Shaping English Language Policies in Academia: Female Saudi English as a Foreign Language Learners' Perspectives

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Abstract

English in Saudi Arabia is an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context which offers very limited opportunities for language practice. The literature suggests that English education in Saudi higher education suffers from weaknesses in English language learning outcomes, leading researchers to explore ways to mitigate this concern. Hence, English language policies (ELPs) can play a significant role in compensating for the lack of limited language practice opportunities outside the classroom and within academic settings. Therefore, this study addresses the necessity of introducing ELPs in academia from learners' perspectives. A mixed method approach was employed to collect data using an online survey ($n = 257$) and semi-structured interviews ($n = 10$). The participants were female Saudi EFL learners undertaking undergraduate and post-graduate academic programs in Saudi higher education English departments. The main findings of the study suggest that ELPs do not exist in these departments, and that students are highly motivated to engage in designing these policies. The implications of this study are also discussed.

Keywords: EFL, English language policies, Higher education, Language use, Student views, Female students

1. Introduction

English has rapidly become a worldwide *lingua franca* (Alcaraz & Navarro, 2006; Meierkord, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2005), and many countries have put great emphasis on including English in their cultures. In non-English-speaking countries, for example, English competes with national languages to an extent that has led to the emergence of language policies governing language usage (Elyas & Badawood, 2016; Payne & Almansour, 2014). In an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educational setting, there is a need to create a learning environment that offers plenty of opportunities for language practice, especially when such contexts are likely to lack features that are known for their positive impact on language learning (Alshammari, 2011; Dinh, 2021). For language learners, as well as educational institutions, mastery of English is seen as being of particular importance, and therefore, stimulating learners' motivation to develop their linguistic skills is needed. Current studies on English language polices have addressed this topic *within* the boundaries of the classroom (Alsuhaibani, 2015), and few studies have looked beyond that (i.e. outside the domain of the classroom and within the broader domain of academic institutions). It can be argued that learners' engagement in decision-making concerning their own learning can promote active learning. Consequently, allowing them to express their views on how English language policies (ELPs) should be situated within their academic vicinity may help to create an encouraging environment that is designed according to learners' expectations. Therefore, the current study aims to explore female EFL learners' views on how ELPs ought to be designed. Exploring this area can provide policymakers with insights into learners' expectations concerning language policies and language practice needs beyond the domain of the classroom.

2. Background

2.1 Language Policies: An Overview

Language policies in any community may emerge to govern language restrictions and boundaries, or even serve different marginal purposes; therefore, different policies have different classifications. These classifications involve the authoritative body that proposes the policies, the purposes for which they are designed to achieve, and the manner in which they are documented (Johnson, 2013). The classification of language polices can be in accordance with their genesis, in terms of whether they were created from a higher authority and passed down to lower communities (i.e. top-down policies), or vice versa (bottom-up policies). On the one hand, top-down policies are expected to be adhered to and they are seen as very formal, while the other type, bottom-up policies, emerge from smaller communities and remain flexible in terms of adherence (Gaspard, 2018). Occasionally, bottom-up policies emerge as a reaction to top-down policies, reflecting disapproval and opposition to them and the need for their revision (Dolowy-Rybinska & Ratajczak, 2021). Moreover, language policies can be classified according to whether they are *covert* or *overt*. Overt polices are explicit, documented, and announced to the public, while covert policies tend to be implicit and may be concealed from the public (Johnson, 2013). The foregoing discussion is relevant

to the current study in that ELPs in academia, from EFL learners' perspectives, can be either bottom-up or top-down and can be covert or overt.

ELPs in the Saudi context have received much attention in recent years (e.g. Alnasser, 2022a; Alnasser, 2018a; Alnasser, 2018b; Elyas & Badawood, 2016; Payne & Almansour, 2014), and the literature suggests that existing policies are implicit in nature. For instance, English is the language of instruction in many disciplines (such as medicine and administration), even though the main legislative document in the Saudi higher education system does not state that this should be so. Furthermore, a study by Almoaily and Alnasser (2019) revealed that the Saudi higher education system, including the English departments, does not have official (overt) policies governing language use in the institutional domain and inside the classroom. Their study showed that ELPs exist implicitly with no governance, and they seem to exist because a large proportion of academic faculty members obtained their degrees from Western and European countries, and the use of English for communication purposes became a sort of habitual practice (Alnasser, 2018a). In general, one may be puzzled about how to classify the current language policies in the Saudi context, since the existing policies are neither top-down nor bottom-up, and are implicit in nature; nevertheless, new policies can be introduced to serve main educational goals such as improving learners' English language competence skills.

2.2 EFL and Saudi Higher Education

Learners in an EFL context are likely to share the same mother tongue, educational background, and culture. Additionally, exposure to the foreign language is mainly offered by language instructors, and in contrast to English as a second language (ESL) contexts, English is exposed frequently by instructors and the surrounding culture (Alsuhaibani, 2015; Dimitroff, Dimitroff & Alhashimi, 2018). Such a lack of exposure urges the need for more interactional exposure to the foreign language rather than simply monitoring the learning of language vocabulary and grammar (Alshammari, 2011). A higher-order concern in EFL contexts is that learners need educators' attention regarding their continuous motivation to improve linguistic competence (Alshammari, 2011; Dinh, 2021). Any observer in the Saudi context would find these characteristics to be rather evident.

Saudi EFL classrooms have another archetypal feature in which teachers seem to have full dominance in the classroom (Alnasser, 2022b). It is argued that learning systems in EFL contexts are likely to be highly tradition-oriented cultures associated with high levels of distance between teachers and learners (Chan, 2018). Learners in the Saudi context are seen amid an environment where teachers are treated with a high level of reverence, with the relationship between students and their instructors being very formal. Additionally, classroom discourse is seen to be unidirectional, where learners receive instructions and teachings from their instructors (Yaseen, Shakir & Mansor, 2016), all of which may not facilitate interactive situations for effective language practice.

The Saudi educational system does not distinguish between male and female students but does segregate them (Nicolás-Conesa, Manchon & Cerezo, 2019; Saito, 2019). The single-sex education system in the country extends to the learning and teaching processes in

classrooms (Saito, 2019). In these classrooms, instructors commonly rely on the first language to convey meaning and support their teaching. This has had adverse impacts on English language learning because it undermines learners' communicative competence by minimising their language exposure level, thus giving them little opportunity to communicate in English (Dmitrieva, 2019). Lee and Du (2020) assert that practising the target language in the classroom is particularly important for the development of linguistic competence.

An investigation by Illes and Akcan (2017) on the impact of facilitating sufficient English language practice opportunities revealed that offering students more opportunities can lead to higher motivation for language use, especially when these opportunities stimulate *spontaneous* language usage. They argue that spontaneity in language use can lead to linguistic creativity beyond the education received in the classroom, simply because these situations push for learner linguistic experimentation without constraints, which forms a step in language acquisition (Illes & Akcan, 2017). Larsen-Freeman (2007: 783) holds that 'it is not that you learn something and then you use it, nor is it that you use something and learn it. Instead, it is in using that you learn—they are inseparable', which emphasises the process of language learning (that involves language use) rather than the product of the language. Waring (2013) and Illes and Akcan (2017) hold that free use of a foreign language promotes recall of knowledge already learned in the class along with the influence of speakers' personal constructs to communicate intended messages. Without doubt, EFL learners require various opportunities to interact using English, especially opportunities that resemble real-life situations and needs (Markee, 2005). Maybin and Swann (2007) argue that EFL learners require language use opportunities outside the domain of the classroom to allow free language use that can prompt instant decisions and activate prior knowledge and metalinguistic skills. Cook (2000: 199) further asserts that ludic language use can 'broaden the range of permitted interactional patterns'. Free interactional use of language can be enjoyable and, therefore, can promote deeper engagement with the language and result in rich language use.

2.3 Situating ELPs in EFL Contexts

The foregoing discussion suggests that the Saudi context lacks sufficient opportunities for English language practice owing to the typical nature of an EFL context. The literature offers studies examining ELPs within the domain of the classroom to regulate language use and therefore offer more opportunities for language practice (e.g. Alnasser & Almoaily, 2022). Nonetheless, EFL learners do not spend most of their time inside the classroom; they often have communicative encounters outside the classroom that are still within the parameters of the educational institution. These encounters are seen as opportunities for 'free' English language practice that may resemble *real-life* language use. As pointed out earlier, free use of language and real-life situations can be rather motivating and beneficial for linguistic competence (Waring, 2013; Illes & Akcan, 2017). Since EFL contexts tend to lack the advantage of offering learners with authentic communicative situations for language use, ELPs can bridge the gap within the context to achieve the purpose of creating various opportunities for language use. The views of EFL learners on their expectations regarding the nature of ELPs can illuminate the ideal setting that would stimulate their linguistic behaviour.

3. Method

The current study investigated female Saudi EFL learners' views regarding enforcing ELPs in their English departments and beyond the domain of the classroom. Therefore, the context of this study is Saudi higher education. To better serve the purpose of the study, both undergraduate and post-graduate female students undertaking academic programmes in areas related to English language were targeted to participate. A mixed method approach was adopted for data collection, and quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. A nine-item electronic survey was disseminated across English departments in Saudi higher education institutions, and 257 female EFL students responded. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with 10 students were conducted (see Table 1 for their characteristics), in which four interview questions were answered. The purpose of the study was explained at the beginning of both the survey and the interviews, and their consent to participate in the study was obtained. It was made clear to them that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any point while assuring the confidentiality of their data. A final remark to make here is that it was not possible to involve male students in the study owing to some cultural issues prevented access to them at the time of data collection.

Table 1. Interviewees' characteristics

Interviewee code	Sex	Current study level (BA, MA, PhD)	Years of practice with English	Code of Institution	Additional comments
1	Female	PhD	13	KSU	Applied Linguistics student
2	Female	MA	6	KSU	Theoretical Linguistics student
3	Female	BA	4	PNU	English and Translation major student
4	Female	MA	7	KSU	Theoretical Linguistics student
5	Female	MA	6	KSU	Theoretical Linguistics student
6	Female	BA	4	KSU	English Literature major student
7	Female	MA	6	KSU	Applied Linguistics student
8	Female	MA	10	AU	Aljouf University Lecturer and a PhD student
9	Female	BA	10	QU	Translation BA student
10	Female	BA	10	QU	Translation BA student

The study addressed the following research question:

- *From female Saudi EFL learners' perspectives, what are the theoretical underpinnings behind introducing ELPs in academic English departments?*

4. Results

The following section presents the results obtained from the survey and interviews.

4.1 Survey: Items

4.1.1 My Department Has ELPs

In response to this item, a proportion of the participants (29.57%) either strongly agreed (8.95%) or agreed (20.62%) that ELPs existed in their departments (Table 2). However, a slightly larger proportion (30.74%) reported being neutral, reflecting their uncertainty about the existence of such policies. Another larger proportion (39.69%) either strongly disagreed (13.23%) or disagreed (26.46%) to the given statement, indicating the non-existence of these policies in their domains. Here, it can be said that the majority of participants (70.43%) had not witnessed any ELPs being practiced in their academic departments. It is likely that some English departments in Saudi Arabia do not have ELPs, and it is possible that there are other departments that may have implicit policies which are not announced to students clearly, in addition to the possibility that members of the departments are not committed to abiding by them; therefore, they are unknown to the academic community.

Table 2. The existence of ELPs

Scale	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	23	8.95%
Agree	53	20.62%
Neutral	79	30.74%
Disagree	68	26.46%
Strongly disagree	34	13.23%
Total	257	100%

4.1.2 English Departments Should Have ELPs Governing Language Use

As for the need for ELPs in English departments to govern language use, the majority of participants (63.82%) supported this notion (23.74% strongly agreed and 40.08% agreed), indicating their interest in practising such policies in their academic domain (Table 3). Of these, 24.90% were uncertain about having language policies; such hesitation can be an indicator of their lack of experience in the nature of such policies and how they would impact their academic environment. It is possible that this proportion can shift their stances to become more positive if it were clearly explained to them what purpose the ELPs would serve. Interestingly, only a small proportion of the participants (11.28%) did not agree with this notion. The overall results here suggest that the majority of participants advocate enforcing language policies in their departments, while such policies can create a more

organised and attractive academic environment where they can have more opportunities to practice English.

Table 3. The Need for ELPs

Scale	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	61	23.74%
Agree	103	40.08%
Neutral	64	24.90%
Disagree	27	10.50%
Strongly disagree	2	0.78%
Total	257	100%

4.1.3 Students Should Be Involved in Making ELPs

When the participants were asked whether they wanted to be involved in designing ELPs, the vast majority (76.65%: 28.79% *strongly agree* and 47.86% *agree*) reported their desire for involvement (Table 4). Only a small proportion (17.90%) reported their uncertainty regarding this notion, and as suggested earlier, such participants might form different views if further clarifications of the process were provided. Finally, only a small proportion (5.45%) disagreed and did not seem to opt for involvement in such activities. The results here are clearly indicative of participants' preference for taking part in the design process of the ELPs they will become exposed to in the future. Here, their involvement can positively influence their motivation to become active participants at the department level and lead them to feel valued by the institution; therefore, this may lead to better engagement in academic activities at the department level. From a different perspective, their involvement provides policymakers with insights into EFL learners regarding what and how they expect from ELPs, which can result in producing policies that better suit the students and, therefore, will be accepted by them.

Table 4. Student participation in creating ELPs

Scale	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	74	28.79%
Agree	123	47.86%
Neutral	46	17.90%
Disagree	11	4.28%
Strongly disagree	3	1.17%
Total	257	100%

4.1.4 I Am Interested in Practicing ELPs Set by the Department

The majority of participants (74.32%: 29.57% *strongly agree* and 44.75% *agree*) reported their interest in practising ELPs at their department (Table 5). Smaller proportions either reported being neutral (18.28%) or were not interested (7.4%) in practising ELPs. The results

suggest that students are expected to show a high level of commitment to the policies set by their department, which can encourage English departments to introduce policies that are likely to be accepted by their students.

Table 5. Students' interest in participation in creating ELPs

Scale	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	76	29.57%
Agree	115	44.75%
Neutral	47	18.28%
Disagree	15	5.84%
Strongly disagree	4	1.56%
Total	257	100%

4.1.5 The Practice of ELPs Should Be Flexible

In this item, the majority (66.54%: 25.29% *strongly agree* and 41.25% *agree*) opted for having flexibility in practising ELPs at the department level (Table 6). Another smaller proportion (22.95%) reported their uncertainty regarding the flexibility of the policies, and a smaller proportion (10.51%) reported not wanting to have flexibility in practising the policies. The results mainly suggest that flexible ELPs are best, which may create an environment that is stress-free. It is possible that the participants believe that there are certain situations in which they need no governance in language use. For instance, when offering condolences to a fellow student or professor, it is not acceptable to communicate in a foreign language. Additionally, Muslims pray in groups at workplaces and the rituals are only acceptable if practiced in Arabic; therefore, ELPs need to be flexible enough to consider such situations.

Table 6. ELPs' flexibility in practice

Scale	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	65	25.29%
Agree	106	41.25%
Neutral	59	22.95%
Disagree	23	8.95%
Strongly disagree	4	1.56%
Total	257	100%

4.1.6 ELPs Should Be Passed Down From Higher Authorities to the Department

Regarding the genesis of the policies, slightly more than half of the participants (51.37%: 19.46% *strongly agree* and 31.91% *agree*) reported that they should be top-down policies (Table 7). A substantial proportion (29.57%) were not sure about having these policies passed down to them, with a smaller proportion (19.06%) disagreeing with this notion. The latter two proportions might consider bottom-up policies, reflecting their view that the English

department should play an integral role in their design. This is supported by the earlier finding that students desire to be involved in shaping ELPs at their departments.

Table 7. ELPs should be top-down

Scale	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	50	19.46%
Agree	82	31.91%
Neutral	76	29.57%
Disagree	42	16.34%
Strongly disagree	7	2.72%
Total	257	100%

4.1.7 ELPs Should Apply to…

Concerning the application of ELPs, the majority (58.37%) reported that the policies should govern all communications within the domain of the English department (Table 8). Similarly, half of the participants (50.19%) reported that they should govern student–staff communication. These two proportions may reflect students' need for more opportunities to practice English, especially practice with professionals such as faculty members, rather than with fellow students (19.07%). It should be noted that ELPs can be employed to encourage more use of English in academic settings, leading to more language practice, and a way to achieve this is by facilitating communication with faculty members outside the classroom.

Table 8. ELP parties' coverage*

Scale	Responses	Percentage
Student- student communication	49	19.07%
Student-faculty communication	129	50.19%
Faculty-faculty communication	51	19.84%
All department communications	150	58.37%
Other	4	1.56%

*In this question, participants could choose more than one answer.

4.1.8 ELPs Should Be…(Their Nature)

Regarding the nature of ELPs, a substantial proportion (31.90%) reported that they should be written and approved, with a similar proportion (31.52%) reporting that they should be both written and spoken (Table 9). A slightly smaller proportion (28.02%) reported that policies should be spoken and agreed upon. These results show that the majority (63.42) prefer to have written polices, suggesting the need for official approval of these policies, where such approval can ensure policy continuity over time and, therefore, continuity of language practice. Additionally, it is suggested that the majority (59.54%) prefer to have spoken (non-written) policies. The findings mainly suggest that participants would prefer that ELPs comprise both spoken and written policies to better suit their academic life in English

departments. Spoken polices can allow for flexibility in language use, which is in line with an earlier finding where the majority of participants reported their desire for flexibility in ELP application.

Table 9. ELPs preferred nature*

Scale	Responses	Percentage
Written and approved	82	31.90%
Spoken and agreed on	72	28.02%
Both written and spoken	81	31.52%
There shouldn't be ELPs	20	7.78%
Other	2	0.78%
Total	257	100%

*In this question, participants could choose more than one answer.

4.1.9 ELPs Should Be…(Their Types)

The vast majority of participants (73.54%) reported that ELPs should be official and adhered to by all relevant individuals in the academic setting (Table 10). A relatively smaller proportion (22.96%) reported that ELPs should be informal, with flexibility in practising them. These results support our earlier finding that ELPs need to be both official (written), with some of them maintaining a degree of flexibility (i.e. spoken, non-written). Nine participants expressed their views in this regard, suggesting the need for ELPs on the condition that they maintain flexibility in their application. For example, it has been stated that ELPs should be 'Informal, but should be followed'; 'Informal, but has extra credits to encourage students'; and 'formal but can be ignored'. This may indicate that a few students are sceptical about the introduction of new policies, which suggests the importance of learner involvement in designing the policies and justifying the need for their introduction in the academic setting.

Table 10. ELPs preferred types

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Formal and thereby abided by	189	73.54%
Informal and therefore can be ignored	59	22.96%
Other, please indicate:	9	3.50%
Total	257	100%

4.2 Interviews: Questions

4.2.1 Do ELPs Exist in Your Department?

All but two interviewees (4 and 7) confirmed that there were no ELPs in their respective departments. Interviewee 4 stated that she is not aware if there are any, but she thought the rules are already being applied because English is used intensively both in class and in other

academic communications. Interviewee 7 explained that there are ELPs, but these are not written and applied daily by faculty members who always speak English even when some students speak to them in Arabic. She also agrees that there is intensive use of English when the institution offers workshops and courses. Therefore, it can be said that ELPs do not exist in all English departments, and if they exist, they are informal and implicit.

4.2.2 Are You for or Against Having ELPs Governing Language Use in Your Department?

Two interviewees (2 and 5) were against having ELPs governing language use in their respective departments because the current English use at the departmental level is acceptable, and there is a need to accord language use in general the liberty it deserves without thinking about how to code or control it. Other interviewees (3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10) agreed that ELPs should govern language use in their respective departments. They further provided reasons for their views, which mainly suggest that ELPs can provide students with the support they need to improve opportunities for language practice. Interviewee 10 further stressed the need for students to be forced to speak English both in and outside the classroom as a means of improving linguistic competency and self-esteem. Interviewees 1 and 8 were indifferent to the question as 1 thinks that the answer depends on the policy with regard to its clarity and flexibility, while 8 is concerned with the fact that such policies have never been practiced. The findings here mainly suggest the need for more language practice through the employment of ELPs, and that justifying policy introduction and learners' involvement in their preparation can positively influence the success of the policies.

4.2.3 In General, Do You Think Students Should Be Required to Adhere to ELPs Outside the Classroom?

All interviewees, with the exception of number 2, expressed the view that students should be required to adhere to ELPs outside the classroom. They provided several justifications for their stances, including encouraging the development of the language among the students, the need to reach desirable English-speaking results, and the need to achieve the benefits associated with speaking the language. Here, it is apparent that the interviewees saw a linguistic positive impact associated with enforcing ELPs, leading to better linguistic communicative competence.

4.2.4 Who Should Be Involved in Designing ELPs for English Departments?

The responses obtained were unanimous regarding the inclusion of English department staff members and students (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). Interviewee 4 proposed that the Ministry of Education should be centrally involved, as it would ensure adherence to the introduced policies. In brief, students clearly have an interest in developing the policies they would become exposed to, and that they believe staff members should be involved as well. These two groups of individuals are the main individuals who will enact the policies and who can contribute significantly to producing effective realistic policies. For instance, interviewees 1 and 2 elaborated that ELPs should be prepared in such a way that they do not create ambiguity and confusion, as this can hinder the purpose of their introduction. Additionally, interviewee 4 argued that the polices should address everything relevant to

student learning and linguistic practice needs. These two examples show that learners have a high level of awareness and expectations regarding the nature of the policies they target, which encourages policymakers to consider their engagement in the policy design process.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The Saudi EFL context resembles typical foreign contexts in which language use is likely to be limited to the classroom, and the educational environment offers limited opportunities for language practice (Almohaimeed & Alnasser, 2022). This status concerns practitioners and policymakers alike, and resulted in opting for student English education in ESL rather than EFL contexts. Nonetheless, this weakness can be mitigated by employing effective ELPs within educational institutions, which is suggested by Alnasser and Almoaily (2022). It can be argued that for the success of the policies to be introduced, students' input on the nature of these policies is integral to the design process as students are mature enough to pinpoint their needs. Therefore, this formed the scope of the current study.

Findings from both qualitative and quantitative data revealed that ELPs in Saudi higher education English departments largely do not exist, and in some cases, they exist unofficially and implicitly, which concur with the finding of Almoaily and Alnasser (2019). This finding particularly highlights the importance of proposing a basis for the introduction of ELPs. In fact, the vast majority of participants in this study reported that having ELPs in their English departments is important to regulate language use. ELPs can create an encouraging environment in which students are exposed to various opportunities to initiate discussions with other individuals freely away from any stress that may be encountered within the classroom. Of course, more language practice is likely to lead to greater linguistic competency. Although a small proportion of students were sceptical about the importance of enforcing language policies, they could be persuaded to take more positive views if the purpose of their introduction and the benefits gained are explained to them. Individuals may not be motivated to adhere to certain practices if they are not convinced of their value.

As to the nature of the policies, students clearly indicated that they had to be formal/official to ensure their sustainability over time; however, they expressed the need for flexibility in the policies' application. Students' stance on this regard is justifiable because language policies may not be appropriate to enforce in certain communicative situations, such as emergencies, or when offering condolences to others. Therefore, policy formality can ensure their adherence by the community they apply to, and acknowledge that a certain degree of flexibility is needed on certain occasions. According to the participants, policies are expected to be passed down from a higher authority (such as the Ministry of Education), while stressing the importance of involving English departments as well as students. On the one hand, the involvement of the Ministry (i.e. the higher authority) ensures individuals' adherence and commitment to the policies, while on the other hand, involvement of the departments (including the students) ensures reaching agreed upon policies that fit their needs, and therefore acceptance of policies and motivation to practice them.

The literature offers numerous studies emphasising the need for learner engagement in the learning process (e.g. Cook, 2000; Maybin & Swann, 2007), which can lead to becoming

active, rather than passive, participants who share responsibility for their own learning. This can be achieved by involving them in decision-making about when English should be used outside the classroom and within the academic domain. Interestingly, the findings of the study clearly suggest that female Saudi EFL learners sense a lack of opportunities to practice English in their EFL context, a context that seems to have failed to meet their needs. Promoting practising English outside the classroom can simulate real-life situations and promote spontaneous language use, which is very beneficial for linguistic competency development. English use outside the classroom is neither linked to student assessment nor will students be criticised for making mistakes; thus, it may allow for further motivation for more language engagement. Moreover, not all EFL students may recognise the importance of the introduction of ELPs and therefore may not accept and abide by them fully. Thus, institutions are encouraged to exert substantial efforts to discuss the nature of the policies and the impact they can have on them. Educational institutions are expected to establish an encouraging supportive learning environment for learners, and regulating language use is seen as a way to approach this.

In this study, we explored female Saudi EFL students' views on the introduction and nature of ELPs to be practiced in their academic domain. This study is the first of its kind to tackle this topic from a student perspective. The overall findings of the study suggest that EFL students recognise the importance of enforcing ELPs in their academic domain as they can provide further opportunities for language practice, and that they are highly motivated to be involved in their design and to practice them in the future. As to the limitations of the study, it was not possible to explore male students' views and make comparisons between the two genders, which could help in introducing unified policies in the segregated educational setting; therefore, exploring this area is recommended for future research. Additionally, it would be interesting to explore the views of those who showed hesitancy towards ELPs in general, with an attempt to investigate the reasons behind their scepticism in relation to their linguistic competency levels.

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