

## “Investigating Cycle I EFL Teachers' Mastery of the Art of EFL Instruction”

### Researchers:

**Dr. Adel Sakakini<sup>1</sup> & Dr. Loubna Nehmeh<sup>2,3</sup>**

1- Associate Professor - Department of English Language and Literature, Beirut Arab University, LEBANON

2- Associate Professor - Department of English Language and Literature, Beirut Arab University, LEBANON

3-Department of English Language and Literature, Lebanese University, LEBANON

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### Abstract:

This paper examines the level of awareness of Cycle I English language teachers of the art of EFL instruction through identifying how much they recognize the characteristics of EFL teachers, and the most efficient EFL teaching methods. In this context, the study gives special attention to assessment tools they use and the role of technology in improving teaching practices on the one hand, and the learning process on the other hand. Moreover, the study highlights the challenges teachers face while teaching English as a foreign language. The investigation employs the mixed method approach and follows an empirical-descriptive design. To collect data, two main instruments were utilized: a questionnaire to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding the most effective EFL practices and a reflection log based on a demo video to examine teachers' reflections on the practices of the demo teacher. The results revealed that most respondents are fully aware of the most self-evident characteristics of an EFL teacher such as setting clear objectives, being proficient in English, possessing good classroom management and communication skills, serving as a good user of technology, and implementing creative and engaging activities. However, only few respondents selected self-reflection, benefitting from colleagues and using various methods of assessment, especially formative ungraded types. Likewise, the results collected from the reflection log also revealed that most teachers could accurately evaluate several aspects such as the lesson flow, the interactive activities used, the means of triggering motivation, and the class atmosphere positivity, but they could not precisely judge aspects related to teaching methodologies, differentiated instruction, constructive feedback, self-reflection, conflict resolution, and student resistance.

### ملخص البحث

تقيس هذه الدراسة مستوى وعي معلمي اللغة الإنكليزية في الحلقة الأولى بفتح تدرّيس اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL)، وذلك من خلال تحديد مدى إدراكهم لخصائص معلم اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية إضافة إلى أكثر طرق تدرّيسها فعالية. وفي هذا السياق، تولي الدراسة اهتمامًا خاصًا بأدوات التقييم التي يستخدمها المعلمون ودور التكنولوجيا في تحسين الممارسات التعليمية من جهة، وتعزيز عملية التعلم من جهة أخرى. كما تسلط الدراسة الضوء على التحديات التي يواجهها المعلمون أثناء تدرّيس اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية.

تعتمد الدراسة على المنهج المختلط وتتبع تصميمًا وصفيًا تجريبيًا. ولجمع البيانات، تم استخدام أداتين رئيسيتين: استبيان لدراسة تصورات المعلمين حول أكثر ممارسات تدرّيس اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية فعالية، وسجل تأملي مبني على نموذج فيديو توضيحي لتحليل تأملات المعلمين المشاركين حول ممارسات المعلمة في الفيديو.

أظهرت النتائج أن معظم المشاركين يتمتعون بوعي كامل بالخصائص الأكثر وضوحًا لمعلم اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية، مثل تحديد أهداف واضحة، وإتقان اللغة، وإملاك مهارات جيدة في إدارة الصف والتواصل، واستخدام التكنولوجيا بشكل فعال، وتطبيق أنشطة إبداعية وجذابة. ومع ذلك، فإن عددًا قليلًا فقط من المشاركين أشار إلى أهمية التأمل الذاتي، والاستفادة من الزملاء، واستخدام أساليب تقييم متنوعة، وخاصة التقييمات التكوينية التي لا تتطلب وضع علامات.

والتغذية الراجعة البناءة، والتأمل الذاتي، وحل النزاعات، وحالات ممانعة المتعلمين.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية، الوعي، الاستراتيجيات، التكنولوجيا، التقييم، التحديات.

كما كشفت النتائج المستخلصة من السجل التأملي أن معظم المعلمين استطاعوا تقييم عدة جوانب بدقة، مثل تسلسل الدرس، والأنشطة التفاعلية المستخدمة، ووسائل تحفيز الدافعية، وإيجابية أجواء الصف. إلا أنهم لم يتمكنوا من الحكم بدقة على الجوانب المتعلقة بمنهجيات التدريس، والتعليم المتميز،

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AJSP ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8048-2082>

## Introduction

Effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction is essential in Cycle 1 as it shapes learners' foundational skills such as phonological awareness, letter–sound correspondence, simple vocabulary acquisition, basic oral interactions, early reading abilities, and emergent writing capacities (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). At this early stage, learners are highly receptive, yet cognitively and emotionally sensitive. This is why teachers need to be responsive to individual characteristics and needs, hence delivering instruction in an appropriate, engaging, and pedagogically sound way that builds learning experiences which extend learners' competences (National Research Council, 2001). This involves more than transmitting linguistic content. In fact, effective EFL instruction encompasses the teachers' ability to integrate subject knowledge with pedagogical practices, thus enhancing student engagement by creating a positive classroom environment, conducting frequent and formative assessments and giving constructive feedback, and utilizing various strategies to meet challenges.

The “art” of EFL instruction involves teachers' ability to renovate curricular objectives into meaningful learning experiences through interactive methodologies, proper scaffolding, purposeful games, and adaptive use of resources (Liao, Chen, Chen, & Chang, 2018) especially that young learners rely heavily on visual, auditory, and kinesthetic input to construct meaning. Therefore, understanding how EFL teachers conceptualize and enact effective instruction in addition to investigating their mastery of instructional art is vital for enhancing EFL in primary classrooms.

The national English curriculum has been criticized for being outdated, disconnected from learners' real-life, and representing artificial rather than practical uses of language. This leads to disengagement and limited exposure to real life scenarios. (Aljaafil, E., & Beyhan, Ö. (2023). Nonetheless, the outdated curriculum and the limited exposure to EFL outside the classroom setting are not the sole factors why Lebanese English language teachers are facing challenges in implementing effective EFL instruction.

In this context, it can be explained that despite the numerous attempts to enhance English language proficiency of Lebanese learners, several factors regarding the effectiveness of EFL instruction remain a critical concern. These factors include Cycle 1 teachers' educational background, their instructional practices, as well as the current Lebanese situation. First and foremost, many Lebanese EFL cycle 1 teachers are contractual who have not received any preservice training. In this sense, they seem unaware of the beneficial teaching methodologies. Other teachers might be knowledgeable of the useful methodologies that engage, motivate, and assess students, but they fail to implement them because of the consecutive crises that the country has undergone. Besides, a considerable number of teachers have poor or modest computer skills that help them address 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. In addition, external considerations such as the large number of learners, the lack of resources, insufficient in-service training, low salaries, etc. have augmented the problem by demotivating teachers and reducing their willingness to work on their professional development in order to meet the present challenges.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of Lebanese Cycle 1 English language teachers regarding the most effective EFL instructional practices and to examine their ability to give feedback on whether an authentic classroom scenario illustrates satisfactory, and subsequently effective EFL instruction.

In more specific terms, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What EFL instructional strategies are the most effective for promoting proficiency among Lebanese English Language learners?
2. How can the integration of technology impact the effectiveness of EFL instruction in Lebanon?
3. What challenges might Lebanese EFL instructors face in diverse classroom settings, and what strategies can be employed to address such challenges?
4. What assessment methods are the most useful to measure Lebanese learners' English language proficiency and track their progress?

### Limitations of the Study

This paper examines Cycle I teachers' level of awareness of EFL instruction in Lebanon. However, the study does not provide a complete image of the situation in Lebanon as it only collects data from 30 teachers rather than from the entire population. Hence, the results might not be generalized and there are certain chances for them to be different if a larger sample or another sample of teachers was taken.

### Literature Review

#### Definition

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to learning a non-native language in a formal setting which is usually the classroom, but this language is not commonly used in the community (Quimosing, 2022). Unlike ESL, EFL learners are not immersed in an English-speaking environment. Instead, they study English as an additional subject, often within the confines of a classroom (TESOL School, 2025). Therefore, English is not the primary language of communication but rather a subsequent language as Ellis (2015) puts it.

Yılmaz & Tekir (2010) build on the notion of Nunan (2003) who explains that EFL emphasizes four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The authors elaborate that good English language teachers need to encompass a multifaceted understanding of teaching and learning; an understanding which includes possessing a good command of English; demonstrating proper pedagogical practices and reflecting an apprehension of the culture. Modern understanding of EFL even involves the integration of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK) (Yang, Jeyaraj, Ahmad, et al., 2026).

#### Key Aspects of the Field of EFL

*Context and Environment:* Since EFL is taught in settings where English is not used for daily, general communication, learners often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. This makes the instructional context considerably different from immersive environments. (TESOL School, 2025).

*Teaching Methodology:* Today's EFL instructions emphasize active learning. Therefore, teaching EFL requires designing and preparing lesson plans that cater to the needs of diverse learners, delivering lessons in an interactive way within a supportive learning environment, evaluating learners frequently and providing constructive feedback, creating an inclusive and culturally sensitive learning environment, incorporating real-life scenarios and encouraging learners to immerse themselves in authentic communication, effectively managing the classroom to create a positive and conducive learning atmosphere, and staying updated on the latest methodologies and trends in language education by participating in workshops, attending conferences, and pursuing further education in the field (DoTEFL, 2023).

*Trends and Technology:* The realm of education in general, and the domain of language teaching in particular is increasingly incorporating technology and AI tools to enhance language proficiency, increase engagement, and foster learner autonomy. Hence, the significant transformations that have recently taken place reshaped learning, teaching, and evaluating information (Alyasin et al., 2023; Qazi et al., 2023). Modern teaching methods suggest implementing the crucial element of personalization, thus providing better opportunities for tailored learning, practice, and prompt feedback which are considered integral components for effective language acquisition (Kawinkoonlasate, 2020; Michel-Villarreal et al., 2023). Artificial

intelligence (AI) has brought about a revolution across various sectors, including that of education. In this context, personalized learning experiences, adaptive feedback mechanisms, and enhanced interactive tools have changed our understanding of natural language processing (NLP) (Banihashem et al., 2023; Ng et al., 2023).

### Characteristics of an EFL Instructor

Everybody can have academic qualifications that allow him/her to become a teacher. However, the teaching profession requires more features than holding a teaching degree or a certificate. Günay and Aslan (2016) highlight the fact that a good teacher directs the class like an orchestra conductor, creating harmony that brings all differences into a single symphony.

Actually, effective EFL teachers tend to figure out their learners' interests and subsequently to trigger their intrinsic motivation which eventually leads to tackling their aspirations and yielding (Deci & Ryan, 2000). More specifically, they realize that in each class there are different levels and layers of intelligences. Accordingly, they design lesson plans that address learners of different levels, interests, and learning styles; hence taking differentiation into consideration (Marzano, 2013). Kótay-Nagy (2025) notes that the concept of differentiated instruction is increasingly being accepted universally as teachers do not only vary the content, process, and product as it is traditionally done. Instead, modern EFL teachers place particular emphasis on the learning environment and various learning profiles and readiness levels, especially English proficiency; hence trying to reach all learners by managing multileveled classrooms (Öveges, 2018).

Furthermore, EFL teachers are expected to achieve a student-centered classroom where they play the role of a facilitator. This means establishing an inquiry-based environment where students are guided to investigate new perspectives and sort out solutions for discussed problems independently and without the intervention of the teacher (Brooks & Brooks, 2010). Materials are fundamental to language teaching and learning. In general, the students' book and the teacher's guide are the two main traditional resources that novice teachers rely on (Hounhanou, 2022). However, for Allwright (1981,10), language teaching and learning is a tangled process. Therefore, teachers cannot be "satisfied with a prepackaged set of decisions found in ready-made teaching materials". Instead, they should use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning chances, monitor student progress adapting instructions as needed, and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence. More importantly, commencing from the fact that a teacher is considered a guide, and EFL teacher is expected to provide learners with useful resources which help them acquire the aspired knowledge and develop learner autonomy in the long run.

In more specific terms, recent studies such as that of Martins (2024) investigate the relationship between playful and interactive activities, and motivation among EFL learners. The results reveal that involving learners instead of just teaching them stimulates them to perform activities, encourages them to make mistakes, and inspires them to deal with the ups and downs of the learning process; hence allowing them to use the power of knowledge to transform their futures (Martins, 2024).

In addition to that, EFL teachers are expected to utilize technology in a way that serves the teaching- learning process. The integration of digital technology in EFL classrooms has revolutionized language learning by providing tools that help learners overcome common challenges, namely anxiety, low motivation, and limited opportunities for authentic language use (Ahmadi, 2018). Building on Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis which explains how emotional factors such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and lack of motivation can inhibit language acquisition by acting as a mental barrier to comprehensible input, the integration of digital technology can be recommended to reduce such barriers. In particular, digital platforms offer a less intimidating, more personalized learning spaces that provide learners with self-paced opportunities to practice language skills without any pressure to perform in front of peers. This reduces their stress levels and boosts their self-confidence. In addition, the Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) highlights the need for instructional designs that curtail unnecessary cognitive load and optimize working memory capacity. If implemented properly, digital technology can address both emotional and cognitive challenges, fostering a more engaging, supportive, and effective learning environment (Mayer, 2001). Complementing both Krashen's and Sweller's frameworks, Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory further supports the notion that learners construct knowledge through experience, collaboration, and meaningful interaction. In this sense, digital tools can facilitate this active learning process by allowing learners to engage with content in an interactive manner which helps them scaffold information. Recently, newly developed AI apps proved to have the potential to efficiently enhance EFL instruction and consequently learners' vocabulary, writing, speaking, listening and communication skills (Zitouni, 2022).

Corujo (2024) lists diagnostic, formative, and summative as three types of assessment that provide insight into where students are before, during, and after learning; explaining that they serve different purposes. She further classifies them into

two categories: formal and informal. The former are standardized and data-based exams while the latter involve evaluating learners' performance with other types of data without grading criteria. They include exit tickets, classroom observations, and project-based assessments. Corujo (2024) argues that traditional assessments might not give a full picture of learners' abilities. Therefore, she suggests alternative assessments that provide English language learners (ELL) with opportunities to showcase what they can do in an authentic way through performance-based assessments like role-playing. Project-based assessments also engage ELL in hands-on activities that integrate language learning with content knowledge. Peer review can be another alternative assessment that encourages peer interactions and promotes language development through discussion. Additional alternative forms are authentic assessments that assess learners' abilities in real-world scenarios, such as demonstrations, portfolios, oral presentations, and student-teacher conferences. Therefore, using a wide range of assessments is an effective strategy in EFL instruction as this can provide a well-rounded perspective to monitor learners' growth and track their progress.

Modern educators are more than educators, they are teacher leaders who come out of the comfort of their classrooms and collaborate with all stakeholders, including learners, colleagues, and parents, to improve their learners' performance (Teacher Leaders, n.d., cited in Warren, 2025). Zambak (2024) reports that EFL teachers should possess both pedagogical and interpersonal competencies namely knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards the teaching profession, their learners, and their professional development. These Theseattitudinal competencies can be promoted through mentorship programs and online communities that enable teachers from different backgrounds to share best practices and stay informed about emerging trends. Additionally, incorporating reflective practices is highly significant in helping teachers to assess and accordingly improve their practices and attitudes, empathy (Warren, 2018; Zwozdiak-Myers, 2018).

### Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers

Mardhatillah et al. (2025, p.90) report that the challenges faced by EFL teachers include internal and external aspects. The former factors involve "classroom management, workload, motivation and job satisfaction, resources and support, as well as professional development" whereas the latter include "educational policies, technology, students' social conditions, parental involvement, and the surrounding environment".

Nguyen and Le (2021) address classroom context as the main challenge faced by EFL teachers, explaining that other challenges such as the teacher's proficiency level of English, and the young learners' inhibition are more localized. Songbatumis (2017) describes lack of training, low language proficiency levels, ineptitude in teaching methods and pedagogies, and lack of professional development as key challenges faced by EFL teachers. Besides, Putra (2021) highlights difficulty and poor motivation while learning English as a second or foreign language as another challenge because EFL learning is a complex process that involves numerous aspects and areas.

Metwally (2025a) adds that despite the potential technology has in EFL instruction, it poses lots of challenges such as learner distractions, overly complex features, lack of guidance, and insufficient teacher training. In addition, while the majority of educators generally acknowledge the potential of technology for differentiated instruction, there seems to be a discrepancy between conceptual acceptance and practical application. These challenges are due to the increased demands in planning and managing differentiated lessons especially in settings where large class sizes are large, the proficiency levels are mixed, and the curricular demands are extensive. Other challenges include collaboration with stakeholders and in-service training (Kótay-Nagy, 2025).

### Methodology

#### Research Design

This study is empirical-descriptive in nature as it describes the perceptions of Lebanese Cycle 1 English language teachers and collects and analyzes new data. It employs the mixed-methods approach as it integrates numeric ratings with reflective responses. The former are collected quantitatively through rating scales in a questionnaire and reflection logs, while the latter are collected qualitatively data from open-ended questions in both instruments.

#### Research Tools

Data were primarily collected from primary as well as secondary sources. The primary sources include two instruments. The first tool is a questionnaire adapted from "The Factors Contributing to Language Teachers' Effectiveness in an EFL Learning Context: A Questionnaire Validation Study" published in *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, Volume 24, Number 2 (unal.edu.co). This tool includes 15 Likert scale items, where the answers range from strongly agree to strongly

disagree to statements representing the characteristics of an effective EFL teacher. It also incorporates 2 open-ended questions for the teachers to express what is best to do or not to do when teaching EFL. Another utilized tool is a reflection log based on a peer review video. It serves the purpose of helping teachers to reflect on the demo teacher's teaching practices, learners' engagement, classroom environment, assessment and feedback, and meeting challenges. Under these domains, the tool has 21 close ended questions, where the answers range between highly satisfactory, partially satisfactory, or not satisfactory at all, noting that there is a column for not applicable items (NA) and another column for responding teachers to add their comments in case they have any. In addition, 7 qualitative open-ended questions related to same topics were included. The selected video "ESL-Teaching English in China- Grade 1 (Demo lesson)" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBeBPusip-k> is a secondary source that provides content for the respondents to reflect on the video in the form of peer feedback. The duration of the video is less than 15 minutes and the demo lesson includes scenes from different stages of the lesson.

### Data Analysis

After data were collected, responses were cleaned and sorted by question. SPSS (version 19) was used for statistical analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed based on frequencies of answers and qualitative data were analyzed based on thematic content. The chi-square test was performed to examine the relationship between the teacher's utilization of authentic materials and the type of school they are affiliated with. The findings serve as a guide to analyze and interpret data, hence answering the research questions, drawing conclusions, and making recommendations.

### Validity and Reliability

The employed questionnaire did not need to be tested for validity as it is adapted from "The Factors Contributing to Language Teachers' Effectiveness in an EFL Learning Context: A Questionnaire Validation Study" and already published; hence presumably tested for validity. The reflection log, however, was self-designed to fit the purpose of the study. Therefore, it had to be tested for validity. So, it was shared with three raters: a statistician to test content and construct validity and two university professors; one specialized in education and another specialized in applied linguistics. A subsample of 5 teachers -who were not a part of study- was used to assess the test-retest reliability of the instruments. This helped the researchers estimate the reliability coefficient and find the correlation between responses at two different intervals.

### Sampling

Data were collected from a voluntary (self-selected) sample of 30 Lebanese Cycle I EFL teachers from both public and private schools. Participants completed a questionnaire designed to investigate their perceptions regarding the most effective EFL instructional practices. 17 out of the 30 teachers, further volunteered to watch a demo video and fill a reflection log correspondingly. More specifically, 24 respondents are public sector teachers with only 8 teaching at private schools. Apart of the school type, most respondents also teach different grade levels; that is to say 35.7% teach Grade 1, 50% teach Grade 2 with 53.6% teaching Grade 3 as well. Although they are from different governorates of Lebanon, it is worth noting that the majority are from Beqaa and Baalbeck – Hermel whereas the non-dominant groups are mostly from Nabatiyeh, the North and Mount Lebanon. Besides, 43% have more than 20 years of experience, 16.7% have an experience that ranges between 16 and 20 years, 23.3% have an experience that ranges between 11 and 15 years, 6.7% have an experience that ranges between 5 and 10 years, and 10% have less than 5 years of experience.

### Findings

**Table 1: Perceived Characteristics of the Most Effective EFL Teachers According to Cycle I Lebanese English Language Educators**

Item	Item Description	1	2	3	4	5
	An Effective EFL teacher:					
1	Sets realistic language learning goals and provides guidance on how to achieve them	18	6	3	2	1
2	Communicates well in English	12	12	3	2	1
3	Pronounces words appropriately	20	5	3	1	1
4	Emphasizes oral proficiency as one of the main tools of input for language learners	17	5	6	0	2
5	Adjusts his/her speaking to the level he/she is teaching	14	8	4	2	2
6	Is always prepared for questions on the content	16	9	2	1	2
7	Is aware of his/her gestures in the classroom	19	3	4	3	1
8	Is creative in using tasks and activities and in presenting the lesson	20	6	2	0	2

9	Is open to using various techniques	17	9	1	2	1
10	Is proficient in using technology	14	9	5	1	1
11	Is skillful in creating a safe and positive classroom environment	18	6	3	1	2
12	Benefits from his/her colleagues' experience	16	5	3	4	2
13	Uses assessment results to improve classroom productivity	14	11	2	2	1
14	Uses his/her teaching experience as a learning experience	15	8	2	3	2
15	Knows how to deal with challenges	18	7	2	1	2

1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Uncertain, 4=Disagree, 5= Strongly Disagree

Table 1 illustrates the perceptions of Lebanese Cycle I English language teachers regarding EFL instruction. Hence, more than 50% of the responding teachers selected “strongly agree” for all items that describe the characteristics of an effective EFL teacher, with a few selecting neutral responses and fewer selecting negative responses. Therefore, more than half of the respondents (15 out of 30) chose “Strongly Agree” for all items expect for 3. In particular, only 12 respondents chose “Strongly Agree” for item 2 (Communicates well in English), 14 respondents chose it for item 5 (Adjusts his/her speaking to the level he/she is teaching) and another 14 chose it for item 10 (Is proficient in using technology). The most significant characteristics of an EFL teacher were considered item 3 (Pronounces words appropriately) and item 8 (Is creative in using tasks and activities and in presenting the lesson) with 20 respondents voting for “Strongly Agree” for each of them. In contrast, it is worth noting that the highest total for negative responses was for item 12 (Benefits from his/her colleagues' experience) and item 14 (Uses his/her teaching experience as a learning experience) with 6 and 5 negative responses respectively.

**Table 2: Cycle I EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher Characteristics: Descriptive Statistics**

Item	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
1	1.67	1	1	0.95
2	1.47	1	1	1.23
3	1.57	1	1	1.14
4	1.67	1	1	1.17
5	1.67	1	1	0.94
6	1.60	1	1	1.16
7	1.60	1	1	1.17
8	1.47	1	1	1.23
9	1.57	1	1	1.14
10	1.67	1	1	0.94
11	1.60	1	1	1.16
12	1.77	1	1	1.32
13	1.73	1	1	1.14
14	1.87	1	1, 2	1.27
15	1.57	1	1, 2	0.84

Table 2 reveals that several insights emerge regarding the perceptions towards the effectiveness of EFL teaching. Utilizing statistical measures such as mean, median, mode, and standard deviation offers notable insights into the perceptions expressed by respondents towards the reported questions and statements on effective EFL teaching. The mean provides a measure of central tendency, offering an average representation of respondents' views. The median serves as a robust alternative, particularly valuable in scenarios of inclined data or outliers. Mode highlights the most common response, shedding light on current opinions among respondents. Finally, standard deviation quantifies the dispersion of responses around the mean, indicating the level of agreement or variability. The predominance of mean values ranging from 1.47 to 1.87 suggests a general tendency towards agreement with the statements, with mean values indicating responses predominantly falling within the "Agree" to "Strongly Agree" categories. The consistency of median values at 1 across most questions reinforces this notion, indicating a central tendency towards agreement among respondents. Additionally, the mode values often align with the median and fall within the "Agree" category, further emphasizing the prevalent agreement towards the statements. However, the variability in standard deviation across questions signifies differing levels of consensus. Items with lower standard deviations exhibit more uniform agreement among respondents, while those with higher standard deviations indicate more diverse opinions. Overall, the analysis suggests a predominantly positive perception of effective EFL teaching practices among respondents, characterized by agreement with the statements presented. Although all the items had a mean score within the “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”, 5 items have a higher mean than others. These items are the ones

which have a mean score higher than 1.67. Hence, most of the teachers agree that the most essential characteristics of an EFL teacher are their ability to: 1) set realistic goals, 2) emphasize on oral fluency, 3) adjust speaking to the level of teaching, 3) use technology proficiently, 4) utilize her/his own as well as colleagues' experience, and 5) make use of assessments to improve classroom productivity.

Equally important, the responses to the two open-ended questions by the end of the questionnaire support and complement the data collected from the Likert scale. As such, when asked to list the top 3 characteristics of an EFL teacher, respondents frequently mentioned issues related to using creative and innovative teaching methods, having strong communication skills and a proficient language level, and being able to manage the classroom and to create a positive learning environment. Other respondents focused on issues like developing good lesson plans and being prepared and organized, integrating technology and performing frequent assessments for learning improvement, and being able to meet challenges and be flexible. The least frequent themes are having good leadership, social skills, and the ability to engage learners through real-life activities.

On the other hand, when asked to list 2 things that the EFL teacher should NOT do, the most frequent answers rotated around themes like allowing the excessive use of L1; being dominant, overcorrecting, or depending on prolonged lecturing; and ignoring learners' needs or discriminating among them. Additional less frequent themes included being unprepared or rigid, yelling or reflecting a negative mood, and using conventional teaching methods and halting professional development.

**Table 3: Teachers' Reflection on the Demo Video**

Q	Description	Total Number of Respondents	Correct Answer	% of teachers having the right answer	More than 50 % of teachers having the right answer
1	How do you describe the teacher's ability to follow a well sequenced and organized flow of the session?	17	HS	88%	Yes
2	How do you describe the teacher's use of different teaching methods?	17	PS	18%	No
3	How do you describe the teacher's use of interactive activities?	17	HS	76%	Yes
4	How do you describe the teacher's use of differentiated instruction to accommodate diverse learning styles?	17	NSAA	0%	No
5	How do you describe the teacher's use of authentic materials?	17	PS	41%	No
6	How do you describe the teacher's skill in integrating technology?	17	PS	18%	No
7	How do you describe the teacher's ability to create open communication channels that allow students to express their thoughts?	17	HS	65%	Yes
8	How do you describe the teacher's ability to encourage students to participate?	17	HS	71%	Yes
9	How do you describe the teacher's ability to motivate students?	17	HS	76%	Yes
10	How do you describe the teacher's incorporation of student-centered activities?	17	HS	59%	Yes
11	How do you describe the teacher's fostering of love and curiosity for learning?	17	HS	65%	Yes
12	How do you describe the teacher's classroom management style?	17	HS	59%	Yes

Q	Description	Total Number of Respondents	Correct Answer	% of teachers having the right answer	More than 50 % of teachers having the right answer
13	How do you describe the teacher's ability to create a safe and respectful atmosphere?	17	HS	76%	Yes
14	How do you describe the teacher's implementation of collaborative activities that promote communication skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving?	17	PS	41%	No
15	How do you describe the teacher's ability to make sure that the physical classroom space is organized, clean, and well-maintained?	17	HS	71%	Yes
16	How do you describe the teacher's ability to give timely, concise, and constructive feedback, focusing on improvement rather than criticism?	17	NA	6%	No
17	How do you describe the teacher's use of peer feedback and self-assessment?	17	PS	47%	No
18	How do you describe the teacher's use of self-reflection?	17	NA	6%	No
19	How do you describe the teacher's ability to stay flexible and adaptable in response to unforeseen challenges?	17	NA	12%	No
20	How do you describe the teacher's ability to resolve conflicts?	17	NA	18%	No
21	How do you describe the teacher's ability to deal with student resistance?	17	NA	18%	No

**HS: highly satisfactory, PS: Partially Satisfactory, NSAA: Not Satisfactory at all, NA: Not Applicable**

Upon analyzing the data from Table 3, it can be noticed that responding teachers do not have enough or complete awareness about the most effective EFL practices. In 11 questions out of 21 more than 50% of the teachers had their answers different from the desired correct answer, while for the other 10 questions, more than 50% of the teachers had their answers correct. This implies that there are still some areas where teachers need more support to understand and implement effective EFL practices. For instance, less than 20% of respondents could not observe and judge appropriate practices related to teaching methodologies, differentiated instruction, proper use of technology, constructive feedback, self-reflection, adaptability, resolving conflicts, and dealing with student resistance. In contrast, more than 70% were able to accurately evaluate the flow of the lesson, the use of interactive activities, the means of motivation, and the positivity of the class atmosphere.

The open-ended questions by the end of the reflection log mirrored teachers' awareness of the most effective practices. For example, when asked about the most effective instructional strategies presented in the demo lesson they watched in the video, teachers focused on the active, participatory, and student-centered approach reflected through learners' engagement in discussions, peer interactions and hands-on activities. Teachers also reported the use of songs, games, and technology as highly significant in making learning interactive, increasing learners' attention, and facilitating classroom management. In addition, teachers also noticed that the visual aids, concrete examples, and repeated reinforcement used by the demo teacher to clarify the content - in addition to her flexibility - made the lesson more efficient.

When asked about the innovative or interactive activities useful to enhance student engagement, most responding teachers mentioned multi-sensory activities mainly because they noticed that learners responded positively to music and action songs with gestures. In addition, collaborative activities like the "mingle and swap" and the gallery walk gave learners the opportunity to work with different peers, hence promoting active participation. The integration of technology also made the lesson more enjoyable. Additionally, controlled speaking activities through drills, made all learners involved and attentive.

The question about how the demo teacher assessed student understanding during the lesson brought some reflective insights about the respondents' views about continuous and formative assessment strategies. For them, observation and monitoring were central. Questioning to check understanding was also substantial. Repetitions also reinforced the newly taught concepts. Immediate Feedback after each activity further played a role in ensuring that learners were following instructions and internalizing information.

In response to the question on specific classroom management techniques employed by the demo teacher to create a positive learning environment, respondents stated that the demo teacher could manage her classroom efficiently because she established clear rules and reinforced positive behaviors to ensure that routines are properly followed. This helped maintain order on the one hand and facilitate smooth transition from one activity to another on the other hand. Furthermore, building a safe and positive environment through simulations and nonverbal communication encouraged learners to participate and make mistakes without fear of being judged, mocked or punished. Employing different interaction patterns as well as dynamic activities that involved singing and clapping, also helped the teacher keep her learners active and focused.

Regarding the integration of technology into the lesson, and how successful it was in enhancing the learning experience, teachers stated that technology was used for three main purposes: providing audio-visual support, supporting instruction, and engaging learners and capturing their attention. In other words, the video and the song were played through the computer and projected to all learners; allowing them to watch, listen, and sing along. Besides, the activities were displayed on the screen to support oral instructions. Such an integration of technology was not an add-on but rather an integral part of the lesson as it helped create a learner-centered environment that equally fostered learning and the love for learning.

Teachers were further asked about the areas of teaching they think the demo teacher needs to focus on for professional development. In this respect, they admitted that the teacher's performance was highly effective. Nonetheless, she might benefit from professional development areas that help build her capacities. These areas might include strategies that foster creativity and higher-order thinking skills such as critical thinking, and problem-solving. Other teachers suggested self-reflection techniques that might help her evaluate herself and improve her teaching practices accordingly. A few teachers added enhancing her communication skills and generating more activities that cultivate student-directed learning.

In order to enhance future lessons, responding teachers recommended that the demo teacher continue using creative and interactive activities and expanding on them by using role-plays, cut ups, puzzles, etc. They also suggested leveraging technology effectively and designing digital tools that go beyond passive display. Differentiated instruction to address diverse learning styles and to meet all learners' needs and learning preferences was also highlighted by most respondents. Additional responses included regularly reflecting on what worked well and what could be improved, encouraging individual and independent work to enhance autonomy, and giving more attention to writing to help learners express their opinions, thoughts, and feelings.

### Discussion

The results reveal that most responding teachers believe that EFL teachers need to have professional and personal characteristics. However, the majority put too much focus on self-evident characteristics of an EFL teacher such as setting clear objectives, having a good proficiency level in English and possessing good classroom management and communication skills. Although most respondents highlighted indispensable issues such as integrating technology and adopting creative and engaging activities, and creating a positive environment, fewer could see the value of self-reflection and benefiting from the results of teacher self-assessment to improve the quality of teaching. In addition, not so many respondents recognized the significance of benefiting from colleagues or even considering themselves as continuous learners who learn from their own experiences and make frequent adjustments. This indicates that teachers in our culture are still not ready to follow such useful practices. Hence, though they are well experienced - some with more than 20 years - They still fall within the orbit of foregone conclusions that it is enough for an English language teacher to have a proficient English level, to possess good communication skills, and to be skillful in designing interactive lesson planning - better if peppered with the use of some technology.

The responses to the open-ended questions support this conventional view about EFL teachers especially that most respondents stated that an EFL should not allow the excessive use of L1. This implies that they are not aware of modern theories of linguistics that call for translanguaging as a means of breaking language barriers and encouraging students to participate. Furthermore, although they are attuned to the importance of following a learner centered approach, using modern tools and strategies, and pursuing professional development, only a few selected "Strongly Agree" for items related to collaboration and lifelong learning (items 12, 13, 14).

These responses to the questionnaire answer the first research question: What EFL instructional strategies are the most effective for promoting proficiency among Lebanese English Language learners? In parallel with this, teachers' reviews in the reflection log indicate that they are self-assured that effective EFL instruction requires following a learner-centered approach, using modelling and examples, promoting collaborative and group work, ensuring active learning, reinforcing classroom rules and integrating technology. In this context, the majority of responding teachers referred to playing songs and music, inquiring and asking questions, and introducing engaging activities as efficient EFL strategies that may improve learner engagement.

This aligns with the results of previous studies. For example, Zamback (2024) concludes that teachers are mainly concerned with professional skills that highlight delivering content on the one hand and managing the teaching and learning process on the other hand. In addition, teachers mostly emphasize communication with students and mastery of subject area knowledge. The results of the same study also confirm the need to develop language as well as digital skills. Another study by Mohammad (2024) exhibits similar results which verify that effective EFL instruction requires teachers to be adaptable, empathetic, knowledgeable, advocates, and continuous learners.

In response to the second research question: How can the integration of technology impact the effectiveness of EFL instruction in Lebanon, the present study proves that digital tools in EFL classrooms equally enhance engagement and performance.

All the responding teachers agreed on the importance of proficiently using technology for improved effectiveness of EFL instruction in the questionnaire. Moreover, in the reflection log, they also noticed the importance of using audio and video techniques during the lesson. In fact, more than 80% of them valued the importance of integrating technology in simplifying the lesson and encouraging students to be entertained, to focus, and to learn at the same time. Based on what they observed in the video, they reported that integrating technology into the classroom made it easier for learners to understand what to do and attracted their attention to the lesson details. However, they rated this as "Highly Satisfactory". For them, just because there is a projector and a computer with multimedia use, this is something remarkable. Thus, only 18% chose the correct answer describing the teacher's skill in integrating technology as "Partially Satisfactory". In fact, the teacher used technology passively. There were no interactive slides that included polls, clickable elements, or live annotations. The screen was merely used to display to content.

Hence, looking into the results of other studies, it can be noticed that technology plays a role which goes beyond displaying content or motivating students. In fact, digital technology plays a transformative role in EFL learning, particularly in "enhancing motivation, reducing anxiety, and supporting learner autonomy" (Metwally, 2025b, p.1950). This is specifically what Lebanese EFL teachers need. They need to be trained on how to use technology to serve behavioral, cognitive, and emotional learner needs (Metwally, 2025b).

Angraini et al. (2025) additionally argue that technology integration has a great potential in developing learners' language skills by creating more interactive and personalized learning environments.

Therefore, the authors stress the impact of digital tools on EFL writing. More specifically, they declare that it significantly improves student engagement and performance, subsequently enhancing educational outcomes. As this transformative role of technology in modern education has been globally proven, it becomes imperative for Lebanese teachers to integrate technology effectively despite all the challenges that they might face such as the varying levels of digital literacy among both learners and teachers, the limited or inconsistent access to devices and internet, and the need for systematic and inclusive training sessions.

The answer to the third research question about the challenges that Lebanese EFL instructors might face in diverse classroom settings, and about the strategies that can be employed to address such challenges is presented directly in reference to the present situation in Lebanon and indirectly in reference to teachers' responses in the reflection log.

Generally speaking, Lebanese EFL teachers face several challenges including the large number of learners that might reach 35 or 40, learners' readiness level especially after the consecutive crises that increased the learning loss as reported by CRDP (2023), lack of digital resources and supplementary material, unpreparedness to teach in cases of emergencies, and insufficient training on strategies and approaches of teaching several language skills and domains such as grammar, vocabulary, and phonics.

According to the video peer review, more than 70% of responding teachers could point out good practices that were obviously "Highly Satisfactory" like the well sequenced flow of the lesson (88%), the teacher's use of interactive activities (76%), her ability to encourage students to participate (71%), to motivate them (76%), to create a safe and respectful atmosphere (76%), and to maintain a clean and organized physical classroom space (71%). However, they failed to identify "Not Applicable"

items that were not observed in the video like those related to giving feedback, assessment, flexibility and adaptability, conflict resolution and dealing with resistance. Teachers chose other options and the percentage of correct answers was less than 20 or even 10 in some cases. This poses a serious challenge regarding teachers' full awareness of instructional practices they are observing and categorizing them according to their pedagogical terms. Another key issue which requires closer examination is teachers' responses on the item related to differentiated instruction. None of the responding teachers (0%) answered correctly "Not Satisfactory at All". Teachers assumed that implementing activities that address learners who have different learning styles is differentiation. This is why they chose "Highly Satisfactory" or "Partially Satisfactory". This supports the notion that Lebanese Cycle I EFL teachers confuse between learning styles and differentiated instruction, thus having insufficient knowledge about multileveled classrooms and how differentiation is implemented.

An additional challenge is represented through the difference between the answers of public and private school teachers on the question "How do you describe the teachers' use of authentic materials?". The responses disclose that 33% of private school teachers, and 45% of public-school teachers answered correctly. This might imply the difference of understanding of using authentic materials between public and private school teachers.

The chi-square test conducted to examine the relationship between the teacher's utilization of authentic materials and the type of school they are affiliated with yielded a significant result ( $\chi^2 = 8.28, p < 0.05$ ). This statistical analysis underscores a significant association between these variables, indicating that the distribution of responses regarding the integration of authentic materials into classroom instruction varies significantly between public and private school settings. A null hypothesis, which assumes no significant association between the variables, is rejected based on the calculated chi-square value exceeding the critical threshold. This rejection suggests that the observed deviation from expected frequencies is unlikely to occur by random chance alone, assisting with the credibility of the association identified. While both groups include teachers who rate their use of authentic materials as 'Highly Satisfactory' or 'Partially Satisfactory,' the proportion of teachers falling into each category differs markedly between public and private schools.

All in all, this raises interesting questions about the underlying factors contributing to such differences. Potential explanations may include disparities in resource availability, curriculum flexibility, teacher training programs, and institutional priorities.

The above-mentioned challenges can be overcome by providing valuable insights into effective strategies for promoting the use of authentic materials in diverse educational contexts, ultimately equally enhancing the quality of teaching and learning experiences for students across public and private schools.

More practically, policy makers should prioritize structural support that enables professional growth as well as the adoption of evidence-based pedagogical practices (Awang et al., 2024). This also involved bridging the gap between theoretical pedagogy and real-world practicum requirements in order to prepare teachers to implement their own innovative methods rather than depend on readily made material (Haron et al., 2025). Finally, promoting reflective pedagogical practices empower teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices, and subsequently bridge the aforementioned gap through concept maps or any other reflective means (Molitor et al., 2025).

The fourth research question about the most useful assessment methods to measure Lebanese learners' English language proficiency and track their progress was answered briefly in one of the open-ended questions in the reflection log. Thus, all the responding teachers agreed on the importance of conducting formative assessments and using their results to track the progress of learners and consequently to improve classroom productivity. They also stated that asking questions to check learners' understanding, observing and monitoring the interaction among learners, and detecting how they share ideas are among the most useful methods to track students' progress. One teacher added giving immediate feedback after each activity. This indicates that teachers have full understanding of the purpose formative assessments and of their efficiency. However, none of them mentioned practical suggestions like conducting national pre and post assessments or using practical tools to track learners' progress such portfolios, project based learning, or digital marking platforms among many others. Surprisingly, teachers did not list these techniques though some of them have been implemented by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) in collaboration with the Center for Educational Research and Development (CRDP) as a part of the national diagnostic assessment conducted by the end of the scholastic year 2024-2025 and then reconducted by the end of 2025 as a post test. In both tests, teachers were asked to upload the grades into an official platform owned by the Ministry so that results can be tracked and analyzed by CRDP experts. A similar experience that Lebanese Grade 3 teachers passed through is using a marking platform as a part of the "Second Language Preparedness" project funded by UNESCO (2025). Likewise, even though teachers used this platform, they overlooked mentioning it as they answered the corresponding

question. This implies that although teachers believe in the value of formative assessments and continuous constructive feedback to measure students' proficiency and to track their progress, they are not aware of the usefulness of digital platforms which serve the purpose of recording individual learners' scores and storing them in their archives; nor they are aware of unconventional tools of administering informal assessments such as portfolios, gamified online quizzes, digital or hand polls, and so forth.

## Conclusion

Based on the results, it can be concluded that Basic Education Lebanese teachers are generally aware of the most important characteristics that qualify teachers to teach English and of the most effective strategies to teach EFL. However, they lack the proper skills to make judgments when they observe the practices of other teachers. Hence, the responding teachers were able to spot the criteria they believe imperative for EFL teaching, but they were uncertain of whether what they have seen in the video reflects the best practices, and whether the strategies used are implemented properly. Thus, they could not decide whether simple computer use - even though passive- was truly impactful. As experienced teachers, they found no difficulty identifying challenges and suggesting strategies to deal with them. Nonetheless, peer observation and formative assessment techniques seemed to be among the aspects that are still not well absorbed in the Lebanese educational settings.

Considering the small sample size, the results cannot be generalized as data from more teachers might yield other results. Despite this, it can be recommended that teachers be trained on the practical use of technology in order to enhance both teacher and student digital literacy. This includes content delivery, student engagement, and progress tracking through different tools, apps, and platforms. In addition, teachers need to diversify assessment methods in order to monitor and track students' progress throughout the entire process. Last but not least, a culture of self-reflection and peer observation and support need to be cultivated. This can be done through professional learning communities that improve confidence and motivation on the one hand and improve instructional quality on the other hand.

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