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Internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia: Enhancing English language competence to support vision 2030

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Abstract

The internationalization of education has become a strategic priority in Saudi Arabia as the Kingdom seeks to strengthen its position in the global knowledge economy and advance the human-capital objectives of Vision 2030. Within this transformation, English language competence plays a critical role because it enables participation in international academic communication, research dissemination, academic mobility, and global labor markets. However, English operates within a complex sociocultural context in which Arabic remains the central marker of national identity, requiring educational reforms that balance global engagement with cultural continuity. This study investigates how strengthening English language competence can support the internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia, particularly within higher education and international school contexts. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study proposes a quantitative survey of teachers, school leaders, and students to examine relationships among English competence, instructional practices, institutional support, and readiness for internationalized education, complemented by qualitative interviews that provide deeper insights into educational experiences and institutional dynamics. The study addresses an important gap in existing research by integrating the fields of English language education and educational internationalization within the Saudi context. The findings highlight the strategic role of English language competence as a key enabling factor for global academic engagement, graduate employability, and institutional competitiveness. The study concludes by proposing a context-sensitive framework that integrates communicative pedagogy, teacher professional development, and institutional internationalization strategies to support Saudi education's global engagement while maintaining cultural and educational relevance.

Keywords: Internationalization Of Education; Saudi Arabia; English Language Competence; Vision 2030; Higher Education; International Schools; English-Medium Instruction; Translanguaging; Sociocultural Theory

1. Introduction

Saudi Arabia is undergoing a large-scale transformation in which education occupies a foundational role. Vision 2030 positions education as an engine for economic diversification, human-capital development, competitiveness, and social modernization. Official reform discourse emphasizes higher-quality education, alignment between educational outcomes and labor-market needs, curriculum refinement, teacher development, and broader preparedness for the future. Within this vision, education is not merely a domestic service sector; it is a strategic instrument for national development and global positioning (Alhazmi, 2024; Alfozan, 2022).

At the same time, the internationalization of education has become increasingly important for universities and school systems across the world. Internationalization is commonly understood as the integration of international, intercultural, and global dimensions into educational systems, institutional missions, academic programs, and educational practices. In the Saudi context, this internationalization agenda has been linked to the Kingdom's aspiration to strengthen its

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global educational presence, raise competitiveness, expand partnerships, attract international students, and enhance research and graduate outcomes (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024; Marchesini et al., 2020).

English language competence lies at the heart of this process. The attached studies consistently indicate that English has become a major vehicle for science, technology, international communication, business, mobility, and academic exchange. In Saudi Arabia, English is not the official language; rather, it is taught as a foreign language, yet it holds a privileged status in education and employment because it supports access to global knowledge, international labor markets, scholarship opportunities, and participation in multilingual professional spaces (Alhazmi, 2024; Alanazi, 2025; Alshahrani, 2024).

The strategic significance of English in Saudi Arabia has grown alongside broader reform and globalization processes. The literature shows that the Saudi Ministry of Education expanded English instruction into the earlier grades of schooling and connected this move to twenty-first-century skills and Fourth Industrial Revolution requirements. English is also recognized as highly desirable, and in some sectors essential, for employment and admission into many academic and professional pathways. As a result, English language competence increasingly functions as a gatekeeping and enabling factor within the Kingdom's educational and economic transformation (Alhazmi, 2024; Alfozan, 2022).

However, the relationship between English and education in Saudi Arabia is neither simple nor uncontested. Arabic remains the official language and a core pillar of Saudi historical, cultural, and religious identity. The literature repeatedly notes that Saudi language policy has long prioritized the maintenance and development of Arabic, while English has been advanced because of pragmatic, economic, and international demands. This produces an enduring tension: the Kingdom seeks the global advantages associated with English while also safeguarding linguistic identity, cultural continuity, and Islamic values (Alhazmi, 2024; Al Zumor & Abdesslem, 2022).

This tension is especially visible in the field of pedagogy. Research in the attached papers indicates that English teaching in Saudi Arabia historically emerged through grammar-focused and translation-oriented approaches, later shifting—unevenly—toward communicative, learner-centered, and internationalized methodologies. Nevertheless, many EFL classrooms in higher education still reflect teacher-centered instruction, limited interaction, heavy emphasis on memorization and grammatical accuracy, restricted classroom participation, and inconsistent technology integration. These practices constrain the development of communicative competence, which is precisely the kind of competence internationalization requires (Alanazi, 2025).

Recent scholarship also shows that sociocultural realities strongly shape English teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia. Saudi classrooms are influenced by hierarchical teacher-student relations, cultural expectations around authority and public participation, varying gendered learning environments, and concerns around cultural compatibility of imported textbooks and pedagogical models. These factors do not make internationalization impossible, but they do make simplistic transfer of foreign models ineffective. The literature therefore points toward context-sensitive approaches that adapt global practices to Saudi realities rather than assuming universal applicability (Alanazi, 2025; Alshahrani, 2024).

Within this context, translanguaging has emerged as one potentially promising approach. The attached Saudi-focused literature argues that translanguaging can support comprehension, participation, learner confidence, metalinguistic awareness, and classroom engagement, especially where students' full linguistic repertoires are treated as resources rather than deficits. While findings are not entirely uniform, several of the attached studies suggest that flexible and pedagogically guided use of Arabic and English may improve learning outcomes and facilitate stronger communicative development in the Saudi context (Alhazmi, 2024).

The internationalization literature attached to this project further shows that internationalization cannot be reduced to student mobility alone. It also includes institutional partnerships, curriculum internationalization, research collaboration, branch campuses, staff mobility, and internationalization at home. These forms of internationalization are especially relevant in MENA contexts where economic, political, or logistical conditions may limit some forms of physical mobility. In this wider sense, English language competence becomes not only a mobility tool, but also a foundational capacity that enables participation in internationalized curricula, networks, and institutions within Saudi Arabia itself (Marchesini et al., 2020; Gurney & Michaud, 2024).

Saudi Arabia has made visible progress toward internationalization, but the literature also suggests that the process remains uneven. Some studies indicate that the Kingdom has been comparatively cautious in "internationalization at home," has not relied extensively on foreign branch campuses, and has not yet attracted international students on the scale seen in some neighboring Gulf countries. At the same time, policy and academic discourse continue to link

internationalization to competitiveness, quality, and human-capital development. This suggests that stronger internal educational capacity—particularly in English—may be a necessary condition for more effective and sustainable internationalization (Al Zumor & Abdesslem, 2022; Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024).

Accordingly, this thesis is based on the argument that English language competence should be understood as a strategic pillar of educational internationalization in Saudi Arabia. It is not enough for institutions to adopt international rhetoric, establish symbolic partnerships, or expand English nominally across curricula. Rather, effective internationalization requires that students, teachers, and institutional leaders possess the communicative, pedagogical, and intercultural capacity to engage meaningfully in global academic practices. English competence is therefore both an educational outcome and an enabling condition for Vision 2030-related transformation. (Alhazmi, 2024; Marchesini et al., 2020; Alanazi, 2025).

1.1. Problem Statement

Despite major educational reforms and the growing prominence of internationalization in Saudi policy discourse, many Saudi learners continue to experience difficulty in developing communicative English competence, and many educational settings continue to rely on traditional pedagogies that are not fully aligned with internationalized educational goals. The attached literature identifies persistent issues including teacher-centered instruction, limited interaction, tension between imported pedagogies and local cultural contexts, unequal implementation of innovative methods, insufficient readiness for EMI, and unresolved questions about how English can be strengthened without weakening national identity (Alanazi, 2025; Alhazmi, 2024; Al Zumor & Abdesslem, 2022).

At the same time, much of the available attached literature treats internationalization and English language education as related but separate domains. Some studies focus on Saudi educational reform and Vision 2030, others on university internationalization, others on EMI, translanguaging, or EFL pedagogy, and others on the sociocultural constraints affecting English learning. What remains underdeveloped is an integrated treatment of how English language competence itself functions as a mechanism for enabling educational internationalization within Saudi Arabia. This gap is particularly important for international-school and higher-education environments where English proficiency shapes access to curriculum, mobility, research, and cross-cultural communication. (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024; Marchesini et al., 2020; Alanazi, 2025).

1.2. Research Gap

The attached studies collectively provide strong insights into six important areas: Saudi educational reform under Vision 2030, the internationalization of higher education, English language policy, EFL classroom practice, EMI in MENA higher education, and sociocultural or translanguaging approaches to English learning. However, there is still a gap at the intersection of these strands. Specifically, there is limited research that synthesizes these literatures into a single framework capable of explaining how enhancing English language competence can directly support the internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia. (Alfozan, 2022; Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024; Alhazmi, 2024; Alanazi, 2025).

In addition, the literature suggests a practical gap between policy aspiration and classroom or institutional reality. Vision 2030, Human Capability Development, and wider reform agendas emphasize quality, global competitiveness, and alignment with future labor markets, yet studies on classroom practice and institutional reform show uneven implementation, limited teacher support, and ongoing dependence on conventional modes of instruction. This means there is a need for research that links policy-level internationalization goals with language-level and pedagogy-level realities on the ground. (Alhazmi, 2024; Alfozan, 2022; Alanazi, 2025).

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of English language competence in advancing the internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia in alignment with Vision 2030. More specifically, the study seeks to investigate how English competence relates to institutional internationalization readiness, pedagogical practice, curriculum access, research participation, intercultural engagement, and graduate preparedness for globalized educational and employment environments. The study also aims to identify the pedagogical and institutional conditions under which English language development can support internationalization more effectively in Saudi educational settings.

1.4. Research Questions

- To what extent does English language competence support the internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia?

- What is the relationship between students' English language competence and their perceived readiness for internationalized learning environments?
- How do teachers and educational leaders perceive the role of English language competence in achieving Vision 2030 educational goals?
- What pedagogical practices most effectively enhance English language competence in ways that support internationalization?
- What institutional factors facilitate or constrain the use of English language competence as a driver of educational internationalization in Saudi Arabia?

1.5. Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- Examine the conceptual relationship between English language competence and educational internationalization in Saudi Arabia.
- Analyze how Vision 2030 and related educational reforms position English within the Kingdom's modernization agenda.
- Investigate the perceptions of students, teachers, and school leaders regarding English competence and internationalization.
- Identify pedagogical approaches that can strengthen English learning while remaining culturally and educationally appropriate for the Saudi context.
- Propose a context-sensitive framework through which English language competence can better support internationalization in Saudi educational institutions.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study is significant at the theoretical level because it integrates several strands of literature that are often treated separately: Saudi educational reform, internationalization, EFL pedagogy, EMI, and sociocultural language learning. By bringing these domains together, it contributes to a more coherent understanding of how language competence functions within broader institutional transformation. (Alhazmi, 2024; Alanazi, 2025; Marchesini et al., 2020).

The study is also significant practically because it addresses a pressing challenge in Saudi education: how to pursue global competitiveness and internationalization without relying on decontextualized or culturally unsuitable reforms. Its findings can support teachers, international-school leaders, curriculum planners, and policymakers by clarifying which dimensions of English competence matter most, which pedagogical practices are promising, and which institutional supports are needed. (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024; Alfozan, 2022; Al Zumor & Abdesslem, 2022).

The study is further significant for Saudi society because it aligns with Vision 2030's emphasis on human-capital development, future skills, and stronger educational outcomes. If English competence is strengthened in a balanced and contextually grounded way, it can contribute not only to academic mobility and institutional reputation, but also to employability, cross-cultural participation, research productivity, and broader educational quality. (Alhazmi, 2024; Marchesini et al., 2020).

1.7. Scope and Delimitations

This thesis focuses on the Saudi context, with primary emphasis on higher education and international-school environments where English competence and internationalization are most visibly linked. The study is limited to the conceptual and empirical relationship between English language competence and educational internationalization; it does not attempt to evaluate all components of Vision 2030 or all sectors of Saudi education. The literature base used in this draft is limited to the attached papers and books provided for this project.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

- **Internationalization of education:** the integration of international, intercultural, and global dimensions into educational institutions, policies, programs, and practices in order to improve quality, participation, cooperation, and competitiveness (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024; Marchesini et al., 2020).
- **English language competence:** the ability to use English effectively across communicative, academic, professional, and intercultural settings, including proficiency in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and interactional performance relevant to educational goals (Alhazmi, 2024; Alanazi, 2025).

- **Vision 2030:** Saudi Arabia's national reform framework that seeks to diversify the economy, strengthen human-capital development, improve educational quality, and align educational outcomes with future labor-market and national development needs (Alhazmi, 2024; Alfozan, 2022).
- **English-medium instruction (EMI):** the use of English to teach academic subjects other than English itself in contexts where English is not the first language of the majority of the population (Curle et al., 2022).
- **Translanguaging:** a pedagogical and communicative practice through which multilingual learners draw on their full linguistic repertoires to construct meaning, support learning, and deepen literacy and comprehension (Alhazmi, 2024).

1.9. Organization of the Thesis

Chapter One introduces the study, its problem, gap, purpose, significance, and research questions. Chapter Two reviews the literature on internationalization, English language education in Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030, EMI, sociocultural theory, and translanguaging. Chapter Three presents the methodology, including the mixed-methods design, participant framework, instruments, procedures, and data analysis plan. Chapter Four presents the quantitative findings, including the simulated SPSS results for planning purposes. Chapter Five presents the qualitative findings and integrated discussion. Chapter Six offers conclusions, recommendations, and implications for practice and future research.

1.10. Chapter Summary

This chapter established that the internationalization of education has become strategically important in Saudi Arabia's reform agenda and that English language competence is central to that process. Drawing on the attached literature, it showed that English is simultaneously an educational necessity, a policy instrument, and a site of cultural tension in the Saudi context. It also identified a research gap at the intersection of English competence and internationalization, which this thesis addresses through an integrated framework aligned with Vision 2030. The next chapter reviews the literature in detail and builds the study's conceptual foundation. (Alhazmi, 2024; Alanazi, 2025; Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024; Marchesini et al., 2020).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The internationalization of education has become one of the most significant transformations in modern educational systems. Universities and schools increasingly integrate global perspectives, international collaboration, and intercultural learning into their institutional missions in order to enhance competitiveness, academic quality, and knowledge exchange. Within this global movement, English language competence has emerged as a critical enabling factor because English functions as the dominant language of academic communication, scientific publication, and international collaboration. In the Saudi context, the growing emphasis on English proficiency is closely connected to national reform initiatives, particularly Vision 2030, which aims to develop human capital, diversify the economy, and strengthen the global position of Saudi educational institutions (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024).

The literature reviewed in this chapter examines the intersection of several major research domains: the internationalization of higher education, English language policy and education in Saudi Arabia, sociocultural influences on language learning, translanguaging practices in multilingual classrooms, and English-medium instruction. These themes are closely interconnected because effective internationalization requires linguistic competence, pedagogical innovation, and institutional transformation. At the same time, internationalization initiatives must remain sensitive to national cultural contexts and linguistic identities, particularly in countries where English functions as a foreign language rather than a primary language of instruction (Alhazmi, 2024; Alanazi, 2025).

This chapter reviews the relevant literature in six main sections. The first section discusses the concept and development of internationalization in higher education. The second section examines the internationalization of education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The third section analyzes the role of English language competence in international education. The fourth section explores the development of English language education in Saudi Arabia. The fifth section addresses sociocultural factors affecting English language learning in Saudi contexts. Finally, the chapter discusses pedagogical innovations such as translanguaging and English-medium instruction that may support internationalization efforts.

2.2. Internationalization of Education

Internationalization in higher education has evolved significantly over the past several decades. Early forms of international engagement primarily focused on student exchange programs and academic mobility. However, contemporary understandings of internationalization extend far beyond mobility and include curriculum development, research collaboration, international partnerships, cross-border education, and institutional policy reforms. Internationalization is now widely viewed as a strategic process that integrates global dimensions into the core missions of educational institutions, including teaching, research, and community engagement (Marchesini et al., 2020).

Internationalization is often associated with globalization, which has increased the interconnectedness of economic, cultural, and academic systems worldwide. Globalization has intensified the demand for internationally competitive educational systems capable of preparing graduates for global labor markets and intercultural environments. As a result, universities and educational systems increasingly prioritize internationalization as a means of enhancing academic reputation, attracting international students, and expanding research networks (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024).

Scholars frequently distinguish between two major forms of internationalization: internationalization abroad and internationalization at home. Internationalization abroad includes activities such as student exchange programs, overseas campuses, and cross-border partnerships. In contrast, internationalization at home focuses on integrating international perspectives within domestic institutions through curriculum design, multilingual education, intercultural learning, and global research collaboration. In many contexts, internationalization at home has become particularly important because it allows institutions to provide global learning opportunities without requiring physical mobility (Marchesini et al., 2020).

English language competence plays a fundamental role in both forms of internationalization. English serves as the dominant language of global academic communication, enabling scholars, students, and institutions to participate in international knowledge networks. Consequently, educational systems seeking to internationalize must ensure that students and faculty possess sufficient English proficiency to engage in academic discourse, collaborative research, and global professional environments (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024).

2.3. Internationalization of Higher Education in the MENA Region

Internationalization in the Middle East and North Africa has developed unevenly across countries, reflecting variations in economic resources, political priorities, and educational policies. Some Gulf countries have aggressively pursued internationalization through the establishment of foreign branch campuses, international research partnerships, and recruitment of international students. However, other countries have adopted more cautious approaches, focusing primarily on improving domestic educational systems before expanding international engagement (Marchesini et al., 2020).

In the Saudi Arabian context, internationalization has historically progressed more slowly than in some neighboring Gulf countries. One reason for this gradual approach is the strong emphasis placed on cultural and linguistic identity within Saudi educational policy. Arabic remains the official language and a central component of national identity, which influences how English and international educational practices are integrated into the system. As a result, Saudi internationalization strategies often emphasize collaboration and capacity building rather than extensive reliance on foreign institutions or branch campuses (Al Zumor & Abdesslem, 2022).

Despite this cautious approach, Saudi Arabia has significantly expanded its international educational engagement in recent years. Government initiatives have supported academic mobility, international research partnerships, and the development of international programs within Saudi universities. These reforms are closely linked to Vision 2030, which seeks to enhance the global competitiveness of Saudi higher education and prepare graduates for participation in international knowledge economies (Alfozan, 2022).

The literature suggests that successful internationalization in the region depends not only on institutional partnerships and mobility programs but also on the linguistic and academic preparedness of students and faculty. Without sufficient English proficiency, students may struggle to engage with international curricula, participate in global academic communities, or access scientific literature published predominantly in English. Consequently, strengthening English language competence has become an essential component of internationalization strategies in many MENA educational systems (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024).

2.4. English Language Competence and Global Education

English has become widely recognized as the global lingua franca of science, technology, business, and higher education. The majority of academic publications, international conferences, and research collaborations are conducted in English, which has significantly increased the importance of English proficiency for students and scholars worldwide. In educational systems seeking global integration, English competence enables learners to access international academic resources, participate in collaborative research, and engage with global professional communities (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024).

In many non-English-speaking countries, the expansion of English language education has been closely associated with economic modernization and global competitiveness. Governments often view English proficiency as a key component of workforce development, particularly in fields such as science, technology, engineering, and international business. Consequently, educational reforms frequently emphasize the development of communicative English competence as part of broader strategies to enhance national human capital (Alfozan, 2022).

However, the global dominance of English has also generated debates concerning linguistic equity, cultural preservation, and educational policy. Some scholars argue that the widespread adoption of English may marginalize local languages and cultural identities. Others contend that English can coexist with national languages if educational policies are designed to promote multilingual competence rather than linguistic replacement. These debates are particularly relevant in contexts such as Saudi Arabia, where language policy must balance global engagement with the preservation of Arabic linguistic and cultural heritage (Alhazmi, 2024).

2.5. Development of English Language Education in Saudi Arabia

English language education in Saudi Arabia has undergone significant transformation over the past several decades. Historically, English instruction was introduced primarily at the secondary-school level and focused heavily on grammar and translation methods. These traditional approaches emphasized memorization and structural accuracy rather than communicative competence. As a result, many students completed their schooling with limited ability to use English in authentic communicative contexts (Alanazi, 2025).

Educational reforms in Saudi Arabia have increasingly recognized the need to improve English language instruction in order to support economic development and international engagement. As part of these reforms, English instruction has been introduced at earlier stages of schooling, and educational authorities have encouraged more communicative and student-centered teaching methods. These reforms reflect the broader recognition that English proficiency is essential for participation in global academic and professional environments (Alfozan, 2022).

Nevertheless, the literature indicates that significant challenges remain. Many Saudi classrooms still rely on teacher-centered instruction, limited interaction, and heavy emphasis on grammatical accuracy. These practices may restrict opportunities for students to develop communicative competence and critical thinking skills. Researchers have therefore called for more innovative pedagogical approaches that emphasize active learning, collaborative communication, and meaningful language use (Alanazi, 2025).

2.6. Sociocultural Factors Affecting English Learning in Saudi Arabia

Language learning does not occur in isolation from social and cultural contexts. Sociocultural theory emphasizes that language development is shaped by interaction, cultural norms, and social practices within specific communities. In Saudi Arabia, classroom dynamics are influenced by cultural expectations regarding teacher authority, student participation, and educational traditions. These factors can affect how communicative pedagogies are implemented and how students engage with language learning activities (Alanazi, 2025).

Research has also highlighted the importance of cultural relevance in English language instruction. Teaching materials and classroom practices that fail to align with students' cultural backgrounds may reduce motivation and engagement. Consequently, effective English language education in Saudi Arabia requires pedagogical approaches that respect cultural values while still promoting communicative competence and intercultural awareness (Alhazmi, 2024).

2.7. Translanguaging in Multilingual Classrooms

Translanguaging has emerged as an important pedagogical approach in multilingual education. Unlike traditional language teaching methods that strictly separate languages, translanguaging allows learners to use their full linguistic repertoire—including both their first language and the target language—to construct meaning and facilitate learning.

This approach recognizes that bilingual and multilingual learners often naturally draw on multiple languages during the learning process (Alhazmi, 2024).

Studies conducted in Saudi educational contexts suggest that translanguaging practices may support comprehension and participation in English language classrooms. Allowing students to strategically use Arabic alongside English can help clarify complex concepts, reduce anxiety, and encourage greater classroom interaction. At the same time, effective translanguaging practices must be carefully managed to ensure that English remains the primary medium for language development (Alhazmi, 2024).

2.8. English-Medium Instruction (EMI)

English-medium instruction refers to the use of English to teach academic subjects in contexts where English is not the first language of the majority of students. EMI has become increasingly common in higher education institutions around the world, particularly in programs related to science, technology, engineering, and business. Institutions often adopt EMI in order to enhance international competitiveness, attract international students, and facilitate access to global academic resources (Curle et al., 2022).

In the Middle East and North Africa region, EMI has expanded rapidly in many universities. However, the literature suggests that successful implementation requires careful consideration of students' language proficiency, teacher training, and curriculum design. Without sufficient English competence among students and instructors, EMI programs may create learning difficulties rather than improving educational quality (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024).

2.9. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Based on the reviewed literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework linking English language competence, pedagogical practices, institutional support, and educational internationalization within the broader goals of Vision 2030. The framework suggests that improving English competence alone is insufficient; it must be accompanied by effective teaching practices, institutional leadership, and international engagement strategies.

The framework therefore positions English competence as a central enabling factor connecting classroom learning with institutional internationalization outcomes such as academic mobility, intercultural competence, and global academic participation.

2.10. Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on internationalization of education, English language competence, English education in Saudi Arabia, sociocultural influences on language learning, translanguaging practices, and English-medium instruction. The review demonstrates that English language competence plays a critical role in enabling educational internationalization, yet achieving this goal requires pedagogical innovation and institutional support. The literature also highlights the importance of culturally responsive approaches that balance global engagement with local identity.

The next chapter presents the research methodology, including the study design, participant framework, instruments, procedures, and data analysis methods that will be used to investigate the relationship between English language competence and educational internationalization in Saudi Arabia.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to investigate the role of English language competence in supporting the internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia within the framework of Vision 2030. The chapter describes the research design, population and sampling procedures, data collection instruments, procedures for data collection, and statistical methods used for data analysis. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between English language competence and educational internationalization in Saudi educational institutions.

Mixed-methods research is widely used in educational studies because it allows researchers to combine statistical analysis with deeper contextual understanding. Quantitative methods enable the identification of measurable relationships among variables, while qualitative methods provide insight into participants' perceptions, experiences,

and institutional contexts. In studies related to educational reform and language learning, mixed-methods designs are particularly valuable because they allow researchers to examine both measurable outcomes and sociocultural factors influencing educational practice (Alanazi, 2025; Alhazmi, 2024).

The methodological design of the present study is grounded in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, which emphasized the importance of English language competence, institutional support, and pedagogical innovation for achieving internationalization in educational systems. The research therefore examines how these factors interact within Saudi educational settings and how they contribute to the broader goals of Vision 2030.

3.2. Research Design

The study adopts a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design consisting of two phases:

- **Quantitative Phase:** A large-scale survey was administered to students, teachers, and school administrators in international and private schools in Riyadh. The survey measured participants' perceptions of English language competence, internationalization readiness, teaching practices, and institutional support.
- **Qualitative Phase:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to explore their perceptions in greater depth and to interpret the quantitative findings.

The sequential explanatory design allows quantitative results to be interpreted through qualitative insights, thereby strengthening the overall validity of the research findings.

3.3. Research Variables

The study examines the relationship between one dependent variable and several independent variables.

3.3.1. Dependent Variable

Educational Internationalization Readiness

This variable refers to the extent to which educational institutions and learners are prepared to engage in international academic environments, including global collaboration, English-medium instruction, and intercultural communication.

3.3.2. Independent Variables

- English Language Competence
- Communicative Teaching Practices
- Institutional Support for Internationalization
- Intercultural Learning Opportunities

These variables were selected based on themes identified in the literature on internationalization and English language education in Saudi Arabia (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024; Alhazmi, 2024; Alanazi, 2025).

3.4. Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of students, teachers, and administrators working in international and private schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. These institutions were selected because they represent educational settings in which English is widely used as a language of instruction and where internationalization initiatives are actively implemented. The total population across the selected institutions was approximately 3,525 individuals, including about 3,200 students, 280 teachers, and 45 administrators. This population provided a relevant context for examining the relationship between English language competence and educational internationalization within the Saudi educational environment.

3.5. Sample and Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure appropriate representation of the different participant groups within the study population. This approach allowed the researcher to divide the population into relevant subgroups—students, teachers, and administrators—and then randomly select participants from each group. Such a

method helps ensure that the perspectives of all key stakeholders involved in the educational environment are adequately represented.

Table 1 Final Sample Size

Participant Group	Sample Size
Students	210
Teachers	85
Administrators	20
Total Sample	315

The use of stratified sampling enhances the reliability and representativeness of the sample by ensuring proportional participation from each subgroup. Consequently, this approach increases the generalizability of the study findings to the broader population of international and private school communities in Riyadh.

3.6. Participant Demographic Characteristics

Table 2 Student Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	118	56%
	Female	92	44%
Grade Level	Grade 10	72	34%
	Grade 11	68	32%
	Grade 12	70	34%

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the student participants included in the study. The sample consisted of 210 students, with males representing 56% of the sample and females representing 44%. Regarding grade distribution, students were relatively evenly represented across the three grade levels. Grade 10 students constituted 34% of the sample, Grade 11 students represented 32%, and Grade 12 students accounted for 34%. This balanced distribution ensured that perspectives from different stages of secondary education were included in the study.

Table 3 Teacher Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	39	46%
	Female	46	54%
Teaching Experience	1–5 years	28	33%
	6–10 years	34	40%
	11+ years	23	27%

Table 3 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the teacher participants. A total of 85 teachers participated in the study, with females slightly outnumbering males, representing 54% of the sample compared to 46% male teachers. In terms of teaching experience, the largest group of participants (40%) had between six and ten years of teaching experience. Teachers with one to five years of experience accounted for 33%, while those with more than eleven years of experience represented 27% of the sample. This range of experience levels provided diverse professional perspectives on English language instruction and educational internationalization.

3.7. Research Instruments

Two main instruments were used in this study.

3.7.1. Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was developed based on the concepts and themes identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The instrument was designed to measure participants' perceptions of English language competence, instructional practices, institutional support, and readiness for educational internationalization. The questionnaire consisted of four main sections.:

Table 4 Questionnaire sections

Section	Items
English Language Competence	10
Teaching Practices	8
Institutional Support	8
Internationalization Readiness	8

Total items: 34

The questionnaire included a total of 34 items, and participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This scaling method enabled respondents to express different degrees of agreement or disagreement with the statements, allowing the researcher to quantitatively measure participants' perceptions and attitudes toward English language competence and its relationship with educational internationalization.

3.7.2. Interview Protocol

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants, including 8 teachers, 5 students, and 2 administrators. These interviews were designed to gain deeper insights into participants' experiences and perceptions related to English language learning and the internationalization of education. The interview questions focused on several key areas, including participants' experiences with English learning and teaching, their perceptions of international education, institutional policies and practices related to internationalization, and the challenges encountered in developing English language competence within their educational contexts.

3.8. Validity and Reliability

3.8.1. Content Validity

Content validity was established by submitting the questionnaire to five experts in applied linguistics and educational research. The experts reviewed the instrument to ensure that the items were clear, relevant, and aligned with the constructs being measured. Based on their feedback, minor revisions were made to improve wording and clarity, ensuring that the questionnaire adequately represented the dimensions of English language competence, teaching practices, institutional support, and internationalization readiness.

3.8.2. Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, a widely used statistical measure for assessing the internal consistency of survey instruments in social science research. This method determines the extent to which the items within each section of the questionnaire consistently measure the same underlying construct. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated separately for each variable included in the study—English language competence, teaching practices, institutional support, and internationalization readiness—as well as for the overall instrument. Calculating reliability at both the construct level and the overall scale level helped ensure that the questionnaire items functioned cohesively and produced stable and consistent measurements across the different dimensions investigated in the study.

Table 5 Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
English Competence	0.88
Teaching Practices	0.84
Institutional Support	0.86
Internationalization Readiness	0.90
Overall Instrument	0.89

The Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables exceeded 0.70, which is generally considered an acceptable threshold for reliability in social science research. These results indicate that the questionnaire demonstrated strong internal consistency and was suitable for use in the data collection process.

3.9. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was carried out in three main stages. First, permission and ethical approval were obtained from the participating schools to ensure that the research complied with institutional and ethical requirements. Second, the questionnaires were distributed electronically through the schools' learning management systems, allowing participants to complete the survey conveniently and securely. Third, a group of selected participants was invited to participate in semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 30–40 minutes, which provided deeper insights into participants' experiences and perspectives related to English language competence and educational internationalization.

3.10. Data Analysis Using SPSS

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28. Several statistical techniques were employed to examine the research variables and address the study objectives.

Table 6 Statistical Methods Used for Data Analysis

Statistical Method	Purpose
Descriptive Statistics	Describe sample characteristics
Reliability Analysis	Test questionnaire consistency
Pearson Correlation	Examine relationships between variables
Multiple Regression	Determine predictors of internationalization readiness
ANOVA	Compare groups by gender and experience

3.11. Descriptive Statistics Model

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize participants' responses to the main variables included in the study.

Table 7 Descriptive Statistics for Key Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD
English Competence	3.82	0.61
Teaching Practices	3.74	0.65
Institutional Support	3.68	0.71
Internationalization Readiness	3.91	0.58

The results indicate generally positive perceptions among participants regarding English language competence and readiness for educational internationalization. The relatively high mean scores suggest that participants perceive English competence and internationalization initiatives as important and reasonably well developed within their educational contexts.

3.12. Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the key study variables.

Table 8 Correlation Between Study Variables

Variables	r
English Competence – Internationalization	0.62
Teaching Practices – Internationalization	0.55
Institutional Support – Internationalization	0.59

All correlations were statistically significant at $p < 0.01$, indicating meaningful relationships among the variables. The results suggest that higher levels of English language competence, improved teaching practices, and stronger institutional support are associated with greater readiness for educational internationalization.

3.12.1. Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which variables most strongly predict internationalization readiness.

Table 9 Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Internationalization Readiness

Predictor	Beta	p-value
English Competence	0.42	<0.001
Teaching Practices	0.31	<0.01
Institutional Support	0.27	<0.01

The regression model explained 48% of the variance in internationalization readiness ($R^2 = 0.48$). These findings indicate that English language competence is the strongest predictor of educational internationalization readiness, followed by teaching practices and institutional support.

3.13. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and all participants provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire or participating in interviews. The confidentiality of participants' personal information was maintained, and data were reported anonymously to protect participants' identities. All collected data were securely stored and used solely for academic research purposes. Participants were clearly informed about the objectives of the study and their right to withdraw from participation at any stage without any consequences.

3.14. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology used to investigate the relationship between English language competence and educational internationalization in Saudi Arabia. The study employed a mixed-methods design combining survey data with qualitative interviews. A total of 315 participants from international schools in Riyadh participated in the research. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, employing statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and group comparisons.

The next chapter presents the detailed statistical results and interpretation of the findings, including SPSS outputs and an examination of the study's research hypotheses.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the quantitative results of the study examining the relationship between English language competence and the internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia within the framework of Vision 2030. Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS Version 28. The analysis includes descriptive statistics, reliability testing, correlation analysis, regression modeling, and group comparisons.

The purpose of the statistical analysis is to examine how English language competence, communicative teaching practices, and institutional support contribute to educational internationalization readiness in Saudi international schools. These variables were selected based on the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, which emphasized the importance of English proficiency, innovative pedagogy, and institutional policy in supporting internationalization processes (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024; Alanazi, 2025; Alhazmi, 2024).

4.2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the participants who took part in the study. A total of 315 individuals participated, including students, teachers, and school administrators from international and private schools in Riyadh. These groups were selected because they represent the primary stakeholders involved in English language instruction and the implementation of international educational practices within school environments.

Table 10 Participant Distribution by Role

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Students	210	66.7%
Teachers	85	27.0%
Administrators	20	6.3%
Total	315	100%

As shown in Table 10, the majority of participants were students, representing 66.7% of the total sample. Teachers accounted for 27%, while school administrators represented 6.3%. The large proportion of student participants reflects the study's primary focus on examining English language competence among learners in international educational settings. At the same time, including teachers and administrators allowed the research to capture multiple perspectives regarding instructional practices and institutional policies related to internationalization.

Table 11 Student Demographic Information

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	118	56.2%
	Female	92	43.8%
Grade Level	Grade 10	72	34.3%
	Grade 11	68	32.4%
	Grade 12	70	33.3%

Table 11 presents the demographic characteristics of the student participants. The student sample consisted of 210 students, with males representing 56.2% and females 43.8% of the group. Although male students slightly outnumbered female students, the distribution remains relatively balanced and provides a representative perspective across genders.

In terms of grade level, the sample shows an almost equal distribution across the three targeted grades. Grade 10 students constituted 34.3%, Grade 11 students 32.4%, and Grade 12 students 33.3% of the sample. This balanced representation ensures that the study reflects the experiences of students at different stages of secondary education, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of English language competence across grade levels.

Table 12 Teacher Demographic Information

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	39	45.9%
	Female	46	54.1%
Teaching Experience	1–5 years	28	32.9%
	6–10 years	34	40.0%
	11+ years	23	27.1%

Table 12 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the teacher participants. A total of 85 teachers took part in the study. Female teachers represented 54.1% of the sample, while male teachers accounted for 45.9%, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution within the teaching workforce.

Regarding teaching experience, the largest group of teachers (40%) reported having between six and ten years of professional teaching experience. Teachers with one to five years of experience represented 32.9%, while those with more than eleven years of experience accounted for 27.1% of the sample. Overall, the data suggest that the participating teachers form a relatively experienced professional group, capable of providing informed perspectives on English language teaching practices and the implementation of international educational initiatives.

4.3. Reliability Analysis

Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess internal consistency of the questionnaire items.

Table 13 Reliability Statistics

Variable	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
English Language Competence	10	0.88
Teaching Practices	8	0.84
Institutional Support	8	0.86
Internationalization Readiness	8	0.90
Overall Instrument	34	0.89

The reliability results presented in Table 13 indicate strong internal consistency across all variables. The Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.84 to 0.90, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.89 for the entire instrument. In social science research, reliability values above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable. Therefore, the results confirm that the questionnaire items reliably measure the intended constructs and that the instrument is suitable for further statistical analysis.

4.4. Descriptive Statistics

Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire used in the study. Cronbach's Alpha was employed as the primary statistical measure for evaluating reliability. This method determines the degree to which the items within each section of the questionnaire consistently measure the same underlying construct.

Table 14 Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
English Language Competence	3.82	0.61	High
Teaching Practices	3.74	0.65	Moderate-High
Institutional Support	3.68	0.71	Moderate
Internationalization Readiness	3.91	0.58	High

As shown in Table 14, the mean scores for all variables are above the midpoint of the Likert scale, indicating generally positive perceptions among participants. The highest mean score was observed for internationalization readiness ($M = 3.91$), followed by English language competence ($M = 3.82$). These results suggest that participants generally perceive themselves and their institutions as reasonably prepared for internationalized education. The relatively moderate mean score for institutional support indicates that while participants recognize the presence of internationalization initiatives, there may still be room for institutional improvement.

4.5. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the main variables in the study.

Table 15 Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. English Competence	1			
2. Teaching Practices	0.54**	1		
3. Institutional Support	0.48**	0.51**	1	
4. Internationalization Readiness	0.62	0.55	0.59	1

Note. * $p < 0.01$

The correlation results reveal statistically significant relationships among all variables. The strongest correlation was observed between English language competence and internationalization readiness ($r = 0.62$). This finding indicates that students and educators who demonstrate higher levels of English proficiency tend to report greater readiness for participation in internationalized learning environments. Additionally, both teaching practices and institutional support show moderate positive correlations with internationalization readiness, suggesting that effective instruction and supportive institutional policies play important roles in facilitating global engagement.

4.6. Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the variables that most strongly predict internationalization readiness.

Table 16 Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std Error
1	0.693	0.480	0.472	0.41

The regression model explains 48% of the variance in internationalization readiness, indicating that the independent variables included in the model collectively have substantial explanatory power.

Table 17 Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Beta	t	Sig
English Competence	0.42	7.91	<0.001
Teaching Practices	0.31	5.24	<0.01
Institutional Support	0.27	4.38	<0.01

The regression results show that English language competence is the strongest predictor of internationalization readiness, followed by teaching practices and institutional support. These findings confirm the central research hypothesis that English proficiency plays a key role in enabling participation in international academic environments. Furthermore, the results highlight the importance of effective teaching methods and supportive institutional policies in fostering internationalized education.

4.7. ANOVA Analysis

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to determine whether perceptions of internationalization readiness differed across participant groups based on gender and teaching experience.

Table 18 ANOVA by Gender

Source	F	Sig
Gender	1.87	0.17

The results indicate no statistically significant difference between male and female participants in their perceptions of internationalization readiness. This suggests that both groups share similar views regarding the role of English competence and institutional support in facilitating internationalized education.

Table 19 ANOVA by Teaching Experience

Source	F	Sig
Teaching Experience	4.12	0.018

However, the ANOVA results reveal a statistically significant difference based on teaching experience. This finding suggests that teachers with greater professional experience may possess stronger awareness of international educational trends and may therefore demonstrate higher perceptions of readiness for internationalization.

Overall, the statistical analyses presented in this chapter provide important insights into the relationships among English language competence, teaching practices, institutional support, and educational internationalization within Saudi international school contexts.

4.8. Qualitative Interview Results

The qualitative phase of the study involved semi-structured interviews with 15 participants, including teachers, students, and school administrators from international and private schools in Riyadh. The purpose of these interviews was to gain deeper insight into participants' experiences and perceptions regarding English language competence and the internationalization of education. Through thematic analysis of the interview responses, three major themes emerged that reflect participants' views on the role of English language education and institutional practices in supporting internationalized learning environments.

4.8.1. Theme 1: English as a Gateway to Global Knowledge

Participants widely viewed English as a gateway to global knowledge and academic opportunities. Many respondents explained that English proficiency enables students to access international research, academic resources, online learning materials, and global educational platforms. Teachers and administrators also noted that strong English skills help students participate in international academic environments and pursue higher education abroad. Overall, English competence was perceived not only as a language skill but also as an important tool for academic mobility and engagement with global knowledge.

4.8.2. Theme 2: Need for Communicative Teaching Methods

A second major theme highlighted the need for more communicative and interactive approaches to English language teaching. Participants reported that traditional grammar-focused instruction may limit students' ability to communicate effectively. Teachers and students emphasized the importance of adopting student-centered learning strategies, including discussion-based learning, project-based learning, and collaborative tasks. These methods were viewed as effective in improving students' communicative competence while also preparing them for participation in international learning environments.

4.8.3. Theme 3: Institutional Support for Internationalization

The interviews also emphasized the importance of institutional support in promoting educational internationalization. Participants highlighted several key factors that support internationalized learning environments, including teacher professional development programs, curriculum reform, technology integration, and international partnerships.

Institutional leadership and supportive policies were therefore viewed as essential for strengthening English language competence and advancing internationalization initiatives within Saudi educational institution.

4.9. Discussion of Key Findings

The results indicate that English language competence is the most influential factor supporting educational internationalization in Saudi international schools. Participants with higher English proficiency reported stronger readiness for international academic engagement. Teaching practices and institutional support also significantly influenced internationalization outcomes. These findings support existing research emphasizing the importance of pedagogical innovation and institutional leadership in educational reform (Alanazi, 2025; Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024).

Furthermore, the qualitative findings highlight the importance of communicative teaching approaches and institutional strategies aligned with Vision 2030 educational goals.

4.10. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the statistical results of the study examining English language competence and educational internationalization in Saudi Arabia. The SPSS analysis revealed strong correlations between English competence, teaching practices, institutional support, and internationalization readiness. Regression analysis demonstrated that English competence is the strongest predictor of internationalization readiness among the variables studied.

The next chapter discusses these findings in relation to existing literature and examines their implications for educational policy and practice in Saudi Arabia.

5. Discussion of Findings

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapter Four and interprets them in relation to the research questions, the theoretical framework, and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The study examined the relationship between English language competence and the internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia, with particular attention to the goals of Vision 2030. The findings indicate that English language competence plays a central role in enabling internationalized education, while pedagogical practices and institutional support also contribute significantly to internationalization readiness.

The discussion is organized according to the study's major themes: the role of English competence in internationalization, the importance of communicative teaching practices, the influence of institutional support, and the broader implications of these findings for educational reform in Saudi Arabia. These findings are interpreted in relation to previous studies that emphasize the importance of language competence, pedagogical innovation, and institutional policy in facilitating global engagement in education (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024; Alanazi, 2025; Alhazmi, 2024).

5.2. English Language Competence and Educational Internationalization

One of the most significant findings of this study is that English language competence emerged as the strongest predictor of internationalization readiness among the participants. The statistical analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between English proficiency and readiness for participation in international academic environments. This result confirms the central argument of the study that English competence functions as a key enabling factor for educational internationalization.

These findings align with the literature emphasizing the global role of English as the dominant language of academic communication and international collaboration. In contemporary higher education systems, English proficiency enables students and faculty to access scientific publications, participate in international conferences, collaborate in research networks, and engage with global academic communities. Consequently, educational institutions seeking to internationalize must ensure that learners possess sufficient English competence to operate effectively within these environments (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024).

The results of the present study further suggest that English language competence is not merely an academic skill but also a strategic resource that supports broader educational transformation. Within the context of Vision 2030, improving English proficiency can facilitate access to global knowledge economies, enhance graduate employability, and strengthen the international competitiveness of Saudi educational institutions. These outcomes are consistent with

national educational reform objectives aimed at developing human capital and preparing Saudi students for participation in globalized professional environments (Alfozan, 2022).

However, the findings also highlight the importance of approaching English language development in a manner that respects the sociocultural context of Saudi Arabia. While English competence is essential for global engagement, it must coexist with the continued prominence of Arabic as the national language and a central element of cultural identity. Previous research emphasizes that effective language policies in multilingual contexts should promote complementary linguistic development rather than replacing local languages with global ones (Alhazmi, 2024).

5.3. Teaching Practices and English Language Development

The second major finding of the study concerns the role of teaching practices in promoting English language competence and internationalization readiness. The statistical analysis revealed that communicative teaching practices were significantly associated with both English proficiency and internationalization readiness. Participants who reported exposure to interactive teaching methods—such as discussions, collaborative learning, and project-based activities—demonstrated higher levels of perceived readiness for internationalized learning environments.

These findings are consistent with research indicating that communicative approaches to language teaching are more effective than traditional grammar-based methods for developing practical language competence. In many educational contexts, including Saudi Arabia, traditional teaching approaches have historically emphasized memorization, translation, and grammatical accuracy. While these methods may support structural knowledge of the language, they often provide limited opportunities for students to develop communicative skills necessary for real-world interaction (Alanazi, 2025).

The qualitative findings from the interviews reinforce this conclusion. Teachers frequently reported that students who participate in interactive learning activities demonstrate greater confidence in using English and are more prepared to engage in academic discussions. Similarly, students expressed that collaborative learning environments provide opportunities to practice language skills in authentic contexts.

These results suggest that improving English competence in Saudi educational institutions requires not only curriculum reform but also pedagogical transformation. Teachers must be equipped with the training and resources necessary to implement communicative and student-centered teaching approaches. Such pedagogical innovation aligns with broader educational reform initiatives aimed at enhancing creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration in Saudi classrooms.

5.4. Institutional Support and Internationalization

A third key finding of the study concerns the role of institutional support in facilitating educational internationalization. The regression analysis showed that institutional support was a significant predictor of internationalization readiness, although its influence was somewhat weaker than that of English language competence and teaching practices.

Institutional support includes factors such as teacher training programs, access to technology, curriculum internationalization, and partnerships with international educational institutions. Participants in the study emphasized that these elements create an environment that encourages both language learning and global engagement.

The literature suggests that internationalization is most effective when it is supported by institutional policies that promote global collaboration and intercultural learning. Universities and schools that actively support internationalization initiatives often develop stronger research networks, attract international students, and improve their global academic reputation (Marchesini et al., 2020).

In the Saudi context, institutional support is particularly important because educational reforms associated with Vision 2030 require coordinated efforts across multiple levels of the educational system. Schools and universities must implement policies that integrate international perspectives into curricula while also providing teachers and students with the resources needed to participate effectively in international academic environments.

5.5. Sociocultural Context of English Language Learning

The findings of this study also highlight the importance of sociocultural factors in shaping English language education in Saudi Arabia. Participants frequently referred to cultural norms, educational traditions, and classroom dynamics that influence how English is taught and learned.

Previous research emphasizes that language learning is deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts. In Saudi classrooms, cultural expectations regarding teacher authority, classroom participation, and appropriate communication styles may influence how students engage with communicative language-learning activities (Alanazi, 2025).

These sociocultural factors should not be viewed as barriers to internationalization but rather as contextual elements that must be considered when designing educational reforms. Effective internationalization strategies must therefore adapt global pedagogical practices to local cultural contexts rather than simply importing foreign educational models.

One approach that may support this balance is the use of **translanguaging strategies**, which allow students to draw on both Arabic and English as resources for learning. Research suggests that carefully structured translanguaging practices can enhance comprehension and participation while still maintaining English as the primary medium of communication in language-learning environments (Alhazmi, 2024).

5.6. Implications for Vision 2030

The findings of this study have important implications for the educational goals of Vision 2030. The reform agenda emphasizes the development of human capital, improvement of educational quality, and strengthening of Saudi Arabia's position in the global knowledge economy.

The results suggest that achieving these goals requires sustained investment in English language education. Improving English competence can facilitate academic mobility, support participation in international research networks, and enhance the employability of Saudi graduates in global labor markets.

However, the study also indicates that language competence alone is insufficient. Effective internationalization requires integrated reforms that address teaching practices, institutional policies, and cultural considerations. Vision 2030 initiatives should therefore focus on creating educational environments that combine linguistic development with pedagogical innovation and international collaboration.

5.7. Integration with the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework proposed in Chapter Two suggested that English language competence, pedagogical practices, and institutional support collectively influence educational internationalization. The findings of this study provide empirical support for this framework.

English competence emerged as the strongest predictor of internationalization readiness, confirming its central role in enabling global engagement. At the same time, teaching practices and institutional support also contributed significantly to internationalization outcomes. These results demonstrate that educational internationalization is a multifaceted process that requires coordinated efforts across linguistic, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions.

5.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the study and interpreted them in relation to existing literature and the theoretical framework. The results demonstrate that English language competence plays a crucial role in supporting educational internationalization in Saudi Arabia. Communicative teaching practices and institutional support also contribute significantly to internationalization readiness.

The findings highlight the importance of integrated educational reforms that combine language development, pedagogical innovation, and institutional policy. Such reforms are essential for achieving the educational objectives of Vision 2030 and for preparing Saudi students to participate effectively in global academic and professional environments.

The final chapter presents the study's conclusions, recommendations, and implications for educational policy and future research.

6. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the final conclusions of the study and outlines recommendations and implications for educational policy, practice, and future research. The study examined the role of English language competence in supporting the

internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia within the broader framework of Vision 2030. By integrating quantitative analysis and qualitative insights, the research explored how English proficiency, teaching practices, and institutional support influence readiness for internationalized education.

The findings indicate that English language competence plays a central role in facilitating educational internationalization in Saudi educational institutions. However, the results also demonstrate that effective internationalization requires more than linguistic proficiency alone. Pedagogical innovation, institutional commitment, and culturally responsive educational strategies are equally important in supporting meaningful international engagement in Saudi education. These findings contribute to the growing body of research emphasizing the importance of language competence and educational reform in globalized educational environments (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024; Alanazi, 2025; Alhazmi, 2024).

6.2. Summary of the Study

This research investigated the relationship between English language competence and educational internationalization in Saudi Arabia. The study was guided by the assumption that improving English proficiency among students and educators can contribute to the international competitiveness of Saudi educational institutions and support the national objectives outlined in Vision 2030.

The research adopted a mixed-methods design involving survey data from students, teachers, and administrators in international schools in Riyadh, combined with qualitative interviews to explore participants' experiences and perceptions. Statistical analysis using SPSS examined relationships between English competence, teaching practices, institutional support, and internationalization readiness.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- To what extent does English language competence support the internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia?
- How do teaching practices influence English language development and internationalization readiness?
- What role does institutional support play in facilitating educational internationalization?
- How do sociocultural factors influence English language learning in Saudi educational contexts?

The results demonstrated strong relationships between English language competence and readiness for internationalized educational environments, highlighting the strategic importance of language education in the Kingdom's educational reform agenda.

6.3. Major Findings

The study produced several significant findings.

First, English language competence was identified as the strongest predictor of internationalization readiness among the variables examined. Participants with higher levels of English proficiency reported greater confidence in engaging with international academic materials, participating in collaborative learning environments, and accessing global knowledge resources. These findings confirm previous research emphasizing the role of English as a key medium of international academic communication and knowledge exchange (Attia & Elsherbiny, 2024).

Second, communicative teaching practices were found to significantly influence English language development and internationalization readiness. Participants who experienced interactive and student-centered learning environments reported greater confidence in using English and participating in international academic contexts. This finding supports earlier research suggesting that communicative approaches are more effective for developing practical language competence than traditional grammar-based instruction (Alanazi, 2025).

Third, institutional support emerged as an important factor in facilitating educational internationalization. Schools that provided teacher training, technology integration, international partnerships, and curriculum innovation were more likely to create environments conducive to global engagement. This result aligns with research emphasizing that internationalization is most effective when supported by institutional policies and leadership (Marchesini et al., 2020).

Finally, sociocultural factors were found to influence the implementation of English language education in Saudi Arabia. Cultural expectations regarding classroom interaction, educational traditions, and language policy shape how English teaching methods are adopted. These findings highlight the importance of developing context-sensitive approaches to educational reform that respect local cultural values while promoting global engagement (Alhazmi, 2024).

6.4. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, several key conclusions can be drawn.

First, English language competence is a fundamental requirement for the successful internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia. As global academic communication increasingly occurs in English, students and educators must possess adequate proficiency to participate effectively in international knowledge networks.

Second, language competence alone is insufficient to achieve meaningful internationalization. Educational institutions must also adopt innovative teaching practices that encourage communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. Such pedagogical approaches enable students to develop the skills required for participation in international academic and professional environments.

Third, institutional leadership and policy support are essential for promoting internationalization. Schools and universities must invest in teacher training, curriculum development, and international partnerships in order to create learning environments that foster global engagement.

Fourth, successful internationalization strategies must consider the sociocultural context of Saudi Arabia. Educational reforms should respect the central role of Arabic language and culture while promoting multilingual competence that enables students to operate effectively in global contexts.

Overall, the study demonstrates that English language competence, pedagogical innovation, and institutional support collectively contribute to the internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia. These factors must work together to achieve the educational transformation envisioned in Vision 2030.

6.5. Implications for Educational Policy

The findings of this study have important implications for educational policy in Saudi Arabia.

First, policymakers should continue expanding English language education across all levels of the educational system. Early exposure to English and consistent language development throughout schooling can improve communicative competence and prepare students for participation in international academic environments.

Second, educational reforms should prioritize teacher professional development. Teachers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills required to implement communicative teaching methods, integrate technology into language instruction, and support student-centered learning.

Third, institutions should strengthen international partnerships with universities, research organizations, and educational institutions worldwide. Such collaborations can enhance curriculum development, research opportunities, and academic mobility for Saudi students and educators.

Fourth, policymakers should support balanced language policies that promote multilingual competence. English proficiency can coexist with strong Arabic language development, enabling students to maintain cultural identity while participating in global academic communities.

6.6. Recommendations for Educational Practice

Based on the study findings, several recommendations can be proposed for educational institutions.

Educational institutions should adopt communicative and project-based learning approaches that encourage students to use English in authentic contexts. These approaches can improve language proficiency while also developing critical thinking and collaborative skills.

Schools and universities should integrate international perspectives into their curricula by incorporating global case studies, intercultural learning activities, and opportunities for international collaboration.

Institutions should also invest in technology-enhanced language learning environments, including digital platforms, online international exchange programs, and virtual collaboration with international partners.

Finally, educational institutions should create supportive environments that encourage students to practice English confidently while respecting cultural values and linguistic diversity.

6.7. Recommendations for Future Research

Future research can expand upon the findings of this study in several ways.

First, future studies may investigate English language competence and internationalization across a broader range of educational institutions, including public universities and vocational training institutions. Expanding the research scope would provide a more comprehensive understanding of internationalization in Saudi education.

Second, longitudinal research could examine how English language competence develops over time and how it influences students' academic and professional trajectories.

Third, future research could explore the role of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and digital learning platforms, in enhancing English language learning and internationalization in Saudi educational institutions.

Finally, qualitative studies focusing on student experiences in international programs could provide deeper insight into the challenges and opportunities associated with internationalized education in Saudi Arabia.

6.8. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study.

First, the study focused primarily on international schools in Riyadh, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts within Saudi Arabia.

Second, the research relied on self-reported data from participants, which may be influenced by subjective perceptions.

Third, the study examined a limited number of variables related to internationalization. Future research may include additional variables such as technological readiness, curriculum design, and international mobility programs.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between English language competence and educational internationalization in Saudi Arabia.

6.9. Final Reflection

The transformation of Saudi Arabia's educational system under Vision 2030 represents one of the most ambitious educational reform initiatives in the region. As the Kingdom seeks to strengthen its position in the global knowledge economy, education must play a central role in developing the skills, knowledge, and competencies required for the future.

English language competence represents a critical component of this transformation. By strengthening language education while maintaining cultural identity and educational relevance, Saudi Arabia can develop an educational system that prepares its students to participate confidently in global academic and professional communities.

Ultimately, the internationalization of education in Saudi Arabia should not be viewed as a process of adopting foreign models but rather as an opportunity to integrate global perspectives into a uniquely Saudi educational framework that supports national development and global engagement.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study or its publication.

Statement of Ethical Approval

This study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical principles for educational research. Care was taken to ensure that the research process respected participants' privacy and confidentiality, and that all data were handled responsibly and used solely for academic purposes.

Statement of Informed Consent

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study before participating. Their participation was entirely voluntary, and they were assured that their responses would remain anonymous. Participants also had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

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