

**EFL REMOTE LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID19  
PANDEMIC: THE PERCEIVED TRAINING NEEDS OF STAFF  
MEMBERS AT SAUDI UNIVERSITIES**

**BY**

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## **EFL remote learning in the context of COVID19 pandemic: The perceived training needs of staff members at Saudi universities**

### **Abstract**

This study aimed at exploring the EFL remote learning training needs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic as perceived by staff members at Saudi universities. The attempt was also made to examine how the participants' perceptions of their training needs may differ according to the variables of gender, years of experience, and specialization. A descriptive-analytic method based on the needs analysis of the perceived training needs of the staff members was used. Data collection was carried out by means of a questionnaire developed by the researcher, which consisted of five main domains of the training needs in the field of EFL emergency remote learning, these were: planning and designing learning experiences, Facilitating students' learning, engaging students, evaluation, and professionalism. The questionnaire was verified in terms of face validity, and reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient on a pilot sample of the nonparticipants in the main study. The instrument was administered to a sample consisting of 124 staff members specialized in EFL in a number of Saudi universities. Data analysis was conducted via descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and ranks) and inferential statistics methods, which included the independent samples T-Test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results revealed that the overall perceived training needs of the staff members in the field of EFL remote learning were high with means amounting to (2.93). The third dimension, *engaging students*, ranked first as the highest perceived training needs from the participants' perspective (very high, mean=3.59), followed by the first dimension, *planning and designing learning experiences*, which was also viewed as very highly needed (mean= 3.26). The second dimension, *Facilitating students' learning*, ranked third among the "highly" required training needs from the participants' perspectives (mean= 3.16), followed by the fourth dimension, evaluation, which was viewed as moderately needed (mean= 2.66), and finally the *professionalism* dimension (mean=1.99). It was also found that there were no statistically significant differences in the perceived training needs in the field of EFL emergency remote learning as reported by the participants according to the variables of gender, years of experience, or

specialization. In light of the results reached, the researcher recommended developing a professional development program to develop the EFL emergency remote learning competencies among EFL Saudi staff members in light of the results of the needs analysis conducted in this study.

**Keywords:** Remote Learning -Training Need Analysis- TEFL

## التعلم عن بعد للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ظل جائحة (كوفيد 19): الاحتياجات التدريبية

### المتصورة لأعضاء هيئة التدريس في الجامعات السعودية

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن الاحتياجات التدريبية المتصورة في مجال التعلم عن بعد للإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ظل جائحة (كوفيد 19) من وجهة نظر أعضاء هيئة التدريس في عدد من الجامعات السعودية فضلاً عن الكشف عن مدى اختلاف تصورات المشاركين لاحتياجاتهم التدريبية وفقاً لمتغيرات (الجنس - عدد سنوات الخبرة - التخصص). ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة تم توظيف منهج البحث الوصفي المستند إلى أسلوب تحليل الاحتياجات التدريبية من خلال المسح بالاستبيان لتحديد الاحتياجات التدريبية المتصورة من وجهة نظر المشاركين. وتم جمع البيانات باستخدام استبيان من إعداد الباحث يتضمن خمس مجالات رئيسية للاحتياجات التدريبية في التعلم عن بعد الطارئ وهي: تخطيط وتصميم التعلم، وتيسير تعلم الطلاب، وإشراك الطلاب، والتقييم، والمهنية. وتم التحقق من صدق الاستبيان بطريقة الصدق الظاهري، وتم التحقق من الثبات باستخدام معامل ألفا كرونباخ على عينة استطلاعية من غير المشاركين في العينة الأساسية. واشتملت عينة الدراسة على (124) من أعضاء هيئة التدريس المتخصصين في الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية EFL في عدد من الجامعات السعودية. وتحليل البيانات تم توظيف أساليب الإحصاء الوصفي ممثلة في المتوسطات الحسابية والانحرافات المعيارية والرتب كما تم توظيف أساليب الإحصاء الاستدلالي ممثلة في اختبار "ت" لدلالة الفروق بين متوسطي عینتين مستقلتين وتحليل التباين أحادي الاتجاه. وقد أبرزت نتائج الدراسة أن الاحتياجات التدريبية لأعضاء هيئة التدريس في التعلم عن بعد الطارئ قد كانت إجمالاً بدرجة "كبيرة" بمتوسط حسابي (2.93). وجاء البعد الثالث (إشراك الطلاب) في المرتبة الأولى كأعلى الاحتياجات التدريبية المتصورة من وجهة نظر المشاركين بدرجة "كبيرة جداً" وبمتوسط حسابي (3.59) تلاه في المرتبة الثانية وبدرجة احتياج "كبيرة جداً" وبمتوسط حسابي (3.26) البعد الأول (تخطيط وتصميم خبرات التعلم). تلاه في المرتبة الثالثة وبدرجة احتياج "كبيرة" وبمتوسط حسابي (3.16) البعد الثاني (تيسير تعلم الطلاب). وجاء في المرتبة الرابعة وبدرجة احتياج "متوسطة" وبمتوسط حسابي (2.66) البعد الرابع (التقويم) وجاء في المرتبة الأخيرة وبدرجة احتياج "متوسطة" وبمتوسط (1.99) البعد الخامس (المهنية). كما أبرزت النتائج عدم وجود فروق

دالة إحصائياً في الاحتياجات التدريبية المتصورة من وجهة نظر أعضاء هيئة التدريس بالجامعات السعودية فيما يتعلق بالاحتياجات التدريبية في التعلم عن بعد الطارئ وفقاً لمتغيرات (الجنس - عدد سنوات الخبرة - التخصص). وفي ضوء هذه النتائج أوصى الباحث ببناء برنامج للتنمية المهنية لتنمية كفايات التعلم عن بعد الطارئ لدى أعضاء هيئة التدريس في الجامعات السعودية استناداً إلى تحليل الاحتياجات الذي تم في الدراسة.

**الكلمات الدالة:** التعلم عن بعد - تحليل الاحتياجات التدريبية - تدريس الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

## Introduction

The health, social, economic, political, and educational effects and consequences of Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic are currently the most prominent issue in the vast majority of discussions at the national and international levels. COVID-19 is a serious global pandemic, unprecedented in decades, which has been creating deep social turbulence and confusion on the global scale and awakened the world from illusions in which it lived for a long time.

Given the worldwide outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many universities and higher education institutions have had to suspend on-campus and switch to online learning (Ali, 2020); because of the increased potential to spread the pandemic in the gatherings. According to recent statistics related to the educational effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest reports issued by UNESCO state that approximately 1.5 billion learners from K-12 as well as in higher education in most countries of the world are subject stop attendance in educational institutions as a result of the pandemic (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Affouneh, Salha & Khlaif, 2020). The kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is no exception, as the study in universities and schools was suspended as a result of the pandemic.

The sudden suspension of the study compelled many countries to require their education system to switch to e-learning tools and techniques. This has paved the way, within the educational community, to the re-emergence of the concept of emergency remote learning, which had been neglected or overlooked by educational researchers and practitioners in prior periods. Due to its very flexible, emergent nature, remote learning emerged as a form of online learning, which is highly appropriate to the pandemic circumstances of COVID-19.

Remote learning involves the use of e-tools for implementing all the teaching and learning activities and tasks that had been taking place face-to-face or within a blended learning system. The purpose behind this is to continue the study until return to normal life when the threats of the pandemic neutralize (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020). However, under uncertainty that characterizes the COVID-19 pandemic, which may last for several months to come, remote learning becomes a vital

choice for all educational institutions in order to continue to provide their services satisfactorily (Aguliera & Nightengale-Lee, 2020).

There are numerous advantages associated with remote learning for EFL learners, especially higher education learners, such as continuing learning without significant suspension, benefiting from reading, listening, speaking, and writing using authentic English materials, the ability to communicate using the target language through various social media, and providing a virtual collaborative context for language learning (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Layali & Al-Shlowiy, 2020; Rababah, 2020; Altam, 2020).

Nonetheless, the transition towards the implementation of e-learning in the context of COVI-19 has been characterized by uncertainty, chaos, and confusion in many countries of the world (Safi, Wenzel & Spalding, 2020). At the same time, the remote learning facilitator needs to be capable of creating an environment conducive to the teaching and learning processes within the special nature of emergency remote learning (Eder, 2020). The design and implementation of remote learning require a great deal of flexibility of educators, which calls for tailored training in order for the educator to be able to perform effectively (Stenman & Pettersson, 2020). The challenge is increased in light of the fact that university staff members are required to switch to emergency remote learning without any previous knowledge or preparation for the majority of them.

In view of the foregoing, adequate heed must be paid to the training of staff members on emergency remote learning. The first step needed to take up the slack is to identify their training needs within this form of learning that is highly needed in the emergency circumstance, which will be focused on in the present study.

### **Statement of the problem**

The researcher's self-observations and personal experience served as a significant source for identifying the problem of the present study. By virtue of working as an EFL staff member at a higher education institution in KSA, I have seen from close how the university staff members were overwhelmed by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in KSA, which resulted in the suspension of on-campus studying in the Saudi higher education institutions.



There have been many attempts to use online learning to deliver education for EFL students, however, several problems were encountered, to give just a few examples, setting the highest priority learning goals, the problems associated with synchronous and asynchronous communications with the students, and the methods to be used for increasing students' motivation and promoting their engagement in learning, in addition to other problems related to the evaluation methods.

This gave rise to the notion that the staff members need to implement the concept and skills of remote learning, which calls for the provision of adequate training for the staff members on this emergency learning system. By interviewing seven university staff members, the researcher concluded that none of them had any idea about the concept of emergency remote learning and that they were unfamiliar with the major adjustments that should be made to the typical online learning in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. These findings served as a primary reason for thinking of conducting a study aimed at identifying the training needs required for emergency remote learning.

Moreover, the results of the previous relevant studies highlighted the pronounced need for good planning of emergency remote learning, as well as the adequate preparation and training for instructors in this field (see, for example, Rababah, 2020; Whalen, 2020; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Allen, Rowan & Singh, 2020). Based on the above, the problem of the present study stems from the need of the staff members for training on EFL emergency remote learning. This problem can be investigated through attempting to answer the following question: what are the perceived training needs of the at Saudi universities in the field of EFL remote learning in the context of COVID-19 pandemic?

In order to answer this main research question, the study tried to answer the following questions:

1. What are the EFL remote learning skills staff members at Saudi universities should master?
2. How do staff members at Saudi universities perceive their training needs in the field of EFL remote learning?

3. Do participants' perceptions of their training needs in the field of EFL remote learning differ according to their demographic variables (i.e. gender, years of experience, or specialization? on)?

### **Significance of the study**

The importance of the present study stems from both theoretical and practical aspects of significance.

**A. *The theoretical significance*** this study, according to the best knowledge of the researcher, is one of a very few studies conducted in the Arab context focusing on emergency remote learning, its implementation in the field of EFL education, and training EFL university staff members on its use. Reviewing the studies conducted in the Arab environment in general, and in the Saudi context in particular, it is observed there is a dearth of research on remote learning. Added to that, the scant research available to date on the global scope in this particular area, which is not surprising given the emergency nature of this form of learning. The attention, then, is devoted to remote learning merely in the case of a pandemic or a catastrophe that prevent study on campus. In light of this, the present study can serve as a good starting point for other researchers interested in training teachers on emergency remote learning.

### **B. The practical significance of the study**

This study can be helpful for the following stakeholders:

1. The university staff members specialized in EFL education: this study would benefit in highlighting many of the main skills that should be mastered by the university staff members in the field of remote learning, in order to be well prepared to respond to any future emergency circumstances.
2. The study may benefit the presidents and deans of higher education institutions in KSA, in terms of indicating how to continue to provide educational services under catastrophic conditions or epidemics as occurring in the present time with the outbreak of COVID-19, thus making the universities more prepared for emergency circumstances and providing them with more flexibility in handling the circumstances of pandemics and disasters. This is particularly significant due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic may take longer to treat, as reported by the World Health Organization.
3. The present study can serve as a basis for identifying the training needs of staff members in the field of emergency remote learning, thus helping in developing training programs tailored to develop the remote learning competencies for the university staff members.

## Limitations of the study

The present study is limited to the following limitations:

- a. **Place and human limits:** the empirical study is conducted on a sample of staff members specialized in teaching EFL at some universities and higher education institutions in KSA, both specialized in linguistics and curriculum and instruction.
- b. **Time limits:** the empirical study was conducted in April and May 2020.
- c. **Object limits:** the study is limited to the following topic areas:
  1. Remote learning which serves as a form of online learning in the emergency circumstance (COVID-19 pandemic in this case).
  2. The training needs as perceived by staff members specialized in EFL education.
  3. The training needs are limited to five domains, namely planning and designing learning experiences, Facilitating students' learning, engaging students, evaluation, and professionalism.
  4. Examining the potential effect of personal variables on the participants' perceptions of their training needs (these are: gender, years of experience, and specialization).

## Terminology

- EFL emergency remote learning:** this term is operationally defined in this study as :a form of online learning that is unscheduled or primarily contingent. The need for such a form of learning urgently arises as a consequence of a pandemic or a disaster which prevents the regular study on campus for a certain period of time, which makes learning home-based and student communication with teachers, peers, and course delivery take place via electronic means of communication".
- The perceived training needs:** these needs refer to the estimations of the staff members specialized in EFL education for the extent to which they need training on a number of essential skills required for EFL emergency remote learning in five main domains, these are: planning and designing learning experiences, Facilitating students' learning, engaging students, evaluation, and professionalism. These needs are identified by means of a training needs analysis questionnaire tailored to the present study.

## Literature Review

### The concept of remote learning

Emergency remote learning implies a sudden suspension of the regular system of teaching and learning due to emergency conditions such as the current situation resulting from the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic (Affouneh, Salha & Khlaif, 2020, p. 35).

Many researcher use the term “remote learning” as a synonym for distance learning or online learning (e.g. Krumsvik, Jones, Leer-Salvesen, Høydal & Røkenes, 2019; Wulff, Lauer & Braun, 2008). However, there is consensus in many other studies that remote learning differs substantially from both of the above-cited concepts.

Despite the similarities existing between remote learning on one hand, and distance learning and online learning on the other hand in several aspects; such as the use of e-communication tools, learning management systems, and digital resources, etc., there is a major difference lies in the emergency nature of remote learning that arises because of a sudden suspension of learning on-campus a result of force majeure circumstances, thus being unplanned unlike the cases of online learning and distance learning. Added to that, an educational institution may not have any planning for the required infrastructure or the necessary resources (Aguliera & Nightengale-Lee, 2020; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Whittle , Tiwari, Yan & Williams, 2020).

Accordingly, researchers prefer the use of Emergency Remote Learning (ERL) concept (Whalen, 2020; Hodges, Moore Lockee & Bond, 2020), which is also known as emergency remote teaching (Bacich, 2020; Aguliera & Nightengale-Lee, 2020) and emergency e-learning (Murphy, 2020).

Based on above, remote learning can be defined as "a form of distance e-learning characterized by its emergency nature as a result of a pandemic or disaster that causes the suspension of the regular on-campus study at the educational institution, and changes the priorities of the educational goals, the focus of instructional content, the forms of content delivery, and the methods of evaluation in order to continue the educational process without interruption and to educationally qualify the students for the post-emergency phase".

#### Significance of EFL Remote learning

The high prevalence of COVID-19 pandemic in most countries of the world forced

several education institutions to suspend study (Hodges, et. Al, 2020). This called for an alternative e-system for EFL education with sufficient flexibility to respond to the pandemic emergency condition. In this respect, EFL remote learning is an appropriate alternative that employs a variety of technologies supporting the various language skills such as individual and collaborative writing (e.g. wiki, blogging, and twitter), reading and listening (authentic films and video clips), and speaking (simultaneous communication with native language speakers).

Several previous studies indicate that the implementation of remote learning on the basis of scientific foundations can have many positive benefits. For instance, in a study conducted by Krumsvik et al. (2019) on a sample of doctoral student candidates in Norway, it was found that the combination of advanced video conferencing tools along with teaching design had positive effects on student achievement and positive participation in the educational process. Similarly, Layali and Al-Shlowiy (2020) concluded that the implementation of e-learning in EFL education at the university level had played a prominent role.

Through a descriptive review of the literature based on a theoretical analytical methodology, it became clear that there are many tools and techniques that can be used to teach EFL in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, including the use of Google Docs for developing students' writing skills, promoting the cooperation skills in EFL learning via Neapod, enhancing communication between teacher and learners through mobile learning techniques, and developing students' vocabulary using Telegram.

In a similar vein, a descriptive survey study conducted by Altam (2020) on a sample of Yemeni students studying the English language at some Indian higher education institutions documented that the use of Web 2.0 technologies and tools had a positive impact on student learning of the English language in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, YouTube videos were used for the acquisition of several language skills, in addition to employing other social media tools to enhance vocabulary learning, overcome language mistakes, develop language fluency, and improve students' interaction with others using the target language.

### **The need to train educators on remote learning**

There is a pronounced need to train and professionally develop educators on the implementation of remote learning in order to enable them to make a successful, effective transition to this untypical form of instruction (Clausen, Bunte & Robertson, 2020). educators need to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to empower them in responding effectively to any similar emergencies, whether epidemics or other disasters (Dreesen, Akseer, Brossard Dewan, Giraldo, Kamei & Correa, 2020).

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Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) investigated the reality and obstacles of using remote learning among (16) EFL educators using semi-structured interviews within a framework of a qualitative research methodology. The researchers found that teachers have made efforts in the application of remote learning through several activities such as simultaneous lectures, asynchronous communication, and the use of e-learning management and online evaluation systems. Meanwhile, the participants faced many problems in providing support to students, making students complete assignments on time, poor preparation, and planning for remote learning experiences by teachers, not to mention the technical problems. In light of this, the researchers articulated the need to train and equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully implement remote learning in EFL education.

In another qualitative study conducted by Rababah (2020) on a sample of EFL learners in Jordan using semi-structured interviews with the participants, it was found that these students encountered problems in EFL learning using technology in the context of COVID-19. In more particular, the participants reported three main difficulties, these were the inconsistency of the teaching methods adopted by teachers, the obstacles related to accessibility, and the lack of training on technology and their new presumed roles.

Likewise, Whalen's (2020) study highlighted the teachers' need for training on emergent remote learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this survey study conducted on a sample of pre-university education teachers in the USA, it was concluded that a large proportion of the participants were not familiar with or had previously applied remote learning. The participants were also not prepared sufficiently for this new form of learning and faced many problems related to their readiness in this field, notably the lack of knowledge of remote learning strategies, and technologies.

### **Educators skills in EFL Remote learning**

Emergency remote learning has a specific nature that significantly differs from the typical forms of distance learning or online learning; which

entails a new set of skills that would bring out new training needs for staff members who are willing to use it in EFL education. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the nature and the essence of emergency remote learning in order to identify the required skills.

In the attempt to understand the specific nature of emergency remote learning, Whittle, Tiwari Yan, and Williams (2020) suggested a model called (ARTE) that involved several main aspects of remote learning, these are the hidden curriculum related to teaching how to interact with remote learning tools, ways to enhance the academic integration of students, methods of overcoming the insufficient social gathering of the facilitator and students, ways to activate learners initiatives and the active role of learners in learning, and ways to enhance asynchronous cooperation and its superiority over simultaneous learning, as well as cooperation in light of the unstable educational expectations.

Based on the ISTE standards for educators, Morgan (2020) proposes a number of best practices in remote learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Seven practices were identified by the author, namely: assuming a leadership role and modeling the utilization of technology to provide continuous educational opportunities for all students, teaching students responsible digital citizenship, promoting the role of facilitator within a learning environment conducive to student learning, employing formative and summative evaluation methods to improve student learning, and designing diverse and personal learning activities and experiences commensurate with the individual needs of students (Morgan, 2020).

In the same respect, Baran and AlZoubi (2020) developed a framework for designing remote learning centered on learners as humans. The main premise of this framework is that remote learning should account for the human aspects of students in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the framework is based on three main components: working to build empathy by responding to the psychological needs of learners, promoting active engagement of students in problem-solving, and striving towards building an inquiry community using e-learning tools.

In view of the foregoing review of literature on the framework of emergency remote learning, I developed a suggested framework, which implies five main domains of the skills required for teachers to implement

emergency remote learning. It is worth observing that this is not an exhaustive list of all skills that teachers must have; given there are many intersection points between remote learning, online learning, and distance learning. Rather, this list focuses on the skills appropriate to the specific nature of remote learning, which is unique to any other form of e-learning or distance learning. The following paragraphs are brief descriptions for each of these domains.

### ***1. planning and designing learning experiences***

The emergency nature of remote learning entails the educational facilitator to implement untypical procedures including the following procedures: analyzing the non-educational needs of students, such as health, safety and security needs; analyzing problems the students may face in communication and accessibility; analyzing the pressures on students and the available infrastructure; analyzing the context of changes in the learning environment and making adjustments to the instructional content like incorporating the pandemic the content; designing instructional content that can be easily used in all devices of students, such as mobile and computer; and the use of authentic materials to learn the language such as English films (at YouTube) as non-traditional sources of education; the flexibility in the design of learning and the ability to respond for errors; and considering the rules of cybersecurity (Morgan, 2020; Pena & Lim, 2020; Stenman & Pettersson, 2020; Hodges, Moore, Lockee & Bond, 2020; Alykova, Smirnov & Stefanova, 2020; Hunter, 2015).

### ***2. Facilitating students' learning***

The staff member should serve as a facilitator of students' learning. Although he or she may deliver live, interactive lectures as is the case in any form of online learning, his or her role should be primarily a facilitator of learning by communicating clear learning expectations for students and employing educational approaches based on contemporary learning theories, which allow the maximum benefit for students of the tools and technologies of Web 2.0. Examples of these theories are the connectivism, the communicative approach for teaching language skills, self-organized learning, and socially shared cognition. The facilitator role also implies encouraging students to solve problems and creativity in language learning through social media techniques and helping in producing user-generated



content (Pena & Lim, 2020; Safi, Wenzel & Spalding, 2020; MacMahon, Leggett & Carroll, 2020; Carter Jr, Rice, Yang & Jackson, 2020; Stanley, 2017).

### **3. *Engaging students***

Academic engagement of students is one of the most prominent issues facing educators in the context of remote learning. The suspension of an on-campus study may give students the impression that the study is not serious, thus lacking the motivation to fully engage. Moreover, students' fears of the pandemic may be another factor that distracts them from studying seriously. Therefore, educators, as facilitators, should adopt many techniques aimed at enhancing students' academic engagement in EFL education via the form of remote learning. This can be done mainly by facilitating the building of student learning communities to practice EFL skills, delivering immediate, effective and appropriate feedback to the students, enhancing their participation in all ways such as encouraging them to ask questions, use polls, promoting communication between the students and native speakers of the target language in the context of authentic communication experiences, and encouraging students to use Web 2.0 tools to express themselves and their feelings using the language positively (Morgan, 2020; Pena & Lim, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; MacMahon et al., 2020).

### **4. *Evaluation***

E-evaluation plays vital roles within remote learning in the form of summative evaluation (through electronic tests), formative evaluation (such as the use of portfolio), and evaluating students performance within authentic language skills in which they employ the English language as a medium, in addition to the other forms of evaluation such as self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and remote learning program evaluation through a variety of means, including student feedback (Morgan, 2020; Pena & Lim, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Zayapragassarazan, 2020; Raud & Vodovozov, 2019).

### **5. *Professionalism***

Professionalism is a cornerstone for teacher practices in remote learning as is the case in other forms of education. This professionalism occurs through a teacher reflecting on his or her practices, either individually or collectively, establishing professional learning communities, professional

practice, and collaboration with other teachers, and the continuous development of skills and knowledge in remote learning and its practices (Morgan, 2020; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Robert & de Abreu Cybis, 2011).

## Methodology

### Method of the study

A quantitative descriptive survey method based on the needs analysis of the perceived training needs from staff members' perspectives was used in this study. The study design included three independent variables (i.e. gender, years of experience, and specialization) and a dependent variable, which is the perceived training needs of the participants in the field of EFL emergency remote learning.

### Participants

The participants of the present study were selected by convenient sampling technique from the university staff members specialized in EFL at the faculties of arts and education in several Saudi universities in **Unayzah, Riyadh, Al-Qassim, Jeddah, Makkah and Madinah**. An online survey was administered via Google Drive. A total number of 124 complete questionnaires were received and formed the final sample of the study. The following paragraph points out the distribution of the sample according to the personal variables of the participants.

Table (1): The distribution of the sample according to the variables of the study

Variables	categories	Number	Percentage
Gender	Males	76	61 %
	Females	48	39 %
	Total	124	100 %
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	27	22 %
	5-10 years	56	45 %
	more than 10 years	41	33 %
	Total	124	100 %

<b>Specialization</b>	Linguistics	53	43 %
	TEFL	71	57 %
	Total	124	100 %

Data presented in table (1) shows that the sample of this study consisted of 124 university staff members; 76 males (61 %) and 48 females (39 %). Twenty-seven participants had less than 5 years of experience (22 %), 56 had 5- 10 years of experience (45 %), and 41 of them had more than 10 years of experience (33 %). Moreover, fifty-three university staff members (43 %) were specialized in linguistics, and 71 participants (57 %) were specialized in TEFL .

### **Instrument of the study**

Data collection was carried out by means of a needs analysis questionnaire, which was used to analyze the perceived training needs in the field of EFL emergency remote learning. What follows is a description of the steps for developing and examining the validity and the reliability of the instrument.

1- *Identifying the aim of the questionnaire*: this questionnaire aimed at exploring the perceptions of staff members Saudi universities on their training needs in the field of remote learning of EFL.

2- *Determining the main dimensions of the questionnaire*: out of reviewing the existing literature, the researcher identified five main dimensions to be included in the questionnaire to reflect the main domains of EFL remote learning, these were: planning and designing learning experiences, Facilitating students' learning, engaging students, evaluation, and professionalism.

3- *Developing the initial draft of the questionnaire*: in this step, the researcher reviewed a number of relevant previous studies on remote learning (e.g. Pohan, 2020; Whalen, 2020; Whittle Tiwari, Yan & Williams, 2020; Aguliera, & Nightengale-Lee, 2020; Carter Jr, Rice, Yang & Jackson, 2020; Correa, 2020; Morgan, 2020; Safi, Wenzel & Spalding, 2020; Affouneh, Salha & Khlaif, 2020; Ali, 2020; MacMahon, Leggett & Carroll, 2020; Hodges, Moore, Lockee & Bond, 2020; Dreesen, Akseer, Brossard, Dewan, Giraldo, Kamei & Correa, 2020; Clausen, Bunte & Robertson, 2020;

Raud & Vodovozov, 2019). Based on reviewing these previous studies, the researcher developed an initial draft of the instrument that included 19 items in the first dimension (planning and designing learning experiences), 12 items in the second dimension (Facilitating students' learning), 14 items in the third dimension (engaging students), 9 items in the fourth dimension (evaluation), and 5 items the last dimension (professionalism). Therefore, the initial draft of the questionnaire consisted of 59 items.

4- *Verifying the validity of the questionnaire*: the validity of the instrument was verified using the face validity method through presenting the questionnaire to a set of jury members of staff and experienced supervisors specialized in education technology and EFL teaching in a number of universities and higher education institutions in KSA in order to provide their opinions of the instrument in terms of whether the questionnaire included all the dimensions of remote learning, if each item was related to the main dimension including it, whether or not the formulation of items was clear and scientifically accurate, and to make any observations by modifying, omission, or addition. Based on the opinions of the jury members, and in light of the identified consensus criterion of 80 % among the jury members for each item as an indicator of face validity, the researcher modified the initial draft of the questionnaire by omitting some items, adding others, and paraphrasing some items. The adjustments made by the jury members were considered an indicator of the face validity of the instrument.

### **5. verifying the reliability of the questionnaire**

In order to verify the reliability of the questionnaire, a Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was used for a pilot sample consisting of 25 staff members at Saudi universities specialized in EFL of the nonparticipants in the main study. Table (2) shows the values of the reliability coefficients for the questionnaire dimensions as well as the total reliability coefficient of the questionnaire.

Table (2): Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients for the dimensions of the questionnaire and the total reliability Coefficient

N	Questionnaire dimensions	Statements	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Planning and designing learning experiences	11	0.89
2	Facilitating students' learning	12	0.92

3	Engaging students	10	0.84
4	Evaluation	8	0.93
5	Professionalism	5	0.87
<b>Total Reliability</b>		<b>46</b>	<b>0.88</b>

\*The "r" value of the correlation coefficient at the level of significance (0.05) = 0.374, and at the level of significance (0.01)= 0.479

Results presented in table (2) reveal that all the values of the reliability coefficients of the dimensions of the questionnaire and the total reliability coefficient ranged between 0.844- 0.925, which are considered high values indicating that the questionnaire enjoyed a high level of reliability.

6- *Developing the final form of the questionnaire:* based on the previous steps, the final form of the perceived training needs analysis questionnaire consisted of two main sections: a letter directed to the respondents explaining the purpose of the study and how to respond to the items of the questionnaire, as well as assuring that the data collected will be confidential. This section also included the personal variables of the participants (i.e. gender - years of experience - specialization).

The main section of the questionnaire consisted of 46 items reflecting the perceived training needs in the field of EFL remote learning. These items were distributed into the following five main dimensions:

- 1.The first dimension (planning and designing learning experiences) consisted of 11 items.
- 2.The second dimension (Facilitating students' learning) consisted of 12 items.
- 3.The third dimension (engaging students) consisted of 10 items.
4. The fourth dimension (evaluation) consisted of 8 items.
- 5.The fifth dimension (professionalism) consisted of 5 items.

The response of each item was based on a 4-lickert scale reflecting the level of perceived need (i.e. very high, high, average, and no need).

## Procedures of the study

1. Identifying the problems of the study and its questions, and developing a proposal for answering the research questions.
2. Reviewing the existing literature on EFL remote learning and the perceived needs of staff in the field.
3. Developing the initial draft of the training needs analysis questionnaire for the participants and examining its face validity.
4. Selecting a pilot sample of the nonparticipants in the main study to verify the internal consistency and reliability.
5. Preparing the questionnaire in its final form and uploading it on Google Drive to facilitate answering it remotely without direct contact between the researcher and the respondents, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

6. The researcher emailed many of the staff members specialized in EFL at the faculties of arts and education in several Saudi universities in Unayzah, Riyadh, Al-Qassim, Jeddah, Makkah and Madinah to answer the questionnaire.
7. A total number of 124 complete questionnaires were received via Google Drive, thus representing the final sample of the study.
8. Raw data were downloaded and statistically processed using (SPSS-22) software.
9. The results were presented, discussed, and interpreted, and recommendations and suggestions for further research were put forth.

### Study results and discussion

In this section the results of the statistical analysis of data are presented, the second and third questions of the study are answered, the statistical hypotheses are tested, and the results reached are discussed in light of the previous studies, in addition to providing recommendations and suggestions related to these results. Research question 1 which states “What are the EFL remote learning skills the staff members at Saudi universities should master?” was answered within the methodology section.

Results of Research question (2):

Research question 2 stated, “How do staff members at Saudi universities perceive their training needs in the field of EFL remote learning?” In order to answer this question, the means and standard deviations of the participants’ responses to the perceived training needs were calculated. The results were interpreted based on the values of means according to the following criterion:

Range= (the highest value of answer categories – the lowest value of answer categories) = 4-1 = 3.

The number of categories = 4 categories.

The length of a category= the range ÷ the number of categories= 4 ÷ 3= 0.75.

Thus, the (0.75) criterion was used as indicated in table (3).

Table (3): the judgment criterion on the means of the participants’ estimations for their training needs.

N	Means		Criterion of Judgment
	From	To	
1	1	1.75	No Need
2	1.76	2.50	Moderate Need
3	2.51	3.25	High Need
4	3.26	4	Very High Need

Table (4): Means and Ranks  
of the training needs dimensions in the field of EFL remote learning

Dimensions	Statements	Means	Ranks	Level of Need
Planning and designing learning experiences	11	3.26	2	Very High
Facilitating students' learning	12	3.16	3	High
Engaging students	10	3.59	1	Very High
Evaluation	8	2.66	4	High
Professionalism	5	1.99	5	Moderate
<b>General Mean</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>High Need</b>	

As indicated in table (4) the general mean of the participants' estimates for their training needs in the field of EFL remote learning amounted to (2.93), which is a high level of need. In more detail, the means values of the staff members' estimates for the training needs dimensions in the field of EFL remote learning ranged between (1.99- 3.59), which indicates moderate to high levels of need. Specifically, the third dimension, engaging students, ranked first with a very high level of need (mean= 3.59), followed by the first dimension, planning and designing learning experiences with a very high level of need (mean= 3.26), while the fifth dimension, professionalism, ranked last as the least needed dimension with a moderate level of need (mean= 1.99).

The following paragraphs present the detailed results of each dimension of training needs in the field of EFL remote learning from the perspectives of staff members at Saudi universities. The results presented in table (5) show the overall results of the estimates of the levels of the training needs for the first dimension "planning and designing learning experiences" from the participants' perspectives, as well as the levels of need for each item.

Table (5): the results of the perceived training needs for the first dimension:  
planning and designing learning experiences

N	planning and designing learning experiences	Means	St. deviations	Ranks	Level of need
1	Analyzing non-teaching needs in the context of COVID 19 pandemic, such as health, psychological, security and safety needs.	3.84	0.37	1	Very High
2	Analyzing accessibility barriers the students may encounter.	3.83	0.38	2	Very High
3	Analyzing the available technology and communications infrastructure to design adequate learning experiences.	3.81	0.40	4	Very High
4	Contextual analysis of changes occurring in the educational environment and the barriers imposed by the pandemic.	2.98	0.15	9	High
5	Making adjustments to instructional content in response to the emergency conditions, such as incorporating reading, translations, and writing texts about COVID19 Pandemic.	3.82	0.38	3	Very High
6	Designing a user friendly educational content for navigation on multiple devices, such as mobiles and computers, along with the printed version.	3.14	0.41	8	High
7	Designing and selecting reusable English learning sources and objects	3.15	0.38	7	High
8	Choosing appropriate, authentic materials for content learning, such as movies, videos, e-books and Google documents.	3.66	0.47	5	Very High
9	Designing and management of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Small private online course (SPOCs).	2.49	0.50	10	Moderate
10	Designing tutoring and personalized teaching software for the English language teaching.	1.98	0.15	11	Moderate
11	Designing alternative plans commensurate with the contingent nature of remote learning.	3.17	0.68	6	High
<b>General Mean</b>		<b>3.26</b>	<b>Very High Need</b>		

The results presented in table (5) reveal that the perceived levels of need for the first dimension, planning, and designing learning experiences, were very high in general with a general mean amounting (3.26). Specifically, five items were reported as very high as training needs, (4) items as high, and (2) items were reported by participants as moderate training needs .



Table (6): the results of the perceived training needs for the second dimension: Facilitating students' learning

N	Facilitating students' learning	Means	St. deviations	Ranks	level of need
1	Understanding the role of a faculty member as facilitator of students' learning.	3.15	0.40	7	High
2	Identifying and communicating clear learning expectations for students, which align with the contingent nature of remote learning.	3.14	0.70	8	High
3	Delivering live, interactive lectures through new video conferencing technologies.	2.82	0.38	10	High
4	Facilitating an English language learning environment based on connectivism through the use of Web.2 technologies.	3.18	0.38	5	High
5	Providing clear instructions to the students about their roles within the remote learning framework, and how to use its tools.	3.84	0.37	1	Very High
6	Making use of e-learning management systems to manage the content, processes, and activities of remote learning, as well as to organize the remote learning environment.	2.83	0.38	9	High
7	Making adjustments to the instructional strategies and activities in response to unstable internet connection for students.	3.83	0.38	2	Very High
8	Utilizing socially shared organization enhancement strategies for students' English language learning using online resources	2.35	0.48	11	Moderate
9	Providing learning opportunities and experiences that elicit students' linguistic creativity and problem solving.	3.82	0.39	4	Very High
10	Using virtual language labs for teaching and learning language skills.	1.98	0.15	12	Moderate
11	Diversifying the goals, content, teaching methods and online evaluation based on the students' needs.	3.17	0.37	6	High
12	Implementing the communicative approach in teaching the four language skills using Web.2 technologies.	3.82	0.38	3	Very High
<b>General Mean</b>		<b>3.16</b>	<b>High Need</b>		

The results presented in table (6) point out that the perceived levels of need for the second dimension, Facilitating students' learning, were overall high with a general mean amounting to (3.159). Specifically, (4) items number were rated as very high as training needs, 6 items as of high levels as

training needs, and (2) items were viewed by participants as the least significant training needs in this dimension with moderate levels of need.

Table (7): the results of the perceived training needs  
for the third dimension: Engaging students

N	Engaging Students	Means	St. deviations	Ranks	level of need
1	Methods of enhancing students' intrinsic motivation of learning under the pandemic.	3.82	0.39	5	Very High
2	Methods of virtual classroom environment management and developing clear criteria for educational interaction in an online environment.	3.83	0.38	3	Very High
3	Training students on using self-regulated English language learning strategies.	3.81	0.40	6	Very High
4	The strategies aimed at encouraging students to use various online resources for informal language learning.	3.15	0.40	10	High
5	Various methods of delivering effective, immediate feedback on students' learning.	3.97	0.18	1	Very High
6	Using students' academic achievement enhancement methods within emergency remote learning, such as quiz and daily polls, and encouraging students' questioning.	3.33	0.47	7	Very High
7	Promoting communication among students via English language and building learning communities through Web.2 technologies.	3.82	0.38	4	Very High
8	Training students on responsible digital citizenship and the secure use of remote learning tools.	3.84	0.37	2	Very High
9	Facilitating students' communication with native English speakers in light of authentic learning experiences.	3.17	0.68	8	High
10	Training students on creative articulation of themselves in English language using blogging, infographics, and videos production.	3.16	0.37	9	High
<b>General Mean</b>		<b>3.59</b>	<b>Very High Need</b>		

As table (7) shows, the perceived levels of needs for the third dimension "Engaging students" were overall very high with a general mean of (3.59). The highest perceived training needs at this dimension expressed in (7) items with very high levels of need, while the last ranked were (3) items which were reported as being high training needs.

Table (8): the results of the perceived training needs

for the fourth dimension: Evaluation

N	Evaluation	Means	St. deviations	Ranks	level of need
1	Designing and scoring e-tests as summative evaluation tools of English language learning.	3.13	0.71	3	High
2	Using language portfolios for students as formative evaluation tools.	2.32	0.49	7	Moderate
3	Using performance evaluation methods for evaluating students' acquisition of language skills through performing authentic tasks using the English language.	2.65	0.48	5	High
4	Using artificial intelligence techniques for student evaluation, such data mining.	1.49	0.50	8	No Need
5	Training students on self-evaluation and peer evaluation using e-methods like journals and questionnaires.	2.67	0.47	4	High
6	Incorporating students' contributions, interactions, and collaboration as a part of the student evaluation process.	3.19	0.70	1	High
7	Methods to elicit students perceptions on remote learning, and taking advantage of this information in enhancing performance.	3.15	0.69	2	High
8	Evaluating remote learning language programs (including, context, inputs, outcomes, and process evaluation).	2.65	0.94	6	High
<b>General Mean</b>		<b>2.66</b>	<b>High Need</b>		

The results presented in table (8) show that the perceived levels of needs for the fourth dimension, evaluation, were overall high *with a general mean of (2.66)*. Six items were perceived as of high need, while 1 item was reported as of moderate level as a training need. On the other hand, the participants viewed only one item number as of no need for them.

Table (9): the results of the perceived training needs for the fifth dimension: professionalism

N	Training Needs	Means	St. deviations	Ranks	level of need
1	Reflection, individually and collectively, on remote learning practices.	1.98	0.59	3	Moderate
2	Active engagement in professional learning communities in pursuit of help about remote learning.	2.16	1.06	2	Moderate
3	Collaboration strategies with other teachers as a	2.84	0.69	1	High

N	Training Needs	Means	St. deviations	Ranks	level of need
	working team to plan, implement, and evaluate remote learning.				
4	Making use of action research as a mechanism for enhancing the implementation of remote learning.	1.83	0.68	4	Moderate
5	Developing life-long professional learning within remote learning.	1.16	0.37	5	No Need
<b>General Mean</b>		<b>1.99</b>	<b>Moderate Need</b>		

As results presented in table (9) indicate, the perceived levels of needs from the participants' perspectives regarding the fifth dimension, professionalism, were overall moderate with a general mean amounting to (1.99). In more detail, one item was perceived as a high training need, while three items were rated as of moderate level of need, and one item was perceived as of no need for the participants.

The finding that the third dimension came first in ranking in terms of its importance as a set of training needs for the participants is consistent with several studies that documented the pivotal role of affective and emotional factors of students in their engagement in remote learning (e.g. Baran & AlZoubi, 2020). This is a reasonable finding given that the students suffer, within the context of COVID-19 pandemic, from psychological pressures and problems caused by the pandemic conditions, the sudden suspension of study and the possibility of being affected in terms of motivation, which highlight the pronounced need for novel methods to engage students in the educational process in a successful way that would differ greatly from the regular face-to-face environment the staff members are used. Therefore, teachers and staff members struggle in making students assume active roles within an environment characterized by the complete suspension of face to face study, in addition to the possible absence of clear learning goals due to the complete lockdown of the educational institution.

Furthermore, the first dimension ranked as a priority with a very high level of perceived need, a finding that is in line with the conclusions reached by Hodges, et. al, (2020) which highlighted the necessity of planning and instructional design for remote learning which are very different from

regular teaching. This can be explained in light of the fact that staff members need training on unfamiliar aspects they may have not practiced at all such as taking into account the health, psychological and security needs of students, analyzing the changes taking place in the context of the educational process as a result of the pandemic conditions, and the need to plan to analyze technical infrastructure, as well as many other aspects that are beyond the typical knowledge of the instructional designer.

On the other hand, the professionalism dimension came as a moderate need; ranking last from the participants' perspectives. This may be due to the premise that staff members view that they need to acquire the essential knowledge and skills in remote learning rather than in-depth or continuous learning for such a form of learning. Thus staff members perceived that they did not need a sustained professional development in this field. That is why the participants reported that there was no training need was required for them in items such as item number 4 of the fourth dimension that is related to the use of artificial intelligence technologies to evaluate students and item number 5 of the fifth dimension about continuous professional learning in remote learning.

### **Results of question (3)**

Question 3 stated, "Do participants' perceptions of their training needs in the field of EFL remote learning differ according to their demographic variables (i.e. gender, years of experience, or specialization?)?" in order to answer this question, the researcher tried to test the following statistical hypotheses:

1. There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the responses of staff members at Saudi universities for their training needs in the field of EFL remote learning that can be attributed to the variable of gender.
2. There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the responses of staff members at Saudi universities for their training needs in the field of EFL remote learning that can be attributed to the variable of years of experience.
3. There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the responses of staff members at Saudi universities for their training needs in the field of EFL remote learning that can be attributed to the variable of specialization.

In order to test the first hypothesis, the means, standard deviations, and the value of independent samples T.Test were calculated to identify the significance of differences between the mean scores of the participants according to the variable of gender (see table 10).

Table (10): the results of T. test for the significance of differences between the mean scores of the responses of participants on their training needs in EFL remote learning according to the variable of gender

Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean s	St. deviation s	df	t	Statistical significanc e
Planning and designing learning experiences	Male	76	35.80	1.90	122	-0.74	statistically non-significant
	Female	48	36.00	0.65			
Facilitating students' learning	Male	76	37.86	1.70	122	-0.57	statistically non-significant
	Female	48	38.00	0.65			
Engaging students	Male	76	35.82	1.80	122	-0.68	statistically non-significant
	Female	48	36.00	0.65			
Evaluation	Male	76	21.37	1.57	122	1.19	statistically non-significant
	Female	48	21.08	0.65			
Professionalism	Male	76	9.95	1.60	122	-0.22	statistically non-significant
	Female	48	10.00	0.65			
Total	Male	76	140.78	8.37	122	-0.24	statistically non-significant
	Female	48	141.08	3.21			

The results presented in table (10) reveal that there were no statistically significant differences in the staff members' perceptions of their training needs in EFL remote learning according to the variable of gender as a total degree and for the sub-dimensions. Therefore, the first statistical hypothesis of the study is accepted.

In order to test the second statistical hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance was used. The results are presented in table (11).

Table (11) the results of one-way analysis of variance for the significance of differences between the mean scores of the responses of participants on their training needs in EFL remote learning according to the variable of years of experience

Dimensions	Source of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Statistical significance
<b>Planning and designing learning experiences</b>	Between Groups	2.51	2	1.25	0.52	statistically non-significant
	Within Groups	289.42	121	2.39		
	Total	291.93	123			
<b>Facilitating students' learning</b>	Between Groups	1.19	2	0.59	0.31	statistically non-significant
	Within Groups	234.84	121	1.94		
	Total	236.02	123			
<b>Engaging students</b>	Between Groups	1.92	2	0.96	0.44	statistically non-significant
	Within Groups	262.5	121	2.17		
	Total	264.41	123			
<b>Evaluation</b>	Between Groups	2.31	2	1.15	0.68	statistically non-significant
	Within Groups	205.43	121	1.70		
	Total	207.74	123			
<b>Professionalism</b>	Between Groups	0.16	2	0.08	0.05	statistically non-significant
	Within Groups	211.71	121	1.75		
	Total	211.87	123			
<b>Total</b>	Between Groups	16.43	2	8.22	0.17	statistically non-significant
	Within Groups	5725.20	121	47.32		
	Total	5741.63	123			

The results presented in table (11) reveal that there were no statistically significant differences in the staff members' perceptions of their training needs in EFL remote learning according to the variable of years of experience as a total degree and for the sub-dimensions. Therefore, the second statistical hypothesis of the study is accepted.

Table (12): the results of T. test for the significance of differences between the mean scores of the responses of participants on their training needs in EFL remote learning according to the variable of specialization

Dimensions	Specialization	N	Means	St. deviations	df	t	Statistical significance
Planning and designing learning experiences	Linguistics	53	36.00	1.09	122	0.42	statistically non-significant
	TEFL	71	35.77	1.81			
Facilitating students' learning	Linguistics	53	38.00	1.09	122	0.54	statistically non-significant
	TEFL	71	37.85	1.57			
Engaging students	Linguistics	53	36.00	1.09	122	0.46	statistically non-significant
	TEFL	71	35.80	1.70			
Evaluation	Linguistics	53	21.25	1.09	122	0.93	statistically non-significant
	TEFL	71	21.27	1.44			
Professionalism	Linguistics	53	10.00	1.09	122	0.81	statistically non-significant
	TEFL	71	9.94	1.46			
Total	Linguistics	53	141.25	5.39	122	0.62	statistically non-significant
	TEFL	71	140.63	7.77			

The results presented in table (12) reveal that there were no statistically significant differences in the staff members' perceptions of their training needs in EFL remote learning according to the variable of specialization as a total degree and for the sub-dimensions. Therefore, the third statistical hypothesis of the study is accepted.

By testing the three hypotheses, question 3 of the study is answered. To sum, the results of research question 3 point out that there were no statistically significant differences in the perceived training needs of remote learning as reported by the participants that could be attributed to any of the three personal variables (i.e. gender, years of experience, specialization), which indicates that these need serve as a common factor among the participants regardless of the different personal variables.



This finding can be explained in light of the fact that remote learning is a completely new concept for the majority of staff members and that the practices required for it are almost not available for most of the participants, which makes their responses homogeneous in this aspect.

### **Recommendations**

In light of the results reached as well as the literature and previous studies reviews, the researcher put forth the following recommendations:

1. Taking advantage of the results of analyzing the training needs conducted in this study as a basis to develop a professional development program for staff in the EFL remote learning competences.
2. Saudi universities may adopt alternative, ready for use plans for remote learning in emergency situations such as natural disasters and epidemics that may cause the suspension of studying on the university campus.
3. Conducting a SWOT analysis for EFL remote learning to make use of the unique opportunities it provides and to overcome its possible problems and disadvantages.
4. The staff members specialized in EFL can benefit from the needs analysis questionnaire developed in this study as a basis for self-evaluation in the field of remote learning.
5. *Establishing professional staff communities to cooperate in designing and planning the learning experiences and academic courses based on EFL remote learning in the emergency circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.*

### **Suggestions for further research:**

1. Conducting a study to investigate the effectiveness of a suggested professional development program in EFL remote learning for in the development of the cognitive and performance aspects of university staff members.
2. Replicating the present study on other samples of staff members at different specializations and on general education teachers.
3. Conducting a survey study of the perceptions of the staff members specialized in EFL regarding EFL remote learning.
4. Examining higher education students' experiences of remote learning in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

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