" (1) to "Extremely challenging" (5).

To ensure strong content validity, a panel of subject matter experts in online education was engaged. These experts were selected based on their extensive experience and knowledge in online teaching and language instruction. The initial development of the questionnaire items was informed by a comprehensive review of relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, ensuring that the items were grounded in established knowledge and best practices in the field.

Each item of the questionnaires was scrutinized for its relevance, clarity, and representativeness. The experts evaluated whether each item accurately reflected the various roles that teachers play in teaching speaking skills online. Their feedback was instrumental in identifying items that were either too vague, redundant, or not directly related to the construct. Through an iterative process of review and refinement, the items of both questionnaires were revised to ensure they were relevant, comprehensive, clear, and unambiguous. This process involved rewording items for better clarity, adding new items to cover gaps, and removing items that did not contribute to the overall construct. The thorough review and refinement process, guided by expert feedback, ensured that the final questionnaires were robust tools for assessing teachers' awareness of their roles and the challenges they face in teaching speaking skills online.

4. 1. 2. 3. Pilot Testing

In the context of assessing teachers' awareness of their roles and the challenges they face in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes, piloting was meticulously conducted to refine the questionnaires and confirm their accuracy and consistency.

Stage 1 involved an online questionnaire designed to assess the extent of awareness of teachers' required roles in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes. This questionnaire utilized a frequency Likert scale, with response options ranging from "Always" to "Never." The researcher began the piloting process by selecting a small, representative sample of teachers (10 participants) actively involved in online teaching. This sample was chosen to reflect the diversity of the larger population that the final study aimed to target. The pilot participants were asked to complete the questionnaire, and their feedback was solicited on various aspects of the survey. The pilot test results showed that the questionnaire is highly reliable, achieving a Cronbach's alpha of 0.912 for the 26 items, based on the responses from 10 participants.

During this stage of validation, the primary focus was on identifying issues related to clarity, relevance, and functionality of the items. Participants were encouraged to point out any terms or phrases that were confusing or unclear, ensuring that the questions were easily understood and unambiguous. They were also asked to evaluate the relevance of each item, considering whether the questions accurately captured their awareness of the roles required in teaching speaking skills online. The functionality of the Likert scale was assessed to ensure that the response options were appropriate and allowed for a nuanced expression of the participants' experiences.

Feedback from the pilot test revealed several areas for improvement. For instance, some items were too broad, leading to varying interpretations among participants. These items were refined to be more specific. Certain terms used in the questionnaire were identified as

potentially confusing, prompting revisions to use clearer, more universally understood language. The pilot test also highlighted the need for additional items to cover aspects of role awareness that were initially overlooked. These refinements ensured that the questionnaire accurately measured the intended construct and was clear and relevant to the respondents.

Following the completion of Stage 1, Stage 2 involved a questionnaire designed to measure the degree of severity of the challenges faced by teachers in teaching speaking skills online. This questionnaire utilized a 5-point ordinal scale, with response options ranging from "Not a challenge" (1) to "Extremely challenging" (5). A similar piloting process was employed, with a small sample of teachers (10 participants) asked to complete the questionnaire and provide feedback. Participants were asked to comment on the clarity of the questions and the relevance of each item to their experiences. The feedback from the pilot testing of the second questionnaire indicated that some items did not adequately differentiate between levels of challenge. As a result, these items were revised to better capture the spectrum of difficulties teachers might face. The pilot test results indicate that the questionnaire has excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94 across 46 items based on responses from 10 participants.

Throughout the piloting process, the researcher maintained an iterative approach, adjusting the questionnaires based on the feedback received (Gay et al., 2012). This ensured that each iteration of the questionnaire became progressively more refined and accurate in measuring the intended constructs. The thoroughness of the piloting phase ensured that the final questionnaires were clear, relevant, and functional, enhancing both their validity and reliability. By addressing the issues identified during the pilot tests, the researchers were able to improve the quality of the data collected in the subsequent large-scale study. This meticulous approach not only ensured the academic rigor of the research but also made the findings more meaningful and applicable to real-world educational settings.

4. 1. 2. 4. Reliability Assessment

In this study, internal consistency was meticulously evaluated for two questionnaires aimed at assessing teachers' awareness of their roles and the challenges they face in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes.

Stage 1 of the research focused on assessing the extent of awareness of teachers' required roles in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes. This was done using an online questionnaire that utilized a frequency Likert scale, with response options ranging from "Always" to "Never." To ensure the reliability of this questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was employed as the statistical measure of internal consistency (Leavy, 2017).

For the first questionnaire, which consisted of 26 items, the Cronbach's Alpha value obtained was 0.926 (Table 8). This high value indicates a strong level of internal consistency, suggesting that the items are highly correlated and measure the same underlying construct—teachers' awareness of their roles. The high internal consistency implies that the items on the questionnaire reliably assess the extent to which teachers are aware of their required roles in teaching speaking skills online. By confirming the reliability of the questionnaire through such a robust statistical measure, researchers can be confident in the stability and dependability of the data collected using this tool.

The mean and standard deviation of the items suggest that the responses are well-distributed across the Likert scale. This distribution indicates that the questionnaire can capture a range of responses, enhancing its ability to distinguish between different levels of awareness among teachers. The analysis is based on 100 valid cases, which means that the sample size is adequate for the reliability analysis. The combination of a high mean score (103.65), moderate variance (150.715), and high internal consistency (0.926) (Cronbach's alpha) indicates that the scale is both reliable and valid.

Table 8

Reliability Assessment: Phase 1, Stage 1 Questionnaire

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	100	100.0
	Excluded	0	.0
	Total	100	100.0

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.926	26

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
103.6500	150.715	12.27659	26

Following stage 1, stage 2 of the research aimed to measure the degree of severity of the challenges faced by teachers in teaching speaking skills online. This stage involved an online questionnaire that utilized a 5-point ordinal scale, with response options ranging from "Not a challenge" (1) to "Extremely challenging" (5). The questionnaire included 46 items that addressed various aspects of the challenges encountered in synchronous online classes, such as students' low language proficiency and social engagement.

To ensure the reliability of this Stage 2 questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was again used to measure internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha value for this questionnaire was 0.941, demonstrating an outstanding level of reliability (Table 9). This very high value indicates that the items are well correlated and provide a cohesive measure of the severity of challenges faced by teachers. The strong internal consistency ensures that the findings derived from this questionnaire are based on a reliable and stable assessment tool, enhancing the credibility of the research outcomes.

The moderate variability indicated by the standard deviation (22.60436) suggests that respondents' scores are not extremely spread out, which is generally good for the reliability of the scale. It indicates that the items are functioning well together to measure the underlying construct consistently. Moderate variability is beneficial as it shows diversity in responses without indicating randomness or inconsistency. This can provide meaningful insights into different aspects of the teaching roles being studied.

Table 9
Reliability Assessment: Phase 1, Stage 2 Questionnaire

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	100	100.0
	Excluded	0	.0
	Total	100	100.0

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.941	46

Scale Statistics			
Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
155.7500	510.957	22.60436	46

The high values of internal consistency obtained for both questionnaires indicate that the items are well-correlated and collectively measure the intended constructs effectively. This meticulous approach to reliability assessment enhances the credibility and stability of the research findings, supporting the study's aim of informing policy and practice in the evolving field of online teaching.

4. 1. 2. 5. Construct Validity

4. 1. 2. 5. 1. Stage 1 Questionnaire (Questionnaire 1)

In the context of evaluating teachers' awareness of their required roles in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes, construct validity was meticulously assessed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). This process is essential in the evolving landscape of online teaching, where precise measurement tools are crucial for gathering meaningful data.

To begin, Stage 1 questionnaire, which utilized a frequency Likert scale with response options ranging from "Always" to "Never," was subjected to a series of preliminary tests to determine the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The correlation matrix calculations showed that the correlation coefficients among the questionnaire items were statistically significant. A determinant value of 5.03E-008 indicated a high level of multicollinearity among the variables, confirming that the items were sufficiently correlated for factor analysis.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted to further evaluate the data's suitability (Hinton et al., 2014). The

KMO value was 0.819, which is considered excellent and indicates that the sample size was appropriate for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < .05$), confirming that the dataset had patterned relationships suitable for factor analysis.

Once the data's suitability was confirmed, the factor analysis proceeded with the extraction method being Principal Component Analysis (PCA). The communalities, which represent the amount of variance in each item that is accounted for by the extracted factors, were all above the 0.50 threshold, with the lowest being 0.602. This suggests that each item shared sufficient common variance with other items, reinforcing the dataset's appropriateness for factor analysis.

The total variance explained by the factor analysis was 72.098%, which significantly exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 50%. This high percentage indicates a strong level of construct validity, suggesting that the questionnaire effectively captures the intended constructs. The initial eigenvalues revealed that the first seven components had eigenvalues greater than 1, justifying their retention in the analysis. The rotated component matrix demonstrated that these components explained a substantial proportion of the variance, with the first factor alone accounting for 36.266% of the variance.

Furthermore, the cumulative percentage of variance explained by these components progressively increased, affirming the coherence and relevance of the extracted factors. This detailed analysis confirms that the questionnaire items group together as expected according to the theoretical framework, thus verifying that the instrument accurately measures the intended constructs (Table 10; Figure 3).

Conducting construct validity through EFA not only validates the theoretical structure of the constructs but also enhances the reliability of the questionnaire. By ensuring that the items are accurately measuring the intended constructs, the research can produce more credible and meaningful findings. This meticulous approach to construct validity is particularly

important in the evolving field of online teaching, where precise and reliable measurement tools are essential for assessing and improving educational practices.

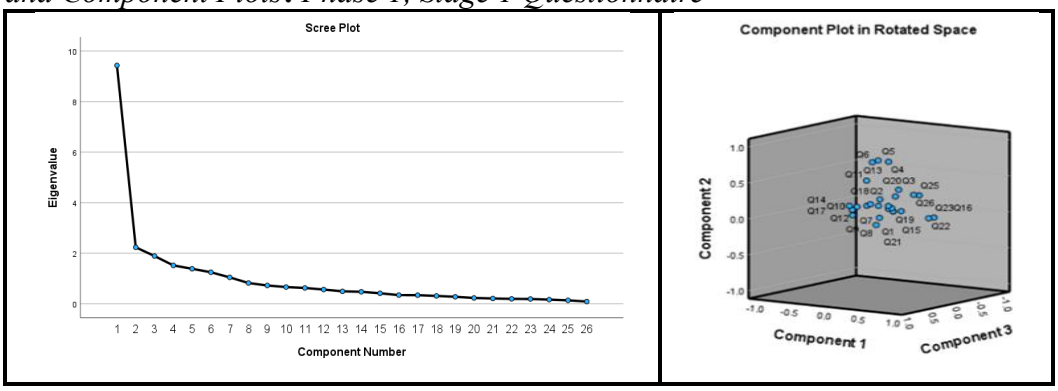
Table 10

Total Variance Explained: Phase 1, Stage 1 Questionnaire

Total Variance Explained									
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.429	36.266	36.266	9.429	36.266	36.266	3.318	12.762	12.762
2	2.235	8.595	44.861	2.235	8.595	44.861	3.029	11.650	24.412
3	1.888	7.262	52.123	1.888	7.262	52.123	2.738	10.533	34.944
4	1.518	5.839	57.962	1.518	5.839	57.962	2.737	10.527	45.472
5	1.384	5.323	63.285	1.384	5.323	63.285	2.457	9.451	54.922
6	1.247	4.795	68.080	1.247	4.795	68.080	2.405	9.250	64.173
7	1.045	4.018	72.098	1.045	4.018	72.098	2.061	7.926	72.098
8	0.821	3.157	75.255						
9	0.724	2.783	78.038						
10	0.661	2.542	80.581						
11	0.626	2.408	82.988						
12	0.562	2.163	85.151						
13	0.492	1.892	87.044						
14	0.474	1.825	88.868						
15	0.415	1.595	90.463						
16	0.343	1.321	91.783						
17	0.340	1.308	93.091						
18	0.310	1.193	94.285						
19	0.276	1.062	95.347						
20	0.230	0.884	96.231						
21	0.209	0.805	97.036						
22	0.194	0.746	97.781						
23	0.189	0.727	98.509						
24	0.165	0.633	99.142						
25	0.135	0.519	99.661						
26	0.088	0.339	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Figure 3

Scree and Component Plots: *Phase 1, Stage 1 Questionnaire*



4. 1. 2. 5. 2. Stage 2 Questionnaire (Questionnaire 2)

The results of a factor analysis were conducted to assess the construct validity of Stage 2 questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to evaluate the degree of severity of challenges faced by university teachers in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes. The scale used ranged from 1 ("Not a challenge") to 5 ("Extremely challenging").

The factor analysis employed was Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Oblimin rotation. The analysis aimed to uncover underlying factors that could validate the constructs intended to be measured by the questionnaire. Key metrics evaluated included the Correlation Matrix, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO), Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, communalities, and the total variance explained by the components.

The calculations of the correlation matrix show that the correlation coefficients among questionnaire items were all statistically significant (Determinant=0.002 which is >0.00001). There is no multicollinearity problem, indicating that the correlation between items is very strong and therefore sufficient for factor analysis. The KMO measure was 0.717, indicating a good level of sampling adequacy for the analysis. Bartlett's test was significant (p=0.001), confirming that the correlations between items were sufficiently strong for PCA. Communalities were all above 0.546, suggesting that each item shared sufficient common variance with other items. The analysis of reproduced correlations indicated a good model fit, with 17% of residuals showing absolute values greater than 0.05.

The PCA results showed that several components extracted cumulatively explained 77.674% of the total variance, well above the 50% threshold commonly used to denote a satisfactory explanation of variance in social science research (Table 6). This high percentage of explained variance indicates that the factor structure of the questionnaire is robust. Components extracted during the analysis were closely aligned with the different types of challenges teachers face in online education. These included technological challenges (e.g., poor internet connectivity, software glitches), pedagogical challenges (e.g., inadequate teacher

training, difficulties in providing feedback), student-related challenges (e.g., limited vocabulary, anxiety, peer pressure), and structural challenges (e.g., class size, limited allocated class time).

The factor loadings within the PCA indicated strong correlations of specific items with their respective components, suggesting that the items are good indicators of the constructs they were intended to measure (Table 11; Figure 4). The clear and distinct factor structure not only supports the construct validity of the questionnaire but also reflects the multifaceted nature of challenges in online teaching environments.

The factor analysis confirms the construct validity of the questionnaire used in Phase 1, Stage 2 of the study. The distinct and interpretable factors, along with a high percentage of variance explained, demonstrate that the questionnaire is a valid tool for assessing the severity of challenges faced by teachers in synchronous online classes. This validation supports its use in further research and in practical applications aimed at improving online teaching strategies and teacher training programs.

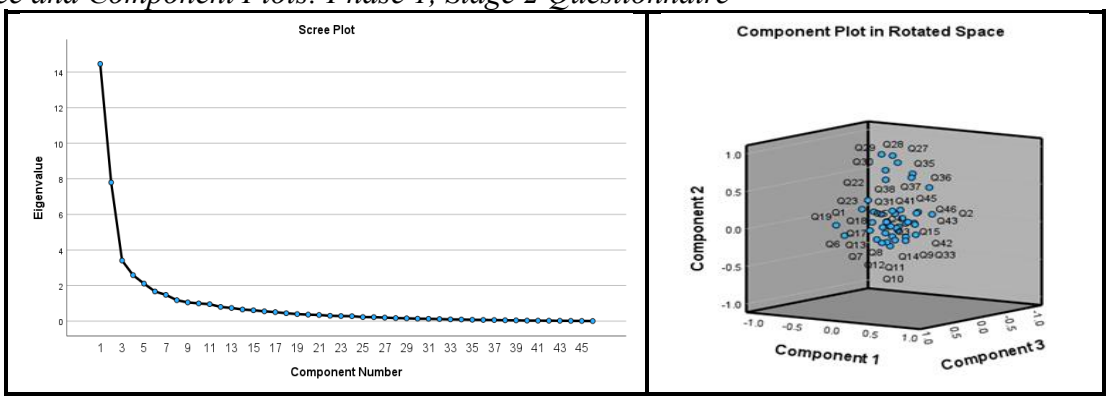
Table 11

Total Variance Explained: Phase 1, Stage 2 Questionnaire

Total Variance Explained						
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	14.456	31.426	31.426	14.456	31.426	31.426
2	7.793	16.942	48.368	7.793	16.942	48.368
3	3.406	7.405	55.773	3.406	7.405	55.773
4	2.586	5.621	61.393	2.586	5.621	61.393
5	2.109	4.585	65.978	2.109	4.585	65.978
6	1.669	3.629	69.607	1.669	3.629	69.607
7	1.477	3.212	72.819	1.477	3.212	72.819
8	1.179	2.563	75.382	1.179	2.563	75.382
9	1.054	2.291	77.674	1.054	2.291	77.674
10	.997	2.168	79.842			
11	.955	2.075	81.917			
12	.800	1.740	83.657			
13	.740	1.609	85.266			
14	.657	1.428	86.694			
15	.612	1.331	88.025			
16	.553	1.203	89.227			
17	.507	1.103	90.330			
18	.446	.970	91.301			
19	.397	.864	92.164			
20	.367	.797	92.962			
21	.347	.754	93.716			
22	.304	.661	94.376			
23	.287	.625	95.001			
24	.279	.607	95.608			
25	.229	.499	96.107			
26	.226	.491	96.598			
27	.200	.434	97.032			
28	.173	.377	97.408			
29	.160	.348	97.756			
30	.140	.304	98.060			
31	.132	.288	98.348			
32	.118	.257	98.605			
33	.100	.217	98.822			
34	.092	.201	99.023			
35	.078	.170	99.192			
36	.069	.149	99.342			
37	.062	.136	99.477			
38	.051	.111	99.588			
39	.045	.097	99.686			
40	.033	.071	99.757			
41	.029	.063	99.820			
42	.025	.055	99.874			
43	.022	.049	99.923			
44	.017	.037	99.960			
45	.012	.026	99.986			
46	.007	.014	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Figure 4

Scree and Component Plots: Phase 1, Stage 2 Questionnaire



4. 1. 3. Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data (Phase 2)

In ***phase 2*** of the research, the emphasis was on addressing the most significant challenges identified in the first phase, specifically those encountered by teachers in teaching speaking skills during online live sessions. To gather data, a standardized (structured) open-ended interview was conducted with 15 experts in online English language teaching. This approach to interviewing brings together the flexibility of open-ended questions with the structure of a consistent process. Open-ended prompts encouraged subject experts to discuss their ideas and experiences in detail. Meanwhile, following a set sequence of topics ensured that each crucial aspect was explored with everyone involved. As a result, the data collected was both thorough and insightful, highlighting not only the obstacles teachers encounter but also the practical solutions and strategies they recommend. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data and findings in this qualitative research, several measures were implemented to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, replacing the traditional criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

The open-ended interview questions for the qualitative phase were systematically derived from the outcomes of the preceding quantitative surveys. The quantitative phase revealed two principal findings: first, university English language teachers demonstrated a very high level of awareness of their roles in teaching speaking skills in online classes; second,

several significant challenges were identified as negatively impacting these roles. These included psychological obstacles faced by students, insufficient personal interaction, social and cultural obstacles, low student engagement, difficulties with assessment, students' low language proficiency, and time constraints. These challenges, rated as highly significant on a 5-point ordinal scale, warranted deeper investigation in the qualitative phase.

Informed by these quantitative results, the initial interview guide was designed to elicit experts' perspectives on practical strategies for addressing each key challenge. Each structured, open-ended question was mapped directly to a challenge highlighted in the survey data, ensuring explicit alignment between the quantitative findings and qualitative inquiry. For instance, students' low language proficiency was addressed through issues like limited vocabulary, grammar difficulties, incorrect pronunciation, and challenges in organizing connected speech both socially and pragmatically. Psychological obstacles were explored with factors such as limited self-regulated learning, fear of mistakes, and lack of confidence. Social obstacles included limited opportunities for English conversation and negative attitudes towards the language, while cultural obstacles encompassed differing communication styles, barriers to cultural exchange, sensitivities, and language-related hurdles. Additional areas included low engagement, insufficient personal interaction, technological issues, time constraints, distractions, and assessment challenges.

Prior to conducting the final interviews, the draft interview guide underwent a rigorous review process. External experts in online English language teaching who were not included in the final interview sample examined the questions for clarity, contextual relevance, and comprehensibility. Their feedback informed refinements to question wording and sequencing. In addition, pilot interviews were conducted with a select group of expert participants. This allowed the researcher to assess how questions functioned in practice, identify ambiguities, and obtain practical suggestions for improvement. Through this iterative process, the instrument

was refined to maximize clarity and suitability before the main phase of data collection commenced (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Roulston, 2021).

To establish credibility, several strategies were employed. Member checking (respondent validation) involved inviting participants to review the interpreted data and findings to confirm their accuracy. It is the process of sharing interview transcripts, analytical reflections, and drafts with the participants of the study. This process ensures that the participants' perspectives and ideas are accurately represented in the research. Member checking is

> the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed (Maxwell, 2013, p. 152).

For example, after an interview, the researcher summarized key points and asked the participant to verify if these accurately reflected their suggestions and strategies. One participant confirmed, "Yes, the main issue I address is getting students to participate actively by using interactive tools like breakout rooms." This process helped ensure that the findings genuinely reflected the participants' perspectives and experiences.

Triangulation was also used, involving multiple data sources and methods to corroborate the findings. As Patton (2015, p. 674) explains, “triangulation, in whatever form, increases credibility and quality by countering the concern (or accusation) that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s blinders.” Alongside standardized open-ended interviews, observational data and relevant documents (recorded classes) were analysed to validate the consistency and reliability of the insights gathered. For instance, if an expert recommended using breakout rooms to enhance interaction, this was corroborated by analysing class recordings and feedback from students noting increased engagement during breakout sessions. Additionally, researchers spent ample time with participants to build trust and gain a thorough understanding of their context and

experiences. This prolonged engagement allowed for the collection of in-depth and rich data, capturing the nuances of the solutions proposed for the challenges in teaching speaking skills online. Peer debriefing further enhanced credibility, as findings and interpretations were discussed with colleagues and experts who provided feedback and challenged potential biases, refining the conclusions.

Although qualitative research is inherently context-specific, ensuring the transferability of findings in this study was a key priority. Transferability refers to the ability to apply the findings from one context to another, based on the similarity, or "fittingness," of the two contexts (Leavy, 2017). To achieve this, several measures were taken. Detailed descriptions of the research context, including the backgrounds of the experts, the specific challenges they encountered, and the online teaching environments, were provided. This rich contextual information allows other researchers to understand the settings in which the findings were derived and evaluate their relevance to different contexts.

Purposive sampling was used to select experts with diverse experiences in teaching English online, ensuring that the findings are broadly applicable to various online teaching scenarios. The selection criteria and rationale behind choosing these experts were clearly documented to support the potential applicability of the results. The interview protocol was meticulously designed to cover a wide range of topics critical to understanding and addressing the challenges in teaching speaking skills online. By exploring issues related to students' language proficiency, psychological obstacles, social and cultural barriers, and other relevant topics, the study captured comprehensive insights that can be valuable in different educational settings.

The research procedures, including the conduct of interviews, data recording methods, and data analysis techniques, were thoroughly documented. This transparency allows other researchers to replicate the study or adapt its methods to their own contexts, enhancing the

transferability of the findings. Detailed demographic information about the experts was collected and reported, including their years of experience, specific areas of expertise, and the types of online platforms they use. This demographic data helps other educators and researchers assess the applicability of the findings to their own teaching environments.

Additionally, the findings were compared with existing studies on similar challenges in online language teaching. Highlighting both the similarities and differences with previous research helps demonstrate the potential transferability of the results to other contexts where similar issues have been observed. The research also included reflective commentary on how the context-specific insights might be applicable to other settings. This discussion considered how the solutions proposed by the experts could be adapted to different educational environments and student populations, further supporting the transferability of the findings.

By implementing these measures, the study ensured that its findings are not only relevant within the specific context of the research but also have broader applicability, allowing other educators and researchers to draw parallels and apply the insights to their own teaching environments. This approach enhances the overall impact and utility of the study, making it a valuable resource for addressing challenges in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes across various contexts.

Dependability was ensured through rigorous documentation and transparency in the research process. Detailed records of all research decisions, data collection processes, and analysis steps were maintained, creating an audit trail. This comprehensive documentation provided a clear and systematic basis for the study’s conclusions, allowing other researchers to replicate the study and verify its findings. For example, all interview guides, raw data, and analysis procedures were thoroughly documented. The researcher stated, "Documenting each session helped me track my progress and identify patterns," emphasizing the importance of systematic documentation.

The code-recode strategy was also employed, where the same researcher coded the data at different times and compared the results to ensure consistency. For instance, the researcher coded the interview data initially and then revisited the coding after a few weeks to check for consistency. This approach helped verify the reliability of the coding process and the stability of the findings over time. Triangulation, using multiple data sources and methods, contributed to dependability by confirming the consistency of the findings across different data points and reducing the impact of any single source of bias.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias. Confirmability in qualitative research means ensuring that the findings and interpretations are based on the actual data collected, and not on the researcher's personal biases or opinions. This involves providing detailed documentation of the data and the analysis process so that other researchers can review the evidence, replicate the study, and verify, adjust, or challenge the original conclusions. It promotes transparency and objectivity, allowing the research to be independently corroborated (Mackey & Gass, 2021).

To ensure confirmability, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal to document personal reflections, decisions, and potential biases throughout the research process. To ensure confirmability, efforts were made to minimize researcher bias and ground the findings in the participants' responses. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal to document personal reflections, decisions, and potential biases throughout the research process. For example, the researcher noted his own experiences with online teaching and considered how it might affect their interpretations. The researcher wrote, "I had to constantly remind myself to stay objective, as my own challenges in online teaching could colour my perspective.” This practice helped acknowledge and address any biases that could influence the research.

As part of the audit trail, detailed documentation of how data were analysed and conclusions were drawn was provided, including evidence from the data to support the

interpretations. This ensured that the findings were clearly linked to the participants' responses. Triangulation was also employed to confirm the findings, ensuring they were not unduly influenced by researcher bias and were genuinely reflective of the participants' experiences. Observations from recorded classes were used to support and verify statements made during interviews. For instance, a teacher's recommendation to use real-time feedback tools was verified through video recordings showing increased student engagement during sessions using such tools.

4. 2. Results

4. 2. 1. Research Question 1

To address Research Question 1, which examines "To what extent are governmental university teachers in Saudi Arabia aware of and adopting their evolving roles in teaching speaking during synchronous online classes?", the extent of teachers' awareness was measured using an online questionnaire administered to 100 online English teachers at Jazan University and King University. This questionnaire, consisting of 26 items, utilized a frequency Likert scale with response options ranging from "Always" to "Never." An example question is: "How often do you foster a supportive and inclusive environment for discussing language aspects?" The collected data provides insights into the consistency and frequency of teachers' engagement in various roles essential for effective online teaching of speaking skills.

SPSS was used to systematically process and analyse the collected data. Through SPSS, descriptive statistics such as means and percentages were calculated to offer a clear picture of the extent of awareness. This statistical software facilitated the identification and quantification of key issues by computing the average awareness scores for each role. A weighted average score of 3.40 (49.89%) or higher was considered to indicate a high level of awareness.

To group the roles according to the general level of awareness from highest to lowest, the average mean score and the average percentage for each role group were calculated.

Individual roles were grouped into broader categories such as "Facilitator Role," "Content Expert Role," etc. For each group, the average mean score and the average percentage of awareness were determined. These averages represented the general level of awareness for each group. The groups were then sorted based on their average percentage of awareness in descending order, ranking them from the highest to the lowest level of awareness (Table 12; Figure 5; Figure 6). This methodology ensured a clear understanding of how well governmental university teachers in Saudi Arabia recognized their changing roles in teaching speaking skills during online live classes.

Facilitator Role: Teachers demonstrated the highest level of awareness in their role as facilitators, with an average mean score of 4.10 and an average awareness percentage of 82%. Tasks such as encouraging students to engage in vocabulary brainstorming and usage had the highest mean score within this group at 4.71 (94%). Facilitating group discussions and problem-solving tasks to help students develop cognitive strategies had a mean score of 3.90 (78%).

Content Expert Role: The content expert role also showed high awareness, with an average score of 4.09 and an awareness percentage of 81.8%. Tasks within this role, such as offering clear explanations, examples, and resources for vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, achieved a mean score of 4.49 (90%). Additionally, modelling effective speaking practices, including appropriate pacing and intonation, had a mean score of 4.04 (81%).

Managerial Role: The Managerial Role had a significant level of awareness, with an average mean score of 3.99 and an average awareness percentage of 79.8%. Teachers frequently assigned specific language goals for students to achieve (mean score 4.10, 82%) and established guidelines and objectives for language-focused activities (mean score 4.03, 81%).

Social Role: Awareness in the Social Role was notable, with an average mean score of 3.99 and an average awareness percentage of 79.8%. Fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for discussing language aspects had a mean score of 4.06 (81%) and using icebreakers or team-building activities to create speaking opportunities scored 4.00 (80%).

Pedagogical Role: The Pedagogical Role showed a solid level of awareness, with an average mean score of 3.98 and an average awareness percentage of 79.6%. Designing activities that target vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation had a mean score of 4.11 (82%). Employing instructional strategies focusing on fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech scored 3.77 (75%).

Assessor Role: In the Assessor Role, teachers had an average mean score of 3.82 and an average awareness percentage of 76.4%. Using rubrics, checklists, or self-assessment tools to assess students' language knowledge had a mean score of 3.96 (79%). Assessing students' fluency, negotiation, and speech management skills through speaking tasks had a mean score of 3.79 (76%).

Technical Role: The Technical Role had the lowest awareness levels, with an average mean score of 3.78 and an average awareness percentage of 75.6%. Utilizing multimedia resources to engage students and enhance their language knowledge had a mean score of 4.24 (85%). However, incorporating digital collaboration tools for practice had a lower mean score of 3.64 (73%), and using online tools like Kahoot, Flipgrid, or VoiceThread scored 3.46 (69%).

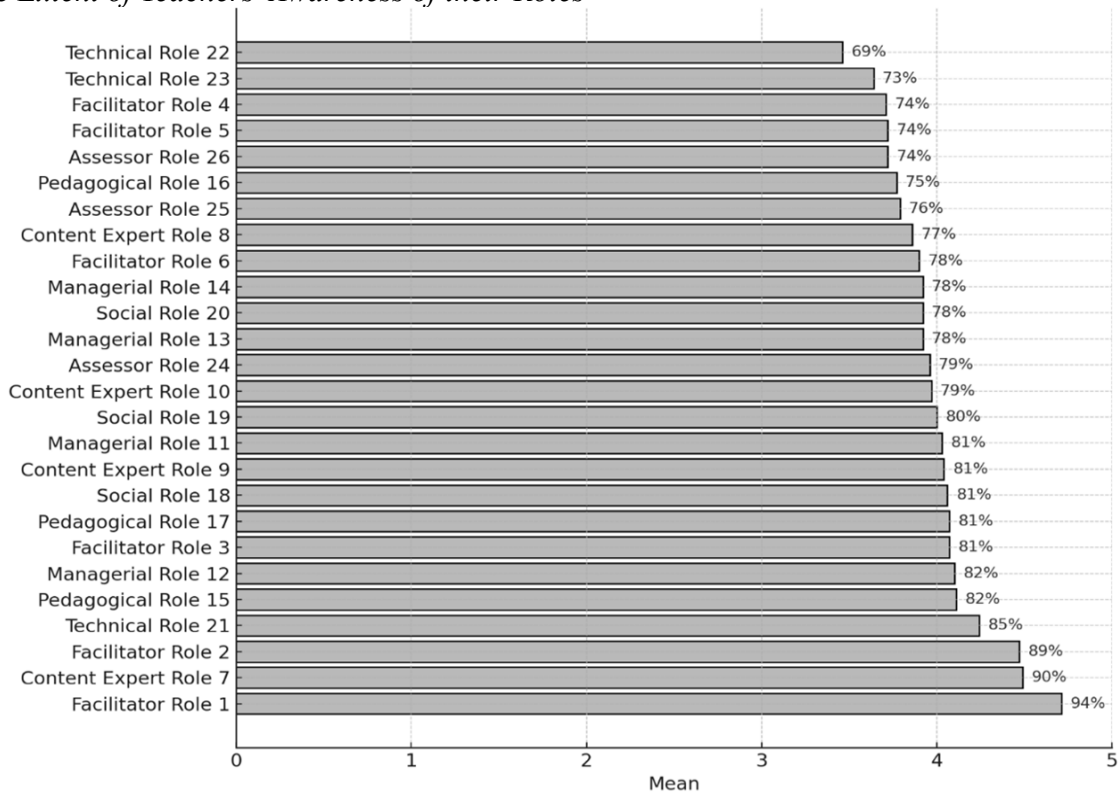
Table 12

The Extent of Teachers' Awareness of their Roles

Roles		Practices / Strategies	Mean
Facilitator Role	1	How often do you encourage students to engage in vocabulary brainstorming and usage to strengthen their language knowledge?	**4.71**
	2	How often do you encourage students to engage in grammar-focused discussions and rules usage to strengthen their language knowledge?	**4.47**
	3	How frequently do you create opportunities for students to practice pronunciation through drills or online resources?	**4.07**
	4	How often do you use role-plays, simulations, or debates to increase students' fluency and ability to negotiate speech?	**3.71**
	5	How frequently do you facilitate turn-taking exercises or encourage students to use conversation-cuing phrases?	**3.72**
	6	How often do you facilitate group discussions and problem-solving tasks to help students develop cognitive strategies?	**3.9**
Content Expert Role	7	How frequently do you provide clear explanations, examples, and resources related to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation?	**4.49**
	8	How often do you offer mini lessons on idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, or tense usage?	**3.86**
	9	How frequently do you model effective speaking practices, such as using appropriate pacing, intonation, or filler words?	**4.04**
	10	How often do you share tips on managing the flow of speech or negotiation techniques?	**3.97**
Managerial Role	11	How frequently do you establish guidelines and objectives for language-focused activities?	**4.03**
	12	How often do you assign specific language goals for students to achieve?	**4.1**
	13	How frequently do you organize and monitor speaking activities that promote fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech?	**3.92**
	14	How often do you assign roles to students during group discussions or debates, ensuring equal opportunities for speaking practice?	**3.92**
Pedagogical Role	15	How frequently do you design activities that target vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation?	**4.11**
	16	How often do you employ instructional strategies that focus on fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech?	**3.77**
	17	How frequently do you incorporate activities that encourage students to practice cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies?	**4.07**
Social Role	18	How often do you foster a supportive and inclusive environment for discussing language aspects?	**4.06**
	19	How frequently do you use icebreakers, team-building activities, or informal conversations to create opportunities for speaking practice?	**4**
	20	How often do you encourage students to share their cultural backgrounds and experiences?	**3.92**
Technical Role	21	How frequently do you utilize multimedia resources to engage students and enhance their language knowledge?	**4.24**
	22	How often do you use online tools like Kahoot, Flipgrid or VoiceThread for speaking practice opportunities?	**3.46**
	23	How frequently do you incorporate digital collaboration tools for students to practice cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies in an online setting?	**3.64**
Assessor Role	24	How often do you use rubrics, checklists, or self-assessment tools to assess students' language knowledge?	**3.96**
	25	How frequently do you assess students' fluency, negotiation, and speech management skills through speaking tasks, performances, and presentations?	**3.79**
	26	How often do you assess students' use of cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies through self-reflection, or peer feedback?	**3.72**

Figure 5

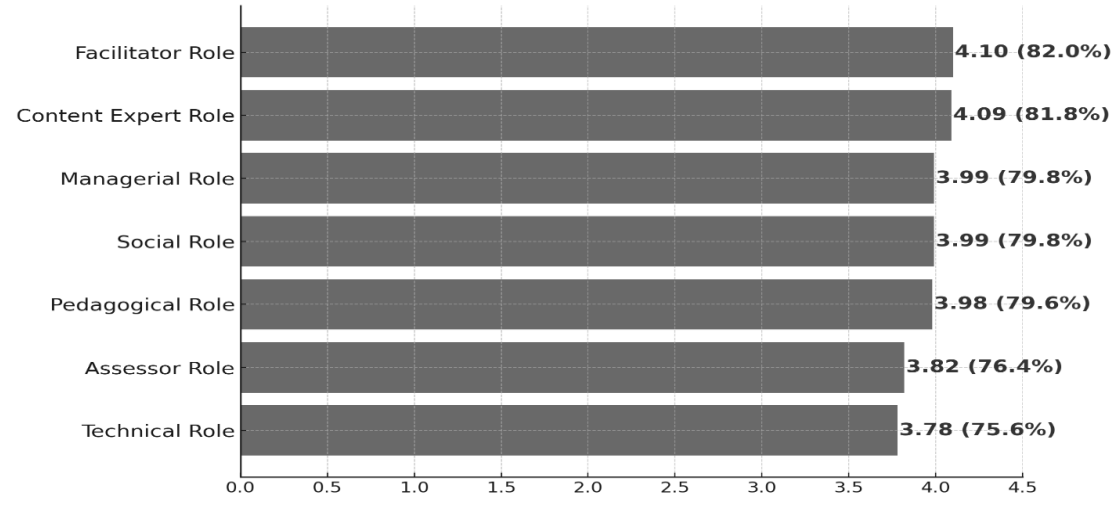
The Extent of Teachers' Awareness of their Roles



The histogram (Figure 6) visually supports the data, showing the mean scores for each role group, with the roles ordered by their level of awareness. The, Facilitator Role, Content Expert Role, and Managerial Role stand out as the areas where teachers are most aware and engaged, while the Technical Role shows room for improvement.

Figure 6

Levels of Teachers' Awareness of their Roles (Grouped)



4. 2. 2. Research Question 2

To address Research Question 2: "What are the main challenges that negatively affect teachers' roles in teaching speaking synchronously in Saudi governmental universities?", the severity of various challenges was measured using an online 5-point ordinal scale questionnaire with 46 items. The scale ranged from 1 (Not a challenge) to 5 (Extremely challenging). An example of an item related to students' engagement is the insufficient behavioural engagement (active listening, asking questions, etc.).

SPSS was utilized to systematically process and analyse the collected data. Through SPSS, descriptive statistics such as means and percentages were calculated to provide a clear picture of the severity of each challenge. This statistical software enabled the identification and quantification of key issues by computing the average severity scores for each challenge and the corresponding percentage of responses in each severity category. Challenges with a weighted average of 3.40 (49.89%) or higher were classified as having high severity, indicating a significant impact on teachers' ability to perform their roles effectively.

The results show that psychological obstacles such as students limited self-regulated learning are the most severe, with a mean score of 4.6 and 92%. This high severity is manifested through students' limited ability to manage their own learning without guidance. To address this, the roles of Facilitator and Social Role are required. The Facilitator Role involves guiding students by providing resources, setting clear expectations, and offering consistent feedback. The Social Role fosters a supportive community and encourages student engagement, helping students to become more autonomous learners.

Insufficient personal interaction is another severe challenge, manifesting as limited opportunities for practice, with a mean score of 4.26 and 85.2%. The severity of this challenge is seen in students' lack of practice opportunities which hinders their language development. This challenge necessitates both the Facilitator Role and the Social Role. Facilitators create

interactive activities like group discussions and role-plays to provide students with ample practice opportunities. The Social Role facilitates interactions among students to increase practice opportunities and foster a sense of community.

Social obstacles, such as limited English conversation opportunities, have a mean score of 4.25 and 85%. The high severity is indicated by the lack of regular practice in conversational English, crucial for language acquisition. Overcoming this challenge requires the Facilitator and Social Roles. As explored in the literature, the teacher's facilitator role is essential for designing structured conversation exercises that promote regular practice, aligning with online learning theories like the Community of Inquiry and Online Collaborative Learning theories. These theories emphasize the importance of cognitive presence and collaboration, where facilitators play a key role in creating effective learning activities. Additionally, the social role of teachers encourages student engagement and language practice through social interaction, fostering a supportive environment that enhances language skills and boosts student confidence.

Low social engagement, which includes building relationships and collaboration, has a mean score of 4.19 and 83.8%. The severity of this challenge is shown by the difficulty in creating a collaborative learning environment. The Facilitator and Social Roles are essential here. Facilitators enhance social engagement through collaborative projects and discussions, while the Social Role fosters a sense of community and belonging, encouraging students to participate more actively.

Low cognitive engagement due to a lack of critical thinking and problem-solving activities has a mean score of 4.18 and 83.6%. This challenge's severity is indicated by students' limited engagement in higher-order thinking tasks. This challenge requires the Facilitator and Pedagogical Roles. Facilitators incorporate problem-solving tasks and critical thinking activities to engage students cognitively, while Pedagogical Roles create challenging tasks that

require students to think critically and solve problems, thereby enhancing their cognitive engagement.

Reduced rapport building has a mean score of 4.14 and 82.8%. The severity is seen in the weakened teacher-student relationships, which are crucial for effective learning. The Facilitator and Social Roles are necessary for addressing this challenge. Facilitators build rapport with students through regular check-ins and personalized feedback, and the Social Role promotes relationship-building activities among students and teachers, creating a more connected and supportive learning environment.

Limited non-verbal cues during online interactions pose another significant challenge, with a mean score of 4.12 and 82.8%. The severity is indicated by the difficulty in interpreting students' non-verbal communication, essential for understanding their engagement and comprehension. This challenge requires the Assessor and Technical Roles. Assessors use diverse assessment methods to capture students' abilities and provide feedback, while Technical Roles utilize digital tools to facilitate assessments and capture non-verbal communication effectively.

Students' low language proficiency, including the inability to understand or organize connected stretches of speech, has a mean score of 4.07 and 81.4%. The severity is manifested in students' struggles with basic language skills, hindering their overall communication abilities. Addressing this challenge requires the Pedagogical and Content Expert Roles. Pedagogical Roles create targeted activities to improve specific language skills, while Content Experts provide clear explanations and relevant examples to help students understand complex concepts and improve their language proficiency.

Students' inability to compensate for limitations in language knowledge has a mean score of 4.04 and 80.8%. The severity of this challenge is shown in students' difficulty in using strategies to overcome gaps in their language knowledge. This challenge is managed by the

Pedagogical and Content Expert Roles. Pedagogical strategies support gradual improvement in language skills, while Content Experts offer targeted instruction to help students compensate for their language limitations.

Students' poor pronunciation scores a mean of 3.68 and 73.6%, requiring the Pedagogical and Content Expert Roles. The severity is seen in students' unclear speech, affecting their overall communication. Pedagogical Roles implement activities focused on improving pronunciation, while Content Experts provide detailed instruction to help students improve their pronunciation and overall language proficiency.

Excessive use of the mother tongue has a mean score of 3.95 and 79%. The severity is indicated by the frequent use of the native language, which limits English practice. This challenge needs the Social Role to encourage more use of English in interactions. The Social Role promotes an environment where students are encouraged to use English more frequently, reducing reliance on their mother tongue.

Large class sizes, with a mean score of 3.93 and 78.6%, require the Managerial Role to efficiently organize and structure class time. The severity of this challenge is shown by the limited individual attention students receive. Managers ensure that class time is used effectively, even in large classes, by setting clear agendas and ensuring focused activities.

Low behavioural engagement, including active listening and asking questions, scores a mean of 3.83 and 78.6%, requiring the Facilitator Role to create more engaging activities. The severity is indicated by students' passive participation. Facilitators design activities that encourage students to participate actively, improving their behavioural engagement in the learning process.

Detecting spontaneous speech is challenging, with a mean score of 3.81 (76.2%), requiring the Assessor and Technical Roles. The severity is shown by the difficulty in assessing students' impromptu speaking abilities. Assessors use methods like oral exams and interactive

activities to detect and assess spontaneous speech, while Technical Roles use digital tools to support these assessments.

Limited class time, scoring 3.77 and 75.4%, requires the Managerial Role to ensure activities are focused and time effective. The severity is manifested in the rushed completion of lessons. Managers allocate class time efficiently, ensuring that lessons are completed within the available time.

Attitude towards English, with a mean score of 3.75 and 75.4%, needs the Content Expert Role to make the material engaging and relevant. The severity is indicated by students' negative perceptions of learning English. Content Experts design lessons that are interesting and relevant to students, positively influencing their attitude towards learning English.

Fear of making mistakes, scoring 3.74 and 74.8%, requires the Facilitator Role to provide formative assessments focusing on learning and improvement. The severity is shown by students' hesitation to participate. Facilitators create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes and learning from them.

Strict time limits, with a mean score of 3.7 and 74.8%, need the Managerial Role for efficient time management. The severity is indicated by the difficulty in completing tasks within the allocated time. Managers ensure that lessons and activities are completed within strict time limits, optimizing the use of available time.

Unauthorized resources used by students, scoring 3.62 and 72.4%, require the Assessor and Technical Roles to ensure academic integrity. The severity is shown by the use of unapproved materials. Assessors and Technical Roles monitor the use of resources to prevent unauthorized assistance and ensure the authenticity of students' work.

Assistance from others during online speaking tasks, with a mean score of 3.62 and 72.4%, needs the Technical Role to monitor and ensure authenticity. The severity is indicated

by the external help students receive. Technical tools are used to detect and prevent unauthorized assistance during online tasks.

Group assessment challenges, scoring 3.62 and 72.4%, require the Managerial Role to organize and manage assessments fairly. The severity is shown by the difficulty in fair evaluation. Managers ensure that group assessments are conducted fairly and effectively.

Students' lack of confidence, with a mean score of 3.66 and 73.2%, needs the Facilitator and Social Roles to build confidence through support and encouragement. The severity is indicated by students' reluctance to participate. Facilitators and Social Roles create a supportive environment that boosts students' confidence.

Feedback and assessment time, with a mean score of 3.66 and 73.2%, requires the Assessor Role to provide timely and constructive feedback. The severity is shown by delayed responses. Assessors ensure that students receive timely feedback to help them improve.

Language barriers, scoring 3.59 and 71.8%, need the Content Expert Role to help students understand and communicate effectively in English. The severity is indicated by students' difficulty in understanding and expressing themselves in English. Content Experts provide instruction and support to help students overcome language barriers.

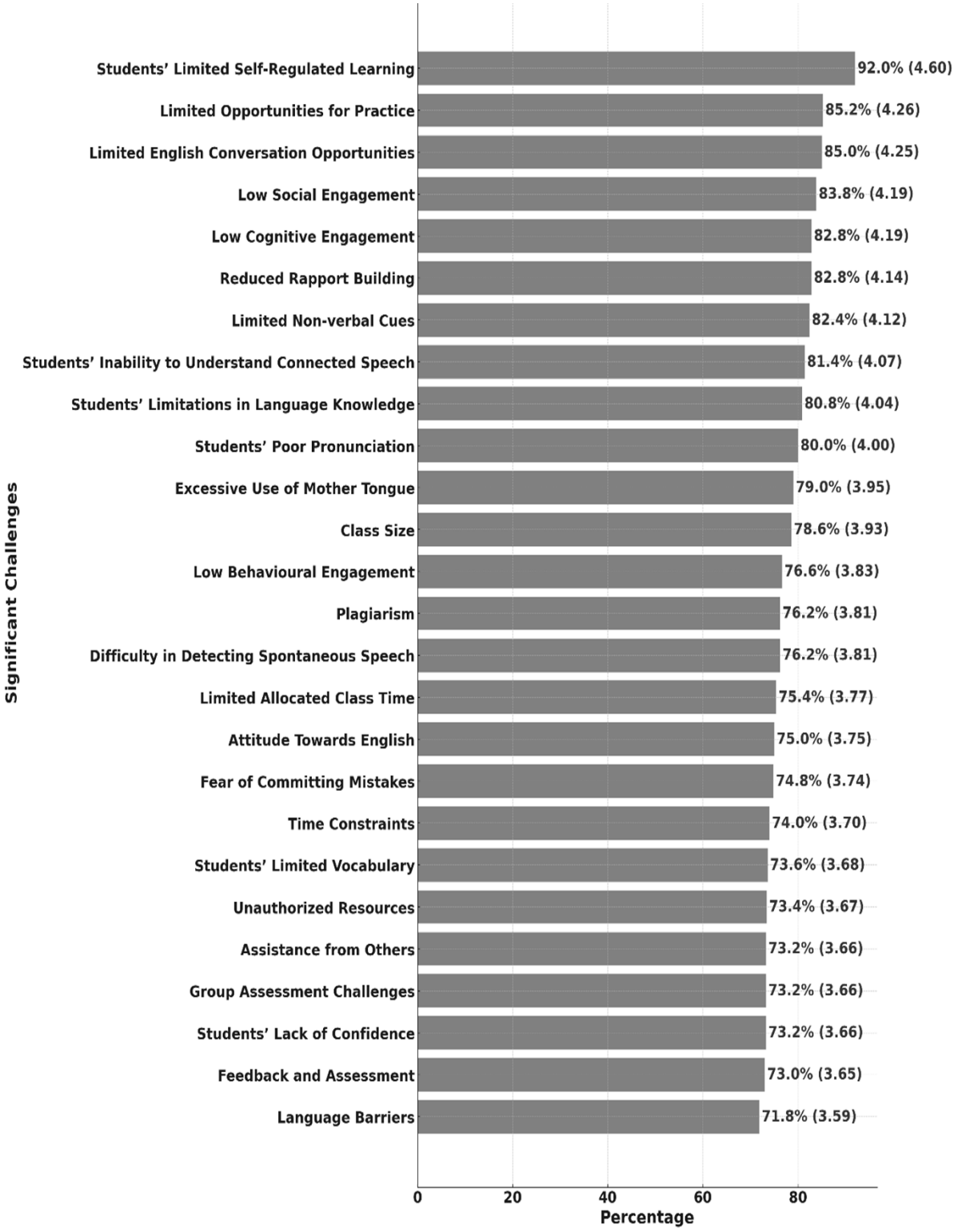
The results (Table 13; Figure 7) show that teachers experience high levels of difficulty mainly with students’ psychological, social, and linguistic challenges during synchronous online speaking classes in the two Saudi universities. These include weak self-regulation, low engagement, reduced interaction, and limited opportunities for meaningful English conversation that hinder effective speaking instruction. Teachers also face significant challenges related to managing large classes, limited time, and online assessment issues, which further complicate the teaching of English-speaking skills in this context.

Table 13

Sorted Challenges Degree of Severity (Grouped by Mean / Percentages)

	Challenges	Mean	%
1	Students' Limited Self-Regulated Learning	4.6	92
2	Limited Opportunities for Practice	4.26	85.2
3	Limited English Conversation Opportunities	4.25	85
4	Low Social Engagement (building relationships, collaboration)	4.19	83.8
5	Low Cognitive Engagement (critical thinking, problem solving, ...)	4.19	82.8
6	Reduced Rapport Building	4.14	82.8
7	Limited Non-verbal Cues (facial expressions, body language, …)	4.12	82.4
8	Students' Inability to Understand or Organize Connected Stretches of Speech	4.07	81.4
9	Students' Inability to address Limitations in Language Knowledge	4.04	80.8
10	Students' Poor Pronunciation	4	80
11	Excessive Use of Mother Tongue	3.95	79
12	Class Size	3.93	78.6
13	Low Behavioural Engagement (active listening, asking questions, ...)	3.83	78.6
14	Difficulty in Detecting Spontaneous Speech	3.81	76.2
15	Plagiarism	3.81	76.2
16	Limited allocated Class Time (teachers may have to rush through lesson)	3.77	75.4
17	Attitude Towards English	3.75	75
18	Fear of Committing Mistakes	3.74	74.8
19	Time Constraints (Assessment strict time limits)	3.7	74
20	Students' Limited Vocabulary	3.68	73.6
21	Unauthorized Resources that Might be Used by Students	3.67	73.4
22	Assistance from Others during Online Speaking Tasks)	3.66	73.2
23	Group Assessment Challenges	3.66	73.2
24	Students' Lack of Confidence	3.66	73.2
25	Feedback and Assessment	3.65	73
26	Language Barriers (understanding and communicating in English)	3.59	71.8

Figure 7
Significant Challenges



4. 2. 3. Research Question 3 (Qualitative)

To address research question 3, "What are the effective strategies for overcoming challenges that hinder teachers' ability to teach speaking skills during synchronous online classes in the Saudi Arabian context?", data was collected through standardized (structured) open-ended interviews with 15 experts in online English language teaching. These interviews combined the flexibility of open-ended questions with the consistency of a standardized process. The open-ended format allowed the experts to freely express their thoughts and experiences, while the structured approach ensured that all key topics were addressed. This method produced rich, detailed responses, offering deep insights into the challenges teachers encounter and the solutions they suggest.

The following is a comprehensive collection of strategies proposed by experts in teaching English online to overcome the challenges they face and fulfil their roles in teaching speaking skills online in Saudi Arabian Universities. TAGUETTE is the software used for the thematic analysis of the interviews, and the analysis followed the following steps.

First, the process began with data familiarization, where the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim ensuring that the participants' original responses were preserved exactly as spoken. The transcripts were produced using the MS Word converter to accurately reflect the spoken responses. The transcripts were then read multiple times to ensure a thorough understanding of the content. Following this, initial coding was performed using TAGUETTE. Significant phrases or sentences that appeared relevant to the research questions were highlighted and assigned labels to capture the essence of these data segments. Subsequently, the initial codes were reviewed and grouped into potential themes by identifying patterns and relationships among the codes. This stage involved searching for *themes* that could represent broader categories of the collected data. Once the preliminary themes were established, they were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. This step included

checking for coherence and distinctiveness among themes and revisiting the data to confirm their relevance.

Each theme was then clearly defined and given a descriptive name to ensure that it captured a specific aspect of the data relevant to the research objectives. Finally, the themes were used to structure the findings section of the report. Detailed descriptions of each theme were provided, supported by direct quotes from the interviews to illustrate key points and provide evidence for the analysis. This systematic approach ensured a rigorous and comprehensive understanding of the strategies employed by university teachers in Saudi Arabia to teach speaking skills online.

4. 2. 3. 1. Psychological Obstacles Faced by Students

4. 2. 3. 1. 1. Students Limited Self-Regulated Learning

The issue of students limited self-regulated learning was identified as a significant psychological obstacle. Experts proposed several strategies and solutions to address this challenge effectively.

Theme: Teaching self-regulation strategies

Teaching self-regulation strategies was deemed crucial. Experts recommended introducing techniques such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-reflection. Encouraging the use of planners and digital tools to track progress, along with providing workshops or sessions focused on developing self-regulation skills, can significantly enhance students' ability to manage their learning. Expert 1 explained, “I teach students techniques for self-regulation, such as setting goals, monitoring their own progress, and reflecting on their learning. Workshops and resources on these strategies are also helpful.”

Theme: Enhancing motivation and engagement through personalized learning paths and structured activities

Enhancing motivation and engagement through personalized learning paths and structured activities was also highlighted. Experts suggested personalizing learning paths to cater to individual student needs and interests, providing regular feedback and positive reinforcement, and using gamification and other motivational techniques to maintain high levels of student engagement. Expert 3 noted, “To keep students motivated, I use strategies like gamification, rewards, and connecting lessons to real-life applications. Tailoring lessons to students' interests makes learning more engaging.”

Theme: Offering personalized learning paths

Offering personalized learning paths by tailoring course materials and activities to meet the diverse needs of students, allowing them to choose topics or projects that interest them, and providing differentiated instruction and support based on individual learning styles were considered effective in addressing the varying needs of students. Expert 8 explained, “Tailoring learning activities to individual needs is important. I use adaptive learning technologies that adjust to each student's pace and style, ensuring they can learn effectively at their own speed.”

4. 2. 3. 1. 2. Fear of committing mistakes

Fear of committing mistakes was identified as a significant psychological obstacle faced by students in online learning environments. Experts proposed several strategies and solutions to help mitigate this challenge effectively.

Theme: Establishing clear expectations

Establishing clear expectations was emphasized as a foundational strategy. By clearly communicating what is expected of students, teachers can help reduce anxiety and create a more predictable learning environment. Expert 9 stated, “I set clear expectations for the importance of taking risks and learning from mistakes. I emphasize that making errors is a natural part of the learning process and encourage students to see mistakes as opportunities for growth.”

Theme: Promoting a positive classroom culture

Promoting a positive classroom culture was also deemed crucial. Creating an environment where students feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment can significantly reduce their fear of making mistakes. Expert 11 remarked:

> I foster a positive and inclusive classroom culture where students feel safe and supported. I encourage respect, kindness, and active listening among students. I create a space where students can freely express their opinions and ideas without fear of judgment.

Theme: Providing constructive feedback

Providing constructive feedback was highlighted as a key strategy to help students learn from their mistakes and improve. Feedback should be timely, specific, and aimed at helping students understand their errors and how to correct them. Expert 12 noted:

> I offer constructive feedback that focuses on students' strengths as well as areas for improvement in their speaking skills. I frame feedback as a means of enhancing their language abilities rather than as criticism. I highlight the progress they are making and provide specific suggestions on how to improve.

Theme: Celebrating success and effort

Celebrating success and effort was emphasized to build students' confidence. Recognizing and valuing students' efforts, regardless of the outcome, can motivate them to keep trying and reduce their fear of failure. Expert 2 suggested, "I recognize and celebrate students' successes and efforts in the speaking class. I highlight examples of improvement and growth, both in individual and group settings. This motivates students to continue taking risks and learning from their mistakes."

Theme: Encouraging self-reflection

Encouraging self-reflection was also noted as an effective strategy. By prompting students to reflect on their learning experiences and outcomes, teachers can help them develop a deeper understanding of the material and reduce their fear of making mistakes. Expert 6 remarked, "I encourage students to reflect on their own progress and identify areas for improvement.

I provide opportunities for self-assessment where they can evaluate their speaking skills and set goals for further development."

4. 2. 3. 1. 3. Students' lack of confidence

Students' lack of confidence was identified as a significant psychological obstacle in online learning environments. Experts suggested several strategies and solutions to help address this challenge effectively.

Theme: Setting realistic and achievable goals

Setting realistic and achievable goals was emphasized as a foundational strategy. By establishing clear and attainable objectives, teachers can help students build confidence gradually. Expert 7 mentioned:

> I assist students in building confidence in their speaking abilities by working with them to set realistic and achievable goals. We break down larger goals into smaller, manageable steps that students can focus on. Celebrating their progress along the way helps them feel motivated and confident in their abilities.

Theme: Implementing gradual exposure to challenging tasks

Implementing gradual exposure to challenging tasks can help students build confidence incrementally. By gradually increasing the difficulty of tasks, students can develop their skills and confidence over time. Expert 2 explained:

> I start with low-pressure speaking activities and gradually increase the complexity and difficulty as students gain confidence. I begin with pair or small group discussions and then progress to whole-class presentations or debates. This gradual exposure helps students build confidence in their speaking abilities before taking on more challenging tasks.

Theme: Providing opportunities for practice

Providing opportunities for practice was emphasized as essential. Regular practice helps students improve their skills and gain confidence in their abilities. "I offer ample opportunities for students to practice their speaking skills through in-class activities, assignments, presentations, and group discussions. I encourage active participation and provide

constructive feedback, helping students further improve their speaking abilities and build confidence.” Expert 10 noted.

Theme: Celebrating achievements

Celebrating achievements, no matter how small, can significantly enhance students' confidence. Recognizing and valuing their efforts and successes can motivate them to continue working hard. Expert 14 noted:

> I celebrate students' achievements and successes in their speaking abilities. I acknowledge their growth, improvements, and efforts. By highlighting examples of their successful speaking performances, I motivate and inspire other students. Positive reinforcement and recognition help boost students' confidence in their speaking skills.

4. 2. 3. 2. Insufficient Personal Interaction

4. 2. 3. 2. 1. Limited opportunities for practice

Limited opportunities for practice were identified as a significant challenge due to insufficient personal interaction in online learning environments. Experts suggested several strategies and solutions to address this issue effectively.

Theme: Presentations

Presentations were suggested as an effective way to build confidence and improve speaking abilities. By preparing and delivering presentations, students can enhance their organization and public speaking skills. Expert 3 shared:

> I assign speaking tasks such as individual or group presentations to give students the opportunity to practice their spoken English. By delivering speeches or presentations on specific topics, they can develop their organization skills and deliver their thoughts effectively. The exercise also allows them to enhance their speaking confidence and learn to use appropriate language and visuals to support their ideas.

Theme: Debates and discussions on current issues

Debates and discussions on current issues were highlighted as valuable methods to stimulate critical thinking and active participation. These activities encourage students to express their opinions and engage in meaningful conversations. Expert 2 remarked:

> Engaging students in debates and discussions on current topics or controversial issues is an effective way to practice their speaking skills. This encourages students to express their opinions, engage in critical thinking, and articulate their viewpoints effectively. This approach helps them hone their speaking abilities while fostering their ability to express and support their ideas.

Theme: Collaborative projects

Collaborative projects were recommended as a way to promote interaction and teamwork. These projects require students to work together towards a common goal, providing ample opportunities for speaking practice. Expert 8 explained:

> To promote speaking practice, I assign collaborative projects that require students to work together as a team. These projects can include creating skits, producing podcasts, or organizing virtual events. Working collaboratively not only improves their speaking skills but also enhances their overall communication and collaboration abilities.

Theme: Breakout activities

Breakout activities were recommended to facilitate smaller group interactions, allowing for more intimate and manageable discussions. Expert 4 remarked:

> To create more personalized speaking opportunities, I utilize breakout rooms during the synchronous online classes. By assigning specific tasks or discussion topics to each breakout room, students have the chance to engage in smaller group conversations. This allows for more speaking opportunities and encourages active participation. An expert shared.

Theme: Q&A sessions

Q&A sessions were emphasized as useful strategies to allow students to engage in real

time discussions and practice spontaneous speaking. Expert 2 explained:

> I include dedicated question and answer sessions during my online synchronous speaking classes. This provides students with the opportunity to ask and answer questions related to the lesson or topic at hand. It not only helps them practice their speaking skills but also improves their ability to comprehend and respond in real-time situations.

4. 2. 3. 2. 2. Reduced rapport building

Reduced rapport building due to insufficient personal interaction in online learning environments was identified as a significant challenge. Experts suggested several strategies and solutions to address this issue effectively.

Theme: One-on-one interactions

One-on-one interactions were highlighted as an effective way to build stronger connections with students. Scheduling individual meetings or providing opportunities for one-on-one conversations can help address students' specific needs and concerns. Expert 2 shared:

> I schedule regular one-on-one interactions with my students, either through private messaging or virtual office hours. This allows for more personalized attention and provides an opportunity for students to discuss any challenges or questions they may have. These individual interactions help in creating a sense of care and showing students that their progress and well-being are valued.

Theme: Using breakout rooms for smaller group interactions

Using breakout rooms for smaller group interactions was recommended to facilitate more intimate and manageable discussions. These settings allow students to interact more comfortably and build stronger connections. Expert 13 stated, “I utilize breakout rooms in online synchronous speaking classes to facilitate small group discussions and activities. This allows students to interact more closely with their peers, build relationships, and engage in meaningful conversations.”

Theme: Promoting collaboration through group projects and peer activities

Promoting collaboration through group projects and peer activities was highlighted as an effective way to foster teamwork and rapport. These collaborative efforts encourage students to work together and support each other. Expert 13 explained, “I incorporate collaborative tasks and projects that require students to work together in pairs or groups. This encourages them to communicate, cooperate, and build relationships while working towards a common goal.”

Theme: Experiential learning activities

Experiential learning activities, which involve hands-on and practical experiences, were also highlighted as beneficial. Expert 9 said:

> I integrate experiential learning activities where students engage in hands-on experiences that require oral communication in English. This could include virtual simulations, virtual field trips, or interactive online exercises. These activities provide students with practical opportunities to apply their language skills in a real-world context.

Theme: Class discussions and structured language practice activities

Class discussions and structured language practice activities can provide students with regular opportunities to use English in meaningful contexts. Expert 14 explained:

> I allocate time for whole-class discussions on various topics related to the course content. I encourage students to actively participate, share their thoughts and ideas, and engage in meaningful conversations in English. I facilitate these discussions and provide prompts or questions to encourage participation.

Expert 4 noted, "I incorporate structured language practice activities that focus on specific speaking skills. This could include pronunciation drills, dialogues, or communicative language games that involve oral communication. These activities help students practice specific aspects of speaking and improve their overall fluency."

Theme: Language exchange partnerships

Language exchange partnerships, where students can practice speaking with peers, were noted as particularly useful. Expert 6 shared:

> I facilitate language exchange partnerships between students who are learning English and those who are native or proficient English speakers. This allows students to engage in conversation and practice speaking English with a fluent speaker. It provides a valuable opportunity for authentic language practice and cultural exchange.

4. 2. 3. 3. Social Obstacles

4. 2. 3. 3. 1. Limited Opportunities for English Conversation

Limited opportunities for English conversation were identified as a critical social obstacle. Experts suggested several strategies to overcome this challenge. Incorporating

collaborative projects was emphasized as an effective method to promote interaction among students.

Theme: Incorporating collaborative projects

Expert 15 stated:

> I assign collaborative projects that require students to work together and communicate in English. This could include group research projects, presentations, or problem-solving tasks that encourage active participation and speaking practice. By working together, students can practice their speaking skills while collaborating with their peers.

Theme: Experiential learning activities

Experiential learning activities, which involve hands-on and practical experiences, were also highlighted as beneficial. Expert 2 said:

> I integrate experiential learning activities where students engage in hands-on experiences that require oral communication in English. This could include virtual simulations, virtual field trips, or interactive online exercises. These activities provide students with practical opportunities to apply their language skills in a real-world context.

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Expert 6 noted:

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4. 2. 3. 3. 2. Excessive Use of the Mother Tongue

Excessive use of the mother tongue was another social obstacle identified. To address this issue, experts recommended redirecting and reinforcing the use of English in the classroom.

Theme: The modelling language

The modelling language used by the teacher can set a good example for students. Expert 2 commented:

> Throughout the class, I model the appropriate use of English by speaking fluently and clearly, using proper grammar and vocabulary. By consistently demonstrating this, I can inspire students to follow suit and take pride in using English during speaking activities.

Theme: Encouraging peer interaction in English

Encouraging peer interaction in English creates more opportunities for practice. Creating a supportive atmosphere where students feel comfortable making mistakes and learning from them is crucial. Expert 12 stated,

> I actively promote peer-to-peer interaction and collaboration during speaking activities. Encouraging students to ask questions, exchange ideas, and provide feedback to each other in English helps foster an English-speaking environment and discourages the use of their mother tongue.

Theme: Offering additional incentives

Offering additional incentives, such as rewards or recognition for using English, can motivate students. Expert 6 suggested:

> To motivate and encourage students to use English during speaking activities, I create incentives or rewards. This could include acknowledging and praising students who consistently use English, awarding participation points, or organizing friendly competitions that require English communication. These additional incentives can provide further motivation for students to actively use English during class.

4. 2. 3. 3. 3. Attitude Towards English

The attitude towards English was also highlighted as a social obstacle.

Theme: Showcasing success stories of individuals

Experts suggested showcasing success stories of individuals who have benefited from learning English to inspire students. Expert 8 explained:

> I share success stories of individuals who have used English language skills to achieve their goals. This could include examples of Saudi individuals who have excelled in their careers or made significant contributions due to their English proficiency. These stories can inspire and motivate students to see the value of English.

Theme: Addressing misconceptions and stereotypes about English

Addressing misconceptions and stereotypes about English and its speakers can help change negative attitudes. Expert 2 commented, “I address any misconceptions or stereotypes that students may hold about English and English-speaking cultures. I foster discussions that challenge stereotypes and promote cultural understanding, helping students develop a more positive and open-minded attitude towards the language.”

Theme: Encouraging autonomy and ownership

Encouraging autonomy and ownership by allowing students to make choices about their learning can increase their motivation. Offering praise and positive reinforcement for efforts and achievements in learning English can boost students' confidence. Expert 12 remarked:

> I acknowledge students' efforts and progress in learning English. I provide specific and constructive feedback to highlight their strengths and areas of improvement. I show appreciation for their willingness to participate and engage in English-speaking activities, boosting their confidence and motivation.

Expert 13 said, “I celebrate diversity and create opportunities for students to learn from each other's experiences. I encourage peer support and collaboration in English-speaking activities to build a sense of community and foster positive attitudes towards the language.”

4. 2. 3. 3. Insufficient Student Engagement

4. 2. 3. 3. 1. Low Social Engagement

Low social engagement, which involves building relationships and collaboration, was identified as a significant challenge. Experts proposed several strategies to enhance student engagement and foster a more interactive learning environment.

Theme: Using of icebreakers and introductions at the beginning of classes

One of the recommended strategies was the use of icebreakers and introductions at the beginning of classes. These activities can help create a welcoming atmosphere and encourage students to interact with each other from the outset. Expert 15 reported, “As an online teacher of English language in Saudi universities, I promote social engagement by starting class with icebreakers and introductions. Encouraging students to share their names, interests, and backgrounds fosters a sense of community and connection.”

Theme: Group activities and discussions

Group activities and discussions were also emphasized as essential methods to promote social engagement. By organizing students into groups for various tasks, they can engage in meaningful conversations and collaborative problem-solving. Expert 7 elaborated:

> Incorporating group activities and discussions is an essential way to promote social engagement in online synchronous speaking classes. Assigning students to work together in pairs or small groups to complete tasks, discuss topics, or practice speaking skills promotes collaboration and social interaction.

Theme: Utilizing breakout rooms

To further encourage participation and discussion, experts suggested the strategic use of breakout rooms. These smaller, more intimate settings allow students to feel more comfortable and confident in sharing their ideas and participating in discussions.

Expert 1 mentioned, “Utilizing breakout rooms in video conferencing platforms facilitates small group discussions or pair activities, which promote social engagement and

meaningful conversations. It is an effective tool that enables students to interact with their peers and engage in social activities."

Theme: Incorporating collaborative projects

Incorporating collaborative projects was highlighted as an effective way to build relationships and enhance social engagement. These projects require students to work together towards a common goal, fostering a sense of teamwork and collaboration.

Expert 8 shared, "Assigning collaborative projects that require students to work together and communicate with each other promotes social engagement, teamwork, and the development of interpersonal skills."

Theme: Promoting active listening and feedback

Promoting active listening and feedback is another crucial strategy. By encouraging students to listen attentively to their peers and provide constructive feedback, teachers can foster a supportive and engaging learning environment.

Expert 1 emphasized, "Encouraging students to actively listen and provide constructive feedback to their peers creates a supportive and collaborative learning environment that fosters social engagement."

4. 2. 3. 3. 2. Low cognitive engagement

Theme: Setting clear learning objectives

Setting clear learning objectives was emphasized as a foundational strategy to guide students and help them understand what they are expected to achieve. Expert 1 explained:

> As an online teacher of English language in Saudi universities, I ensure cognitive engagement by clearly articulating the course goals and learning objectives to my students. By providing clarity on the purpose and relevance of the course material, students can understand the expectations and stay cognitively engaged.

Theme: Using diverse teaching strategies

Using diverse teaching strategies was highlighted as an essential approach to cater to different learning styles and keep students interested. By incorporating various teaching

methods, such as lectures, discussions, hands-on activities, and multimedia resources, teachers can maintain high levels of student engagement. Expert 3 remarked, “Using a variety of teaching strategies is essential in catering to diverse learning styles and preferences. I incorporate visual aids, discussions, case studies, quizzes, and small group activities to ensure that students stay cognitively engaged with the course material.”

Theme: Encouraging critical thinking

Encouraging critical thinking was also emphasized. Experts recommended posing thought-provoking questions, encouraging debates, and integrating problem-solving activities into the curriculum to stimulate students' intellectual engagement. Expert 7 stated, “I encourage students to think critically about the course material by asking open-ended questions and prompting discussions. This not only helps develop their analytical skills but also keeps them mentally engaged in the learning process.”

Theme: Using authentic materials

Using authentic materials, such as real-life texts, videos, and case studies, was recommended to make learning more relevant and interesting. These materials help students see the practical application of their knowledge, thereby enhancing engagement. Expert 8 noted, “Incorporating authentic materials, such as news articles, videos, podcasts, and case studies, adds relevance and engagement to the course material. By connecting learning to real-world issues and contexts, I enhance students' cognitive engagement.”

Theme: Encouraging student reflection

Encouraging student reflection was another effective strategy highlighted by experts. By prompting students to reflect on their learning experiences and outcomes, teachers can help them develop a deeper understanding of the material. Expert 4 remarked, “I encourage students to reflect on their understanding of the course material by inviting them to share their thoughts

and reactions. This reflection helps students internalize their learning and maintain cognitive engagement."

Theme: Building on prior knowledge

Building on prior knowledge by connecting new information to what students already know can make learning more accessible and engaging.

Expert 6 highlighted, "Building on students' prior knowledge enables them to make connections between new concepts and existing understanding. By reinforcing learning through these connections, I facilitate cognitive engagement with the course material."

4. 2. 3. 3. 3. Low behavioural engagement

Low behavioural engagement, characterized by active listening, asking questions, and participating in class activities, was identified as a significant challenge in online learning environments. Experts provided a variety of strategies and solutions to address this issue effectively.

Theme: Establishing clear expectations

Establishing clear expectations was highlighted as a foundational strategy. Setting and communicating clear guidelines and expectations for student behaviour and participation can help create a structured and predictable learning environment. Expert 1 noted:

> As an online teacher of English language in Saudi universities, I would set clear expectations for student behaviour and participation in class. It is important for students to understand what is expected of them and how their participation will be assessed. By establishing clear expectations, I can encourage behavioural engagement in my online synchronous speaking classes.

Theme: Encouraging active participation

Encouraging active participation was also deemed crucial. Teachers can foster a more interactive and engaging classroom by actively encouraging students to participate in discussions, ask questions, and share their ideas. Expert 10 explained:

> To promote behavioural engagement, I would encourage students to actively participate in class discussions and activities. By asking open-ended questions, prompting

> discussions, and providing opportunities for group work and collaboration, I can create an interactive learning environment that motivates students to engage and contribute.

Theme: Making connections with student interests and experiences

Making connections with student interests and experiences was suggested as an effective way to increase engagement. By relating lesson content to students' personal interests and real-life experiences, teachers can make learning more relevant and engaging. Expert 3 remarked, “Relating the course content to real-world experiences and student interests can significantly enhance engagement. By making meaningful connections between the material and the students' lives, I can make the learning experience more relevant and motivating for them.”

Theme: Personalizing learning

Personalizing learning was also highlighted as an important approach. Tailoring instruction to meet individual student needs and preferences can help maintain their interest and engagement.

Expert 8 explained:

> Customizing class activities and discussions based on individual students' interests and goals can increase their motivation to engage actively. By tailoring the learning experience to suit their needs, students are more likely to take ownership of their learning and actively participate in class.

Theme: Facilitating peer interaction

Facilitating peer interaction was suggested to foster a sense of community and collaboration among students. Encouraging group work and peer discussions can create opportunities for students to learn from and support each other. Expert 4 noted, “Encouraging student interaction through pair or small group work is essential in promoting engagement. By providing opportunities for peer discussion and collaboration, I can foster a supportive community where students feel comfortable interacting and exchanging ideas.”

Theme: Using varied teaching strategies

Using varied teaching strategies was recommended to cater to different learning styles and keep students interested. Incorporating a mix of lectures, discussions, hands-on activities, and multimedia resources can help maintain high levels of student engagement. Expert 5 explained:

> Incorporating a variety of teaching strategies that cater to different learning styles and preferences can help maintain student engagement. By diversifying the approaches used in class, I can provide a stimulating and dynamic learning experience that avoids potential boredom or disinterest.

4. 2. 3. 4. Assessment Challenges

4. 2. 3. 4. 1. Limitation of Non-verbal Cues

Several assessment challenges were highlighted. Experts identified the limitation of non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and body language, as a significant challenge in online learning environments. They proposed various strategies and solutions to effectively address this issue.

Theme: Encouraging voice recording

Encouraging voice recording was recommended as a useful technique for students to practice and self-assess their speaking abilities. Recording their speech allows students to review their performance and identify areas for improvement. Expert 13 mentioned: " Assigning speaking tasks that require students to record their responses allows for a more detailed evaluation of their oral skills. I provide feedback based on these recordings.”

Theme: Offering individual feedback

Offering individual feedback was deemed essential for helping students improve their speaking skills. Personalized feedback provides students with specific guidance on how to enhance their language use. Expert 15 stated, " After students complete their speaking tasks, I provide individual feedback to each student. This feedback includes highlighting their strengths, areas for improvement, and specific techniques to enhance their speaking skills."

Theme: Employing peer evaluation

Employing peer evaluation was suggested as an effective way to provide students with additional feedback and perspectives on their performance. Peer evaluations encourage students to critically assess each other's work and learn from their peers.

" I encourage students to evaluate their peers' speaking performances. This allows for active engagement, critical analysis, and the opportunity to provide constructive feedback to classmates." Expert 15 noted.

Theme: Conducting verbal assessments

Conducting verbal assessments was recommended to directly evaluate students' speaking abilities. Verbal assessments provide teachers with a clear understanding of students' proficiency and areas that need improvement. Expert 4 explained, " I incorporate oral exams or interviews to assess students' speaking skills in real-time. Despite the limited non-verbal cues, I can evaluate their fluency, clarity of expression, and coherence."

Theme: Assessing spoken pronunciation

Assessing spoken pronunciation was noted as an essential component of language assessments. By focusing on pronunciation, teachers can help students improve their clarity and confidence in speaking. Expert 14 explained, " I pay close attention to students' pronunciation during speaking tasks. Assessing their ability to accurately pronounce words and sounds helps determine their level of pronunciation proficiency."

4. 2. 3. 4. 2. Difficulty in Detecting Spontaneous Speech

Difficulty in detecting spontaneous speech in online learning environments was identified as a significant assessment challenge. Experts proposed various strategies to effectively address this issue.

Theme: Impromptu speaking tasks

Impromptu speaking tasks were recommended as a key strategy to encourage spontaneous speech. By giving students prompts that require immediate responses, teachers can assess their ability to think and speak on their feet. Expert 1 noted:

> To assess students' ability to produce spontaneous speech, I give them impromptu speaking tasks where they should speak without prior preparation for a set time. For instance, I provide them with a topic and ask them to speak for two minutes. This allows me to evaluate their ability to generate spontaneous ideas and effectively communicate them.

Theme: Rehearsed speaking tasks

Rehearsed speaking tasks were also suggested as a method to practice and improve fluency. While these tasks may not be entirely spontaneous, they help build confidence and speaking skills that can transfer to more spontaneous situations.

Expert 1 mentioned:

> I make use of rehearsed speaking tasks that require students to prepare in advance but still demand spontaneous speech in their responses. For example, I have students prepare a short speech on a specific topic, but then randomly assign them a different topic during the assessment. This assesses their ability to think on their feet and communicate their ideas in a logical and organized manner.

Theme: Pair/group speaking tasks

Pair/group speaking tasks were recommended to facilitate interactive and spontaneous conversations. By working in pairs or groups, students can practice speaking spontaneously in a collaborative setting. Expert 3 noted, " I incorporate pair/group speaking tasks that require students to respond to prompts or questions and engage in conversations with their peers. This allows them to practice speaking spontaneously while also catering to different language levels within the group."

Theme: Listening and reacting

Listening and reacting were emphasized as essential skills for spontaneous speech. Encouraging students to listen carefully and respond to their peers' comments can enhance their ability to engage in natural conversations. " I include listening and reaction exercises where

students listen to speakers and respond in an impromptu manner. This helps assess their ability to listen attentively and speak spontaneously on the spot." Expert 6 explained.

Theme: Using varied prompts

Using varied prompts was suggested as a way to stimulate spontaneous speech. By providing diverse and interesting prompts, teachers can encourage students to think creatively and respond naturally. Expert 8 noted, “I use a variety of prompts, such as pictures, news stories, or short articles, to assist hesitant speakers. This allows students to generate ideas more spontaneously and creatively while responding to different prompts.".

Theme: Providing feedback

Providing feedback was deemed essential for helping students improve their spontaneous speaking skills. Timely and constructive feedback helps students understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Expert 12 said, "I give students feedback not only on their language proficiency but also on the spontaneity and natural flow of their speech. This feedback can include their tone, pace, intonation, and how authentic their communication was during the assessment.”

Theme: Incorporating self-assessment

Incorporating self-assessment was recommended to encourage students to reflect on their spontaneous speaking performance. By assessing themselves, students can become more aware of their progress and areas that need improvement. Expert 4 explained, " I encourage students to assess their own spontaneous speaking abilities. After an assessment, I ask them to reflect on their performance, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and set goals for future development."

4. 2. 3. 4. 3. Use of Unauthorized Resources, Assistance from Others, and Plagiarism

The use of unauthorized resources, assistance from others, and plagiarism was identified as a significant assessment challenge in online learning environments. Experts provided a range of strategies and solutions to address this issue effectively.

Theme: Setting clear expectations

Setting clear expectations was emphasized as a foundational strategy. By clearly communicating the rules and expectations regarding academic integrity and the use of resources, students can better understand the importance of honesty in their work. Expert 1 noted:

> I establish clear expectations for academic honesty and plagiarism at the beginning of the course. I articulate the consequences of academic dishonesty and explain what constitutes unauthorized resources and assistance from others. This helps students understand the importance of maintaining integrity in their work.
> Theme: Using diverse prompts

Using diverse prompts was recommended to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism and the use of unauthorized assistance. By varying the types of prompts and questions used in assessments, teachers can make it more challenging for students to use pre-prepared answers or seek help from others. Expert 5 explained:

> I use prompts for speaking activities that require students to draw mainly on their personal experience or opinion rather than relying on outside resources. By designing prompts that encourage students to use their own thoughts and ideas, I minimize the temptation to use unauthorized resources or seek assistance from others.

Theme: Designing tests that require specific knowledge

Designing tests that require specific knowledge was suggested as an effective strategy. By creating assessments that require students to apply their knowledge in specific ways, it becomes more difficult for them to use unauthorized resources. Expert 3 mentioned:

> I design well-structured tests that assess students' ability to apply factual knowledge, logical reasoning, and critical thinking. By incorporating questions that require

> analysis, synthesis, or original perspectives, I create assessments that necessitate students' own understanding and prevent reliance on unauthorized sources.
> .

Theme: Incorporating penalties for the use of unauthorized resources

Incorporating penalties for the use of unauthorized resources and plagiarism was emphasized as a deterrent. By clearly communicating the consequences of academic dishonesty, teachers can discourage students from engaging in such behaviour. Expert 8 noted:

> I establish a clear policy for addressing instances of academic dishonesty, including appropriate disciplinary procedures aligned with the campus-wide policy. By clearly communicating the penalties for any infringement of plagiarism and academic dishonesty code, I reinforce the importance of ethical conduct.

Theme: Providing resources and support

Providing resources and support was highlighted as a crucial measure to help students succeed without resorting to unauthorized assistance. By offering additional resources and support, teachers can address students' needs and challenges. Expert 13 remarked:

> I offer students access to reputable and reliable resources to support their learning. By providing them with credible sources and teaching them how to properly cite and reference information, I empower them to avoid plagiarism and utilize resources appropriately.

Theme: Regularly communicating with students

Regularly communicating with students was emphasized as a way to reinforce the importance of academic integrity. By maintaining open lines of communication, teachers can address any concerns or questions students may have. Expert 12 noted:

> I maintain regular communication with students to address any questions or concerns they may have regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. By keeping an open line of communication, I can clarify expectations and provide guidance to ensure students understand and follow academic integrity guidelines.

4. 2. 3. 4. 4. Time Constraints (Assessment Strict Time Limits)

Time constraints, particularly strict time limits, were identified as a significant assessment challenge in online learning environments. Experts provided a variety of strategies and solutions to address this issue effectively.

Theme: Providing clear time limits

Providing clear time limits was emphasized as a foundational strategy. By clearly communicating the time allocated for each task or activity, students can better manage their time and pace themselves accordingly. Expert 7 noted:

> As an online teacher, I make sure to communicate the specific time limits for each speaking assessment task to my students before they begin. I clearly specify the duration for each task or question so that they know how much time they should allocate for their responses.

Theme: Offering structured speaking tasks

Offering structured speaking tasks was recommended to help students stay focused and organized within the given time constraints. By providing clear guidelines and structure for speaking tasks, students can better prepare and deliver their responses within the allotted time. Expert 7 explained, "To manage time constraints, I design speaking tasks that have a specified time limit for each section or prompt. By providing clear time boundaries, I help my students plan their responses and allocate time accordingly."

Theme: Teaching time management strategies

Teaching time management strategies was highlighted as a crucial approach. By equipping students with techniques for managing their time effectively, such as prioritizing tasks and creating study schedules, teachers can help them become more efficient in completing their assessments.

Expert 6 noted:

> I provide my students with strategies for managing their time effectively during the speaking assessment. These strategies may include brainstorming and outlining ideas before speaking, allocating specific time segments for each part of their response, and using transition phrases to signal the end of one idea and the beginning of another.

Theme: Using timers or countdowns

Using timers or countdowns was recommended as a practical tool for keeping students on track. By incorporating timers or countdowns during assessments, students can stay aware

of the time remaining and pace themselves accordingly. “During the speaking assessment, I utilize timers or countdowns to visually display the remaining time for each task. This helps my students monitor their progress and manage their time effectively, ensuring they stay within the allocated time frame.” Expert 15 stated.

Theme: Breaking down tasks into smaller segments

Breaking down tasks into smaller segments was recommended to make assessments more manageable for students. By dividing tasks into smaller, more manageable parts, students can focus on completing each segment within the time limits. “To manage time constraints successfully, I break down the speaking tasks into smaller segments. By dividing the task into manageable parts, I help my students allocate their time more efficiently and stay focused.” Expert 13 explained.

4. 2. 3. 4. 5. Group Assessment Challenges

Group assessment challenges were identified as significant obstacles in online learning environments. Experts provided a variety of strategies and solutions to address these challenges effectively.

Theme: Assigning collaborative tasks

Assigning collaborative tasks was emphasized as a foundational strategy. By assigning tasks that require students to work together, teachers can foster a sense of teamwork and collaboration. Expert 10 noted:

> I divide students into groups and assign them collaborative projects or presentations. This allows them to work together to research, plan, and deliver their presentation online. I assess their ability to work as a team, collaborate effectively, and communicate during the group task.

Theme: Facilitating group discussions

Facilitating group discussions was recommended to promote interaction and engagement among students. By organizing and guiding group discussions, teachers can ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate and contribute. “I facilitate group

discussions on specific topics or issues. I assign roles or topics to each group member to ensure active participation. I assess their ability to engage in meaningful discussions, express their opinions, and respond to their peers' ideas.” Expert 5 explained.

Theme: Implementing role-plays or simulations

Implementing role-plays or simulations was suggested as an effective way to enhance group dynamics and engagement. By incorporating role-plays and simulations into the curriculum, students can practice real-life scenarios and develop their communication and problem-solving skills. Expert 5 stated:

> I assign group role-plays or simulations that require students to work together to act out a scenario. This can be a problem-solving activity or a real-life situation. I assess their ability to collaborate, communicate, and perform effectively as a group.

Theme: Incorporating peer feedback and evaluation

Incorporating peer feedback and evaluation was highlighted as a crucial strategy to enhance group assessments. By encouraging students to provide feedback to their peers, teachers can promote a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration. Expert 9 noted:

> I include peer feedback and evaluation in the group assessment process. After each group activity, I have students provide feedback and evaluate their peers based on specific criteria. This encourages active participation and helps students develop their ability to critically assess others.

Theme: Designing group projects

Designing group projects with individual components was recommended to ensure accountability and fairness. By incorporating individual components into group projects, teachers can assess each student's contribution and ensure that all students are actively participating. “I assign group projects that include individual components. Each group member is responsible for a specific aspect or deliverable within the project. I assess both the group's overall performance and the individual contributions of each student.” Expert 9 explained.

Theme: Utilizing online collaboration tools

Utilizing online collaboration tools was suggested as a way to enhance group work and communication. By leveraging digital tools and platforms, students can collaborate more effectively and efficiently. Expert 8 stated, “I utilize online collaboration tools like shared documents, virtual whiteboards, or video-conferencing platforms that support breakout rooms for group work. These tools facilitate effective communication and collaboration among group members.”

4. 2. 3. 5. Students’ Low Language Proficiency

4. 2. 3. 5. 1. Students’ Inability to Understand or Organize Connected Stretches of Speech

The challenge of students’ inability to understand or organize connected stretches of speech due to low language proficiency was identified as a significant issue. Experts suggested several strategies and solutions to address this challenge effectively.

Theme: Setting an example

Setting an example was also highlighted as an essential approach. Teachers should model correct language use and organization in their speech to provide students with a clear standard to emulate. Expert 15 stated, “I model appropriate speech by using polite and respectful language, actively listening to students, and responding appropriately to their contributions. This serves as a guide for students to follow.”

Theme: Discussing cultural norms

Discussing cultural norms was recommended to help students understand the context and nuances of the language. This discussion can aid in comprehension and appropriate language use.

Expert 14 explained, “I engage students in discussions about cultural norms and behaviours in Saudi Arabian society. This helps them understand appropriate ways of greeting, addressing superiors, expressing opinions, and respecting others' perspectives.”

Theme: Providing feedback and correction

Providing feedback and correction was deemed crucial for helping students improve their language skills. Constructive feedback helps students understand their mistakes and learn how to correct them. “I give students timely feedback on their speech, addressing any instances where they may have been socially or pragmatically inappropriate. I guide them on alternative phrases or behaviours they can use in specific situations.” Expert 5 shared.

Theme: Collaborative discussions

Collaborative discussions were highlighted as an effective strategy to engage students in meaningful conversations and improve their language proficiency. Expert 5 noted, “I encourage students to engage in collaborative discussions with their peers. This provides opportunities for them to practice polite and respectful language, turn-taking, and active listening.”

Theme: Using conversation starters and prompts

Using conversation starters and prompts can help students practice initiating and maintaining conversations, thereby improving their ability to organize connected stretches of speech. “I provide conversation starters or prompts to guide students' discussions and help them structure their speech in a socially appropriate manner. These prompts can encourage respectful disagreement, sharing of personal experiences, or understanding different perspectives.” Expert 12 explained.

Theme: Emphasizing nonverbal communication

Emphasizing nonverbal communication was highlighted as an important aspect of understanding and organizing speech. Nonverbal cues can aid comprehension and provide

context for verbal communication. “I remind students about the significance of nonverbal communication during online classes. They are encouraged to use appropriate facial expressions, body language, and gestures to enhance understanding and convey politeness.” Expert 13 noted.

Theme: Creating a supportive environment

Creating a supportive environment where students feel comfortable practicing and making mistakes was deemed essential. A supportive atmosphere encourages students to take risks and learn from their errors. “I strive to foster a supportive and inclusive online environment where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas and opinions. This includes encouraging open dialogue, respect for each other's viewpoints, and providing constructive feedback.” Expert 6 emphasized.

4. 2. 3. 5. 2. Students' Inability to Compensate for Limitations in Language Knowledge

Experts identified several strategies and solutions to address the challenge of students' inability to compensate for limitations in language knowledge. These strategies aim to help students develop skills and techniques to overcome their language deficiencies.

Theme: Encouraging paraphrasing

Encouraging paraphrasing was emphasized as a valuable strategy. By teaching students how to rephrase sentences and express ideas in different ways, teachers can help them work around gaps in their language knowledge. “I teach students how to paraphrase when they encounter difficulties in finding the right words or expressing their thoughts accurately. I emphasize the importance of understanding the main idea and conveying it in their own words.” Expert 1 noted.

Theme: Providing vocabulary resources

Providing vocabulary resources is another critical strategy. Supplying students with lists of useful words and phrases can aid their language development and compensate for gaps in their vocabulary.

Expert 1 explained, “I share vocabulary resources such as dictionaries, thesauruses, or online vocabulary tools that students can use to expand their language knowledge. I actively encourage them to search for and learn new words relevant to the speaking tasks at hand.”

Theme: Teaching circumlocution strategies

Teaching circumlocution strategies was highlighted as an essential approach. These techniques involve describing or defining a word that a student may not know, enabling them to convey their message despite vocabulary limitations. “I help students develop the ability to describe words or concepts indirectly when they are unsure of the specific vocabulary. I teach them to use descriptive language, synonyms, or examples to convey their intended meaning.” Expert 3 mentioned.

Theme: Promoting self-awareness

Promoting self-awareness is another valuable strategy. Encouraging students to recognize their language strengths and weaknesses helps them become more proactive in addressing their limitations. Expert 9 shared, “I encourage students to reflect on their own language limitations and identify areas for improvement. This helps them understand their strengths and weaknesses and develop personalized compensatory strategies.”.

Theme: Supporting notetaking

Supporting notetaking can also help students manage their language learning more effectively. Teaching students how to take organized notes during lessons can aid their comprehension and retention of new information. Expert 4 noted, “I encourage students to take notes during online synchronous speaking sessions. Taking notes helps them capture important

information, prompts, or ideas discussed during the session, allowing them to refer to their notes when formulating their responses,".

Theme: Using visual aids

Using visual aids was highlighted as an effective strategy to enhance students' understanding and compensate for language limitations. Visual aids such as charts, diagrams, and images can provide additional context and support comprehension. "I incorporate visual aids such as images, charts, or diagrams to support students' understanding and communication. Visuals provide context, prompt discussion, and assist in conveying meaning." Expert 13 explained.

Theme: Offering feedback and guidance

Offering feedback and guidance is crucial for helping students improve their language skills. Constructive feedback helps students understand their mistakes and learn how to correct them. "I provide constructive feedback on students' language use during the speaking classes. I highlight areas of improvement, suggest alternative expressions or vocabulary, and guide them on how to further develop their language skills." Expert 6 emphasized.

4. 2. 3. 5. 3. Students' Poor Pronunciation

To address the challenge of students' poor pronunciation, experts suggested a variety of strategies and solutions:

Theme: Modelling Correct Pronunciation

Demonstrating accurate pronunciation helps students understand how words should sound. Expert 7 mentioned:

> As the teacher, I will clearly articulate words and sentences during the online class, being mindful of my own pronunciation and using correct intonation, stress, and rhythm patterns. By serving as a model for students to imitate and emulate, they can learn proper pronunciation.

Theme: Incorporating Phonetic Drills and Exercises

Using targeted phonetic exercises can improve students' pronunciation by focusing on specific sounds and patterns. “I incorporate phonetic drills and exercises into my lessons to help students practice and master challenging sounds,” An expert explained.

Theme: Encouraging Mimicry and Repetition

Repeated practice of sounds and words helps reinforce correct pronunciation. Expert 2 noted:

> I will encourage students to imitate correct pronunciation by repeating after me or their peers. Repetition exercises, tongue twisters, or chants can be used to practice challenging sounds or patterns. It is important to create a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable practicing and experimenting with their pronunciation.

Theme: Utilizing Visual Aids

Visual aids like charts, diagrams, and videos can help students understand mouth movements and sound production. “I will incorporate visual aids, such as diagrams or videos, to help students visualize the correct mouth shape and movement for specific sounds. This can aid their understanding of how to produce correct sounds and improve their pronunciation.” Expert 8 shared.

Theme: Using Pronunciation Apps or Websites

Technology tools offer interactive and engaging ways for students to practice pronunciation. “I will recommend pronunciation apps or websites that offer interactive exercises and audio samples for practice. These resources can provide additional support for students to independently work on improving their pronunciation outside of class.” Expert 8 mentioned.

Theme: Assigning and Reviewing Recorded Speaking Tasks

Recording speaking tasks allows students to self-assess and receive teacher feedback on their pronunciation. Expert 12 noted, “I will assign recorded speaking tasks that allow students to review their own pronunciation skills. They will listen to their recordings and self-

evaluate their pronunciation. Based on their recordings, I will provide feedback and suggestions for improvement."

4. 2. 3. 5. 4. Students' Limited Vocabulary

To address the challenge of students' limited vocabulary, experts suggested a variety of strategies and solutions.

Theme: Utilizing Arabic-English bilingual resources

One effective strategy is utilizing Arabic-English bilingual resources. This approach helps bridge the gap between the students' native language and English, making it easier for them to learn and retain new vocabulary. Expert 1 noted, "I understand the importance of connecting new vocabulary with students' native language. To facilitate comprehension and encourage knowledge transfer between Arabic and English, I provide bilingual resources such as dictionaries or online materials."

Theme: Incorporating local and cultural references

Incorporating local and cultural references was also highlighted as a beneficial approach. By using examples and contexts that are familiar to the students, teachers can make vocabulary learning more relevant and engaging. "By incorporating vocabulary related to Saudi culture, customs, and local contexts, I make the learning experience relatable and engaging. This helps students expand their English vocabulary and express themselves effectively when discussing topics that resonate with their experiences." Expert 1 explained.

Theme: Fostering authentic communication

Fostering authentic communication is another important strategy. Encouraging students to use new vocabulary in real-life conversations helps reinforce their learning and improves retention.

Expert 3 mentioned, "I create opportunities for students to engage in authentic and meaningful conversations. Through class discussions, debates, or presentations on topics relevant to Saudi

Arabian society, students can practice using new vocabulary in practical and meaningful ways."

Theme: Encouraging self-directed learning

Encouraging self-directed learning empowers students to take charge of their vocabulary acquisition. Providing them with tools and resources to learn independently can boost their confidence and motivation. Expert 8 stated:

> I support students in developing independent learning habits by recommending online English language resources, mobile apps, or vocabulary-building websites for exploration beyond classroom hours. Additionally, I encourage students to create personal word lists, use vocabulary flashcards, or engage in self-study exercises to expand their vocabulary.

Theme: Utilizing multimedia resources

Utilizing multimedia resources, such as interactive games, videos, and quizzes, can make vocabulary learning more dynamic and engaging. "By incorporating multimedia resources like videos, podcasts, or online interactive exercises, I expose students to a variety of vocabulary in different contexts. This helps them develop a more comprehensive understanding of words and enhances their ability to use them effectively." Expert 13 shared.

Theme: Promoting word association

Promoting word association helps students remember new vocabulary by linking it to related words and concepts. Expert 12 explained:

> I encourage students to make connections between new vocabulary and familiar words they already know. Through examples and exercises, I facilitate the process of associating new words with existing ones, allowing students to better remember and use them in their speaking.

4. 2. 3. 6. Time Constraints (Class Time)

4. 2. 3. 6. 1. Large Class Sizes

To address the challenge of large class sizes, where teachers have less time to spend with each individual student, experts suggested a variety of strategies and solutions.

Theme: Establishing clear expectations

Establishing clear expectations is a foundational strategy that can help manage large classes effectively. By setting and clearly communicating guidelines and expectations for student behaviour and participation, teachers can create a structured and predictable learning environment. This helps ensure that students understand what is required of them and can work more independently.

Expert 1 noted, “I set clear expectations for student behaviour and participation from the beginning of the course. This includes guidelines for turn-taking, speaking time limits, and respectful communication, ensuring a smooth and organized flow of the class.”

Theme: Utilizing breakout rooms

Utilizing breakout rooms is another effective approach. Breakout rooms allow teachers to divide the class into smaller groups for discussions and activities, making it easier to manage and interact with students. Expert 1 explained:

> I make use of breakout rooms in the online platform to divide the class into smaller groups for discussions or speaking activities. This allows for more meaningful interaction among students and enables me to offer targeted guidance and support to each group.

Theme: Assigning group roles and setting up group rotations

Assigning group roles and setting up group rotations can also help manage large classes. By assigning specific roles to students within their groups, such as discussion leader or note-taker, teachers can ensure that each student is actively involved in the learning process. Rotating these roles regularly can help students develop a range of skills. “I assign specific roles to students within each group, such as group leader, timekeeper, or note-taker. This helps distribute responsibilities and keeps the group activities running smoothly, allowing me to focus on monitoring and providing feedback to each group.” Expert 5 stated.

Theme: Providing asynchronous opportunities

Providing asynchronous opportunities allows students to engage with the course material at their own pace. This can be particularly beneficial in large classes, where it may be challenging to address everyone's needs during synchronous sessions. “I offer asynchronous opportunities for speaking practice, such as discussion boards or recorded presentations, where students can interact and provide feedback to one another. This allows for more flexibility and extends speaking practice beyond the synchronous class sessions.” Expert 8 noted.

Theme: Offering office hours or individual sessions

Offering office hours or individual sessions provides students with additional support and personalized attention. This can help address individual needs and ensure that students who require extra assistance can receive it. “I provide office hours or individual sessions where students can schedule one-on-one time with me to address concerns, practice speaking, or receive personalized feedback. This ensures that every student has access to individualized attention, despite the larger class size.” Expert 12 mentioned.

Theme: Using formative assessment

Using formative assessment is essential for monitoring student progress and providing timely feedback. Formative assessments, such as quizzes, assignments, and peer reviews, help teachers gauge student understanding and identify areas that need improvement. “I employ frequent formative assessments, such as short quizzes, presentations, or speaking tasks, to gauge students' progress and understanding throughout the course. This provides ongoing feedback and helps me identify areas where additional support may be needed.” Expert 13 shared.

4. 2. 3. 6. 2. Limited Allocated Class Time

To address the challenge of limited allocated class time, which often necessitates teachers rushing through lessons, experts provided a range of strategies and solutions aimed at maximizing the effectiveness of each lesson.

Theme: Planning engaging activities

Planning engaging activities is another critical approach. Experts advocate for activities that capture students' interest and involvement, thereby making the best use of the limited time available. Engaging activities can reduce time spent managing distractions and increase the overall effectiveness of the lesson. Expert 1 remarked, "I carefully plan engaging speaking activities that encourage active participation and interaction among students. These activities may include discussions, debates, roleplays, or collaborative projects. By selecting activities that promote meaningful engagement, I optimize the use of class time."

Theme: Using timed activities

Using timed activities can help in managing the lesson schedule effectively. By allocating specific amounts of time to different activities, teachers can keep the lesson on track and ensure that all planned content is covered. Expert 3 noted:

> I utilize timed activities or speaking tasks to ensure that each activity is completed within a specific time frame. This helps maintain a steady pace and prevents activities from dragging on, allowing more activities to be covered in a single class session.

Theme: Encouraging student preparation

Encouraging student preparation is an effective way to ensure that class time is spent on higher-order learning activities rather than on basic content delivery. By having students come prepared, teachers can focus on interactive and in-depth discussions. Expert 4 remarked:

> I encourage students to come prepared for class by assigning pre-class reading or listening tasks related to the speaking topic. This allows students to familiarize themselves with the material beforehand and engage in more productive and meaningful discussions during class time.

Theme: Promoting peer-to-peer interaction

Promoting peer-to-peer interaction is another strategy to enhance learning while saving time. Peer interactions, such as group discussions and collaborative projects, allow students to learn from each other and engage more deeply with the content. “I facilitate opportunities for students to interact with one another and provide ongoing peer feedback. This not only fosters collaboration but also allows me to focus on guiding and supporting students where necessary, maximizing the use of class time.” Expert 4 stated.

4. 2. 3. 6. 3. Feedback Time

To address the challenge of feedback and assessment time, which can be constrained in synchronous online classes, experts provided a range of strategies aimed at optimizing these processes for maximum effectiveness.

Theme: Providing real-time feedback

Providing real-time feedback was emphasized as a crucial strategy. This approach allows students to receive immediate insights into their performance, helping them to understand their strengths and areas for improvement without delay. Expert 7 noted:

> During online synchronous speaking classes in Saudi universities' context, I provide immediate feedback to students by utilizing video conferencing tools. I offer corrections, suggestions, or praise to students while they are speaking, enabling them to improve their speaking skills in real-time and fostering active participation.

Theme: Recorded presentations

Recorded presentations are another valuable tool. By assigning students to prepare and record presentations, teachers can assess their speaking skills at a convenient time, and students can reflect on their performance. Expert 10 remarked:

> I assign individual speaking tasks or presentations that students need to record and submit before the class. By reviewing these recordings, I can assess their speaking skills more comprehensively and provide detailed feedback. I focus on specific areas such as pronunciation, grammar, or the organization of ideas.

Theme: Peer feedback

Peer feedback is emphasized as a beneficial practice. Encouraging students to give and receive feedback from their peers fosters a supportive learning environment and helps students develop critical evaluation skills. Expert 2 stated:

> I encourage students to provide feedback to their peers during online speaking classes. After group discussions or individual presentations, I ask students to give constructive feedback to their fellow classmates. This not only promotes peer learning but also encourages students to reflect on their own speaking skills and improve with each session.

Theme: One-on-one speaking sessions

One-on-one speaking sessions are suggested to provide personalized feedback and support. These sessions allow teachers to give detailed, individualized feedback and help students improve specific aspects of their speaking skills. Expert 4 explained:

> I schedule individual speaking sessions with students outside the regular class time. Through video conferencing tools, students can have more focused speaking practice and receive personalized feedback from me. This allows me to give more individual attention to their specific speaking needs.

Theme: Peer feedback and assessment

Peer assessments are another useful strategy. By evaluating each other's work, students can gain insights into different approaches and perspectives, which can enhance their own learning. Expert 2 noted:

> I include activities where students evaluate their classmates' speaking skills through peer assessments. I provide clear assessment criteria and guidelines for peer assessments. This not only provides valuable feedback to students but also encourages them to actively listen and analyse their peers' speaking performances.

4. 2. 3. 7. Cultural Obstacles

Language Barriers

To address the challenge of language barriers in understanding and communicating in English, experts have proposed a comprehensive range of strategies designed to support students and enhance their language proficiency.

Theme: Providing scaffolding

Providing scaffolding was emphasized as a foundational strategy. By breaking down complex tasks into smaller, more manageable steps, teachers can support students' learning and help them build their language skills incrementally. Expert 14 noted:

> As an online teacher of English language in Saudi universities, I would provide appropriate support to students to help them overcome language barriers related to cultural differences. This might include providing sentence starters or vocabulary lists that are specifically tailored to their cultural context. Offering this support can make it easier for students to participate in class activities and discussions.

Theme: Encouraging active listening

Encouraging active listening is crucial for improving students' comprehension and communication skills. By fostering an environment where students are attentive and responsive during interactions, teachers can enhance their listening skills. Expert 15 explained:

> To help students overcome language barriers, I would encourage active listening. This means teaching students to focus on what the speaker is saying, asking clarifying questions, and checking their understanding. By actively listening, students can better understand and respond to their peers from different cultural backgrounds.

Theme: Using authentic materials

Using authentic materials, such as real-life texts, videos, and audio recordings, was recommended to make learning more relevant and engaging. These materials provide students with exposure to natural language use and help them understand how English is used in various contexts. Expert 2 noted:

> In my online synchronous speaking classes, I would use authentic materials such as videos, podcasts, and articles from a range of sources. These materials help students understand the diverse linguistic backgrounds of English speakers around the world. I expose them to different accents and cultural contexts. By using authentic materials, students can overcome language barriers by familiarizing themselves with different linguistic variations.

Theme: Providing cultural context

Providing cultural context was also deemed important. By incorporating cultural references and explaining cultural norms associated with language use, teachers can help students understand the nuances of communication in English. Expert 8 explained:

> To help students overcome language barriers related to cultural differences, it is important to provide them with cultural context. This involves explaining the social and cultural norms in English-speaking countries, and how they might differ from their own culture. By understanding the cultural context, students can better grasp the language they are learning and overcome potential language barriers.

Theme: Repeating and modelling correct language use

Repeating and modelling correct language use was highlighted as a practical strategy. Teachers can demonstrate proper pronunciation, grammar, and usage, and then encourage students to imitate and practice these language forms. Expert 6 explained:

> Repeating new language structures and modelling correct pronunciation is an effective technique to help students familiarize themselves with the language. By providing repeated exposure in a relevant cultural context, students can develop a sense of familiarity with the language structures, making it easier for them to overcome language barriers.

Table 14 presents the experts' proposed role-based strategies and the corresponding required teacher roles to address synchronous online speaking challenges in Saudi governmental universities. Key themes include Facilitator Role (clear goals, breakout rooms, icebreakers), Pedagogical Role (self-regulation strategies, pronunciation drills, vocabulary scaffolding), Social Role (rapport building, cultural sensitivity), Assessor Role (peer evaluation, plagiarism prevention), Content Expert Role (authentic materials), and Managerial Role (time management, large class strategies). These multifaceted solutions target psychological, social, linguistic, and technical barriers.

Table 14

All Experts' Proposed Strategies and Solutions (Themes) and the Required Roles

Main Challenges	Manifestations	Strategies for Overcoming Challenges (Themes)	Role Required
Psychological Obstacles Faced by Students	Students' Limited Self-Regulated Learning	- Setting clear goals and expectations - Teaching self-regulation strategies - Developing time management skills - Promoting active learning - Enhancing motivation and engagement - Offering personalized learning Paths - Incorporate structured activities - Utilizing technology tools - Providing regular feedback - Fostering a supportive learning environment	**Facilitator Role, Pedagogical Role, Social Role**
Insufficient Personal Interaction	Limited Opportunities for Practice	- Pair and group discussions - Role-plays and simulations - Oral Presentations - Debates and discussions on current issues - Collaborative projects: - Language games and activities - Breakout activities - Q&A sessions - Language partners - Recording and self-assessment	**Facilitator Role, Social Role**
Social Obstacles	Limited English Conversation Opportunities	- Pair and group discussions - Role-play activities - Debates or discussions - Oral presentations - Collaborative projects - Experiential learning activities - Class discussions - Structured language practice activities - Language exchange partnerships - Recorded presentations or speeches	**Facilitator Role, Social Role**
Insufficient (Low) Student Engagement	Low Social Engagement (building relationships, collaboration)	- Icebreakers and introductions - Group activities and discussions - Encouraging participation and discussion: - Using breakout rooms - Incorporating collaborative projects - Promoting active listening and feedback - Celebrating and share cultural diversity - Creating opportunities for informal interaction - Establish communication channels - Leading by example	**Facilitator Role, Social Role**
Insufficient (Low) Student Engagement	Low Cognitive Engagement (critical thinking, problem solving, ...)	- Setting clear learning objectives - Providing clear instructions - Using diverse teaching strategies - Encourage critical thinking - Providing timely feedback - Using authentic materials - Encouraging student reflection - Promoting collaborative learning - Building on prior knowledge - Providing opportunities for self-directed learning	**Pedagogical Role, Content Expert Role, Facilitator Role**
Insufficient Personal Interaction	Reduced Rapport Building	- Icebreakers and warm-up activities - Personal introductions - Active listening and empathy - One-on-one interactions: - Incorporating cultural elements: - Providing timely feedback and encouragement - Using breakout rooms - Encouraging active participation - Promoting collaboration - Providing opportunities for reflection	**Facilitator Role, Social Role**
Assessment Challenge	Limited Non-verbal Cues (facial expressions, body language, …)	- Utilizing listening comprehension - Analysing language accuracy - Encouraging voice recording - Offering individual feedback - Employing peer evaluation - Conducting verbal assessments - Monitoring active participation - Using Role-play activities - Assessing spoken pronunciation - Monitoring progress over Time	**Assessor Role, Social Role, Technical Role**

Students' Low Language Proficiency	Students' Inability to Understand or Organize Connected Stretches of Speech	- Clearly communicating expectations - Setting an example - Discussing cultural norms - Role-play activities - Providing feedback and correction - Collaborative discussions - Promoting active listening skills - Using conversation starters and prompts - Emphasizing nonverbal communication - Creating a supportive environment	**Pedagogical Role, Content Expert Role, Facilitator Role**
Students' Low Language Proficiency	Students' Inability to Compensate (address) Limitations in Language Knowledge	- Encouraging paraphrasing - Providing vocabulary resources - Teaching circumlocution strategies - Promoting self-awareness - Providing language scaffolding - Support notetaking - Using visual aids - Foster peer collaboration - Providing opportunities for language practice - Offering feedback and guidance	**Pedagogical Role, Content Expert Role, Facilitator Role**
Students' Low Language Proficiency	Students' Poor Pronunciation	- Modelling correct pronunciation - Incorporating phonetic drills and exercises - Providing individualized feedback - Encouraging mimicry and repetition - Utilizing visual aids - Using pronunciation apps or websites - Organizing pair work and peer feedback - Assigning and reviewing recorded speaking tasks - Integrating pronunciation practice in all activities - Implementing guided practice with audio resources	**Pedagogical Role, Content Expert Role, Facilitator Role**
Social Obstacles	Excessive Use of Mother Tongue	- Establishing language expectations - Creating a language pledge - Engage students actively - Providing language support - Redirecting and reinforce - Model language use - Providing corrective feedback - Encouraging peer interaction - Creating a supportive atmosphere - Offering additional incentives	**Social Role, Facilitator Role**
Time Constraints	Large Class Size (Teachers have less time to spend with each individual student)	- Establishing clear expectations - Utilizing breakout rooms - Assigning group roles - Setting up group rotations - Encouraging active participation - Providing asynchronous opportunities - Utilizing technology features - Offering office hours or individual sessions - Using formative assessment: - Providing peer feedback	**Managerial Role, Facilitator Role, Pedagogical Role**
Insufficient (Low) Student Engagement	Low Behavioural Engagement (active listening, asking questions, ...)	- Establishing clear expectations - Encouraging active participation - Making connections with student interests and experiences - Providing immediate feedback - Using technology effectively - Personalizing learning - Facilitating peer interaction - Creating a positive learning environment - Using varied teaching strategies - Providing opportunities for practice	**Facilitator Role, Social Role**
Assessment Challenge	Difficulty in Detecting Spontaneous Speech	- Impromptu speaking tasks - Rehearsed speaking tasks: - Role-plays - Debates and discussions - Pair/group speaking tasks - Listening and reacting - Use varied prompts - Provide feedback - Incorporate self-assessment - Utilize video recordings	**Assessor Role, Technical Role**

Assessment Challenge	Use of unauthorized resources, assistance from others, and plagiarism	- Setting clear expectations: - Using diverse prompts - Designing tests that require specific knowledge: - Monitoring student activity - Conducting live speaking assessments - Using plagiarism-detection software - Incorporating penalties - Promoting collaboration and discussion - Providing resources and support - Regularly communicating with students	**Assessor Role, Managerial Role**
Time Constraints	Limited allocated Class Time (teachers may have to rush through lesson)	- Setting clear learning objectives - Planning engaging activities - Using timed activities - Providing clear instructions - Employing technology efficiently - Encouraging student preparation - Providing immediate feedback - Promoting peer-to-peer interaction - Allowing for flexibility - Incorporating real-world scenarios	**Managerial Role, Pedagogical Role**
Social Obstacles	Attitude Towards English	- Create a positive learning environment - Promote the relevance of English - Highlight the benefits of English proficiency - Personalize the learning experience - Showcase success stories - Address misconceptions and stereotypes - Cultivate an inclusive and supportive classroom culture - Provide engaging and interactive lessons - Encourage autonomy and ownership - Offer praise and positive reinforcement	**Content Expert Role, Social Role**
Psychological Obstacles Faced by Students	Fear of Committing Mistakes	- Establish clear expectations - Promote a positive classroom culture - Provide constructive feedback - Encourage peer feedback - Design collaborative activities - Celebrate success and effort - Create structured speaking opportunities - Use icebreaker activities - Encourage self-reflection - Be supportive and approachable	**Facilitator Role, Social Role**
Assessment Challenge	Time Constraints (strict time limits)	- Provide clear time limits - Offer structured speaking tasks - Set expectations for concise responses - Teach time management strategies - Use timers or countdowns - Conduct live time monitoring - Provide practice activities - Encourage self-reflection - Break down tasks into smaller segments - Provide feedback on time management	**Assessor Role, Managerial Role**
Students' Low Language Proficiency	Students' Limited Vocabulary	- Utilizing Arabic-English bilingual resources - Incorporating local and cultural references - Fostering authentic communication - Incorporating real-life materials - Encouraging self-directed learning - Providing feedback and correction - Conducting virtual vocabulary challenges - Assigning recorded speaking tasks - Utilizing multimedia resources - Promoting word association	**Pedagogical Role, Content Expert Role**
Assessment Challenge	Unauthorized Resources that Might be Used by Students	- Set clear expectations: - Use diverse prompts. - Design tests that require specific knowledge: - Monitor student activity - Conduct live speaking assessments - Use plagiarism-detection software - Incorporate penalties - Promote collaboration and discussion - Provide resources and support - Regularly communicate with students	**Assessor Role, Technical Role**

Assessment Challenge	Assistance from Others during Online Speaking Tasks)	- Set clear expectations - Use diverse prompts - Design tests that require specific knowledge: - Monitor student activity - Conduct live speaking assessments - Use plagiarism-detection software - Incorporate penalties - Promote collaboration and discussion - Provide resources and support - Regularly communicate with students	**Facilitator Role, Technical Role**
Assessment Challenge	Group Assessment Challenges	- Assigning collaborative tasks - Facilitating group discussions - Implementing role-plays or simulations - Incorporating peer feedback and evaluation - Designing group projects with individual components - Utilizing online collaboration tools - Communicating clear assessment criteria: - Actively observing and monitoring - Encouraging reflection and self-assessment - Implementing peer-assisted learning	**Assessor Role, Managerial Role**
Psychological Obstacles Faced by Students	Students' Lack of Confidence	- Setting Realistic and Achievable Goals - Providing Positive and Specific Feedback - Creating a Supportive and Inclusive Learning Environment - Implementing Gradual Exposure - Using Role-Play and Simulations - Providing Opportunities for Practice - Offering Individualized Support - Encouraging Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment: - Celebrating Achievements - Providing Supportive Resources	**Facilitator Role, Social Role, Content Expert Role**
Time Constraints	Feedback and ' Assessment' time	- Real-time feedback - Group discussions - Recorded presentations - Peer feedback - Rubrics and assessment criteria - One-on-one speaking sessions - Pronunciation drills - Self-assessment and reflection - Peer assessments - Utilize online assessment tools	**Assessor Role, Managerial Role**
Cultural Obstacles	Language Barriers (understanding and communicating in English)	- Provide scaffolding - Encourage active listening - Facilitate peer interaction - Use authentic materials - Focus on communication - Provide cultural context - Give regular feedback - Encourage self-reflection - Repeat and model - Create a supportive environment	**Content Expert Role, Social Role**

4. 3. Evaluation of Findings

This section reports what the findings mean, structured around specific research questions to offer a targeted interpretation. This analysis draws upon the theories and conceptual frameworks outlined in the literature review, aiming to contextualize the results within the existing body of knowledge. It examines whether the observed outcomes were anticipated based on the literature and discusses potential reasons for any discrepancies,

unexpected, or conflicting results. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the findings' implications and identifies potential avenues for further research.

4. 3. 1. Research Question 1: Online Techers' Level of Awareness

Findings for research question 1, "To what extent are governmental university teachers in Saudi Arabia aware of and taking on their evolving roles in teaching speaking during synchronous online classes?" reveals a remarkably high level of awareness among these teachers.

The facilitator role stands out with the highest awareness levels, with an average mean score of 4.10 (82%), reflecting teachers' dedication to engaging students in activities that enhance their language skills. Tasks such as encouraging vocabulary brainstorming and facilitating group discussions highlight teachers' efforts to create interactive and participatory learning environments, essential for developing speaking proficiency.

Similarly, the content expert role shows high levels of awareness, averaging a mean score of 4.09 (81.8%). Teachers exhibit strong proficiency in providing clear explanations and resources related to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. This role's significance is underscored by the high average scores, indicating that teachers are well-prepared to deliver comprehensive content knowledge effectively.

The managerial role also demonstrates significant awareness, with an average mean score of 3.99 (79.8%). Teachers are adept at organizing and managing the online learning environment, as evidenced by their ability to set specific language goals and establish clear guidelines for language focused activities. This capability is crucial for maintaining structured and goal-oriented learning experiences.

Awareness of the social role is notable, with an average mean score of 3.99 (79.8%), with teachers fostering supportive and inclusive environments for discussing language aspects. This role's importance is evident in the high scores, showing that teachers understand the

critical role of social interaction in language learning and strive to create inclusive and engaging learning spaces.

The pedagogical role also reflects a solid level of awareness, with an average mean score of 3.98 (79.6%), with teachers effectively designing instructional activities and employing strategies that enhance fluency and negotiation skills. This role's emphasis on effective instructional design and delivery is critical for the successful teaching of speaking skills in an online setting.

In the assessor role, teachers demonstrated a high level of awareness, with an average mean score of 3.82 and an awareness percentage of 76.4%. This indicates strong familiarity and engagement with assessment methods. Specifically, the use of rubrics, checklists, or self-assessment tools to evaluate students' language knowledge scored 3.96, reflecting 79% awareness, while assessing students' fluency, negotiation, and speech management skills through speaking tasks scored 3.79, indicating 76% awareness. These results suggest that teachers are well-versed in diverse assessment strategies to gauge student performance effectively.

Even the technical role, which had the lowest awareness level compared to other roles, still indicated a high level of awareness overall, with an average mean score of 3.78 (75.6%). Teachers showed competence in utilizing multimedia resources to engage students, though there is room for improvement in incorporating digital collaboration tools and online platforms for speaking practice and assessment.

Results for research question 1 aligns with established theories and conceptual frameworks regarding the roles of online teachers. Specifically, the observed high levels of awareness across various teaching roles support the theoretical assertion that effective online teachers should fulfil multifaceted roles, including facilitator, content expert, managerial, pedagogical, social, assessment roles, and technical roles (Bogart, 2023; Singh & Engeness,

2021). The high scores in the Facilitator and Content Expert roles indicate that teachers are well-prepared to deliver comprehensive content and create interactive learning environments, consistent with the expectations set by the literature (Ní Shé et al., 2019). This aligns with the notion that content knowledge and the ability to engage students are critical for successful online language teaching.

The significant awareness of the managerial role among teachers corroborates the findings of Grammens et al. (2022), who emphasize the importance of effective classroom management in synchronous online settings. Additionally, the high awareness in the social role highlights the importance of building supportive and inclusive learning environments, a concept strongly supported by social constructivist theories that emphasize the role of social interaction in learning (Bogart, 2023; Conklin & Garrett Dikkers, 2021).

However, the relatively lower awareness of the Technical Role, while still indicating a high level of overall competence, suggests an area for potential improvement. This finding is somewhat unexpected given the increasing reliance on technology in online education and the sophisticated communication technology available in Saudi Arabia. It implies that while teachers are proficient in using multimedia resources, there might be a need for additional training in advanced digital tools and platforms that can enhance speaking practice and assessment (Martin et al., 2021). This gap could be due to varying levels of access to technology and professional development opportunities among teachers.

Overall, the results were anticipated based on the theoretical framework and existing literature, which highlight the multifaceted roles of teachers in effective online education. These insights provide valuable guidance for targeted professional development initiatives, ensuring that teachers can continue to enhance their skills and effectively fulfil their roles in online teaching environments. The study underscores the critical importance of comprehensive

teacher training in adapting to the evolving demands of online language teaching (Tawafak et al., 2023).

Results indicate that teachers in Saudi Arabian governmental universities possess a high level of awareness of their evolving roles in online language teaching. This elevated level of awareness across most roles suggests that teachers are effectively adapting to the demands of online education. These insights provide valuable guidance for targeted professional development and support, ensuring that teachers can continue to enhance their skills and effectively fulfil their roles in online teaching environments.

4. 3. 2. Research Question 2: Significant Challenges

The results for research question 2, which investigates the significant challenges negatively affecting teachers' roles in teaching speaking synchronously in Saudi governmental universities, reveal several high severity challenges, indicating a substantial impact on teaching roles in this context.

4. 3. 2. 1. Psychological Obstacles Faced by Students

The findings reveal that psychological challenges such as limited self-regulated learning (92%) fear of making mistakes (74.8%), and lack of confidence (73%) significantly inhibit active participation in online learning environments. These psychological challenges resonate with the Community of Inquiry theory, which emphasizes the importance of cognitive, social, and teaching presence to create a productive online learning environment. The theory suggests that addressing emotional and psychological barriers is crucial for establishing a social presence where students feel safe and confident to interact and express themselves.

Similarly, Online Collaborative Learning theory underscores the need for collaborative knowledge construction, which can be hindered by psychological barriers that limit participation and open communication among students. The focus on reducing such barriers

aligns with Online Collaborative Learning theory's emphasis on fostering an environment conducive to active collaboration and shared understanding.

These findings align with the observations made by Alharbi (2022) who emphasizes the importance of fostering self-regulated learning among students to enhance their autonomy and motivation in online classes, which supports the need for strategies to develop these skills. Additionally, Meinawati et al. (2020) and Al Mahmud (2022) discuss how fear of making mistakes, coupled with a lack of confidence, significantly deters students from actively participating in class discussions. Furthermore, Elsayed (2022) corroborates that these psychological barriers, including anxiety and low self-esteem, directly impact students' ability to engage effectively in online learning environments.

These studies collectively emphasize the profound effect of psychological challenges on student participation and underscore the necessity for strategies aimed at reducing anxiety and boosting confidence to enhance engagement in online learning settings. This explicit alignment demonstrates the consistency of the research findings with established studies, reinforcing the reliability and contextual relevance of the conclusions drawn from the data.

4. 3. 2. 2. Insufficient Personal Interaction

The results indicate significant challenges in insufficient personal interaction, specifically limited opportunities for practice (85.2%) and reduced rapport building (82.8%), which stem from the lack of direct, face-to-face communication between students and teachers. This absence significantly undermines the development of rapport and the effectiveness of instructional practices. The issue aligns with the Connectivism theory, which emphasizes the importance of networks and connections in learning environments. According to this theory, the lack of personal interaction can disrupt the flow of information and hinder the establishment of meaningful connections that facilitate learning. Enhancing digital interaction tools such as video conferencing could mimic face-to-face interactions and help maintain the network's

strength. Moreover, the Community of Inquiry framework, which highlights the necessity of social presence alongside cognitive and teaching presences, suggests that the lack of personal interaction could weaken the social fabric necessary for a comprehensive learning experience. Strengthening personal interactions can therefore enhance social presence, which is crucial for effective online learning environments.

The findings correspond closely with the observations by Lestiyanawati and Widyantoro (2020) and Ariyanti (2020), who report that the lack of non-verbal cues in online environments complicates teachers' ability to gauge students' understanding and engagement, potentially leading to misinterpretations and educational setbacks. To counteract these issues, Nordin et al. (2022) recommend the utilization of video conferencing tools to facilitate more personal interaction and the incorporation of collaborative activities that enhance communication among students. These measures resonate with the findings, suggesting that enhancing interactive opportunities can mitigate the challenges posed by insufficient personal interaction in online education settings. This version explicitly demonstrates how the challenges identified in the research are mirrored in the literature, underscoring the consistency and validity of the findings in relation to established academic research.

4. 3. 2. 3. Social Challenges

The findings reveal that social challenges such as limited English conversation opportunities (85%), excessive use of the mother tongue (79%), and a negative attitude towards English (75%) significantly impede effective language learning. These issues are particularly relevant to the Online Collaborative Learning theory, which stresses the importance of collaborative interactions and constructive group dynamics for effective learning. According to Online Collaborative Learning, fostering environments that promote English usage and positive attitudes toward the language can significantly enhance language acquisition through social learning and peer interaction. The Connectivism theory also supports these findings,

highlighting the necessity of creating extensive networks where learners can immerse themselves in English through various digital platforms and social media, thereby increasing their exposure to and practice with the language in real-time contexts.

Alzamil (2021) presents similar findings, highlighting the limited opportunities for students to practice speaking English, which leads to inadequate immersion in the target language. Similarly, Alharbi (2022) and Al Mahmud (2022) observe the frequent reliance on students' native language during online classes, which undermines the development of English-speaking skills. Additionally, Abed et al. (2022) underscore how students' unfavourable perceptions and stereotypes about the English language contribute to a lack of motivation and engagement in learning activities. These observations corroborate the study's findings and emphasize the need for enhanced social dynamics and interactions that foster a more conducive environment for language acquisition. This version explicitly aligns the challenges identified in the research with the issues documented in the literature, highlighting the consistency between the findings and established academic research, thereby validating the conclusions drawn from the data.

4. 3. 2. 4. Low Student Engagement

The findings point to low student engagement, characterized by minimal social, cognitive, and behavioural involvement (83.8, 82.8, 78.6%) in online learning processes. This issue correlates strongly with the Community of Inquiry framework, which argues that enhancing cognitive and social presence is essential for fostering deeper engagement and meaningful learning experiences. According to the Community of Inquiry theory, engaging students effectively in online environments requires structured interaction and sustained communication, elements currently lacking as per these findings. Furthermore, the Connectivism theory supports this observation by emphasizing the role of diverse and dynamic connections in sustaining learner engagement. By expanding the network of interactions,

including peer collaborations and access to various resources, student engagement can be significantly enhanced. This section clearly illustrates how the findings are reflected in the research conducted by Al-Ghamdi (2022), Al Mahmud (2022), Mohammed (2021), and Alshumaimeri (2021), and how they substantiate the theoretical underpinnings of the Community of Inquiry framework and Connectivism, highlighting a unified approach to understanding and addressing student engagement in online learning settings. These observations are consistent with the Community of Inquiry framework, which posits that enhancing cognitive and social presence is essential for fostering deeper engagement and meaningful learning experiences.

4. 3. 2. 5. Assessment Challenges

The data highlights significant assessment challenges in online learning environments, particularly the difficulties related to limited non-verbal cues (82.4%), the detection of spontaneous speech (76.2%), use of unauthorized resources and assistance from others (73.4%), time constraints (74%), and group assessment (73.2%) challenges. These challenges correlate closely with Beleulmi's (2022) observations, emphasizing educators' difficulties in adapting to digital tools and heightened concerns about academic dishonesty, including more frequent cheating and plagiarism, which compromised the reliability of online assessments. Additionally, these assessment challenges align with the principles of the Community of Inquiry framework, as detailed by Garrison and Akyol (2013) and Oyarzun et al. (2017), which underscores the importance of teaching presence in facilitating cognitive and social processes to achieve educational outcomes. These processes are particularly challenging to implement without effective assessment strategies. Connectivism theory also highlights the need for dynamic and flexible assessment methods that can keep pace with the rapidly changing information landscape and distributed learning networks (Herlo, 2017).

This theory suggests leveraging technology to create more authentic and contextual assessment opportunities that reflect real-world tasks and interactions, thus addressing some of the challenges posed by time constraints and the authenticity of online assessments. Moreover, the Online Collaborative Learning theory suggests that assessment in collaborative settings should reflect shared understanding and collective problem-solving capabilities, which can be difficult to measure through traditional assessment methods.

Thus, developing new forms of assessment that capture these dynamics is critical for validating the collaborative learning process. The difficulties are compounded by unauthorized resource use during assessments, echoing the need for more secure and innovative assessment methods to ensure academic integrity and fair evaluation (Rahman et al., 2022). This section explicitly demonstrates how the research findings are supported by and align with the observations made by Anugrah (2021) and the theoretical insights from the Community of Inquiry and Online Collaborative Learning frameworks, establishing a robust connection between empirical data and established educational theories.

4. 3. 2. 6. Students' Low Language Proficiency

The results indicate that students' inability to understand or organize connected stretches of speech (81.4%) and address limitations in language knowledge (80.8%) are significant barriers to effective communication in online classes. Poor pronunciation (80%) and limited vocabulary (73.6%) further highlight the language proficiency barriers. These challenges align with findings by Al Mahmud (2022) and Syafiq et al. (2021), which emphasize the need for targeted language support in online learning environments. According to the Connectivism theory, learning occurs through the formation of connections between information nodes, and students learn best by interacting with others and accessing various resources (Siemens, 2005; Downes, 2012). This theory supports the idea that students with low language proficiency can benefit from increased opportunities for interaction and access to

diverse learning materials. The high degree of severity of these challenges indicates a pressing need for comprehensive language support strategies are essential for improving students' language proficiency in online settings (Herlo, 2017).

Moreover, the Community of Inquiry framework suggests that enhancing social and cognitive presence can significantly aid students struggling with language proficiency by creating a supportive community that encourages open communication and collaborative learning, which can help in overcoming language barriers. Furthermore, the Online Collaborative Learning theory underscores the importance of using group interactions as a method to enhance language learning, proposing that collaborative tasks and peer feedback are beneficial for improving language skills in an online environment. These educational theories collectively support the implementation of structured, interactive, and collaborative approaches to language learning in online platforms, aiming to enhance language proficiency through a multifaceted educational strategy.

4. 3. 2. 7. Time Constraints

Findings highlight significant time constraints (74%) that impact the effectiveness of online learning. These findings correspond closely with Salmon (2011), who discusses the importance of effective time management and the strategic use of online tools to enhance instructional efficiency. These constraints are especially challenging in synchronous online classes, where large class sizes and limited class time restrict the opportunities for individual interaction and feedback. Moreover, these observations are in harmony with the Community of Inquiry framework, as outlined by Garrison and Akyol (2013), which emphasizes the role of teaching presence in organizing and facilitating learning activities, crucial for managing these time constraints effectively.

Additionally, the Connectivism theory suggests that overcoming time constraints can be achieved using a well-integrated network of resources and tools that allow for flexible

learning schedules and asynchronous learning opportunities. This approach helps in maximizing the efficient use of time and resources, making learning more adaptable to the needs of individual learners (Herlo, 2017). Online Collaborative Learning theory also supports the idea that collaborative tools and group-based activities can be designed to utilize time more efficiently, ensuring that even within limited periods, significant educational interactions and engagements can occur. Ad-dressing these time management challenges is vital for improving instructional efficiency and ensuring that educational goals are met within the limited time available. This section clearly demonstrates how the research findings are supported by the insights provided by Salmon (2011) and align with the theoretical underpinnings of the Community of Inquiry, Connectivism, and Online Collaborative Learning frameworks, highlighting a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the challenges of time management in online education.

4. 3. 2. 8. Cultural Obstacles

Findings underscore cultural obstacles, particularly language barriers (71%) in understanding and communicating in English, significantly impact the effectiveness of online teaching and learning of speaking skills, especially in contexts where English is a foreign language. These findings align closely with Al-Shehri (2011), who emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptive teaching methods to address these barriers. Furthermore, the findings resonate with the Community of Inquiry framework, as described by Garrison and Akyol (2013), which underscores the role of social presence in creating a sense of community and open communication among learners. This approach is vital for mitigating the impact of cultural differences. Additionally, the Connectivism theory suggests that leveraging a diverse network of resources and connections can help overcome cultural barriers by facilitating access to varied linguistic and cultural contexts, which enriches the learning experience and helps students navigate language challenges more effectively (Herlo, 2017). The Online

Collaborative Learning theory also supports the integration of culturally relevant collaborative activities that respect and utilize the diverse backgrounds of learners to foster mutual understanding and enhance communication skills across different cultural settings.

These challenges emphasize the necessity of promoting a more inclusive and supportive learning environment through culturally relevant materials and activities, ensuring that all students feel valued and engaged in the learning process. This section clearly demonstrates how the research findings are corroborated by the insights provided by Al-Shehri (2011) and are consistent with the theoretical principles of the Community of Inquiry, Connectivism, and Online Collaborative Learning frameworks, highlighting a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the cultural challenges in online education.

Table 15 summarizes the significant challenges negatively impacting teachers' roles in synchronous speaking instruction at Saudi governmental universities. Psychological obstacles (students' fear of mistakes, low confidence, limited self-regulation), insufficient personal interaction (limited practice, reduced rapport), social obstacles (mother tongue dominance, low engagement), assessment challenges (limited non-verbal cues, plagiarism), low language proficiency (poor pronunciation, vocabulary gaps), time constraints (large classes), and cultural obstacles (language barriers) collectively hinder effective teaching.

Table 15

Significant Challenges and their Manifestations

Significant Challenges	Manifestations
Psychological Obstacles Faced by Students	Students' Limited Self-Regulated Learning
	Fear of Committing Mistakes
	Students' Lack of Confidence
Insufficient Personal Interaction	Limited Opportunities for Practice
	Reduced Rapport Building
Social Obstacles	Limited English Conversation Opportunities
	Excessive Use of Mother Tongue
	Attitude Towards English
Insufficient (Low) Student Engagement	Low Social Engagement (building relationships, collaboration)
	Low Cognitive Engagement (critical thinking, problem solving, ...)
	Low Behavioural Engagement (active listening, asking questions, ...)
Assessment Challenge	Limited Non-verbal Cues (facial expressions, body language, …)
	Difficulty in Detecting Spontaneous Speech
	Time Constraints (strict time limits)
	Unauthorized Resources that Might be Used by Students, Plagiarism Assistance from Others during Online Speaking Tasks
	Group Assessment Challenges
Students' Low Language Proficiency	Students' Inability to Understand or Organize Connected Stretches of Speech
	Students' Inability to address Limitations in Language Knowledge
	Students' Poor Pronunciation
	Students' Limited Vocabulary
Time Constraints	Class Size (teachers have less time to spend with each student)
	Limited allocated Class Time (teachers may have to rush through lesson)
	Feedback and Assessment time
Cultural Obstacles	Language Barriers (understanding and communicating in English)

4. 3. 3. Research Question 3: Overcoming Significant Challenges

For research question 3, "How can Saudi university teachers overcome the main challenges that prevent them from fully performing their required roles in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes?" the detailed experts' responses offer valuable insights into various strategies and solutions. Below is a thorough compilation of strategies suggested by experts in online English teaching to address these challenges and effectively fulfil their roles in teaching speaking skills at Saudi Arabian universities.

4. 3. 3. 1. Strategies for Overcoming Psychological Obstacles Faced by Students

In the context of Saudi universities, the psychological obstacles faced by students during synchronous online classes are of high severity, significantly impacting their

engagement and learning outcomes. These challenges are manifested in various forms, including students limited self-regulated learning, fear of committing mistakes, and lack of confidence.

The challenge of limited self-regulated learning among students can Ryan with a number of strategic interventions. Firstly, setting clear goals and expectations can provide students with a structured learning path, thereby enhancing their focus and commitment. Teaching self-regulation strategies, such as time management and active learning techniques, is crucial in fostering independence and responsibility in students. Additionally, promoting motivation and engagement through personalized learning paths and structured activities can create a more dynamic and interactive online learning environment (Bogart, 2023; Ní Shé et al., 2019). Integrating technology tools effectively and providing regular feedback are essential for continuous improvement and keeping students engaged. Creating a supportive learning environment through positive reinforcement and structured activities can significantly enhance students' self-regulation capabilities. Specifically, the strategies include setting clear goals and expectations, teaching self-regulation strategies, developing time management skills, promoting active learning, enhancing motivation and engagement, providing personalized learning paths, incorporating structured activities, using technology tools, offering regular feedback, and fostering a supportive learning environment. These strategies align with the facilitator role, pedagogical role, and social role of online teachers, as highlighted by the Community of Inquiry model, which emphasizes cognitive, social, and teaching presence (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Garrison et al., 2000).

Establishing clear expectations and promoting a positive classroom culture where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities can help reducing the fear of making mistakes. Providing constructive feedback and encouraging peer feedback can create a supportive atmosphere, reducing the anxiety associated with making mistakes. Designing collaborative

activities and celebrating success and effort can further help students overcome their fear by fostering a sense of community and mutual support (Harasim, 2017). The proposed strategies include establishing clear expectations, providing constructive feedback, encouraging peer feedback, designing collaborative activities, promoting a positive classroom culture, celebrating success and effort, creating structured speaking opportunities, using icebreaker activities, encouraging self-reflection, and being supportive and approachable. These strategies are key aspects of the facilitator and social roles that teachers need to embody (Ní Shé et al., 2019). These strategies resonate with the principles of the online learning theories, which highlight the importance of interaction and feedback in learning (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Siemens, 2005; Herlo, 2017)).

To overcome students' lack of confidence, teachers should set realistic and achievable goals and provide positive and specific feedback. Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment where students feel valued and understood is crucial. Implementing gradual exposure to speaking activities and using role-play and simulations can prepare students for practice in a low-stress setting, thereby boosting their confidence (Bogart, 2023; Ní Shé et al., 2019). The strategies proposed include setting realistic and achievable goals, providing positive and specific feedback, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, implementing gradual exposure, using role-play and simulations, providing opportunities for practice, offering individualized support, encouraging self-reflection and self-assessment, celebrating achievements, and providing supportive resources (Rahman et al., 2022). These strategies align with the roles of facilitator, social role, and content expert role, ensuring a comprehensive support system for students (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Bogart, 2023; Garrison et al., 2000; Harasim, 2017).

The results obtained from this study are consistent with the theoretical frameworks identified in the literature, particularly the Community of Inquiry model, Connectivism, and

the Online collaborative theories. The Community of Inquiry model emphasis on cognitive, social, and teaching presence aligns well with the roles identified as necessary for addressing psychological obstacles in online learning environments. The strategies proposed by experts, such as fostering a supportive learning environment and providing regular feedback, reflect the principles of these theories and are expected to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Unexpectedly, some challenges like the fear of committing mistakes and lack of confidence were found to be more prevalent and significant than initially anticipated. This discrepancy could be attributed to cultural factors in Saudi Arabia, where students might experience higher levels of anxiety and pressure to perform perfectly due to societal expectations. Addressing these cultural nuances by incorporating more personalized and culturally sensitive teaching approaches can further improve the effectiveness of the proposed strategies.

The study's findings underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach to overcoming psychological obstacles in online learning. By adopting strategies aligned with established theoretical frameworks, teachers can enhance their facilitator, pedagogical, social, and content expert roles, ultimately improving students' speaking skills in synchronous online classes (Grammens et al., 2022; Ní Shé et al., 2019; Singh & Engeness, 2021; Tawafak et al., 2023)

4. 3. 3. 2. Strategies for Overcoming Insufficient Personal Interaction

One of the main challenges identified in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes is insufficient personal interaction. This challenge manifests in two significant ways: limited opportunities for practice and reduced rapport building. In an online setting, activities such as pair and group discussions, roleplays, simulations, oral presentations, and debates on current issues become more challenging to facilitate effectively. These activities are

crucial for developing speaking skills but are often less dynamic and interactive online due to the lack of immediate feedback and engagement.

To address the challenge of limited opportunities for practice, several strategies can be employed. Implementing collaborative projects and language games can foster interaction and communication among students, providing practical opportunities to use their speaking skills. Utilizing breakout activities, where students are divided into smaller groups, can simulate in person discussions and provide a more intimate setting for practice. Regular Q&A sessions and pairing students with language partners can further enhance interaction, ensuring that students engage more actively. Additionally, recording and self-assessment activities enable students to review their performance and identify areas for improvement.

Reduced rapport building is another critical manifestation of insufficient personal interaction. Building rapport is essential for creating a comfortable and engaging learning environment. Strategies to overcome this issue include using icebreakers and warm-up activities to set a positive tone at the beginning of classes. Encouraging personal introductions and fostering one-on-one interactions can help build trust and familiarity between teachers and students. Incorporating cultural elements into the curriculum makes the content more relatable and engaging for students from diverse backgrounds. Providing timely feedback and encouragement is vital to maintain student morale, while using breakout rooms can facilitate more personal and intimate group discussions. Promoting active participation and collaboration through group tasks and providing opportunities for reflection also help in building a supportive and connected online learning community.

The strategies mentioned above necessitate the roles of a facilitator and a social coordinator. As facilitators, teachers need to guide and manage student interactions effectively, creating an environment promoting learning and collaboration. The social role involves

fostering a sense of community within the online classroom, promoting collaboration, and ensuring that students feel comfortable and engaged.

The findings indicate that addressing insufficient personal interaction through structured strategies can significantly enhance the effectiveness of teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes. The implementation of collaborative projects, breakout activities, and Q&A sessions aligns with the Community of Inquiry framework, which emphasizes cognitive, social, and teaching presence as critical components of successful online learning (Bogart, 2023; Garrison et al., 2000; Ostaff, 2020). In Saudi universities, where the technological infrastructure is advanced and teachers are well-trained, these strategies are practical and achievable. The focus on teachers' facilitator and social roles aligns with the literature, emphasizing their significance in fostering an engaging and interactive online learning environment (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Grammens et al., 2022; Ní Shé et al., 2019).

The proposed strategies are well-aligned with the Community of Inquiry model's emphasis on fostering interaction and collaboration among students, essential for developing speaking skills. The results were expected given the literature's emphasis on the value of personal interaction and rapport in effective teaching. The Community of Inquiry framework supports the idea that cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence are interdependent and collectively contribute to a successful online learning experience.

An unexpected aspect is the potential difficulty in implementing some of these strategies due to time constraints and large class sizes often found in Saudi universities. While the strategies are theoretically sound, practical implementation may face hurdles such as limited class time and the logistical challenges of managing multiple breakout rooms simultaneously. These challenges highlight the need for careful planning and resource allocation to ensure the successful execution of the proposed strategies.

4. 3. 3. 3. Strategies for Overcoming Social Obstacles

One of the main challenges identified in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes is the presence of social obstacles. These obstacles manifest in three major ways: limited English conversation opportunities, excessive use of the mother tongue, and negative attitudes towards English. These factors are particularly significant in the context of Saudi universities, where cultural and linguistic factors significantly influence the teaching and learning environment.

Limited English conversation opportunities occur because many of the activities (e.g. pair and group discussions, role-play activities, debates, and oral presentations are somewhat less dynamic and interactive in an online setting. The lack of immediate feedback and engagement makes it challenging for students to practice their English conversational skills effectively. To maximize interaction, several strategies can be implemented. Engaging students in collaborative projects and experiential learning activities provides practical, real-world contexts for using English. Regular class discussions, structured language practice activities, and language exchange partnerships can ensure consistent opportunities for speaking English. Additionally, recorded presentations or speeches allow students to prepare and practice their speaking skills, receiving valuable feedback from peers and teachers.

Excessive use of the mother tongue is another critical instance of social obstacles. Students often revert to their native language, which hinders their English language practice. To overcome this, teachers can establish clear language expectations and encourage students to commit to speaking English by creating a language pledge. Active engagement and providing language support can help students feel more comfortable using English. Teachers can also redirect students to use English and reinforce this behaviour positively. Modelling language use, providing corrective feedback, and encouraging peer interaction can further reduce reliance on the mother tongue. In addition, creating a supportive atmosphere and

offering additional incentives for using English can motivate students to practice more consistently.

Negative attitudes towards English also pose a significant challenge. Some students may perceive English as irrelevant or less important, influenced by misconceptions and stereotypes. To combat this, teachers can create a positive learning environment that promotes the relevance of English and highlights its benefits in academic and professional contexts. Personalizing the learning experience by tailoring activities to students' interests and needs can make learning English more engaging. Showcasing success stories of English learners and addressing false beliefs can help change negative perceptions. Cultivating an inclusive and supportive classroom culture, providing engaging and interactive lessons, and encouraging autonomy and ownership in learning can significantly improve students' attitudes towards English. Offering praise and positive reinforcement for efforts and achievements in learning English can boost confidence and motivation.

The strategies mentioned above require teachers to take on various roles. As facilitators, teachers need to guide and manage activities, ensuring students have ample opportunities to practice English in a supportive environment. The social role involves fostering a sense of community and connection among students, promoting collaboration and positive interactions. As content experts, teachers should provide accurate and engaging content, addressing misconceptions and highlighting the relevance and benefits of learning English (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021).

The findings indicate that addressing social obstacles through structured and interactive strategies can significantly enhance the effectiveness of teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes. The implementation of collaborative projects, experiential learning activities, and language exchange partnerships aligns with the Community of Inquiry framework, which emphasizes cognitive, social, and teaching presence as critical components

of successful online learning (Bogart, 2023; Garrison et al., 2000; Ostaff, 2020). These strategies leverage these elements by fostering a more interactive and engaging learning environment, thus improving students' speaking skills. In Saudi universities, the roles of facilitator, social, and content expert are crucial for fostering an engaging and interactive online learning environment, as supported by the literature (Grammens et al., 2022; Ní Shé et al., 2019; Singh & Engeness, 2021).

The proposed strategies fit well with online learning theories that emphasize the importance of fostering interaction and collaboration among students, which is crucial for developing speaking skills. These results were anticipated based on literature highlighting the significance of personal interaction and rapport in effective teaching. The framework of online learning theories supports the notion that cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence are interconnected and together contribute to a successful online learning experience.

4. 3. 3. 4. Strategies for Overcoming Insufficient (Low) Student Engagement

One of the primary challenges identified in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes is insufficient student engagement. This issue manifests in three major areas: low social engagement, low cognitive engagement, and low behavioural engagement. Each of these areas presents unique obstacles that hinder effective teaching and learning.

Low social engagement is characterized by difficulties in building relationships and promoting collaboration among students. This can be seen in the limited use of icebreakers and introductions, group activities and discussions, and breakout rooms for small group interactions. To address this, several strategies can be employed. Incorporating collaborative projects can foster teamwork and communication among students. Promoting active listening and feedback, celebrating and sharing cultural diversity, and creating opportunities for informal interaction are also essential. Establishing communication channels and leading by example can further enhance social engagement. These strategies align with the roles of facilitators and

social coordinators, as teachers need to create an environment that encourages interaction and collaboration.

Low cognitive engagement involves challenges related to critical thinking and problem-solving. This can be seen in the lack of clear learning objectives, insufficient use of diverse teaching strategies, and inadequate encouragement of critical thinking. To overcome these challenges, teachers can set clear learning objectives and provide clear instructions. Using diverse teaching strategies and encouraging critical thinking are vital. Providing timely feedback, using authentic materials, and encouraging student reflection can also enhance cognitive engagement. Promoting collaborative learning, building on prior knowledge, and providing opportunities for self-directed learning are additional strategies that can help. These strategies require teachers to take on pedagogical, content expert, and facilitator roles, ensuring that students are intellectually engaged and motivated.

Low behavioural engagement is marked by a lack of active listening, asking questions, and participating in class activities. This can be addressed by establishing clear expectations and encouraging active participation. Making connections with student interests and experiences can make learning more relevant and engaging. Providing immediate feedback and using technology effectively are also crucial. Personalizing learning, facilitating peer interaction, and creating a positive learning environment can further promote behavioural engagement. Using varied teaching strategies and providing opportunities for practice can help maintain student interest and involvement. These strategies align with the roles of facilitators and social coordinators, as teachers need to actively engage students and create a conducive learning environment.

The findings suggest that addressing low student engagement through structured and inter-active strategies can significantly improve the effectiveness of teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes. In Saudi universities, strategies that foster an interactive learning

environment have been shown to enhance students' speaking skills and align with the established roles of facilitators, content experts, and social guiders.

The proposed strategies are well-aligned with the community of inquiry, connectivism, and online collaborative learning theories, all of which emphasize the importance of fostering interaction and collaboration among students for developing speaking skills. These positive outcomes were anticipated, given the literature's emphasis on the significance of personal interaction and rapport in effective teaching.

The Community of Inquiry framework supports the notion that cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence are interdependent and collectively contribute to a successful online learning experience. Connectivism highlights the importance of building networks and making connections between ideas and people, which facilitates the flow of information and knowledge in a dynamic learning environment (Herlo, 2017). Collaborative learning theory posits that students learn more effectively when they work together, sharing insights and problem-solving strategies, thereby enhancing their communication skills and overall learning experience (Das & Madhusudan, 2023).

By promoting these elements, the proposed strategies can create a more engaging and effective online learning environment, ultimately enhancing students' speaking abilities. This aligns with established roles for facilitators, social, and content experts, ensuring that the learning experience is both comprehensive and effective (Bogart, 2023; Garrison et al., 2000; Grammens et al., 2022; Ostaff, 2020); Ní Shé et al., 2019; Singh & Engeness, 2021).

4. 3. 3. 5. Strategies for Overcoming Assessment Challenges

Another significant challenge in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes is related to assessment. This challenge manifests in four significant ways: difficulty in detecting spontaneous speech, the use of unauthorized resources and assistance from others,

time constraints, and group assessment challenges. Each of these issues poses unique obstacles to effective assessment and requires specific strategies to address them.

In an online environment, it is challenging for teachers to determine if a student's speech is genuinely spontaneous or pre-prepared. This can be mitigated through a variety of strategies. Impromptu speaking tasks, role-plays, debates, and discussions can help gauge spontaneity. Pair/group speaking tasks, listening and reacting exercises, and using varied prompts also promote spontaneous speech. Providing feedback and incorporating self-assessment can encourage students to engage authentically. Utilizing video recordings allows teachers to review and assess spontaneous speech more effectively. These strategies align with the roles of assessors and technical experts, as teachers need to employ various tools and techniques to evaluate spontaneous speech accurately.

The use of unauthorized resources, plagiarism, and getting assistance from others during online speaking tasks are significant concerns. To address this, setting clear expectations and using diverse prompts can help ensure assessments are fair and accurate. Designing tests that require specific knowledge and monitoring student activity are crucial strategies. Conducting live speaking assessments and using plagiarism-detection software can further mitigate these issues. Incorporating penalties for academic dishonesty, promoting collaboration and discussion, and providing resources and support can also help. Regular communication with students about the importance of academic integrity is essential. These strategies require teachers to take on assessor and managerial roles, ensuring the integrity and fairness of assessments.

Limited time for assessments can hinder the ability to thoroughly evaluate students' speaking skills. Providing clear time limits, offering structured speaking tasks, and setting expectations for concise responses are essential strategies. Teaching time management strategies, using timers or countdowns, and conducting live time monitoring can help students

manage their time effectively during assessments. Providing practice activities and encouraging self-reflection can further enhance time management skills. Breaking down tasks into smaller segments and providing feedback on time management can also be beneficial. These strategies align with the roles of assessors and managers, as teachers need to manage assessment logistics effectively.

Assessing group work in an online environment presents unique challenges. Assigning collaborative tasks, facilitating group discussions, and implementing role-plays or simulations can help assess group dynamics and individual contributions. Incorporating peer feedback and evaluation, designing group projects with individual components, and utilizing online collaboration tools can enhance group assessments. Communicating clear assessment criteria, actively observing and monitoring group interactions, and encouraging reflection and self-assessment are also critical. Implementing peer-assisted learning can further support group assessments. These strategies require teachers to take on assessor and managerial roles, ensuring that group assessments are fair and effective.

The findings indicate that addressing assessment challenges through structured and interactive strategies can significantly enhance the effectiveness of evaluating speaking skills in synchronous online classes. The proposed strategies align well with online learning theories. The Community of Inquiry framework, emphasizing the importance of a supportive online community, aligns with this finding. Teachers can foster social presence through video conferencing discussions and collaborative projects using tools. Additionally, providing feedback and encouraging self-reflection enhances students' cognitive presence and speaking abilities (Garrison et al., 2010).

Connectivism further emphasizes the importance of utilizing online platforms for content creation and sharing. Siemens (2005) highlights the value of building connections in the digital age. Teachers can assign tasks such as creating videos or podcasts to assess students'

ability to connect ideas and synthesize information, while also practicing their speaking skills. Peer feedback and self-assessment provide additional insights into students' speaking abilities.

Online collaborative learning theory supports the use of collaborative tasks like role-plays, debates, and group presentations, which have been shown to positively impact communication skills. In online settings, virtual tools can facilitate these tasks. Assessing students' participation, feedback, and teamwork in these activities provides a comprehensive understanding of their speaking skills.

A multifaceted approach to assessment is recommended, aligning with research that emphasizes the importance of diverse assessment methods for accurate evaluation (Bogart, 2023; Ostaff, 2020). By incorporating various tools, providing clear criteria, offering feedback, encouraging self-reflection, and fostering a supportive online environment, teachers can effectively assess and enhance students' speaking skills. Additionally, by focusing on the roles of assessors, technical experts, and managers, teachers can create a more effective and supportive online learning environment that promotes the accurate evaluation of speaking skills (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Grammens et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2019, 2021; Ní Shé et al., 2019).

4. 3. 3. 6. Strategies for Overcoming Students' Low Language Proficiency

Another key challenge in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes is students' low language proficiency. This challenge manifests in several ways: students' inability to understand or organize connected stretches of speech, inability to compensate for limitations in language knowledge, poor pronunciation, and limited vocabulary. Each of these issues presents unique obstacles to effective language learning and requires specific strategies to address them.

Students’ Inability to Understand or Organize Connected Stretches of Speech: This challenge can be mitigated through various strategies. Clearly communicating expectations,

setting an example, and discussing cultural norms can help students understand the context and structure of speech. Role-play activities and providing feedback and correction can enhance their ability to organize speech. Collaborative discussions and promoting active listening skills encourage students to engage more deeply with the material. Using conversation starters and prompts, emphasizing nonverbal communication, and creating a supportive environment can further assist in overcoming this challenge. Encouraging paraphrasing, providing vocabulary resources, teaching circumlocution strategies, and promoting self-awareness are also crucial. These strategies align with the roles of pedagogical, content expert, and facilitator, as teachers need to guide and support students in developing their speaking skills.

Students' Inability to Compensate for Limitations in Language Knowledge: To address this issue, providing language scaffolding and support for notetaking can help students manage their limitations. Using visual aids and fostering peer collaboration encourage active learning and support. Providing opportunities for language practice and offering feedback and guidance are essential strategies. These approaches help students develop compensatory strategies and improve their overall language proficiency. Teachers need to take on pedagogical, content expert, and facilitator roles to effectively implement these strategies.

Students' Poor Pronunciation: This challenge can be addressed by modelling correct pronunciation and incorporating phonetic drills and exercises into the curriculum. Providing individualized feedback, encouraging mimicry and repetition, and utilizing visual aids can help students improve their pronunciation. Using pronunciation apps or websites, organizing pair work and peer feedback, and assigning and reviewing recorded speaking tasks can further support pronunciation practice. Integrating pronunciation practice in all activities and implementing guided practice with audio resources are also effective strategies. These approaches require teachers to take on pedagogical, content expert, and facilitator roles to support students in improving their pronunciation.

Students' Limited Vocabulary*:* To enhance students' vocabulary, utilizing Arabic-English bilingual resources and incorporating local and cultural references can make learning more relevant and engaging. Fostering authentic communication and incorporating real-life materials provide practical contexts for vocabulary use. Encouraging self-directed learning, providing feedback and correction, conducting virtual vocabulary challenges, and assigning recorded speaking tasks are essential strategies. Utilizing multimedia resources and promoting word association can also help students expand their vocabulary. These strategies align with the roles of pedagogical and content expert, as teachers need to provide re-sources and support to help students build their vocabulary.

The findings suggest that structured and interactive strategies can significantly enhance the teaching of speaking skills in synchronous online classes by addressing students' low language proficiency. Implementing clear expectations, role-play activities, and pronunciation practice aligns with the online learning theories, which highlights cognitive, social, and teaching presence as essential for successful online learning (Bogart, 2023; Garrison et al., 2000; Ostaff, 2020). These strategies foster interaction and collaboration among students, crucial for developing language proficiency, and reflect the literature's emphasis on the importance of personal interaction and support in effective teaching. The Community of Inquiry framework underscores that cognitive, social, and teaching presence are interconnected and collectively contribute to a successful online learning experience. In Saudi universities, these strategies require the roles of pedagogical, content expert, and facilitator, which are consistent with those outlined in the literature (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Ní Shé et al., 2019; Singh & Engeness, 2021; Tawafak et al., 2023).

The proposed strategies align well with the Community of Inquiry model's emphasis on fostering interaction and collaboration among students, essential for developing language proficiency. The results were expected given the literature's emphasis on the importance of

personal interaction and support in effective teaching. The Community of Inquiry framework supports the idea that cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence are interdependent and collectively contribute to a successful online learning experience.

An unexpected aspect is the potential difficulty in implementing some of these strategies due to technological constraints and large class sizes often found in Saudi universities. While the strategies are theoretically sound, practical implementation may face hurdles such as limited technological resources and the logistical challenges of managing multiple activities simultaneously. These challenges highlight the need for careful planning and resource allocation to ensure the successful execution of the proposed strategies.

The evaluation of findings underscores the importance of addressing students' low language proficiency through well-structured and interactive strategies. By focusing on the roles of pedagogical, content expert, and facilitator, teachers can create a more effective and supportive online learning environment that promotes the development of speaking skills.

4. 3. 3. 7. Strategies for Overcoming Time Constraints

One of the main challenges in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes is the time constraints. This challenge manifests in three significant ways: large class sizes, limited allocated class time, and feedback time. Each of these issues presents unique obstacles to effective teaching and learning, requiring specific strategies to address them.

In large classes, teachers have less time to spend with each individual student, making it difficult to provide personalized attention and support. To address this, several strategies can be employed. Establishing clear expectations and utilizing breakout rooms can help manage the class effectively. Assigning group roles and setting up group rotations encourage active participation and ensure that all students are engaged. Providing asynchronous opportunities allows students to practice speaking skills outside of scheduled class times. Utilizing technology features, such as online discussion boards and collaboration tools, can enhance

student interaction and participation. Offering office hours or individual sessions provides additional support for students who need it. Using formative assessment and providing peer feedback can help monitor student progress and identify areas for improvement. These strategies align with the roles of managerial, facilitator, and pedagogical, as teachers need to organize and manage large classes efficiently.

With limited class time, teachers may have to rush through lessons, making it challenging to cover all necessary material and provide adequate practice opportunities. To overcome this, setting clear learning objectives and planning engaging activities are essential. Using timed activities and providing clear instructions can help manage time effectively during class. Employing technology efficiently, such as using digital timers and online collaboration tools, can facilitate smooth transitions between activities. Encouraging student preparation before class ensures that students come ready to participate actively. Providing immediate feedback and promoting peer-to-peer interaction can enhance learning efficiency. Allowing for flexibility in lesson plans and incorporating real-world scenarios make learning more relevant and engaging. These strategies align with the roles of managerial and pedagogical, as teachers need to maximize the use of limited class time effectively.

The findings show that addressing time constraints with structured and interactive strategies can significantly improve the teaching of speaking skills in synchronous online classes. This could involve setting clear time limits for each activity, utilizing breakout rooms for small group discussions, and employing active learning techniques like think-pair-share or rapid-fire questions. (Bogart, 2023; Ostaff, 2020; Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Garrison et al., 2000). In Saudi universities, where large class sizes and limited class time are common, these strategies prove effective. The roles of managerial, facilitator, and pedagogical identified in the findings align with those outlined in the literature, highlighting the importance of creating an

engaging and interactive online learning environment (Singh & Engeness, 2021; Grammens et al., 2022; Tawafak et al., 2023).

Providing timely and effective feedback is crucial for student learning, but it can be time-consuming, especially in large classes. To address this, several strategies can be implemented. Providing real-time feedback during class activities ensures that students receive immediate guidance. Group discussions and recorded presentations can facilitate peer feedback, allowing students to learn from each other. Using rubrics and assessment criteria can streamline the feedback process, making it more efficient and consistent. Offering one-on-one speaking sessions provides personalized feedback and support. Incorporating pronunciation drills, self-assessment, and reflection activities can help students monitor their progress and identify areas for improvement. Utilizing online assessment tools, such as automated feedback systems, can save time and provide detailed analysis of student performance (Bogart, 2023). These strategies align with the managerial role, as teachers need to manage and deliver feedback efficiently.

Findings stress the importance of addressing time constraints through well-structured and interactive strategies. By focusing on the roles of managerial, facilitator, and pedagogical, teachers can create a more effective and supportive online learning environment that promotes the development of speaking skills. These strategies are firmly grounded in online learning theories, providing a strong theoretical foundation. However, to ensure successful implementation, it is important to consider and address any practical challenges.

4. 3. 3. 8. Strategies for Overcoming Cultural Obstacles

One of the main challenges in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes is overcoming cultural obstacles. These obstacles primarily manifest as language barriers, where students struggle with understanding and communicating in English. This

challenge is particularly significant in the context of Saudi universities, where English is not the first language for most students.

Language Barriers (understanding and communicating in English): To address this challenge, several strategies can be implemented. Encouraging active listening helps students improve their comprehension skills and become more engaged in conversations. Facilitating peer interaction provides opportunities for students to practice speaking in a more relaxed and supportive environment. Using authentic materials, such as real-life texts and recordings, makes learning more relevant and engaging. Focusing on communication rather than perfection encourages students to use English more freely and confidently.

Providing cultural context is essential for helping students understand the nuances of the English language. This involves explaining cultural references and idiomatic expressions that might be unfamiliar to students. Giving regular feedback helps students identify their strengths and areas for improvement, while encouraging self-reflection allows them to become more aware of their learning process. Repeating and modelling correct language use provides students with clear examples to emulate. Creating a supportive environment is crucial for building students' confidence and willingness to participate in speaking activities.

These strategies align with the roles of content expert and social coordinator. As content experts, teachers need to provide accurate and engaging materials that reflect real-world usage of the English language. In their social role, teachers should create an inclusive and supportive class-room environment that fosters communication and collaboration.

The findings suggest that overcoming cultural obstacles with these strategies can significantly improve the teaching of speaking skills in synchronous online classes. Implementing active listening exercises, peer interactions, and authentic materials aligns with the Community of Inquiry framework, which emphasizes cognitive, social, and teaching presence as essential for successful online learning (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Bogart, 2023).

In Saudi universities, the content expert and social roles identified in the findings are consistent with those outlined by online learning theories, underscoring the importance of an engaging and interactive online learning environment (Grammens et al., 2022; Ní Shé et al., 2019).

The proposed strategies align well with the Community of Inquiry model's emphasis on fostering interaction and collaboration among students, essential for developing speaking skills. The results were expected given the theories' emphasis on the importance of personal interaction and cultural understanding in effective teaching. The Community of Inquiry framework supports the idea that cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence are interdependent and collectively contribute to a successful online learning experience.

Findings highlight the importance of addressing cultural obstacles through well-structured and interactive strategies. By focusing on the roles of content expert and social coordinator, teachers can create a more effective and supportive online learning environment that promotes the development of speaking skills. These strategies have a strong theoretical foundation based on online learning theories, but practical challenges need to be considered and addressed for successful implementation.

Table 16 outlines role-based strategies proposed by the experts to overcome the identified significant challenges that teachers faced to teach English speaking skills in synchronous online classes. For psychological obstacles faced by students such as students' limited self-regulated learning, fear of committing mistakes, and students' lack of confidence, strategies include teaching self-regulation strategies, promote a positive classroom culture, providing positive and specific feedback, and creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, requiring the facilitator role, pedagogical role, social role, and content expert role. Insufficient personal interaction, social obstacles, and insufficient student's engagement are addressed by pair and group discussions, role-plays and simulations, language exchange partnerships, incorporating collaborative projects, utilizing video recordings, and impromptu

speaking tasks as the facilitator role, social role, assessor role, technical role, and managerial role. For students' low language proficiency, time constraints, and cultural obstacles, strategies involve utilizing breakout rooms, use authentic materials, provide cultural context, and role-play activities, requiring the pedagogical role, content expert role, social role, managerial role, and assessor role.

Table 16

Strategies for Successful Roles Fulfilment

Significant Challenges	Manifestations	Example of Strategies Proposed by the Experts	Required Roles
Psychological Obstacles Faced by Students	Students' Limited Self-Regulated Learning Fear of Committing Mistakes Students' Lack of Confidence	Teaching Self-Regulation Strategies, Promote a Positive Classroom Culture, Encourage Self-Reflection, Setting Realistic and Achievable Goals, Providing Positive and Specific Feedback, Creating a Supportive and Inclusive Learning Environment …	**Facilitator Role, Pedagogical Role, Social Role, Content Expert Role**
Insufficient Personal Interaction	Limited Opportunities for Practice Reduced Rapport Building	Pair and Group Discussions, Role-Plays and Simulations, Oral Presentations, Icebreakers and Warm-Up Activities, Active Listening and Empathy, Providing Timely Feedback and Encouragement …	**Facilitator Role, Social Role**
Social Obstacles	Limited English Conversation Opportunities Excessive Use of Mother Tongue Attitude Towards English	Language Exchange Partnerships, Providing Corrective Feedback, Encouraging Peer Interaction, Promote the Relevance of English, Cultivate an Inclusive and Supportive Classroom Culture, Provide Engaging and Interactive Lessons …	**Facilitator Role, Social Role, Content Expert Role**
Insufficient Student's Engagement	Low Social Engagement Low Cognitive Engagement Low Behavioural Engagement	Incorporating Collaborative Projects, Creating Opportunities for Informal Interaction, Encouraging Critical Thinking, Providing Timely Feedback, Using Diverse Teaching Strategies, Encouraging Active Participation …	**Facilitator Role, Social Role, Pedagogical Role, Content Expert Role**
Assessment Challenge	Limited Non-verbal Cues (facial expressions, body language, …) Difficulty in Detecting Spontaneous Speech Time Constraints (strict time limits) Unauthorized Resources that Might be Used by Students and Plagiarism Assistance from Others during Online Speaking Tasks Group Assessment Challenges	Impromptu Speaking Tasks, Utilizing Video Recordings, Conducting Live Speaking Assessments, Regularly Communicating with Students, Providing Clear Time Limits, Use Timers or Countdowns, Conduct Live Time Monitoring, Assigning Collaborative Tasks, Utilizing Online Collaboration Tools …	**Assessor Role, Social Role, Technical Role, Managerial Role, Facilitator Role**
Students' Low Language Proficiency	Inability to Understand or Organize Connected Stretches of Speech Inability to address Limitations in Language Knowledge Poor Pronunciation Limited Vocabulary	Role-Play Activities, Promoting Active Listening Skills, Using Conversation Starters and Prompts, Encouraging Paraphrasing, Providing Language Scaffolding, Modelling Correct Pronunciation, Using Pronunciation Apps or Websites, Assigning and Reviewing Recorded Speaking Tasks, Utilizing Arabic-English Bilingual Resources,	**Pedagogical Role, Content Expert Role, Facilitator Role,**
Time Constraints	Class Size (teachers have less time to spend with each student) Limited allocated Class Time (teachers may have to rush through lesson) Feedback	Utilizing Breakout Rooms, Providing Asynchronous Opportunities, Offering Office Hours or Individual Sessions, Using Timed Activities, Encouraging Student Preparation, Incorporating Real-World Scenarios, Utilizing Online Assessment Tools, Peer Assessments, Recorded Presentations …	**Managerial Role, Facilitator Role, Pedagogical Role, Assessor Role**
Cultural Obstacles	Language Barriers (understanding and communicating in English)	Use Authentic Materials, Provide Cultural Context, Encourage Self-Reflection …	**Content Expert Role, Social Role**

4. 4. Summary

Chapter 4 begins by detailing the process used to ensure the validity and reliability of the quantitative and qualitative data collected. For quantitative data, the validation process included face validation, content validity, pilot testing, reliability assessment, and construct validity. Face validation involved non-experts reviewing the questionnaire items to assess their relevance and appropriateness, ensuring the items appeared valid to potential respondents and helped identify obvious issues early on. Content validity involved experts reviewing the items to confirm they accurately represented the constructs being measured, such as teachers' awareness of their roles and the challenges they face. Pilot testing, conducted with a small group of teachers, identified issues related to the clarity, relevance, and usability of the questionnaire items, leading to refinements based on feedback. Reliability assessment, using Cronbach’ s alpha, measured the internal consistency of the questionnaires. High Cronbach’ s alpha values indicated that the items were highly correlated and reliable. Construct validity involved exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to verify that the items measured the intended constructs accurately.

For qualitative data, trustworthiness was ensured through measures such as member checking, triangulation, prolonged engagement, and peer debriefing. These strategies established the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data.

The results section is organized around the three main research questions. The first research question examined the extent to which Saudi university teachers are aware of and adopting their evolving roles in teaching speaking skills online. An online questionnaire with 26 items was used to measure teachers' awareness across various roles, including Facilitator, Content Expert, Manage-rial, Social, Pedagogical, Technical, and Assessor roles. The findings revealed varying levels of awareness across different roles. Teachers showed the highest awareness in the Content Expert Role, indicating they frequently provide clear explanations

and model effective speaking practices. The Facilitator Role also showed high awareness, with teachers often encouraging student engagement and facilitating group discussions. The Managerial and Social Roles showed significant awareness, while the Pedagogical Role exhibited solid awareness. The Assessor Role indicated teachers used rubrics, checklists, and self-assessment tools to evaluate students' language knowledge and speaking skills. The Technical Role had the lowest awareness level, indicating a need for improvement in utilizing digital tools effectively.

The second research question identified the main challenges that negatively affect teachers' roles in teaching speaking synchronously in Saudi universities. A 46-item questionnaire measured the severity of various challenges on a 5-point scale. Psychological obstacles, such as students limited self-regulated learning, were the most severe challenges. Limited opportunities for practice and insufficient personal interaction were also significant, impacting students' language development. Social obstacles, such as limited English conversation opportunities and low social engagement, were critical challenges. Low cognitive engagement, students' lack of engagement in higher-order thinking tasks, and reduced rapport building were notable issues. Technological issues, including poor internet connectivity and software glitches, were also identified as significant obstacles. Large class sizes were a challenge, indicating limited individual attention for students. Assessment challenges, such as difficulties in providing immediate feedback and ensuring fair and consistent assessment, were also significant.

The third research question focused on identifying effective strategies for overcoming the challenges hindering teachers' ability to teach speaking skills in synchronous online classes. The study found that the Facilitator and Social Roles are crucial for addressing psychological and social obstacles by creating interactive and supportive learning environments. The Pedagogical and Con-tent Expert Roles are essential for improving students' language

proficiency and engagement through targeted activities and clear instruction. Managerial Roles are necessary for efficiently organizing class time and managing large class sizes. Technical Roles are vital for utilizing digital tools to enhance interaction and assessment, ensuring academic integrity and effective monitoring of online activities. The Assessor Role is important for addressing assessment challenges by using diverse methods to capture students' abilities and provide timely, constructive feedback, ensuring fair and consistent evaluation practices.

The evaluation of findings provided an in-depth analysis of the data in relation to the research questions. This section discussed the implications of the results, emphasizing the importance of enhancing teachers' awareness and implementing effective strategies to overcome the identified challenges. The comprehensive analysis ensured a thorough understanding of the study's outcomes and their practical applications for improving online English language teaching in Saudi universities.

Overall, Chapter 4 presents a detailed and systematic reporting of the research findings, validating the instruments used, analysing the data in depth, and offering practical strategies for addressing the challenges in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes. This approach ensures that the study's outcomes are both credible and applicable, contributing valuable insights to the field of online education.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Redefinition of roles for teachers and improvement of skills have become necessary in online education, especially in Saudi Arabian universities. Despite enormous investments in professional development, instructive materials, and advanced means of communication, the results in English Language proficiency have remained at suboptimal. This research specifically examined teachers' roles in teaching speaking skills during live online classes. The study employed an array of surveys and interviews to highlight the challenges faced by these teachers and put forward recommendations to further improve their effectiveness. The investigation maintained complete confidentiality for the participants and obtained informed consent throughout the course of the study.

In this regard, Chapter 5 deals with the implications, recommendations, and conclusions emanating from the research findings. The chapter starts by drawing attention to the core findings and possible limitations concerning each research question, thereby contextualizing the results while exploring both expected and unexpected results. It addresses the practical implications as well as contributions to existing literature. Following this is a section that outlines recommendations directed toward practically applying the findings to improve teaching and enhance English language proficiency among university students in Saudi Arabia. The chapter also provides some recommendations for future studies, which are intended to build on the findings of this research and potentially address areas that remain unexamined. It concludes with a synthesis of research findings and reaffirms the dynamic role of the teacher in enhancing effective teaching of speaking skills online.

5.1. Implications

5. 1. 1. Implications for Research Question 1 Results

5. 1. 1. 1. Key Findings

Results of research question 1 indicates that government university teachers from Saudi Arabia portrayed a very high degree of awareness of their evolving roles in teaching speaking in synchronous online classes. This heightened awareness is a major point of achievement that highlights the impact of comprehensive professional development programs, advanced telecommunication infrastructure, well-designed textbooks, and effective planning and management initiatives implemented by the universities.

At an average score of 4.10 (82%), The facilitator role generated the greatest levels of awareness. This reflects teachers' commitment to provide student-centered learning environments involving activities to develop language skills like vocabulary brainstorming and group discussion by engaging students in them. Teachers cultivate speaking skills in an interactive and participatory manner. This concurs with research literature focusing on student engagement in effective online teaching (Ní Shé et al., 2019), endorsing that teachers are implementing strategies that lead active student engagement, which is critical to language learning development.

The content expert role showed high levels of awareness, with an average mean of 4.09 (81.8%). The ability of teachers to provide wide explanations and resources around vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation indicates their readiness to provide wide content knowledge effectively. This finding provides substantial evidence in recognition of the effectiveness of professional training programs in providing teachers with good content knowledge on language skills and language behaviour. This coincides with theoretical orientations emphasizing that possessing a strong level of content knowledge is very vital to the effective functioning of online language teaching. 2021).

The managerial role demonstrated significant awareness, with an average mean score of 4.99 (79.8%). The potential of teachers to organize and manage the online learning environment, to set specific language goals, and to establish clear guidelines/parameters for language-focused activities is essential in sustaining organized and goal-oriented learning experiences. Such a finding confirms the importance of effective classroom management in synchronous online settings, as explained by Grammens et al. (2022), pointing to the teacher's readiness to deal with organizational demands in online contexts.

Awareness of the social role was notable, with an average mean score of 3.99 (79.8%). Teachers' efforts to foster supportive and inclusive environments for discussing language aspects highlight the critical role of social interaction in language learning. This concurs with the online learning theories, which highlights that learning occurs through social involvement (Conklin & Garrett Dikkers, 2021). suggesting that teachers are effectively creating optimum opportunities for positive and cooperative learning, which provides a foundation for language development.

The pedagogical role reflected a sound level of awareness, as indicated by an average mean score of 3.98 (79.6%). Teachers are doing a good job of planning instructional activities and manipulating fluency and negotiation skills. Effective instructional design and delivery play an integral role in success in teaching speaking skills in online settings, indicating that teachers are knowledgeable about pedagogies in support of language learning.

The level of awareness the teachers demonstrated in their roles as ***assessors*** was rated high, with an average of 3.82 (76.4%). There was a comprehensive understanding of assessment strategies, which they apply in the classroom. Teachers weighed the speaking proficiency of students through rubrics, checklists, and self-assessment. They also assessed fluency, negotiation reasoning, and control of speech that baited students during speaking activities, and the opt-out for following other assessment procedures. The results indicate the

extent to which teachers are knowledgeable about several assessment strategies that help them to better judge student performance (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Bogart, 2023; Tuah & Naing, 2020).

Even though the technical role had the lowest level of awareness compared to other roles, it still indicates a high level of overall competence, with an average mean score of 3.78 (75.6%). Teachers showed proficiency in utilizing multimedia resources to engage students. However, there is room for improvement in incorporating advanced digital tools and platforms for speaking practice and assessment. This finding suggests that while teachers are adept at using basic multimedia resources, additional training in advanced digital tools could further enhance their technical skills, implying a need for ongoing professional development to keep pace with technological advancements (Al-Seghayer, 2022; Martin et al., 2021).

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers at Saudi Arabian governmental universities have developed awareness concerning their evolving roles in online language instruction. Each role was perceived to have a high level of awareness, which portrays the idea that teachers are responsive to the needs of online education. These results hold critical information relating to professional development and support targeted for working because they ease the necessary progressive achievement in teachers and enable them to channel their efforts better in an online teaching context. This study reaffirms the criticality of an exhaustive teacher training course designed for teachers to meet the new and innovative demands of online language teaching. By ensuring that continuous professional development takes its shape, the universities can maintain teachers' preparedness to face the challenges of online education, thus serving to better the quality of language instruction to students.

5. 1. 1. 2. Contextualizing the Results

The results of Research Question 1 indicate that university teachers in Saudi Arabia are very conscious of the changes in their roles when it comes to teaching speaking skills in real-

time online classes. This high level of awareness indicates effective adaptation to online education demands, supported by professional development programs and resources provided by universities. The findings align with the study's purpose and the Community of Inquiry model, highlighting the significance of the universities' efforts in preparing teachers for online teaching.

The results of this study directly address research question 1 by revealing that governmental university teachers in Saudi Arabia have a high level of awareness regarding their evolving roles in teaching speaking during synchronous online classes. This high level of awareness indicates that teachers are well-informed about the expectations and responsibilities associated with online language teaching.

The purpose of this study was to understand how well teachers are adapting to the demands of online education and whether they are aware of their multifaceted roles. The findings show that teachers have successfully adopted these roles, aligning well with the study's purpose. By demonstrating high levels of awareness in roles such as content expert, facilitator, managerial, social, and pedagogical, the study confirms that teachers are not only aware of their evolving roles but are also implementing them effectively in their teaching practices.

The results support the Community of Inquiry model: cognitive, social, and teaching presence are essential to an engaging online learning environment. The high awareness levels in the content expert and facilitator roles highlight the cognitive and teaching presence, for teachers are prepared adequately to deliver content and involve students actively. The high awareness of the social role emphasizes the importance of social presence: the ability of teachers to create supportive, clinically interactive learning environments. Such findings conform to the Community of Inquiry model in that they validate the theoretical framework employed in this study; thus, it confirms that these roles were critical in effective online teaching.

Equally, the findings correspond to the Connectivism framework of the theory, wherein learning is thought to occur through networks and connections made by digital technology. While Connectivism recognizes the role of learners in effectively using their knowledge of various information sources and technologies, it underlines knowledge construction however in an online learning environment. The high level of awareness exhibited by university teachers from Saudi Arabia regarding their evolving roles in teaching speaking skills resonates well with this interconnected nature of learning in the digital environment. By leveraging online tools and resources effectively, these teachers not only enrich their own teaching practices but actually promote a networked learning community that actively engages students and supports their collaboration.

Moreover, the findings resonate with Online Collaborative Learning theory, stemming from the significance given to collaborative interactions during the process of learning. This theory theorizes that when students work together, share knowledge, solve problems, and support each other's educational journeys, enhanced learning arises, building awareness on part of the teachers regarding their roles as facilitators and social connectors in giving rise to collaborative learning settings. By emphasizing group discussions, peer feedback, and collaborating on projects, teachers create a community among the students, fostering improvement of the speaking skills and overall learning experience. Collectively, these theories highlight the crucial nature of teacher roles in online education. The teacher not only delivers content but also organizes an interactive, supportive learning environment in which all students are able to fully cooperate and connect with their peers.

With the support of Connectivism and Online Collaborative Learning theory, this finding of the research will reinforce the idea that effective online teaching needs a more holistic approach whereby an educator enriches the ever-complex nature of digital learning, nurturing supportive, meaningful interaction among the students. This well-grounded

knowledge of their roles leads to improved educational outcomes as they equip students for success in an interconnected world.

The study's significance is demonstrated through its empirical findings, which provide concrete evidence that teachers are adapting well to online education. The high awareness levels across various roles suggest that the investments in professional development programs, telecommunication infrastructure, and resources by Saudi universities are paying off. This is significant as it shows that the universities' efforts to prepare their teachers for online education have been successful. It also highlights the importance of continued support and development to maintain and enhance these capabilities.

This study adds to the existing body of literature by providing empirical evidence from the context of Saudi Arabian governmental universities. Previous research has highlighted the multifaceted nature of effective online teaching (Singh & Engeness, 2021; Ní Shé et al., 2019), and this study corroborates these findings within a specific geographical and educational context. By demonstrating high awareness levels in key teaching roles, this study supports the idea that comprehensive teacher training is crucial for effective online education. It also addresses a gap in the literature by providing data from a region that has made significant investments in online education infrastructure and teacher development.

5. 1. 1. 3. Expected Results and Explanations for Unexpected Findings

It was expected that Saudi Arabian government university teachers would be highly aware of their changing roles in teaching speaking skills during live online classes, given the existing research and the significant investments universities have made in professional development and communication technology. Previous research has consistently highlighted the importance of comprehensive teacher roles in effective online education. Studies have shown that successful online teaching requires teachers to fulfill multiple roles, including content expert, facilitator, manager, and social coordinator (Singh & Engeness, 2021; Ní Shé

et al., 2019). Given the extensive professional development programs and resources provided, it was expected that teachers would report high levels of awareness and preparedness in these roles.

The findings are consistent with the Community of Inquiry framework, which highlights the critical roles of cognitive, social, and teaching presence in online educational settings. Teachers' high awareness in the content expert, facilitator, managerial, and social roles aligns with the framework’s emphasis on creating a comprehensive and engaging learning experience. The significant scores in these areas suggest that the professional development programs have effectively addressed these critical components of online teaching, resulting in teachers who are well-prepared to meet the demands of their evolving roles.

While most of the findings aligned with expectations, the relatively lower awareness of the technical role was somewhat unexpected. Teachers reported high overall competence in utilizing multimedia resources, but there was a notable gap in their ability to fully integrate advanced digital tools and platforms for speaking practice and assessment. This finding contrasts with the significant investments in telecommunication infrastructure and the availability of sophisticated technology in Saudi Arabian universities, which should ideally support high proficiency in technical skills.

5. 1. 1. 4. Implications for Practice and Contribution to Existing Research

5. 1. 1. 4. 1. Implications for Practice

The high level of awareness among Saudi Arabian governmental university teachers regarding their evolving roles in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes has several practical implications.

The findings indicate that effective professional development programs provide teachers with the requisite skills and knowledge base. However, it is evident that these programs should develop further, particularly in regard to advanced tech skills (Al-Seghayer,

2022). This, in turn, will enable teachers to utilize technology in their teaching by using various digital tools or platforms for speaking practice and assessment. Such ongoing development in professional development will check the standards of online education and keep teachers updated with fresh developments in educational technology.

The variability in teachers' access to technology highlights the importance of equitable resource allocation. Universities should ensure that all teachers have access to high-quality internet connectivity, up-to-date electronic devices, and advanced virtual platforms. Providing consistent technical support and resources can help bridge the gap between teachers with differing levels of access and experience. By addressing these disparities, universities can create a more uniform teaching environment where all educators are equally equipped to deliver effective online instruction.

As a result of differences in personal abilities in technology, professional development programs need to vary among teachers. Providing training sessions on the basis of the varying capabilities in technology will ensure that all teachers can get the support needed. For example, basic introductory sessions could run alongside advanced workshops that assist in integrating complex technological tools into pedagogy. This plan will enable every teacher to advance their technical skills to the best of their ability.

The rapid pace of technological advancements in education necessitates ongoing and adaptive training programs. Professional development should not be a one-time event but a continuous process that evolves with emerging technologies. Regular ***updates and refresher courses*** on new tools and platforms can help teachers stay current and proficient. Universities should also provide opportunities for teachers to share best practices and collaborate on integrating new technologies into their teaching.

Teachers might prioritize content delivery and student engagement over technical proficiency due to perceived relevance. To address this, professional development programs

should demonstrate the practical applications of advanced digital tools in enhancing teaching effectiveness. By showing how these tools can improve student outcomes and streamline instructional processes, teachers may be more motivated to develop their technical skills. Practical examples and case studies can illustrate the tangible benefits of using technology in language teaching.

5. 1. 1. 4. 2. Contribution to Existing Research

This study provides empirical evidence on the context of Saudi Arabian governmental universities to the existing body of online language teaching research. It points out the teachers' awareness of their change roles and indicates that the universities had effective professional development programs and technical infrastructures. In this sense, it represents a contribution because it casts light on a particular situation in Saudi Arabia, which has invested massively in online education.

Findings of the study endorse the relevance of numerous theoretical approaches in online language teaching in Saudi Arabia. High levels of awareness were found with regard to cognitive, social, and teaching presence, congruent with the Community of Inquiry model, underscoring the importance of these aspects for effective enrolment. The study leans on Connectivism for highlighting the centrality of networks and digital tools, thus resonating with Online Collaborative Learning theories that urge social interaction and collaboration. Similarly, the work mirrors Singh and Engeness' (2021) multifaceted teacher roles and Ní Shé et al.'s (2019) focus on content knowledge and student engagement.

The unexpected finding of lower awareness in the technical role highlights a critical area for further research and improvement. By identifying this gap, the study provides direction for future research to explore the reasons behind this discrepancy and develop targeted interventions (areas for improvement). This focus on technical skills enhancement can

contribute to more effective online teaching practices and better integration of technology in language instruction.

The study's findings have important implications for educational policy and practice. Policymakers can use this evidence to support the continuation and enhancement of professional development programs, ensuring they include comprehensive training on advanced digital tools. The study also underscores the need for equitable resource allocation to address disparities in access to technology, guiding policy decisions that aim to create a more uniform and effective online teaching environment.

This study lays the groundwork for future research on online language teaching in Saudi Arabia and similar contexts. Researchers can build on these findings to explore the long-term impact of professional development programs, the effectiveness of different training approaches, and the integration of new technologies in teaching. By providing a detailed analysis of teachers' awareness and preparedness, this study offers a foundation for further investigation into best practices and innovations in online education.

5. 1. 2. Implications for Research Question 2 Results

5. 1. 2. 1. Key Findings

Research question 2 investigates the significant challenges that impede teachers from effectively fulfilling their roles in teaching speaking in synchronous online classes at Saudi governmental universities. The findings highlight several high-severity challenges, each impacting the effectiveness of teaching in this context.

The study revealed major psychological obstacles that interfere with active participation in online learning environments. These include reduced self-regulated learning, fear of making mistakes, and a lack of confidence. These findings correspond with the Community of Inquiry theory that underlines the necessity of creating cognitive, social, and teaching presence for a productive online learning atmosphere. The theory's postulation is that less self-regulated

learning may hinder cognitive presence, given that students might find it difficult to engage with course materials by themselves.

Further, fear of making mistakes may impede social presence, preventing students from participating in discussions and collaborative practice. There is further consistency with Connectivism tenets which emphasize digital networks connecting, linking, and interacting for learning. Psychological issues, fear, and lack of confidence can prevent the establishment of such connections, therefore limiting students' willingness to engage with peers and resources.

In an online collaborative learning context, social engagement and collaborative activities in the construction of knowledge are valuable; psychological barriers can stop students from engaging fully in group work, thus stagnating collective learning experiences. To overcome these psychological barriers, it is very important to promote a social presence wherein students feel secure and confident during interactions. The work of Alharbi (2022) and Meinawati et al. (2020) confirms this viewpoint, which insists on the importance of implementing strategies to develop self-regulated learning while simultaneously relieving fears and enhancing confidence among the students. Thus, when the environment promotes collaboration and connection, it will arguably diminish these psychological hindrances and enhance students' engagement in online learning.

Insufficient personal interaction remained a major challenge of the distance learning environments, with limited opportunities of practice (85.2%) and rapport building (82.8%) being attributed to lack of face-to-face communication. This challenge is based on Connectivism, which places an emphasis on networks and connections paper and the importance of each of them among learning environments. It can be realized that this challenge embroils the flow of information and constrains meaningful connections necessary for effective learning.

The findings further corroborate the Community of Inquiry theory, which postulates that social presence plays a critical role in establishing a collaborative learning environment. If there is an insufficient implication of personal interaction, students will be hindered in engaging in meaningful discourse and reflection, thus providing the essence of the inquiry process.

Further, it indicates that principles of Online Collaborative Learning would face involvement challenges as rapport reduces the scope of collaboration among students and eventually obstructs knowledge construction. Interactive video conferencing can be instrumental in providing face-to-face experiences and augmenting social presence, which later remains a critical factor in providing effective online learning environments. Therefore, facilitating a learning environment that fosters this type of interaction helps in coping with challenges and improves the way students participate in online learning contexts (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020; Ariyanti, 2020).

Social challenges, including limited English conversation opportunities (85%), excessive use of the mother tongue (79%), and negative attitudes towards English (75%), significantly impede effective language learning. These problems are congruent with the Online Collaborative Learning theory, which recognizes collaborative interactions and positive group dynamics as vital for effective learning. Promoting the use of English and enhancing positive attitudes toward the language will ensure social learning and interaction with peers, culminating in an enrichment of the learning experience.

Furthermore, these findings help support the Community of Inquiry theory, stressing the need for social presence in the learning experience. With fewer opportunities for conversation, students are unlikely to engage in this critical discourse and scaffolding of knowledge. Additionally, Connectivism principles resonate, focusing on how vital digital networks facilitate connections/interactions among learners. A lack of opportunity in English conversation disallow formation of the necessary connections for enabling effective language

learning in a digital context. Dealing with social challenges in the language learning environment is key to enabling acquisition of that language and enhancing student engagement. According to studies conducted by Alzamil (2021) and Alharbi (2022), addressing the need to function in a collaborative and interactive manner in learning proves significant.

Low student engagement, characterized by minimal social (83.8%), cognitive (82.8%), and behavioral (78.6%) involvement, was a significant issue. These findings are very much in line with the framework of Community of Inquiry, introducing the importance of enhancing the cognitive and social presence to foster deeper engagement and meaningful learning experiences (Garrison, et al., 2000). Indeed, lack of engagement would set students up not to engage in the sort of collaborative discourses needed for knowledge construction. These findings also resonate with Connectivism, which names the need for extending networks of interactions to allow for learning. Engagement is limited when students fail to connect with one another and with resources, which, in turn, takes away several aspects of their learning opportunities in an online context (Siemens, 2005). Other relevant theories are those of Online Collaborative Learning because such theories emphasize the significance of collaborative interactions and positive group dynamics for effective learning. Low levels of engagement can block collaborative processes that are essential for sharing knowledge and solving problems in groups (Brindley et al., 2009). Therefore, to improve student engagement, they needed to enhance the expanding network of interactions, including peer collaborations and access to various resources, and this would improve the overall learning experience significantly (Al-Ghamdi, 2022; Mohammed, 2021; Alshumaimeri, 2021). Addressing these engagement concerns would provide a more adaptable supportive online learning environment with teachers.

Assessment challenges in online learning environments were significant, with issues related to limited non-verbal cues (82.4%), difficulty detecting spontaneous speech (76.2%),

unauthorized resources (73.4%), time constraints (74%), and group assessment (73.2%). These challenges have been examined through the prism of the Community of Inquiry framework, which denotes the requirements of social and teaching presence for effective assessment practices (Garrison et al., 2000). Furthermore, the scarcity of nonverbal cues and difficulty in spontaneous speech detection could hinder the accurate assessment of student engagement and comprehension. The finding aligns well with a Connectivism philosophy advocating dynamic and flexible assessment approaches that address the diverse needs of students (Siemens, 2005). The issues of unauthorized resources and abstract time constraints reflect the shortcomings of traditional assessment mechanisms in an online context. Therefore, meeting the challenges via technology can also present authentic contextual assessment opportunities that address the need for fairness in evaluation without compromising academic integrity. In addition, the principles of Online Collaborative Learning offer further induction since for any group assessment, clear communication and collaboration among students are pertinent (Brindley et al., 2009). By resolving these assessment challenges, educators can enhance the quality of online learning experiences while observing academic standards (Anugrah, 2021).

Students' low language proficiency, including difficulties in understanding and organizing speech (81.4%), addressing language knowledge limitations (80.8%), poor pronunciation (80%), and limited vocabulary (73.6%), were significant barriers. These challenges conform to the Connectivism theory, a postulate which advocates for increased interaction and access to diverse learning materials to augment language learning (Siemens, 2005). Connectivism supports the thought that varied content instruction can benefit a student by facilitating connections among learners and resources. However, with the Community of Inquiry framework focusing on the importance of social and cognitive presence in facilitating meaningful learning experiences (Garrison et al., 2000), this means improving social and cognitive presence to foster constructivist social presence to further support teachers in

building communities that encourage open and collaborative communication among students. With the basic tenets of Online Collaborative Learning underlining the importance of collaborative interaction in breaking down the barrier that language creates (Brindley et al., 2009), these frameworks do pave the way for students with low language proficiency to develop better learning by providing conducive opportunities for working together and learning from each other. All these approaches will, in unison, form an accepting environment that encourages language development (Syafiq et al., 2021).

Time constraints (74%) impact the effectiveness of online learning, especially in synchronous online classes where large class sizes and limited class time restrict individual interaction and feedback. This finding aligns with the Community of Inquiry framework, which emphasizes the critical role of teaching presence in organizing and facilitating learning activities, essential for managing these time constraints effectively (Garrison et al., 2000). Additionally, the Connectivism theory suggests that utilizing a well-integrated network of resources and tools can facilitate flexible learning schedules and asynchronous opportunities, thereby addressing time management challenges (Siemens, 2005). By providing diverse learning pathways, educators can help students navigate their time constraints more effectively. Moreover, the principles of Online Collaborative Learning highlight the importance of collaborative interactions in overcoming barriers posed by time limitations. By fostering a collaborative environment, students can engage with peers and teachers outside of synchronous sessions, enhancing their learning experience and promoting deeper understanding (Brindley et al., 2009). Together, these frameworks underscore the need for innovative approaches to assessment and interaction in online learning environments, ensuring that time constraints do not hinder student success (Salmon, 2011).

These findings resonate with the Community of Inquiry framework that highlights the paramount importance of social and teaching presence in creating an inclusive learning

environment for the various cultural backgrounds of students (Garrison et al., 2000). This framework emphasizes educators' roles in creating the supportive context needed for all students to feel valued and involved. Further, the findings seem to coincide with Connectivism theory, ordering for cultural sensitivity and adaptive teaching strategies for integration. By utilizing a diversely connected network of resources together with culturally significant collaborative activities, teachers can efface these barriers, cultivate empathy between learners, and enhance communication skills underscoring diverse cultures (Siemens, 2005; Al-Shehri, 2011). The process allows learners to see contradictions in perspectives and, thus, broadens their learning experiences. Furthermore, the principles/tenets of Online Collaborative Learning underscore collaboration as an important aspect of passing a cultural barrier. Shifting the focus toward collaborative tasks, educators can give learners opportunities for practicing their language skills effectively in supportive contexts, enabling them to boost their overall communicative ability. This kind of collaborative approach affirms language learning and builds community among the learners, which is necessary for effective online education. In conjunction, these two frameworks suggest innovative approaches to creating more inclusive communication conditions in online learning contexts.

5. 1. 2. 2. Contextualizing Research Question 2 Results

This study Responds to the study problem by directly addressing significant challenges impacting teachers' roles in teaching speaking skills online at Jazan University and King Khalid University. By investigating the specific barriers faced by teachers, the study provides a deeper understanding of the obstacles hindering effective instruction in online language teaching. Identifying challenges such as psychological barriers, insufficient personal interaction, social challenges, low student engagement, assessment difficulties, low language proficiency, time constraints, and cultural obstacles allows for targeted interventions and support strategies aimed at enhancing the teaching of speaking skills in synchronous online classes.

The purpose of this study was to explore the significant challenges that hinder teachers' effectiveness in online language teaching, focusing on speaking skills. The findings reveal that primary issues include psychological barriers, insufficient personal interaction, social challenges, low student engagement, assessment difficulties, low language proficiency, and time constraints. These results align with the study's purpose by highlighting the multifaceted challenges teachers face, providing a clear direction for future efforts to support teachers and enhance online teaching practices. By identifying these specific barriers, the study offers actionable insights to improve the quality of online language instruction.

The study's findings align with several established educational theories, including the Community of Inquiry framework, Connectivism, and Online Collaborative Learning. Each of these frameworks offers insights into the elements necessary for creating effective online learning environments.

The Community of Inquiry framework emphasizes cognitive, social, and teaching presence as essential components of an effective online learning environment. The study's results highlight psychological challenges that impede cognitive and social presence, such as fear of mistakes and lack of confidence (Meinawati et al., 2020; Elsayed, 2022). Addressing these psychological barriers is crucial for establishing a supportive and engaging online learning environment where students feel confident and motivated to participate actively.

Connectivism focuses on the importance of networks and connections in learning. The lack of personal interaction reported by teachers disrupts the flow of information and hinders the establishment of meaningful connections that facilitate learning (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020; Ariyanti, 2020). Enhancing digital interaction tools and facilitating more interactive sessions can help maintain the network's strength, supporting effective online learning.

Online Collaborative Learning theory emphasizes collaborative knowledge construction, which can be hindered by social challenges like limited English conversation opportunities and excessive use of the mother tongue (Alzamil, 2021; Alharbi, 2022). Creating environments that encourage English usage and positive attitudes toward the language can enhance language acquisition through social learning and peer interaction.

The study's findings are significant as they provide a detailed understanding of the challenges faced by teachers in the specific context of Saudi universities. By highlighting these challenges, the study underscores the need for targeted interventions to enhance online teaching effectiveness. For instance, the identification of insufficient personal interaction and its impact on student engagement (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020; Ariyanti, 2020) emphasizes the importance of using video conferencing tools and other digital interaction methods to foster better communication and engagement.

The study contributes to the existing body of research by providing specific insights into the unique challenges faced by Saudi university teachers in teaching speaking skills online. It corroborates previous findings on the psychological barriers to participation (Meinawati et al., 2020; Elsayed, 2022) and extends the literature by highlighting additional context-specific challenges such as cultural obstacles and technological issues (Al-Shehri, 2011; Nordin, Omar & Ridzuan, 2022).

The study confirms that psychological barriers, such as limited self-regulated learning, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence, are major issues that need to be addressed to enhance student participation in online classes. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of reducing anxiety and building student confidence (Meinawati et al., 2020; Elsayed, 2022).

The lack of non-verbal cues and limited opportunities for practice were identified as significant issues. These findings align with previous studies that noted the absence of face-to-

face communication complicates the assessment of student understanding and engagement (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020; Ariyanti, 2020).

Limited English conversation opportunities, excessive use of the mother tongue, and low student engagement were significant challenges. These findings are supported by Alzamil (2021) and Alharbi (2022), who noted that these factors impede effective language learning and student participation.

Assessment challenges, including difficulties with detecting spontaneous speech and using unauthorized resources, were significant. These challenges align with insights from Anugrah (2021) and Nordin, Omar, and Ridzuan (2022), who discussed the complexities of online assessments and the need for more dynamic and flexible methods.

Time constraints and cultural obstacles, such as language barriers and large class sizes, were also prominent. These issues were noted by Mounika and Thamarana (2018) and Al-Shehri (2011), who emphasized the need for effective time management and cultural sensitivity in online teaching.

The study's findings are significant as they provide a detailed understanding of the challenges faced by teachers in the context of Saudi universities, specifically in teaching speaking skills. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing psychological barriers, enhancing student engagement, and improving personal interactions to foster a conducive learning environment. For instance, students often face psychological obstacles such as fear of making mistakes, anxiety, lack of confidence, and peer pressure, which deter active participation in class discussions (Meinawati et al., 2020). Moreover, the lack of engagement is another critical factor, with students struggling due to distractions, lack of motivation, or discomfort with the online format (Vudien, 2019). The absence of personal interaction also poses significant challenges, as it makes it difficult for teachers to gauge students'

understanding and provide immediate feedback (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020; Ariyanti, 2020).

The alignment of these findings with established theoretical frameworks, such as the Community of Inquiry model and Connectivism theory, further validates the study's significance. The Community of Inquiry model emphasizes the critical role of cognitive, social, and teaching presence in online education, highlighting the need for interventions that enhance these elements (Garrison et al., 2000). Similarly, Connectivism theory underscores the importance of networks and connections in learning, suggesting that fostering interaction and engagement is essential for effective online education (Siemens, 2005). These theoretical perspectives validate empirical findings and emphasize the need for targeted interventions to support teachers and improve student outcomes.

This study contributes to the existing body of literature by providing empirical evidence from Saudi Arabian governmental universities on the challenges of online language teaching. Previous research has documented similar challenges, such as the importance of addressing psychological barriers (Alharbi, 2022) and enhancing personal interactions (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020). This study corroborates these findings within a specific geographical and cultural context, offering new insights into the unique challenges faced by teachers in Saudi Arabia. For instance, the study highlights the impact of cultural differences on communication styles and the necessity of adapting teaching methods to accommodate diverse preferences (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020).

By validating previous research and extending the understanding of online language teaching challenges in a different educational setting, the study enriches the global discourse on effective online education. The findings align with the Community of Inquiry model and Connectivism theory, which emphasize the importance of cognitive, social, and teaching presence in creating a conducive learning environment (Garrison et al., 2000; Siemens, 2005;

Harasim, 2017). This alignment underscores the study's contribution to the broader literature on online education and highlights the critical need for targeted interventions that address psychological barriers, enhance engagement, and improve personal interactions.

5. 1. 2. 3. Expected Results and Explanations for Unexpected Findings

Expected Results: The study's identification of psychological challenges, such as limited self-regulated learning (92%), fear of making mistakes (74.8%), and lack of confidence (73%), aligns with expectations. These challenges are well-documented in the literature, emphasizing the need to address emotional and psychological barriers to foster a conducive learning environment (Alharbi, 2022; Meinawati et al., 2020).

The finding that insufficient personal interaction is a significant challenge, with limited opportunities for practice (85.2%) and reduced rapport building (82.8%), also aligns with expectations. Personal interaction is crucial for building rapport and facilitating effective instructional practices, consistent with the Connectivism theory (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020; Ariyanti, 2020).

Social challenges, such as limited English conversation opportunities (85%), excessive use of the mother tongue (79%), and negative attitudes towards English (75%), were anticipated. These challenges impede effective language acquisition through social learning and peer interaction, aligning with the Online Collaborative Learning theory (Alzamil, 2021; Alharbi, 2022).

Low student engagement, characterized by minimal social (83.8%), cognitive (82.8%), and behavioral (78.6%) involvement, is a common issue in online education. This finding aligns with the Community of Inquiry framework, which emphasizes the need for enhancing cognitive and social presence to foster deeper engagement and meaningful learning experiences (Al-Ghamdi, 2022; Mohammed, 2021; Alshumaimeri, 2021).

The identification of challenges in assessment, such as limited non-verbal cues (82.4%), difficulty in recognizing spontaneous speech (76.2%), and concerns about unauthorized resources (73.4%), is consistent with findings in existing literature. These challenges highlight the complexities of accurately assessing student performance in online environments, consistent with the Community of Inquiry framework and Connectivism theory (Anugrah, 2021).

The findings related to students' low language proficiency, including difficulties in understanding and organizing speech (81.4%) and poor pronunciation (80%), were expected. These challenges emphasize the need for comprehensive language support strategies, supported by the Connectivism theory (Syafiq et al., 2021).

Time constraints (74%) affecting the effectiveness of online learning were anticipated, particularly in synchronous online classes. Effective time management and strategic use of online tools are crucial for enhancing instructional efficiency (Salmon, 2011). The Community of Inquiry framework and Connectivism theory suggest that flexible learning schedules and asynchronous opportunities can help address time management challenges

Cultural obstacles, particularly language barriers (71%) in understanding and communicating in English, were expected. Literature emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptive teaching methods to address these barriers (Al-Shehri, 2011). The Community of Inquiry framework and Connectivism theory support integrating culturally relevant collaborative activities to foster mutual understanding and enhance communication skills.

The study revealed unexpectedly high levels of psychological challenges and low language proficiency among students in Saudi Arabian universities. Notably, 92% of students struggled with self-regulated learning, indicating significant difficulties in managing their own learning processes due to fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence. Additionally, 73.6%

of students faced challenges with limited vocabulary, hindering their ability to express thoughts clearly and participate effectively in discussions. Moreover, 73.4% of students resorted to unauthorized resources and assistance, reflecting a lack of confidence in completing tasks independently and raising concerns about academic integrity. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to boost self-regulation, enhance language skills, and promote academic honesty to improve the overall effectiveness of online education.

While the study's expected results align well with existing literature and theoretical frameworks, the unexpected findings highlight critical areas for further exploration and improvement. By understanding and addressing the reasons behind these unexpected findings, universities can provide more comprehensive support and training to their teachers, ensuring they are well-prepared to meet the evolving demands of online education. Addressing these gaps will ultimately enhance the quality of language instruction and support the effective integration of technology in teaching practices.

5. 1. 2. 4. Implications for Practice and Contribution to Existing Research

5. 1. 2. 4. 1. Implications for Practice

The findings from this study provide critical insights into practical strategies for improving the teaching of speaking skills in synchronous online classes at Saudi Arabian universities.

With a high level of significance, limited student self-regulated learning (92%), students' fear of making mistakes (74.8%), and students' lack of confidence (73%) constituted critical challenges to online speaking instruction. Consequently, teachers are required to implement strategies designed to proactively enhance student self-confidence and self-regulation skills. Creating a supportive online environment that encourages participation and reduces the fear of mistakes is essential to enhance student engagement and participation.

The study indicates significant challenges due to insufficient personal interaction, with 85.2% of students reporting limited opportunities for practice and 82.8% noting reduced rapport building. Teachers should utilize digital tools like video conferencing to mimic face-to-face interactions and incorporate collaborative activities that foster better rapport and engagement among students.

Low student engagement, characterized by minimal social, cognitive, and behavioral involvement (83.8%, 82.8%, 78.6%), requires teachers to enhance structured interactions and sustained communication. Expanding networks of interactions, including peer collaborations and access to diverse resources, can significantly boost student engagement.

Significant assessment challenges include limited non-verbal cues (82.4%), difficulty detecting spontaneous speech (76.2%), and the use of unauthorized resources (73.4%). Teachers should develop dynamic and flexible assessment methods that reflect real-world tasks and interactions, leveraging technology to create authentic and contextual assessment opportunities.

With significant language proficiency barriers such as poor pronunciation (80%) and limited vocabulary (73.6%), targeted language support is crucial. Increasing opportunities for interaction and access to diverse learning materials can help improve students' language skills, aligning with the principles of the Community of Inquiry framework and Connectivism theory.

Effective time management and the strategic use of online tools are vital to address time constraints (74%) in online learning. Flexible learning schedules and asynchronous learning opportunities can help maximize the efficient use of time and resources, making learning more adaptable to individual learners' needs.

Cultural barriers, particularly language barriers (71%) in understanding and communicating in English, significantly impact online teaching effectiveness. Promoting cultural sensitivity and

leveraging diverse networks of resources can help overcome these barriers, ensuring all students feel valued and engaged in the learning process.

5. 1. 2. 4. 2. Contribution to Existing Research

This study adds valuable empirical evidence to the existing body of research on online language education, particularly within the context of Saudi Arabian universities.

The study validates previous research on the challenges of online language teaching, such as the importance of addressing psychological barriers (Alharbi, 2022) and enhancing personal interactions (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020).

By focusing on Saudi Arabian governmental universities, the study provides new insights into the unique challenges faced in this specific geographical and cultural context. This contextual understanding enriches the global discourse on effective online education, highlighting how these challenges manifest differently across various settings.

The alignment of the study's findings with established theoretical frameworks like the Community of Inquiry and Connectivism theories underscores its significance. These theories emphasize the importance of cognitive, social, and teaching presence, and the role of networks and connections in learning, respectively. The study's findings reinforce these theoretical underpinnings and suggest practical interventions to improve student outcomes.

The study extends the understanding of online language teaching challenges by integrating findings from multiple dimensions such as psychological, interactional, social, engagement, assessment, proficiency, time management, and cultural challenges. This comprehensive approach offers a robust framework for addressing these challenges in online education settings.

The study not only identifies critical areas for practical improvement but also contributes significantly to the existing literature, providing a detailed and contextual

understanding of the challenges and potential solutions for online language education in Saudi Arabian universities.

5. 1. 3. Implications for Research Question 3 Results

5. 1. 3. 1. Key Findings

Research question 3 examines strategies for Saudi university teachers to overcome the substantial challenges that hinder their ability to effectively carry out their responsibilities in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes. The study identifies several strategies to address these challenges, focusing on psychological obstacles, insufficient personal interaction, social obstacles, low student engagement, assessment challenges, students' low language proficiency, and time constraints.

The findings highlight the high severity of psychological obstacles, such as limited self-regulated learning, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence. These issues significantly impact student engagement and learning outcomes. To address these challenges, experts suggest strategies such as setting clear goals and expectations, teaching self-regulation strategies, providing regular feedback, and creating a supportive learning environment. These strategies align with the roles of facilitators, pedagogical experts, and social coordinators, as emphasized by the Community of Inquiry model (Garrison et al., 2000). By implementing these strategies, teachers can enhance student motivation and confidence, thereby improving their participation and performance in online speaking activities (Ní Shé et al., 2019; Harasim, 2017; Siemens, 2005).

Insufficient personal interaction, manifested through limited opportunities for practice and reduced rapport building, is another significant challenge. To overcome this, strategies such as implementing collaborative projects, utilizing breakout rooms, and encouraging personal introductions and one-on-one interactions are recommended. These approaches can simulate face-to-face interactions and foster a sense of community, which is crucial for effective

language learning. These strategies necessitate the roles of facilitators and social coordinators, emphasizing the importance of creating an engaging and interactive online learning environment (Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro, 2020; Ariyanti, 2020).

Social obstacles, including limited English conversation opportunities, excessive use of the mother tongue, and negative attitudes towards English, hinder effective language acquisition. Experts suggest strategies such as language exchange partnerships, providing corrective feedback, encouraging peer interaction, and promoting the relevance of English. These strategies align with the roles of facilitators, social coordinators, and content experts. By addressing these social challenges, teachers can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students to use English more frequently and confidently (Alzamil, 2021; Alharbi, 2022).

Low student engagement, characterized by low social, cognitive, and behavioral involvement, is a critical barrier to effective teaching. Strategies to enhance engagement include incorporating collaborative projects, promoting active listening and feedback, setting clear learning objectives, and using diverse teaching strategies. These approaches align with the roles of facilitators, social coordinators, and pedagogical experts, as they emphasize the importance of interaction and engagement in the learning process. By implementing these strategies, teachers can create a more dynamic and engaging online classroom that promotes active participation and critical thinking (Al-Ghamdi, 2022; Mohammed, 2021; Alshumaimeri, 2021).

Assessment challenges, such as difficulty detecting spontaneous speech, unauthorized resource use, time constraints, and group assessment issues, pose significant obstacles in online learning. Strategies to address these challenges include using impromptu speaking tasks, employing plagiarism detection software, setting clear time limits, and incorporating peer feedback. These approaches align with the roles of assessors, technical experts, and managers,

emphasizing the need for fair and accurate assessments. By adopting these strategies, teachers can ensure that assessments accurately reflect students' abilities and maintain academic integrity (Anugrah, 2021).

Students' low language proficiency, including difficulties in understanding and organizing speech, poor pronunciation, and limited vocabulary, are significant barriers to effective communication. Strategies to address these issues include role-play activities, modeling correct pronunciation, using pronunciation apps, and providing vocabulary resources. These approaches align with the roles of pedagogical experts, content experts, and facilitators, emphasizing the need for comprehensive language support. By implementing these strategies, teachers can help students improve their language skills and build confidence in their speaking abilities (Syafiq et al., 2021).

Time constraints, particularly in large classes with limited allocated time, hinder effective teaching. Strategies to manage these constraints include using breakout rooms, providing asynchronous opportunities, employing timed activities, and offering individual support sessions. These approaches align with the roles of managers and facilitators, emphasizing the importance of efficient time management. By adopting these strategies, teachers can maximize the use of class time and provide personalized support to students, enhancing the overall learning experience (Salmon, 2011).

5. 1. 3. 2. Contextualizing the Results

This study addresses how Saudi university teachers can overcome challenges in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes by presenting strategies. These strategies tackle various obstacles, including psychological barriers, insufficient personal interaction, social obstacles, low student engagement, assessment challenges, students' low language proficiency, and time constraints. For example, promoting a positive classroom culture and providing constructive feedback help address psychological barriers, aligning with

facilitator and social roles (Harasim, 2017; Ní Shé et al., 2019). Enhancing personal interaction through breakout rooms and group discussions fosters a supportive online learning environment (Garrison et al., 2000). Implementing these strategies provides valuable insights into effective interventions and support mechanisms, thereby improving student outcomes. The study meets its objectives and contributes to the global discourse on effective online education, emphasizing the need for context-specific approaches (Singh & Engeness, 2021; Tawafak et al., 2023)

The study aims to identify effective strategies to tackle significant challenges hindering teachers' success in online language teaching. Experts provided strategies to address psychological barriers, enhance personal interaction, improve social dynamics, boost student engagement, refine assessment methods, increase language proficiency, and manage time constraints. These strategies align with the roles of facilitator, pedagogical, social, content expert, managerial, and technical expert as outlined by the Community of Inquiry model and connectivism theory, supporting teachers in their online teaching roles (Garrison et al., 2000; Siemens, 2005; Ní Shé et al., 2019). For example, fostering a positive classroom environment and offering constructive feedback support facilitator and social roles, ensuring students feel supported and motivated (Harasim, 2017). Collaborative projects and breakout activities promote personal interaction, creating an engaging learning environment (Garrison et al., 2000; Grammens et al., 2022).

The study's results align with the Community of Inquiry framework, Online Collaborative Learning theory, and Connectivism theory, as well as the roles outlined by Ní Shé et al. (2019). The Community of Inquiry framework emphasizes cognitive, social, and teaching presence, addressing psychological barriers and enhancing engagement through active learning, collaborative activities, and supportive environments (Garrison et al., 2000; Harasim, 2017). Online Collaborative Learning theory focuses on collaborative learning and group

dynamics, which are promoted through peer interactions and group projects (Harasim, 2017). Connectivism highlights the importance of digital networks and tools in facilitating learning, which aligns with the study’s strategies for using technology to enhance personal interactions (Siemens, 2005). Additionally, the roles of facilitator, pedagogical, social, content expert, managerial, assessment, and technical roles as identified by Ní Shé et al. (2019) are integral to supporting teachers in their online teaching roles, ensuring a comprehensive approach to overcoming challenges in online language teaching. This alignment validates the study’s strategies, emphasizing their theoretical and practical relevance (Garrison et al., 2000; Harasim, 2017; Siemens, 2005; Ní Shé et al., 2019).

The qualitative findings of this study highlight the importance of implementing targeted strategies to overcome barriers in online language teaching, enabling teachers to effectively teach speaking skills online. The strategies align with established theoretical frameworks, such as the Community of Inquiry model, which emphasizes cognitive, social, and teaching presence, and connectivism theory, which underscores the role of technology and networked learning (Garrison et al., 2000; Siemens, 2005; Harasim, 2017). The proposed strategies enhance cognitive presence by promoting active learning and critical thinking, foster social presence through collaborative activities and peer feedback, and strengthen teaching presence with timely feedback and supportive environments. Ní Shé et al. (2019) further emphasize the roles of facilitator, pedagogical, social, content expert, and managerial, ensuring comprehensive teacher support. Additionally, the strategies address cultural factors specific to the Saudi context, enhancing their relevance and effectiveness (Tawafak et al., 2023). This alignment validates the strategies' significance, providing a theoretically sound and practically relevant approach to overcoming challenges in online language teaching (Singh & Engeness, 2021; Grammens et al., 2022).

This study adds to the existing body of literature by providing qualitative evidence from Saudi Arabian governmental universities on effective strategies to overcome challenges in online education and fulfill the required roles in teaching speaking skills online. The results validate prior findings within a specific geographical and cultural context, offering new insights into the unique challenges faced by teachers in Saudi Arabia. The alignment of the proposed strategies with the Community of Inquiry model and connectivism theory emphasizes their theoretical soundness and practical relevance, extending the global discourse on effective online education (Garrison et al., 2000; Siemens, 2005; Harasim, 2017). By incorporating the roles of facilitator, pedagogical, social, content expert, and managerial, as outlined by Ní Shé et al. (2019), the study highlights the multifaceted support required for successful online teaching. Additionally, the strategies address cultural factors specific to the Saudi context, enhancing their applicability and effectiveness (Tawafak et al., 2023). This ***contribution*** underscores the necessity of context-specific strategies to address diverse educational settings and enhances understanding of the complex dynamics involved in online language teaching (Singh & Engeness, 2021; Grammens et al., 2022).

5. 1. 3. 3. Expected Results and Explanations for Unexpected Findings

The experts' strategies to address the challenges of teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes align with established theoretical frameworks such as the Community of Inquiry model, connectivism theory, collaborative learning theory, and Ní Shé et al. (2019) online teachers roles framework. These frameworks emphasize the importance of cognitive, social, and teaching presence, interaction, and teamwork in online learning environments. The experts recommended creating a supportive learning environment, offering regular feedback, and promoting student interaction and collaboration. These strategies are anticipated to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes by addressing various challenges, including psychological obstacles, insufficient personal interaction, social

obstacles, low student engagement, assessment challenges, students' low language proficiency, and time constraints.

In teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes at Saudi universities, certain challenges have proven to be more substantial than initially anticipated. These challenges include limited self-regulated learning among students, fear of making mistakes, and a lack of confidence. Additionally, students' limited vocabulary, use of unauthorized resources, and technical issues related to assessment further complicate the teaching process.

Addressing these challenges effectively requires personalized and culturally sensitive teaching approaches. Given the high levels of societal pressure to perform perfectly, common among students in Saudi Arabia, it is crucial to tailor teaching methods to accommodate these cultural nuances. Such approaches can enhance student engagement and learning outcomes by creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Teachers can foster a positive classroom culture that encourages risk-taking and views mistakes as learning opportunities. Implementing structured activities and providing constructive feedback can help reduce students' fear of making mistakes and build their confidence.

Creating opportunities for personal interaction and rapport building is also essential. This can be achieved through icebreakers, collaborative projects, and group discussions, which help in reducing anxiety and promoting a sense of community among students. Setting clear goals and expectations, teaching self-regulation strategies, and promoting active learning are vital components of effective teaching. This includes developing time management skills and engagement through personalized learning paths and interactive activities.

Developing fair and transparent assessment methods that minimize technical issues and discourage unauthorized assistance is critical. Teachers should utilize diverse assessment tasks and provide timely feedback to ensure accurate evaluations of students' speaking skills. Despite the advanced technological infrastructure in Saudi universities, practical implementation of

these strategies may be hindered by logistical challenges such as limited class time and large class sizes. Therefore, careful planning and resource allocation are necessary. Strategically managing resources and optimizing class schedules can help teachers better support their students and effectively address these teaching challenges. By adopting these roles and strategies, teachers can create a more engaging and effective online learning environment that enhances students' speaking skills.

5. 1. 3. 4. Implications for Practice and Contribution to Existing Research

5. 1. 3. 4. 1. Implications for Practice

Implementing the proposed strategies requires teachers to adopt various roles effectively. As facilitators, teachers should guide and manage student interactions, create a supportive learning environment, and provide timely feedback and encouragement. This involves setting clear goals, teaching self-regulation strategies, and designing collaborative activities that foster a positive learning culture. Techniques such as time management, setting personal learning goals, and using learning diaries can help enhance student self-regulation, motivation, and engagement.

In their pedagogical role, teachers should employ diverse teaching strategies, set clear learning objectives, and provide structured activities that promote active learning and critical thinking. This includes using methods such as collaborative projects, role-plays, simulations, and debates to engage students and cater to different learning styles. Authentic materials and real-world scenarios can make learning more relevant and engaging, helping students connect theoretical knowledge with practical applications.

The social role of teachers involves fostering a sense of community and collaboration among students. Encouraging peer interaction, promoting a positive classroom culture, and creating opportunities for informal interaction can build rapport and support among students,

enhancing social engagement and reducing feelings of isolation. Activities such as icebreakers, group discussions, and structured speaking opportunities are essential for this role.

As content experts, teachers need to deliver accurate and engaging content that addresses students' needs and interests. Highlighting the relevance and benefits of learning English helps address misconceptions and showcases the practical advantages of language proficiency in academic and professional contexts.

In the managerial role, teachers should efficiently organize and manage large classes by utilizing technological features and providing asynchronous opportunities for practice. This includes using breakout rooms, online discussion boards, and collaboration tools to handle large groups effectively. Offering opportunities to practice speaking skills outside of scheduled class times helps manage class time more efficiently and provides flexibility for students.

5. 1. 3. 4. 2. Contribution to Existing Research

The findings of this study significantly contribute to existing research by offering practical strategies and defining the roles necessary for effective online language teaching in the Saudi context. The alignment of these strategies with established theoretical frameworks such as the Community of Inquiry model, connectivism theory, collaborative learning theory, and Ní Shé et al. (2019) online teachers roles framework reinforces their validity and applicability. Additionally, the study provides valuable contextual insights by addressing specific cultural and contextual factors influencing online learning in Saudi Arabia. These insights can be applied in similar educational settings, making the findings broadly relevant.

By focusing on a multifaceted approach, the study offers a comprehensive framework for addressing various challenges in online language teaching, such as psychological obstacles, insufficient personal interaction, social obstacles, low student engagement, assessment challenges, students' low language proficiency, and time constraints. These contributions are

invaluable for teachers and researchers aiming to improve online language education across diverse cultural contexts.

The study validates previous research through its alignment with established theoretical frameworks, provides unique contextual insights specific to Saudi Arabia, ensures theoretical alignment by promoting effective strategies for student engagement and learning outcomes, and offers a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and solutions in online language teaching. The practical contributions of the study provide actionable strategies for teachers and researchers to enhance online language education in diverse cultural contexts, ensuring both theoretical soundness and practical applicability.

5. 2. Study Limitations

This study, which investigated teachers' awareness, challenges, and strategies for teaching speaking skills synchronously at Saudi governmental universities, is subject to several overarching limitations that span all research questions.

A significant limitation is the reliance on self-reported data from teachers and experts, which may be biased due to social desirability, frustration, or personal perceptions. Respondents might overstate or understate their competence, challenges, or the feasibility of strategies, and their interpretations of survey and interview items are shaped by individual experiences and beliefs, affecting the consistency and accuracy of the data (Taherdoost, 2019; Anvari et al., 2023). The employment of structured surveys and ordinal scales, while useful for identifying broad patterns, may not fully capture the complexity and nuance of teachers' experiences, challenges, or the contextual factors affecting strategy implementation (Kusmaryono et al., 2020). Although the study incorporated structured open-ended interviews to explore strategies (research question 3), the predetermined format may have limited the depth and flexibility of responses, as well as the opportunity for participants to elaborate on unanticipated but relevant topics. The analysis of qualitative data is also subject to researcher

interpretation and potential bias, and the quality of insights depends on participants' willingness and ability to articulate their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The study's exclusive focus on governmental university teachers in Saudi Arabia further limits the generalizability of the findings. Educational systems, cultural contexts, and available resources in these universities differ from those in private institutions or other regions, which may affect teachers' awareness, the nature of challenges encountered, and the effectiveness of proposed strategies (Ercikan & Roth, 2014; Alfallaj, 2020). Even within the governmental sector, disparities in access to telecommunication infrastructure and professional development opportunities mean that not all teachers have equal chances to develop their skills or address challenges effectively (Alghamdi, 2022). Some teachers may have greater opportunities for professional development and technology integration, while others may face significant barriers, leading to variability in reported awareness, challenges, and strategy implementation.

The study does not consider the specific content or quality of professional development programs, which can vary widely in effectiveness depending on relevance, delivery, and support. Without such detail, it is difficult to determine how these programs specifically affect teacher awareness, the ability to overcome challenges, or the success of strategies in practice. Additionally, teachers' experiences with online teaching and professional development vary, with some having extensive exposure to technology and others being relatively new to online instruction. This variability can influence how teachers perceive their roles, report challenges, and evaluate the practicality of strategies (Dang et al., 2020).

The cross-sectional design of the study captures only a single point in time and does not reflect how awareness, challenges, or effective strategies might evolve as technologies, institutional policies, and teaching practices change (Cook & Sonnenberg, 2014; Wang et al., 2024; Nair, 2024). The rapid pace of technological advancement and changes in online

education mean that some findings may quickly become outdated, underscoring the need for longitudinal research to track developments over time.

Finally, differences in technological proficiency among both teachers and students were not fully explored, which could influence the severity and nature of challenges encountered and the success of strategies adopted (Algethami, 2022). Logistical constraints, such as limited resources, large class sizes, and time restrictions, may further hinder the practical application of strategies that appear effective in theory. While expert recommendations provide a strong foundation, they may sometimes overlook the nuanced, on-the-ground challenges teachers face, making it essential to consider practical feedback from those directly involved in classroom teaching.

By acknowledging these limitations, this research provides important context for interpreting its results and highlights directions for future studies, such as incorporating longitudinal designs, diverse methodologies, and broader institutional samples to enhance the depth, applicability, and generalizability of findings.

5. 3. Recommendations

This research addresses the critical need for reconfiguring teachers' roles and skills to effectively facilitate online learning, driven by new theories such as the Community of Enquiry, Connectivism, and Online Collaborative Learning, alongside the challenges posed by emerging technologies (Setlhako, 2014). Despite significant efforts to improve English language proficiency among Saudi university students, outcomes remain below expectations, with the nation ranking 108th out of 113 countries (EF EPI, 2022, 2023,2024). A key issue contributing to this is the inability of some teachers to effectively fulfill their roles during synchronous online classes, particularly in teaching speaking skills (Algethami, 2022).

The purpose of this research is to enhance the effectiveness of online English language teaching by improving teachers' understanding and implementation of their evolving roles and

addressing the challenges they face. The research aims to examine the roles that English language teachers undertake in online speaking instruction, assess their awareness of these roles, identify the obstacles they encounter, and develop effective strategies to address these challenges within the context of Saudi Arabian universities.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to expand knowledge, develop good practices in online teaching, and provide valuable insights and guidance for teachers adapting to these transformations. The key research questions focus on (1) the extent of teachers' awareness of their roles, (2) the challenges affecting their performance, and (3) the strategies for overcoming these challenges.

The recommendations are organized around these questions, providing targeted solutions to enhance the overall effectiveness of online English language instruction in Saudi universities. By addressing these issues, the research aims to improve learning outcomes, boost learners' confidence, and foster further investigation into effective online teaching practices.

5. 3. 1. Recommendations for Application

5. 3. 1. 1. Recommendations for Application for Research Question 1 Findings

Research Question 1: "To what extent are university teachers in Saudi Arabia aware of their roles in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes?"

Recommendation 1: Enhance Technical Proficiency

University teachers should receive targeted professional development to enhance their technical proficiency, particularly in using advanced digital tools and platforms for speaking practice and assessment. The research indicates that while teachers demonstrate high overall awareness of their roles, the technical role had the lowest mean score of 3.78 (75.6%). This suggests that although teachers are competent in using multimedia resources, there is significant room for improvement in utilizing advanced digital collaboration tools and online platforms more effectively. Enhancing technical proficiency will enable teachers to integrate

these tools seamlessly into their teaching practices, thereby enriching the online learning experience.

This recommendation aligns with findings by Martin, Kumar, and She (2021), who emphasize the critical role of technology in enhancing online education. Literature underscores that proficiency in advanced digital tools is essential for effective online teaching, particularly for facilitating speaking practice and assessments. Improving teachers' technical skills will lead to more dynamic and engaging online speaking classes, thereby increasing student speaking proficiency. With better integration of technology, teachers can offer more interactive and varied speaking activities, fostering greater student engagement and language development (Al-Seghayer, 2022). This will ultimately contribute to a more effective and enriching learning environment.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen Assessment Strategies

University teachers should be trained to diversify their assessment strategies to include more formative and summative assessments specifically tailored to speaking skills. Teachers demonstrated a high level of awareness in the assessor role, with a mean score of 3.82 (76.4%). However, there is potential to broaden the range of assessment methods beyond traditional rubrics and checklists to include more innovative and interactive assessment techniques. Diversifying assessment strategies will allow teachers to evaluate student performance more comprehensively, considering various aspects of speaking proficiency.

The literature underscores the importance of diverse assessment methods in capturing a comprehensive picture of student performance. According to Singh and Engeness (2021), effective assessment strategies are critical for providing meaningful feedback and guiding student improvement in language proficiency. This supports the need for continuous development and implementation of varied assessment methods. Expanding assessment techniques will provide a more holistic understanding of student abilities and progress in

speaking skills. This can lead to more personalized feedback and targeted interventions, ultimately enhancing students' speaking proficiency and confidence. Additionally, diversified assessments can motivate students to engage more actively in their learning processes.

Recommendation 3: Foster Interactive and Participatory Learning Environments

University teachers should focus on creating more interactive and participatory learning environments to enhance student engagement and speaking proficiency. The facilitator role had the highest mean score of 4.10 (82%), indicating that teachers are already making efforts to engage students through activities such as vocabulary brainstorming and group discussions. However, increasing the level of interaction and participation in online settings can further enhance the learning experience. This involves using more collaborative tools and techniques to promote active student involvement.

Interactive and participatory learning environments are crucial for language acquisition. Conklin and Garrett Dikkers (2021) emphasize the importance of social interaction in learning, supporting the need for more dynamic and interactive teaching methods. Such environments facilitate meaningful student engagement and collaborative learning, which are essential for developing speaking skills.

By fostering more interactive environments, students are likely to be more engaged and motivated, leading to improved speaking skills. Enhanced interaction can provide more opportunities for real-time feedback and peer learning, which are essential for language development. This approach can also create a more inclusive and supportive learning atmosphere, benefiting all students.

Recommendation 4: Continuous Professional Development

A sustained professional development program is necessary for university teachers to keep them updated on the latest methodologies and technologies in teaching speaking skills online. The study found high levels of awareness among teachers in most roles, but continuous

professional development is essential to maintain and improve these competencies. Regular training can help teachers stay abreast of new educational technologies and pedagogical strategies, ensuring they remain effective in their evolving roles.

Tawafak et al. (2023) highlight the importance of ongoing professional development in adapting to the evolving demands of online education. Continuous learning and development are crucial for maintaining high teaching standards and effectiveness. This ensures that teachers can continuously improve their skills and adapt to new educational challenges. Ongoing professional development will ensure that teachers continue to grow and adapt, leading to sustained improvements in teaching quality and student outcomes. It will also help teachers to innovate and incorporate new strategies that can enhance the learning experience and effectiveness of online speaking classes. Continuous development programs will empower teachers to meet the dynamic needs of students effectively.

5. 3. 1. 2. Recommendations for Application for Research Question 2 Findings

Research Question 2*:* "What are the significant challenges that negatively affect teachers' roles in teaching speaking skills synchronously in Saudi governmental universities?"

Recommendation 1: Address Psychological Barriers

Implement comprehensive interventions to mitigate psychological barriers, including limited self-regulated learning among students, fear of making mistakes among students. The study identified significant psychological challenges impacting student participation: limited self-regulated learning (92%), fear of making mistakes (74.8%), and lack of confidence (73%). These barriers restrict students' willingness to actively engage in online speaking activities. Alharbi (2022) emphasizes the importance of fostering self-regulated learning to enhance student autonomy and motivation in online classes. Additionally, Meinawati et al. (2020) and Elsayed (2022) highlight how fear of making mistakes and low confidence deter active

participation, aligning with the Community of Inquiry theory and Online Collaborative Learning theory, which stress the importance of addressing psychological barriers to create an effective learning environment.

Reducing psychological barriers can lead to increased student participation, enhanced confidence in speaking, and a more supportive online learning community. Interventions such as confidence building exercises, supportive feedback mechanisms, and self-regulated learning strategies can empower students to engage more actively, improving their speaking skills and overall learning experience.

Recommendation 2: Enhance Personal Interaction

Increase opportunities for personal interaction between students and teachers through advanced digital tools and structured interactive activities. Insufficient personal interaction was identified as a significant challenge, with 85.2% of respondents indicating limited opportunities for practice and 82.8% noting reduced rapport building. This lack of interaction undermines the effectiveness of instructional practices and student-teacher relationships. Lestiyanawati & Widyantoro (2020) and Ariyanti (2020) report that the absence of non-verbal cues complicates teachers' ability to gauge student understanding. The Connectivism theory and the Community of Inquiry framework emphasize the importance of social presence and network connections in learning environments.

Enhancing personal interaction through tools such as video conferencing, breakout rooms, and collaborative platforms can improve student engagement, facilitate better understanding, and strengthen the teacher-student relationship. These improvements can lead to more effective speaking practice, higher student motivation, and better learning outcomes.

Recommendation 3: Foster English Language Use and Positive Attitudes

Develop and implement strategies to promote the use of English and cultivate positive attitudes towards the language among students. The study identified social challenges such as

limited English conversation opportunities (85%), excessive use of the mother tongue (79%), and negative attitudes towards English (75%). These factors significantly impede effective language learning. Alzamil (2021) and Alharbi (2022) highlight the need for increased opportunities to practice English and reduced reliance on native languages. The Online Collaborative Learning theory and Connectivism theory support creating environments that encourage English usage and positive attitudes towards the language.

Promoting English use and positive attitudes can improve language immersion, increase student confidence in speaking English, and foster a more conducive learning environment. This can lead to higher student engagement, better language acquisition, and enhanced speaking proficiency.

Recommendation 4: Improve Student Engagement

Implement structured interaction and sustained communication strategies to enhance student engagement in online classes. The findings indicate low student engagement, characterized by minimal social, cognitive, and behavioral involvement (83.8%, 82.8%, 78.6%, respectively). Engaging students effectively is crucial for meaningful learning experiences. Al-Ghamdi (2022), Mohammed (2021), and Alshumaimeri (2021) emphasize the need for structured interaction to improve engagement. The Community of Inquiry framework and Connectivism theory support enhancing cognitive and social presence to foster deeper engagement.

Improved student engagement can lead to more active participation, better learning outcomes, and increased motivation. Structured and sustained interaction will help students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and speaking skills more effectively, leading to a more enriching educational experience.

Recommendation 5: Develop Effective Assessment Strategies

Adopt innovative and secure assessment methods to address challenges related to limited non-verbal cues, time constraints, and academic integrity. Assessment challenges, including the difficulty of detecting spontaneous speech (76.2%), time constraints (74%), and issues with unauthorized resources (73.4%), were significant findings. These challenges hinder accurate evaluation of student performance. Anugrah (2021) and the Community of Inquiry framework highlight the complexity of accurate assessment in online settings. Connectivism and Online Collaborative Learning theories suggest leveraging technology to create authentic assessment opportunities that reflect real-world tasks.

Innovative assessment methods can provide a more accurate measure of student proficiency, ensure fair evaluation and maintaining academic integrity. This can lead to more targeted feedback and improved student performance in speaking tasks. Strategies such as digital proctoring, authentic assessment tasks, and interactive quizzes can enhance the reliability and validity of online assessments.

Recommendation 6: Address Time Constraints

Implement strategies to manage time effectively in online classes, such as flexible learning schedules, asynchronous activities, and efficient use of synchronous class time. Time constraints, identified by 74% of respondents, limit the effectiveness of online learning, particularly in large classes. Efficient time management is essential for maximizing instructional impact. Salmon (2011) and the Community of Inquiry framework emphasize the importance of effective time management in online education. Connectivism theory supports the use of flexible learning schedules to overcome time constraints.

Effective time management can enhance the quality of instruction, provide more opportunities for individual feedback, and improve overall student engagement and learning

outcomes. Flexible schedules and asynchronous activities can accommodate diverse student needs, making learning more accessible and efficient.

Recommendation 7: Integrate Cultural Sensitivity in Teaching

Incorporate culturally sensitive teaching methods and materials to address language barriers and enhance communication in English. The findings highlight cultural obstacles, particularly language barriers, impacting the effectiveness of online teaching and learning of speaking skills. Adddressing these barriers is crucial for improving language proficiency and engagement. Al-Shehri (2011) emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity in overcoming language barriers. The Community of Inquiry framework and Connectivism theory suggest leveraging diverse networks and resources to facilitate better communication and understanding.

Incorporating culturally relevant materials and teaching methods can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. This approach can help students feel more valued and engaged, leading to improved communication skills and better learning outcomes.

These recommendations, grounded in the research findings and supported by relevant literature, are intended to address the challenges that undermine teachers' roles in effectively teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes within the Saudi universities' context. Implementing these strategies can strengthen teachers' roles, leading to greater teaching effectiveness and enhanced student learning outcomes, thereby fostering a more supportive and efficient online learning environment.

5. 3. 1. 3. Recommendations for Application for Research Question 3 Findings

Research Question 3: "What are the effective strategies for overcoming challenges that hinder teachers' ability to teach speaking skills during synchronous online classes in the Saudi Arabian context?"

Recommendation 1: Enhance Teacher Training and Professional Development

Develop and implement comprehensive, ongoing professional development programs focused on improving teachers' competence in using online platforms and innovative teaching strategies. The study indicates a significant need for teachers to be proficient in using online platforms and tools to foster engaging and impactful online learning environments. Experts pointed out that inadequate teacher competence in utilizing these platforms severely hampers the quality of synchronous online teaching. Singh and Engeness (2021) underscore the importance of teacher training in effectively integrating technology into education. Similarly, Ní Shé et al. (2019) highlight the crucial role of continuous professional development in equipping teachers with the necessary skills to navigate and leverage online platforms for teaching speaking skills.

Well-trained teachers can significantly improve student success by creating more interactive, engaging, and supportive learning environments. Long-term benefits include improved student speaking proficiency, increased motivation and engagement, and better overall learning outcomes. Continuous professional development ensures that teachers remain updated with the latest technological advancements and pedagogical strategies, fostering a culture of lifelong learning and adaptability.

Recommendation 2: Implement Structured and Interactive Teaching Strategies

Adopt and integrate structured, interactive teaching strategies to foster student engagement and active participation in online speaking classes. The research highlights insufficient personal interaction and low student engagement as major challenges in online teaching. Effective strategies such as collaborative projects, role-plays, simulations, and interactive discussions are essential to address these issues. The Community of Inquiry framework, as presented by Garrison et al. (2000), highlights the significance of cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence in fostering successful online learning

environments. Harasim (2017) supports the use of interactive and collaborative activities to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Implementing interactive teaching strategies will lead to a more engaging and supportive learning environment. This approach encourages active participation, enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and improves language proficiency. Long-term benefits include increased student confidence in speaking, better retention of language skills, and a more positive attitude towards learning English.

Recommendation 3: Address Psychological Barriers with Supportive Interventions

Develop and implement supportive interventions to mitigate psychological barriers such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and limited self-regulated learning among students. The study reveals that psychological barriers significantly impact student participation and learning outcomes. Strategies such as setting realistic goals, providing positive and specific feedback, and creating a supportive learning environment are crucial in overcoming these barriers. Alharbi (2022) and Elsayed (2022) emphasize the importance of addressing psychological barriers to enhance student engagement and participation. The Community of Inquiry model and Connectivism theory (Siemens, 2005) support the need for a supportive and interactive learning environment to foster self-regulated learning and reduce anxiety.

Addressing psychological barriers can lead to improved student participation, increased confidence in speaking, and enhanced overall learning outcomes. Long-term benefits include more positive learning experience, higher student motivation, and better academic performance. Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment encourages students to take risks and engage more actively, fostering a growth mindset and resilience.

Recommendation 4: Leverage Technology to Enhance Interaction and Assessment

Utilize advanced technological tools to enhance interaction, provide real-time feedback, and improve the assessment of speaking skills. The study identifies technological challenges in facilitating personal interaction and accurately assessing speaking skills. Utilizing tools such as video conferencing, breakout rooms, and digital assessment platforms can effectively address these issues. Martin, Kumar, and She (2021) highlight the role of technology in enhancing online learning experiences. The Community of Inquiry framework supports integrating technological tools to foster cognitive, social, and teaching presence, improving interaction and assessment accuracy.

Leveraging technology can enhance the quality of online teaching and assessment, providing more accurate and timely feedback. Long-term benefits include improved student engagement, better assessment of speaking proficiency, and enhanced learning outcomes. Advanced technological tools can create a more interactive and immersive learning environment, encouraging students to practice and improve their speaking skills.

Recommendation 5: Foster a Culturally Responsive Teaching Environment

Develop and implement culturally responsive teaching strategies to address language barriers and enhance communication in English. The study highlights cultural obstacles, including language barriers, as significant challenges in teaching speaking skills. Strategies such as using authentic materials, providing cultural context, and encouraging active listening and peer interaction are essential to overcome these barriers. Al-Shehri (2011) emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity in teaching English as a foreign language. The Community of Inquiry framework supports the need for a culturally inclusive learning environment to foster social presence and effective communication.

Creating a culturally responsive teaching environment can enhance students' understanding and communication abilities in English. Over time, this approach leads to greater

student engagement, improved language proficiency, and a more inclusive and supportive classroom atmosphere. By fostering mutual respect and understanding, culturally responsive teaching enriches the learning experience for every student.

Recommendation 6: Enhance Personal Interaction

Enhancing personal interaction in synchronous online speaking classes requires the effective use of digital tools and well-structured interactive activities. Limited personal engagement in these settings reduces opportunities for authentic practice and hinders rapport between students and teachers, which can diminish instructional effectiveness. Lestiyanawati and Widyantoro (2020) and Ariyanti (2020) note that the absence of non-verbal cues in online environments makes it difficult for educators to accurately gauge student understanding. Theories such as Connectivism and the Community of Inquiry framework highlight the importance of social presence and networked interactions in fostering meaningful learning experiences. By prioritizing personal interaction, teachers can boost student engagement, improve comprehension, and cultivate stronger teacher-student relationships. These factors not only enhance the quality of speaking practice but also increase student motivation, ultimately leading to greater proficiency in speaking skills.

Recommendation 7: Promote Active Learning and Student Engagement

Adopt active learning strategies and activities to boost student engagement and participation in synchronous online classes. The findings indicate low student engagement, characterized by minimal social, cognitive, and behavioral involvement. Active learning strategies such as collaborative projects, interactive discussions, and real-time feedback are essential to address these challenges. Active learning is supported by the Community of Inquiry framework, which emphasizes the significance of cognitive, social, and teaching presence. Engaging students through active learning can significantly enhance their motivation and participation.

Promoting active learning can lead to more engaged and motivated students, resulting in better learning outcomes. Long-term benefits include improved critical thinking skills, increased collaboration, and enhanced speaking proficiency. Active learning also fosters a more dynamic and interactive online learning environment, encouraging students to take ownership of their learning.

Recommendation 8: Implement Efficient Time Management Strategies

Adopt strategies to efficiently manage time in online classes, such as using breakout rooms, asynchronous activities, and providing clear instructions for time management. The study identifies time constraints as a major challenge, particularly in large classes with limited allocated class time. Efficient time management strategies are essential for maximizing instructional impact. Salmon (2011) and the Community of Inquiry framework emphasize the importance of effective time management in online education. Utilizing digital tools and clear planning can help manage time constraints effectively.

Effective time management can enhance the quality of instruction, provide more opportunities for individual feedback, and improve overall student engagement and learning outcomes. Long-term benefits include better utilization of class time, increased student participation, and enhanced learning experiences.

Recommendation 9: Address Assessment Challenges

Develop diverse and secure assessment methods to accurately evaluate speaking skills, addressing issues such as spontaneous speech detection, unauthorized resources, and group assessment challenges. The study highlights significant challenges in assessing speaking skills online, including detecting spontaneous speech and preventing the use of unauthorized resources. Implementing varied assessment strategies can help mitigate these challenges. Research by Anugrah (2021) and the Community of Inquiry framework underscores the

complexity of accurate assessment in online settings. Connectivism theory supports the use of diverse and authentic assessment methods.

Using new and creative ways to assess students can give a clearer picture of their skills, promote fairness in evaluation, and help preserve academic honesty. Long-term benefits include more personalized feedback, improved student performance, and enhanced learning outcomes. Secure and diverse assessments encourage students to engage authentically and develop their speaking skills in meaningful ways.

These recommendations, derived from research findings and validated by relevant literature, offer a well-rounded approach to addressing the challenges of teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes within the Saudi Arabian context. Adopting these strategies can improve teaching effectiveness, boost student learning outcomes, and foster a more engaging and supportive online learning environment.

5. 3. 1. 4. Implementation Considerations

Implementing these recommendations in Saudi Arabia, which has a sophisticated communication infrastructure and high internet connectivity, involves addressing challenges related to the practical application of new teaching strategies and technologies. Although teachers exhibit a high level of awareness regarding their roles in teaching speaking skills online, they may still face obstacles in effectively utilizing advanced digital tools and integrating innovative teaching methods into their practice.

To enhance technical proficiency and ensure effective implementation, it is crucial to provide comprehensive professional development programs. These programs should focus on training teachers to use advanced digital tools and platforms such as Blackboard and Microsoft Teams, highlighting their pedagogical benefits, and offering practical, hands-on experience. By doing so, educators can become more confident and skilled in incorporating these technologies

into their teaching practices, leading to a more dynamic and engaging online learning environment.

Continuous support and the creation of communities of practice where teachers can share experiences and strategies are also vital. This collaborative approach can help educators feel more supported and motivated to adopt new methods, ultimately leading to better student outcomes. Research by Fullan (2007) and others emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development and peer support in successfully implementing educational changes.

5. 3. 1. 5. Professional and Academic Relevance

The findings and recommendations from this research are highly relevant to various professional and academic organizations. TEFL (Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) organizations and online education platforms like Coursera and edX can benefit significantly from these insights. By focusing on enhancing technical proficiency, diversifying assessment strategies, and fostering interactive learning environments, these platforms can improve the quality and effectiveness of their online English language teaching programs, making them more engaging and impactful for students.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, tertiary education institutions and the Ministry of Education can greatly benefit from these recommendations. Given the high level of awareness among teachers about their roles in teaching speaking skills online, these institutions are well-positioned to implement these strategies effectively. The Saudi Vision 2030 initiative emphasizes improving English language proficiency among students to better prepare them for global opportunities. By enhancing teacher training, addressing psychological barriers, and improving student engagement, these institutions can significantly improve their English language teaching outcomes, helping students achieve higher proficiency levels and aligning with the broader educational and economic goals of the nation.

Platforms like Blackboard and Microsoft Teams can play a crucial role in this context. These platforms offer a range of tools for creating interactive and engaging online learning environments, including video conferencing, breakout rooms, and collaborative workspaces. By effectively utilizing these platforms, educators can enhance personal interaction, provide real-time feedback, and facilitate more dynamic and participatory learning experiences.

These recommendations can influence and benefit these organizations by enhancing their teaching practices and outcomes. For TEFL and online education platforms, integrating advanced digital tools and interactive teaching methods can lead to more effective language instruction, thereby increasing student satisfaction and success rates. For Saudi Arabian educational institutions, adopting these strategies can improve the quality of English language education, helping students become more proficient and confident speakers. This, in turn, will support the overall goal of preparing students for a competitive global environment, ultimately contributing to the nation's development objectives.

5. 3. 2. Recommendations for Future Research

5. 3. 2. 1. Recommendations for Future Research for Research Question 1 Findings

Recommendation 1: Combine Quantitative and Qualitative Methods to Understand Teachers' Awareness of Their Roles

Future research should combine quantitative surveys with qualitative methods like interviews and classroom observations. While surveys can provide statistical data on teachers' awareness of their roles in teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes, qualitative methods can offer deeper insights into their experiences and practices. This approach will create a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers perceive and implement their roles.

Recommendation 2: Increase Sampling Diversity

To improve the generalizability of findings, future studies should include a wider variety of teachers from different institutions, such as private universities, community colleges, and technical schools, as well as from various regions inside and outside of Saudi Arabia. A diverse sample will allow researchers to determine whether the findings are applicable across different educational settings and cultural contexts.

Recommendation 3: Examine Technological Disparities

It is important to investigate how differences in access to technology and resources affect teachers' professional development opportunities and their awareness levels. Researchers should investigate factors such as internet connectivity, availability of digital devices, and access to online teaching platforms. Understanding these disparities will help identify the barriers some teachers face and lead to more equitable solutions in professional development programs.

Recommendation 4: Assess Professional Development Programs

Future studies should evaluate the content and quality of professional development programs aimed at enhancing teachers' skills in synchronous online teaching. This involves examining the relevance of the training content, the methods of delivery, and the support provided. Identifying the most effective elements of these programs will help in designing better training initiatives that truly enhance teachers' awareness and capabilities.

Recommendation 5: Implement Longitudinal Studies

To gauge the long-term impact of professional development initiatives, researchers should conduct longitudinal studies that follow teachers over time. These studies can track changes in teachers' awareness and competencies as they gain more experience with synchronous online teaching and as new technologies emerge. Longitudinal research will provide insights into the sustainability of teachers' awareness and the ongoing effects of

professional development programs, highlighting areas that may require continuous support and improvement.

To guide future research, specific questions could include:

- How do teachers in private universities differ from those in governmental universities in their level of awareness of teaching speaking skills in Saudi Arabia, if at all?
- Which aspects of training content, delivery methods, and support systems contribute most to improving teachers' awareness and practical application of their roles?
- What long-term trends in awareness and teaching practices can be observed?

5. 3. 2. 2 Recommendations for Future Research for Research Question 2 Findings

Addressing Multiple Challenges in Online Teaching

Future research should explore a range of challenges that significantly impact the effectiveness of teaching speaking skills during synchronous online classes in Saudi Arabia. These challenges include psychological barriers, insufficient personal interaction, social obstacles, low student engagement, assessment challenges, low language proficiency, time constraints, and cultural obstacles. Investigating each of these areas in depth will provide a comprehensive understanding and practical solutions for improving online education.

Psychological Barriers

A critical area for future research is the psychological barriers that hinder student engagement and participation. The findings reveal that limited self-regulated learning, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence are substantial barriers to student participation in online classes. These psychological challenges align with the Community of Inquiry theory and the Online Collaborative Learning theory, which highlight the importance of addressing emotional and psychological barriers to create a supportive and collaborative online learning environment. Research should examine how these barriers impact student participation and what interventions can effectively reduce anxiety and build confidence. This could lead to curriculum designs that incorporate confidence building exercises, supportive feedback

mechanisms, and strategies to foster self-regulated learning, ultimately enhancing student engagement.

Insufficient Personal Interaction

Another significant area for future research is the limited personal interaction in online teaching, which is crucial for fostering effective learning and instruction. The results indicate that limited opportunities for practice and reduced rapport building due to the absence of face-to-face communication are significant challenges. This aligns with the Connectivism theory and the Community of Inquiry framework, which emphasize the importance of social presence and networks in learning. Future studies should explore how digital interaction tools can be optimized to enhance personal interaction in online settings and the role of personal interaction in improving student speaking skills. Enhancing interactive opportunities through tools like video conferencing and collaborative activities can help mitigate these challenges and foster stronger teacher-student and peer relationships.

Social Challenges

Future research should also address social challenges, such as limited English conversation opportunities, excessive use of the mother tongue, and negative attitudes towards English. These issues are particularly relevant to the Online Collaborative Learning and Connectivism theories, which stress the importance of fostering environments that promote English usage and positive attitudes. Research should focus on strategies that increase English conversation opportunities and reduce reliance on the mother tongue, as well as how students' attitudes towards English influence their engagement and proficiency. By designing curricula that encourage English usage and promoting a positive attitude towards the language, educators can improve language acquisition and student participation.

Low Student Engagement

Low student engagement is another area that warrants further investigation. The findings indicate minimal social, cognitive, and behavioral involvement among students in online learning processes. This challenge aligns with the Community of Inquiry framework and Connectivism theory, which emphasize the need for structured interaction and diverse connections to sustain engagement. Future research should explore how structured interaction, and diverse connections can enhance student engagement and identify specific strategies to increase cognitive, social, and behavioral engagement. Curriculum designs that include structured interactive activities and diverse resources can keep students engaged, while instructional strategies should focus on fostering collaborative projects, real-time feedback, and dynamic content.

Assessment Challenges

Challenges in assessment, including the lack of non-verbal cues, difficulty in identifying spontaneous speech, and concerns over the use of unauthorized resources, present substantial obstacles in online learning environments. These challenges align with the Community of Inquiry framework and the need for dynamic assessment methods as suggested by Connectivism and Online Collaborative Learning theories. Future research should investigate innovative assessment methods that accurately evaluate speaking skills in online settings and how technology can be leveraged to create authentic and secure assessment opportunities. Developing new forms of assessment that capture the dynamics of online learning is crucial for fair evaluation and maintaining academic integrity.

Low Language Proficiency

Students' low language proficiency, including difficulties in understanding connected speech and limited vocabulary, presents significant barriers to effective communication in online classes. These challenges highlight the need for targeted language support, as

emphasized by the Connectivism and Community of Inquiry theories. Future research should explore how increased interaction and diverse learning materials can improve students' language proficiency and identify specific strategies to address pronunciation and vocabulary limitations in online settings. Curriculum designs that include targeted language support and interactive learning materials can enhance language proficiency, while instructional strategies should focus on structured, interactive, and collaborative approaches.

Time Constraints

Time constraints, particularly in large classes and limited class time, significantly impact the effectiveness of online learning. These findings align with the Community of Inquiry framework and Connectivism theory, which emphasize effective time management and the use of flexible learning schedules. Future research should explore how flexible learning schedules and asynchronous activities can mitigate time constraints and what strategies can maximize instructional time to ensure comprehensive coverage of learning objectives. Curriculum designs that integrate flexible schedules and asynchronous activities can accommodate diverse student needs, while instructional strategies should emphasize efficient time management and structured lesson plans.

Cultural Obstacles

Cultural obstacles, especially language barriers, significantly impact the effectiveness of online teaching and learning of speaking skills. These findings align with the Community of Inquiry and Connectivism theories, which emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptive teaching methods. Future research should investigate how culturally relevant materials and activities can overcome language barriers in online learning and the role of cultural sensitivity in enhancing communication and engagement. Curriculum designs that include culturally relevant materials and activities can promote a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, ensuring that all students feel valued and engaged.

Future research should employ a mixed methods approach to answer this type of research questions by combining qualitative methods, such as interviews and open-ended survey questions, with quantitative surveys to better understand the challenges teachers face. Expanding the study to include a diverse range of universities with different characteristics will help determine if the challenges observed at Jazan University and King Khalid University are also present in other settings. Additionally, adopting a longitudinal approach will allow researchers to track changes in teachers' perceptions of challenges over time and how these evolve with advancements in technology and changes in institutional policies. It is also important to examine the differences in technological proficiency among teachers and students, as these can significantly impact the challenges experienced in online teaching. Finally, future studies should consider cultural and institutional factors, investigating how varying cultural attitudes, technological infrastructure, and support systems across different regions influence the difficulties teachers encounter. Specific questions for guiding future research could include:

- How does insufficient personal interaction impact the effectiveness of teaching speaking skills online, and what digital tools can enhance this interaction?
- What innovative assessment methods can accurately evaluate speaking skills in online settings?
- How do the challenges identified at Jazan University and King Khalid University compare with those in other universities with different characteristics?

By addressing these various challenges comprehensively, future research can provide valuable insights and practical solutions to enhance the effectiveness of online language education, benefiting both teachers and students in the Saudi context.

5. 3. 2. 3. Recommendations for Future Research for Research Question 3 Findings

Research question 3: “What are the effective strategies for overcoming challenges that hinder teachers' ability to teach speaking skills during synchronous online classes in the Saudi Arabian context?”

Recommendation 1: Combine Expert and Practical Insights

Future research should balance theoretical recommendations from experts with practical feedback from teachers who are actively engaged in online teaching. This approach ensures that proposed strategies are not only theoretically sound but also practically feasible and relevant to real classroom settings. Creating mechanisms for ongoing dialogue between experts and practicing teachers can help refine and adapt strategies based on practical classroom experiences.

Recommendation 2: Enhance Generalizability

Recommendations for future research include testing the identified strategies in a variety of educational settings, such as private universities and institutions in different countries. This will help adapt strategies to fit various cultural and institutional contexts, enhancing their effectiveness across diverse environments. Broader testing will determine the universality of the strategies and identify necessary modifications for different settings.

Recommendation 3: Stay Updated with Technological Advances

Future research should involve ongoing studies to keep pace with rapid technological advancements and changes in online teaching practices. Regularly updating strategies to incorporate the latest technological tools and methodologies will ensure that they remain current, effective, and capable of leveraging new opportunities to enhance online teaching.

Recommendation 4: Address Practical Constraints

Future research must consider real-world challenges such as limited resources, large class sizes, and time constraints. These practical issues can significantly impact the feasibility and implementation of proposed strategies. Researchers should work closely with teachers to understand these constraints and develop strategies that are realistic and implementable within the existing limitations of different educational settings.

Recommendation 5: Cater to Diverse Teaching Needs

Recommendations for future research include considering the diverse needs of both teachers and students. This involves considering different learning styles, classroom dynamics, and varying levels of technological proficiency among teachers and students. Addressing these diverse needs will help develop more inclusive and effective strategies that support a wider range of teaching and learning scenarios, ensuring that all teachers and students can benefit from the proposed strategies. To guide future research, consider the following questions:

- How can online teaching strategies be adapted to meet the diverse needs of teachers and students with different learning styles and classroom dynamics?
- How can expert recommendations and practical feedback from teachers be combined to develop effective strategies for teaching speaking skills online?
- How does the level of technological proficiency among teachers influence the success of strategies for teaching speaking skills online?

5. 4. Conclusions

5. 4. 1. Research Problem and Objectives

The research problem highlights the need to redefine teachers' roles and skills to enable effective online learning. This necessity stems from the emergence of new theories in online education, including the Community of Inquiry, Connectivism, and Online Collaborative Learning, as well as the advent of advanced technologies that both enhance teaching and introduce significant challenges for educators (Setlhako, 2014).

In Saudi Arabia, despite a sophisticated communication technology infrastructure and extensive efforts in planning, curriculum development, teacher qualification, and management, the outcomes of English language learning have been unsatisfactory. The nation ranks 102nd among 111 countries in English proficiency (Education First English Proficiency Index, 2020; 2021; 2022, 2023, 2024). Mastering speaking skills is particularly crucial and challenging for learners of English as a foreign language, with around 70% of teachers recognizing its importance over other language skills (Cambridge University Press Survey, 2017).

Teaching speaking skills effectively requires teachers to be acutely aware of their evolving roles and to fulfill these roles during synchronous online classes. However, some teachers struggle to adapt, contributing to the subpar outcomes in students' online English language learning (Al-gethami, 2022). This study investigates the extent to which teachers recognize their changing roles in online speaking skills instruction. It further addresses the challenges they encounter in this context and aims to uncover potential strategies for improving the overall effectiveness of online teaching in this domain.

The objectives of this study are to investigate Saudi university teachers' awareness of their changing roles in teaching speaking skills online, to identify the specific challenges teachers encounter while teaching speaking skills online in Saudi universities, and to determine effective strategies for overcoming these challenges to improve the teaching of speaking skills during synchronous online classes in the Saudi Arabian context.

5. 4. 2. Research Process and Key Findings

The research employed a sequential mixed methods approach to examine the roles of university teachers in Saudi Arabia regarding the teaching of speaking skills during synchronous online classes. This approach was structured into two phases: an initial quantitative phase followed by a subsequent qualitative phase.

In the quantitative phase, the study aimed to measure teachers' awareness of the various roles required for teaching speaking skills online and to identify the significant challenges they face. Surveys were distributed to university teachers at two universities in Saudi Arabia to gather data on their roles and the significant challenges they face in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes. The findings revealed a high level of awareness among teachers regarding their roles as facilitators, content experts, managers, social, pedagogical guides, and assessors. However, technical proficiency was identified as an area needing improvement. This indicated that while teachers were competent in using multimedia resources, there was

significant room for improvement in utilizing advanced digital collaboration tools and online platforms for speaking practice and assessment.

The study also highlighted several significant challenges that teachers face in online teaching. Psychological barriers, such as limited self-regulated learning, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence, were prominent, affecting student participation and engagement. Insufficient personal interaction was another major challenge, with limited opportunities for practice and reduced rapport building due to the lack of face-to-face communication. Social obstacles, including limited English conversation opportunities, excessive use of the mother tongue, and negative attitudes towards English, also impeded effective language learning. Additionally, low student engagement, characterized by minimal social, cognitive, and behavioral involvement, and assessment challenges, such as limited non-verbal cues, time constraints, and unauthorized resource use, were significant issues affecting the effectiveness of online teaching.

In the qualitative phase, the study sought to identify ***effective strategies*** to overcome these challenges specific to the context of governmental Saudi universities. Sstandardised open-ended interviews were conducted with experts in teaching English online. The experts provided valuable insights into various strategies to enhance online teaching effectiveness.

To tackle psychological obstacles, experts proposed strategies such as teaching self-regulation techniques and enhancing motivation through personalized learning paths and structured activities. They emphasized the importance of promoting a positive classroom culture to reduce students' fear of making mistakes and providing constructive feedback to help students learn and improve.

To address the issue of insufficient personal interaction, experts recommended creating interactive activities and utilizing digital tools that facilitate more personal interactions. This

includes incorporating more opportunities for practice and using technology to maintain strong connections between students and teachers, thereby enhancing student engagement.

For social obstacles, experts suggested encouraging the use of English in all interactions and designing engaging and relevant lessons that foster a positive attitude towards learning English. They also recommended creating a supportive learning environment to help students feel more comfortable and confident in using English.

Low student engagement was another challenge addressed by experts. They proposed implementing collaborative projects and critical thinking activities to increase cognitive engagement. Additionally, they recommended using interactive tasks that encourage active participation and deeper involvement from students.

To overcome assessment challenges, experts advised using diverse assessment methods and integrating technology to support real-time feedback. They also emphasized the need for fair and consistent evaluation practices to ensure that assessments accurately reflect students' abilities and progress.

In response to time constraints, especially in synchronous online classes with large enrollments, experts emphasized the importance of efficient time management and structured lesson plans. These strategies help maximize the use of available time and ensure that the curriculum is thoroughly covered.

To address cultural obstacles, experts highlighted the need for culturally responsive pedagogy and tailored instructional strategies. These approaches help students overcome language barriers and cultural sensitivities, enhancing their understanding and communication skills in English.

Teachers' high awareness of their roles aligns with the Community of Inquiry framework, emphasizing cognitive, social, and teaching presence as crucial for successful online learning (Garrison et al., 2010; Garth-James & Hollis, 2014; Garrison, 2017). Their

awareness of their roles as content experts, facilitators, managers, social and pedagogical guides, assessors, and technical supporters supports prior research on clear content delivery, interactive engagement, and effective online teaching practices (Ní Shé et al., 2019).

Psychological barriers, such as limited self-regulated learning and fear of mistakes, are highlighted by Alharbi (2022) and Elsayed (2022), emphasizing the impact of psychological factors on engagement. The Community of Inquiry framework and Online Collaborative Learning theory support addressing these barriers to foster supportive online environments (Harasim, 2017).

Challenges related to insufficient personal interaction and limited practice opportunities are consistent with findings by Conklin and Garrett Dikkers (2021). The recommendation to use collaborative tools aligns with Connectivism theory on the role of networks in learning (Siemens, 2005; Downes, 2020).

Social obstacles, such as limited English conversation opportunities and excessive use of the mother tongue, are noted by Alzamil (2021) and Alharbi (2022). The Online Collaborative Learning theory emphasizes fostering positive attitudes towards English. Low student engagement, characterized by minimal social, cognitive, and behavioral involvement, aligns with research by Al-Ghamdi (2022) and Mohammed (2021). The Community of Inquiry framework supports enhancing cognitive and social presence.

Assessment challenges, including limited non-verbal cues and time constraints, are consistent with findings by Anugrah (2021) and the Community of Inquiry framework. Recommendations for diverse assessment methods are supported by Connectivism and Online Collaborative Learning theories.

Additional challenges include low language proficiency, time constraints, and language barriers, noted by Mohammed (2021) and Singh & Engeness (2021). These recommendations

enhance technical proficiency, diversify assessments, and foster interactive learning, contributing valuable insights into improving online teaching in Saudi universities.

5. 4. 3. Contributions to the Field and Strategies for Immediate Implementation

This research significantly contributes to online education by investigating the teachers' multifaceted roles and challenges, focusing on teaching speaking skills. Using a sequential mixed-methods design, the research examined the complexities of online teaching. Using a sequential mixed-methods approach, the research examined the intricate dynamics of online teaching. It details the various roles teachers should fulfill, highlighting the broad range of strategies required to manage online classrooms effectively. These roles are complicated by challenges like psychological obstacles among students, insufficient personal interaction, social obstacles, low student engagement, assessment challenges, students' low language proficiency, time constraints, and cultural obstacles. Findings emphasize the importance of professional development, showing that continuous training enhances teachers' awareness of their evolving roles and fosters pedagogical innovation. The research also proposed effective strategies and practical recommendations to aid students in mastering speaking skills within a supportive environment.

Teaching speaking skills online requires teachers to play simultaneously multiple roles to address the challenges associated with teaching speaking skills online. By serving as content experts, facilitators, managers, social and pedagogical guides, assessors, and technical supporters, teachers can create an engaging and supportive learning environment. Strategies such as addressing psychological barriers, increasing personal interaction, overcoming social and cultural obstacles, increasing student engagement, developing effective assessment strategies, and addressing low language proficiency are essential for successful online teaching. Implementing these strategies requires ongoing professional development and the integration

of advanced technologies to enhance teaching practices and student outcomes, facilitated by teachers in all their roles.

Practical Implications for Policymakers

The practical implications of this research are extensive, benefiting not only teachers but also policymakers focused on enhancing online English language instruction in Saudi Arabia. By tackling the identified challenges and applying the proposed strategies, universities can significantly boost the effectiveness of online teaching. This improvement can lead to better learning outcomes and ensure that educational practices are in line with national goals, such as those outlined in Saudi Vision 2030. Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of professional development programs, underlining the necessity for ongoing learning and adaptation to new technologies and teaching methods. This continuous professional growth is crucial for maintaining high standards of online education and ensuring that educators are well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of the digital learning environment.

Broader Significance

The broader significance of this study is its potential to impact educational practices and policies globally, serving as a model for regions facing similar challenges. The research underpins the enhancement of English language proficiency among students, leading to improved engagement and learning outcomes. Future investigations should prioritize longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term effects of these interventions and determine the generalizability of the findings across diverse educational contexts and cultural settings. Moreover, analyzing the impact of advanced technological tools and culturally responsive teaching methods can further enhance the effectiveness of online language education. This study is particularly pertinent to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which aims to elevate educational standards and global competitiveness. Continuous professional development and the integration of advanced technologies are vital for sustaining high quality online education.

5. 4. 4. Final Thoughts and Future Directions

Final Thoughts

This research underscores the necessity for redefined teacher roles and enhanced competencies to enable effective online learning in Saudi Arabia, where English language proficiency remains inadequate despite significant efforts and investments. The study, which concentrated on the instruction of speaking skills, revealed that although teachers are cognizant of their evolving roles, they encounter considerable challenges, including psychological barriers, insufficient personal interaction, social obstacles, and low student engagement.

The research provides practical strategies to address these challenges, emphasizing the importance of continuous professional development, the use of advanced technologies, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Key recommendations include enhancing teacher-student and student-student interactions, fostering a supportive online environment, promoting the use of English in all interactions, and diversifying assessment methods.

This study's contributions extend beyond Saudi Arabia, offering valuable insights for global educational practices. By implementing the proposed strategies, educators worldwide can enhance online language education, leading to better student engagement and learning outcomes. This research aligns with Saudi Vision 2030, highlighting the need for continuous improvement in educational standards and the adoption of innovative technologies to achieve global competitiveness.

Future Directions

Longitudinal Studies: Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies to monitor the long-term effects of the recommended interventions. Such studies can offer valuable insights into how teachers' roles and effectiveness evolve over time, particularly with continuous professional development and technological integration. This approach will help

understand the sustainability of the proposed strategies and their long-term benefits on student outcomes.

Generalizability Across Different Contexts: It is crucial to explore the applicability of the findings across various educational settings and cultural contexts. Future research should include a diverse range of institutions such as private universities, community colleges, and technical schools, both within and outside Saudi Arabia. This broader perspective will help determine the relevance of the strategies and identify necessary adaptations for different contexts, ensuring the findings are useful in a wide array of educational environments.

Advanced Technological Tools: Investigating the role of advanced technological tools in enhancing online language education is another essential area for future research. This includes examining the effectiveness of various digital collaboration tools, online platforms, and innovative assessment methods. Understanding how these tools can be integrated into the teaching process to improve student engagement and learning outcomes will provide valuable insights for educators, helping them better utilize technology in their teaching practices.

Psychological and Social Barriers: Further research should delve into the psychological and social barriers students face in online learning environments. Identifying effective interventions to mitigate these barriers, such as confidence building exercises and supportive feedback mechanisms, can enhance student participation and engagement. Additionally, exploring strategies to foster a sense of community and connection in online classes can help overcome the challenges of limited personal interaction, leading to a more supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Methods: Future studies should focus on developing and assessing culturally responsive teaching methods. This involves examining how cultural factors influence student engagement and learning outcomes and identifying the best practices for creating inclusive and supportive learning environments. Addressing cultural sensitivities

and promoting positive attitudes towards English can improve language acquisition and student participation.

Real-World Constraints and Practical Implementation: Research should consider the practical challenges teachers and institutions face, such as limited resources, large class sizes, and time constraints. Understanding these challenges and developing feasible strategies to address them is essential for the successful implementation of the recommended practices. Collaborating with teachers to cocreate solutions that are both effective and practical will ensure better adoption and sustainability.

Diverse Needs of Teachers and Students: Future studies should also consider the diverse needs of teachers and students, address psychological barriers and promote a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Tailoring strategies to meet varying levels of technological proficiency, learning styles, and classroom dynamics will help develop more inclusive and effective teaching methods. This comprehensive approach will ensure that all teachers and students benefit from the proposed strategies, leading to improved language proficiency and better educational outcomes.

By addressing these aspects comprehensively, future research can provide valuable insights and practical solutions to enhance the effectiveness of online language education, benefiting teachers and students in Saudi Arabia and beyond. This holistic approach will contribute to the broader academic conversation and support the continuous improvement of online teaching practices globally.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A (Online Questionnaire 1 (Informal Consent included))

Tool 1: Online Questionnaire (Frequency Likert Scale)
Online Teachers Awareness of their Required Roles to Enhance Students' Speaking Skills during Synchronous Online Classes.

This research study is being conducted to gain insights into the extent to which online teachers are aware of and carry out their required roles to enhance students' speaking skills during synchronous online classes. You are invited to participate in this questionnaire to share your expertise and contribute to the advancement of online language instruction. You have been selected to receive this questionnaire because you have taught English language online at your university. Your honest and thoughtful responses will enable the researcher to develop effective instructional approaches to enhance students' speaking skills. Your valuable insights will contribute to improving the quality of online education and the effectiveness of teachers' practices.

Informed Consent

Before proceeding with the survey, please read and provide your informed consent by agreeing to the following statements:

"I have read the foregoing information about this study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss it. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions, and I have received enough information about this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without negative consequences. I consent to the use of multimedia (e.g., audio recordings, video recordings) for the purposes of my participation in this study. I understand that my data will remain anonymous and confidential unless stated otherwise. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study."

Please tick ***'Yes'*** to confirm your agreement to participate in this research study. By doing this, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the informed consent provided above. Your participation is highly appreciated.

❒ ***Yes***

Guidelines

Please read and follow the guidelines below before proceeding with the survey:

- This questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
- Ensure you have a stable internet connection to avoid any interruptions during the survey.
- Please carefully read and follow the instructions provided for each question.
- Answer all the questions honestly and to the best of your knowledge and experience as an online teacher.
- Please use the following frequency Likert scale to respond to the questions: *Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never.*

Demographics

Please provide the following demographic information. Your responses will help us better understand the characteristics of the participants:

Name (Optional):
Age: Under 30 ❒ 30 – 60 ❒
Gender: Male ❒ Female ❒ Other ❒ Prefer not to mention ❒
Native Language:
Occupation:
Place of work (University?):

Next

Online Teachers' Roles	S.	Questions	Frequency	
Facilitator Role	1	How often do you *encourage* students to engage in *vocabulary* brainstorming and usage to strengthen their language knowledge?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	2	How often do you *encourage* students to engage in *grammar*-focused discussions and rules usage to strengthen their language knowledge?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	3	How frequently do you *create opportunities* for students to practice *pronunciation* through drills or online resources?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	4	How often do you *use role-plays, simulations, or debates* to increase students' fluency and ability to negotiate speech?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	5	How frequently do you *facilitate turn-taking exercises or encourage students to use conversation-cuing phrases*?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	6	How often do you *facilitate group discussions and problem-solving tasks* to help students develop cognitive strategies?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
Content Expert Role	7	How frequently do *you provide clear explanations, examples, and resources* related to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	8	How often do you *offer mini lessons on idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, or tense usage*?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	9	How frequently do you *model effective speaking practices,* such as using appropriate pacing, intonation, or filler words?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	10	How often do you *share tips on managing the flow of speech* or negotiation techniques?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
			Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒

Managerial Role	**11**	How frequently do you *establish guidelines and objectives* for language-focused activities?	Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	12	How often do you *assign specific language goals* for students to achieve?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	13	How frequently do you *organize and monitor speaking activities* that promote fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	14	How often do you *assign roles to students during group discussions or debates,* ensuring equal opportunities for speaking practice?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
Pedagogical Role	**15**	How frequently do you *design activities* that target vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	16	How often do you *employ instructional strategies* that focus on fluency, negotiation, and managing the flow of speech?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	17	How frequently do you *incorporate activities* that encourage students to practice cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
Social Role	**18**	How often do you *foster a supportive and inclusive environment* for discussing language aspects?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	19	How frequently do you *use icebreakers, team-building activities, or informal conversations* to create opportunities for speaking practice?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	20	How often do you *encourage students to share their cultural backgrounds and experiences*?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
Technical Role	**21**	How frequently do you *utilize multimedia resources* to engage students and enhance their language knowledge?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	22	How often do you *use online tools* like Kahoot, Flipgrid, VoiceThread for speaking practice opportunities?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
			Always	❒

	23	How frequently do you *incorporate digital collaboration tools* for students to practice cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies in an online setting?	Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
Assessor Role	**24**	How often do you *use rubrics, checklists, or self-assessment tools* to assess students' language knowledge?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	25	How frequently do you *assess students' fluency, negotiation, and speech management skills* through speaking tasks, performances, and presentations?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒
	26	How often do you *assess students' use of cognitive, metacognitive, and interaction strategies* through self-reflection, or peer feedback?	Always	❒
			Often	❒
			Sometimes	❒
			Rarely	❒
			Never	❒

Additional Open-ended Question: What other roles, in your opinion, are essential for effectively teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes? How often do you carry out these roles?

……

……

Thank you for participating in this online survey. Your input and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

Appendix B: Online Questionnaire 2 (Informed Consent included)

Tool 2: Online Questionnaire (A 5-point Ordinal Scale)
Teaching Speaking Skills in Synchronous Online Classes: Challenges Questionnaire

This research study is currently being conducted to gather information about the degree/severity of challenges encountered by online teachers to carry out their required roles to teach speaking skills in synchronous online classes. By participating in this questionnaire, you can share your expertise and contribute to the advancement of online language instruction. You have been selected to receive this questionnaire because you have taught English language online at your university. Your responses are valuable and will contribute to improving the quality of online education and the effectiveness of teachers' practices.

Informed Consent

Before proceeding with the survey, please read and provide your informed consent by agreeing to the following statements:

"I have read the foregoing information about this study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss it. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions, and I have received enough information about this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without negative consequences. I consent to the use of multimedia (e.g., audio recordings, video recordings) for the purposes of my participation in this study. I understand that my data will remain anonymous and confidential unless stated otherwise. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study."

Please tick *'Yes'* to confirm your agreement to participate in this research study. By doing this, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the informed consent provided above. Your participation is highly appreciated.

❒ ***Yes***

Guidelines

- Please read and follow the guidelines below before proceeding with the survey:
- This questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
- Ensure you have a stable internet connection to avoid any interruptions during the survey.
- Please carefully read and follow the instructions provided for each question.
- Please use the following 5-point ordinal scale: *1. Not a challenge, 2. Slightly challenging, 3. Moderately challenging, 4. Very challenging, 5. Extremely challenging.*
- Answer all the questions honestly and to the best of your knowledge and experience as an online teacher.
- An open-ended question is added to give you the freedom and space to add in as much detail as you like.

Demographics

Please provide the following demographic information. Your responses will help us better understand the characteristics of the participants:

Name (Optional):
Age: Under 30 ❒ 30 – 60 ❒
Gender: Male ❒ Female ❒ Other ❒ Prefer not to mention ❒
Native Language:
Occupation:
Place of work (University?):

Next

Challenges		Manifestations	Rates
Students' Low Language Proficiency	1	Limited Vocabulary	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	2	Grammar Difficulties	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	3	Poor Pronunciation	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	4	Inability to Understand or Organize Connected Stretches of Speech	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	5	Inability to Compensate Limitations in Language Knowledge	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
Psychological Obstacles Facing students	6	Fear of Committing Mistakes	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	7	Anxiety	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	8	Lack of Confidence	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	9	Shyness	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	10	Students' Limited Self-Regulated Learning	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	11	Peer Pressure	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
Social Obstacles Facing students	12	Limited English Conversation Opportunities	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	13	Attitude Towards English	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	14	Excessive Use of Mother Tongue	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
Insufficient (Low) Student Engagement	15	Low Behavioural Engagement (active listening, asking questions,)	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	16	Low Cognitive Engagement (critical thinking, problem solving...)	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	17	Low Social Engagement (building relationships, collaboration…)	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
Insufficient Personal Interaction	18	Misinterpretation of Responses	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	19	Difficulty in Providing Immediate Feedback	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	20	Limited Opportunities for Practice	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	21	Reduced Rapport Building	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	22	Technical Issues	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
Cultural Differences	23	Understanding Communication Styles	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	24	Cultural Exchange (cultural background and values)	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	25	Language Barriers (understanding and communicating in English)	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	26	Cultural Sensitivities (students' beliefs, values, culture, …)	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
Technological Challenges	27	Lack of Proper Infrastructure	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	28	Poor Internet Connectivity	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	29	Limited Access to Devices	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	30	Inadequate Teacher Training	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
Time Constraints	31	Class Size	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	32	Limited Class Time	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	33	Balancing Content and Practice	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	34	Feedback and Assessment	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
Distractions	35	Background noise and interruptions from family members	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	36	Presence of Electronics (smartphones, social media notifications	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	37	Software Glitches	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
Assessment Challenges	38	Technical Issues (Poor audio / video quality, delays in streaming)	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	39	Limited Non-verbal Cues (facial expressions, body language, …)	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	40	Time Constraints (strict time limits)	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	41	Difficulty in Detecting Spontaneous Speech	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	42	Group Assessment Challenges	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	43	Ensuring a Fair and Consistent	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	44	Unauthorized Resources that Might be Used by Students	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	45	Assistance from Others during Online Speaking Tasks)	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐
	46	Plagiarism	**1.** ❐ **2.** ❐ **3.** ❐ **4.** ❐ **5.** ❐

Additional Open-ended Question: What additional significant challenges have you encountered while carrying out your required roles to teach speaking skills in synchronous online classes?

……

……

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

Appendix C: Interview Questions (Informed Consent included)

Tool 3: A standardized (structured) Open-ended Interview
Overcoming Challenges in Teaching Speaking Skills in Synchronous Online Classes

This ongoing research study aims to collect information on overcoming challenges faced by online teachers which impede them from effectively fulfilling their roles in teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes. Your participation in this interview offers a valuable opportunity to share your expertise and contribute to the progression of online language instruction. You have been selected based on your status as an experienced English language instructor in online settings. Your insights are greatly appreciated and will aid in enhancing the overall quality of online education, as well as in developing more effective teaching practices for instructors.

Informed Consent
Before proceeding with the survey, please read and provide your informed consent by agreeing to the following statements:

> "I have read the foregoing information about this study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss it. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions, and I have received enough information about this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without negative consequences. I consent to the use of multimedia (e.g., audio recordings, video recordings) for the purposes of my participation in this study. I understand that my data will remain anonymous and confidential unless stated otherwise. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study."

Please tick ***'Yes'*** to confirm your agreement to participate in this research study. By doing this, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the informed consent provided above. Your participation is highly appreciated.

❒ ***Yes***.

Guidelines

Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Please note that the interview is expected to last around one 40 minutes.
- Kindly, carefully listen and respond to each question truthfully and provide as much detail as possible. Your insights and experiences are invaluable in improving online education.
- The session will be recorded to ensure accuracy and facilitate in-depth analysis of the interview data. The recordings will only be used for research purposes and will be deleted after analysis.
- Some notes will also be taken during the session. These notes will assist in capturing key points and important details to support the analysis process.
- Kindly, speak clearly and be specific with your comments for better recording quality to ensure that your insights and comments are accurately captured.
- Please find a quiet and comfortable space where you can minimize disturbances and ensure your full attention.

Demographics

Please provide the following demographic information. Your responses will help us better understand the characteristics of the participants:

Name (Optional):
Age: Under 30 ❒ 30 – 65 ❒ Above 65
Gender: Male ❒ Female ❒ Other ❒ Prefer not to mention ❒
Occupation:
Years of Teaching English Online:

Next

Questions

1. Students' Low Language Proficiency

a. Limited Vocabulary

1. How do you assist students in expanding their vocabulary within an online setting?

b. Grammar Difficulties

2. How do you tackle grammar issues during online speaking sessions?

c. Incorrect Pronunciation

3. What are some effective ways to rectify pronunciation errors during online speaking classes?

d. Inability to Understand or Organize Connected Speech Socially and Pragmatically.

4. How do you instruct students to structure their speech in a socially and pragmatically appropriate manner during online classes?

e. Inability to Compensate Limitations in Language Knowledge

5. How do you aid students in developing compensatory strategies to overcome their limitations in language knowledge during online speaking classes?

2. Psychological Obstacles Face by Students

a. Fear of Committing Mistakes

6. How do you create a supportive online environment that encourages students to take risks and learn from their mistakes?

b. Anxiety

7. How do you address anxiety in your online speaking classes?

c. Lack of Confidence

8. How do you assist students in building confidence in their speaking abilities during online classes?

d. Shyness

9. How do you encourage shy students to participate in online speaking activities?

e. Students' Limited Self-Regulated Learning

10. How do you address the challenge of limited self-regulated learning among students when teaching speaking skills in synchronous online classes at Saudi Arabian universities?

f. Peer Pressure

11. How do you create a supportive and non-judgmental online environment that minimizes peer pressure?

3. Social Obstacles

a. Limited English Conversation Opportunities

12. How do you provide ample opportunities for students to practice speaking English in an online setting?

b. Attitude Towards English

13. How do you address negative attitudes towards English in your online speaking classes?

c. Use of Mother Tongue

14. How do you discourage the use of students' mother tongue during online speaking activities?

4. Cultural Obstacles

a. Communication Styles

15. How do you address different communication styles in your online speaking classes?

b. Cultural Exchange

16. How do you promote cultural exchange and understanding in your online speaking classes?

c. Language Barriers

17. How do you assist students in overcoming language barriers related to cultural differences in your online speaking classes?

d. Cultural Sensitivities

18. How do you address cultural sensitivities in your online speaking classes?

5. Students' Lack of Engagement

a. Insufficient of Behavioural Engagement (active listening, asking questions, …)

19. How do you encourage behavioural engagement in your online speaking classes?

b. Insufficient Cognitive Engagement (critical thinking, problem solving, …)

20. How do you ensure cognitive engagement during online speaking classes?

c. Insufficient Social Engagement (building relationships, collaboration, …)

21. How do you promote social engagement in your online speaking classes?

6. Insufficient Personal Interaction

a. Misinterpretation of Responses

22. How do you address the potential for misinterpretation of responses in your online speaking classes?

b. Difficulty in Providing Immediate Feedback

23. How do you provide immediate feedback to students during online speaking sessions?

c. Limited Opportunities for Practice

24. How do you create opportunities for students to practice their speaking skills in an online setting?

d. Reduced Rapport Building

25. How do you build rapport with your students in an online speaking class?

e. Technical Issues

26. How do you handle technical issues that arise during online speaking classes?

7. Technological Challenges

a. Limited Access to Devices

27. How do you address issues related to limited access to devices in your online speaking classes?

b. Poor Internet Connectivity

28. How do you handle poor internet connectivity during your online speaking classes?

c. Inadequate Teacher Training

29. How have you prepared yourself to teach speaking skills in an online environment?

d. Low Students' Technological Knowledge

30. How do you support students with limited technological knowledge in your online speaking classes?

8. Time Constraints

a. Large Class Size

31. How do you manage large class sizes in your online speaking classes?

b. Limited Class Time

32. How do you maximize the use of limited class time in your online speaking classes?

c. Limited Feedback and Assessment Time

33. How do you provide feedback and assess students' speaking skills in a timely manner during online classes?

9. Distractions

a. Social Media Notifications

34. How do you address the issue of social media distractions during your online speaking classes?

b. Noisy Environments and Interruptions from Family Members or Pets

35. How do you help students manage noisy environments interruptions from family members or pets during online speaking classes?

c. Presence of electronics (smart phones, social media notifications, …)

36. How do you address the issue of presence of electronics during your online speaking classes?

d. Software Glitches

37. How do you address the issue of software glitches during your online speaking classes?

10. Assessment Challenges

a. Technical Issues: Poor Audio Quality, Connection Problems, and Delays in Streaming

38. How do you handle technical issues related to assessment during your online speaking classes?

b. Limited Non-Verbal Cues

39. How do you assess students' speaking skills in an online environment with limited non-verbal cues?

c. Time Constraints

40. How do you manage time constraints during online speaking assessments?

d. Difficulty in Detecting Spontaneous Speech

41. How do you assess students' ability to produce spontaneous speech in an online setting?

e. Group Assessment Challenges

42. How do you conduct group assessments in your online speaking classes?

f. Ensuring a Fair and Consistent Assessment

43. How do you ensure a fair and consistent assessment of students' speaking skills in an online setting?

g. Difficulties in Monitoring Unauthorized Resources, Assistance from Others, and Plagiarism

44. How do you address the issue of unauthorized resources, assistance from others, and plagiarism in your online speaking classes?

Additional Question: In addition to the strategies we've discussed, what unique approaches or techniques have you found particularly effective in navigating the challenges teachers face while teaching speaking in synchronous online classes?

Thank you for participating in this online interview. Your input and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form (Interviewees)

UU_IC - Version 2.1

Informed Consent Form

Part 1: Debriefing of Participants

Student's Name: Mohamed Elboussairi Salih Elhaj Mohamed

Student's E-mail Address: abubaraa999@gmail.com

Student ID #: R2102D11868461

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Peter Mitchell

University Campus: Unicaf University Zambia (UUZ)

Program of Study: PhD Doctorate of Philosophy

Research Project Title: Investigating University Teachers Roles in Teaching Speaking Skill Online in Saudi Arabia
A Case Study on Jazan University and King Khalid University

Date: 27-Oct-2023

Provide a short description (purpose, aim and significance) of the research project, and explain why and how you have chosen this person to participate in this research (maximum 150 words).

This research aims to enhance online English language teaching, specifically speaking skills, within Saudi universities. It investigates the roles of online English teachers, aiming to raise awareness and identify challenges hindering their effective implementation. The study proposes strategies to overcome these obstacles and highlights the need for further in-depth research to improve online English language teaching practices in Saudi Arabia. To ensure expert insights, an experienced interviewee aged between 30 and 65, who has taught English online for more than 5 years, was meticulously chosen. This selection guarantees professionalism, a thorough grasp of the research goals, and the ability to provide valuable insights that will meaningfully contribute to the study. Importantly, this age range and requisite experience also mitigates any potential ethical concerns associated with working with inexperienced individuals who may not fully comprehend the purpose and implications of the research.

The above named **student** is committed **to** ensuring participant's voluntarily participation in the research project and guaranteeing there are no potential risks and/or harms to the participants.

Participants have the right to withdraw at any stage (prior or post the completion) of the research without any consequences and without providing any explanation. In these cases, data collected will be deleted.

All data and information collected will be coded and will not be accessible to anyone outside this research. Data described and included in dissemination activities will only refer to coded information ensuring beyond the bounds of possibility participant identification.

I, Mohamed Elboussairi Salih Elhaj Mohamed **, ensure that all information stated above is true and that all conditions have been met.**

Student's Signature: _____

UU_IC - Version 2.1

Informed Consent Form

Part 2: Certificate of Consent

This section is mandatory and should to be signed by the participant(s)

Student's Name: Mohamed Elboussairi Salih Elhaj Mohamed

Student's E-mail Address: abubaraa999@gmail.com

Student ID #: R2102D11868461

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Peter Mitchell

University Campus: Unicaf University Zambia (UUZ)

Program of Study: PhD Doctorate of Philosophy

Research Project Title: Investigating University Teachers Roles in Teaching Speaking Skill Online in Saudi Arabia
A Case Study on Jazan University and King Khalid University

I have read the foregoing information about this study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss about it. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions and I have received enough information about this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without negative consequences. I consent to the use of multimedia (e.g. audio recordings, video recordings) for the purposes of my participation in this study. I understand that my data will remain anonymous and confidential, unless stated otherwise. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Participant's Print name:

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: 27-Oct-2023

If the Participant is illiterate:

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had an opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the aforementioned individual has given consent freely.

Witness's Print name:

Witness's Signature: _____

Date: 27-Oct-2023

Appendix E: UREC Decision 1

UNICAF UNIVERSITY

UREC Desision, Version 2.0

Unicaf University Research Ethics Committee Decision

Student's Name: Mohamed Elboussairi Salih Elhaj Mohamed

Student's ID #: R2102D11868461

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Peter Mitchell

Program of Study: UUZ: PhD Doctorate of Philosophy

Offer ID /Group ID: O38432G40211

Dissertation Stage: 1

Research Project Title: Investigating University Teachers' Roles in Teaching Speaking Skill Online in Saudi Arabia - A Case Study on Jazan University and King Khalid University Teachers

Comments: No comments

Decision*: A. Provisionally approved without revision or comments

Date: 08-Aug-2022

*Provisional approval provided at the Dissertation Stage 1, whereas the final approval is provided at the Dissertation stage 3. The student is allowed to proceed to data collection following the final approval.

Appendix F: UREC Decision 2

UNICAF UNIVERSITY

UREC Decision, Version 2.0

Unicaf University Research Ethics Committee Decision

Student's Name: Mohamed Elboussairi Salih Elhaj Mohamed

Student's ID #: R2102D11868461

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Peter Mitchell

Program of Study: UUZ: PhD Doctorate of Philosophy

Offer ID /Group ID: O60047G61520

Dissertation Stage: 3

Research Project Title: Investigating University Teachers' Roles in Teaching Speaking Skill Online in Saudi Arabia. A Case Study on Jazan University and King Khalid University

Comments: No comments.

Decision*: A. Approved without revision or comments

Date: 22-Aug-2023

*Provisional approval provided at the Dissertation Stage 1, whereas the final approval is provided at the Dissertation stage 3. The student is allowed to proceed to data collection following the final approval.

Appendix G: Local Approvals

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ministry of Education
Jazan University
Local Committee for Research Ethics

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم
جامعة جازان
اللجنة المحلية لأخلاقيات البحوث

Local Committee for Research Ethics - Jazan University (HAPO-10-Z-001)	**Reference No.:** REC-46/08/1388
Research Title: Investigating University Teachers' Roles in Teaching Speaking Skills Online in Jazan University.	**Date of decision:** 25 February 2025
Principal Investigator : Mohamed Elboussairi Salih Elhaj Mohamed	**Sponsor:**

The following item [✓] have been received and reviewed in connection with the above study to be conducted by the above investigator.

[✓] Application for Research Ethics Committee approval
[✓] Research proposal/protocol
[✓] Patient Information Sheet & Consent Form
[✓] Questionnaire
[✓] Investigator's CV.

The committee's decision is:

[✓] Approved
[ ] Modification required (item specified below or in a companying letter)
[ ] Rejected (reasons specified below or in a companying letter)

Comments: Investigator is required to:

1. This approval is valid for one year, starting from the date of this letter.
2. Follow the instructions, provisions and requirements of the local committee for research ethics regarding the ethics of medical and biological research.
3. Report any protocol deviation/violations to the Ethics Committee.
4. Provide progress and closure reports to the Ethics Committee.
5. The principal investigator has to contact the responsible person at the research site or the responsible entities for obtaining permission for research implementation and disclosure of the outcomes before publication.

Chairman of
Local Committee for Research Ethics

Dr. ESSAM AL AGEELI

University ▾ Admission ▾ Research ▾ Colleges ▾ KKU Life MyKKU Services

https://www.kku.edu.sa/en/news/105748

King Khalid University Signs Strategic Agreements to Enhance Research, Innovation and Sustainable Development

King Khalid University - General Administration of Institutional Communication 2025-02-12

In line with its ongoing efforts to strengthen academic and research cooperation and support innovation and sustainable development, King Khalid University signed several strategic agreements with prestigious academic, health and research institutions, at the Future Outlook Forum "Universities and Sustainable Development," which the university is hosting to discuss the role of higher education institutions in building a knowledge economy, developing human capital, and developing societies in line with the Saudi Vision 2030 and the Asir Region Strategy "Qimam wa Shiam", which aims to achieve integration between universities and relevant parties to promote innovation and scientific research, and align education outcomes with development requirements, with the participation of an elite group of speakers and experts from within the Kingdom and beyond.

These agreements included a Memorandum of Understanding with Jazan University, aimed at strengthening research cooperation and the exchange of knowledge between the two universities, where the agreement included areas of joint research, supervision of graduate studies theses, exchange of academic visits, and the establishment of joint research training programs, in addition to coordination in organizing scientific events and conferences. The agreement was signed by King Khalid University President, His Excellency Prof. Faleh bin Rajallah Al-Solami, and the President of Jazan University, Prof. Mohammad bin Hassan Abu Raseen.