The Dynamics of EFL Classroom Teaching and Learning in Saudi Arabia
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Message from the Editors

I am delighted to introduce this special issue, “The Dynamics of EFL Learning and Teaching in the Saudi Arabian Context,” of fruitful collaboration with the Arab World English Journal (AWEJ). This special issue focuses on teaching methodologies and the implications for ESL/EFL education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and explores language learning from both theoretical and empirical assessment perspectives. The EFL is a standing contributor to the Journal, and our research articles collected from FLT/ELC teachers and graduate students are featured in this inaugural special issue. The editorial board accepted eighteen research manuscripts. The articles focused on teaching methodologies and discussed their implications in EFL teaching, language learning, and assessment in Saudi Arabian academia.

We are rapidly approaching the beginning of a new year with even higher professional aspirations and commitment to supporting the national education strategy. Improving learning outcomes is a crucial element of educational development, and an essential component of the goals outlined in Vision 2030. I would like to commend the Head of the Research Unit and all of the manuscript authors who made this publication possible. I am also grateful to the members of AWEJ’s editorial board and staff for their cooperation on this project for these many months. It is my sincere hope that this inaugural issue inspires and motivates faculty members to engage in ever more ambitious research endeavors with national and international researchers.

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Studying Foreign Language Anxiety with its Causes and Effects: A case of King Khalid University EFL Learners

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Abstract.
The primary focus of the present study is to investigate the anxiety level of Saudi undergraduate students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). An attempt has been made to find out various possible causes, sources, and effects of foreign language anxiety on Saudi EFL learners. The study aims to answer the main question; if this anxiety affects the learning process of Saudi EFL learners positively or adversely. The study demonstrates some models and strategies related to causes and effects of anxiety. These models and strategies can be applied as potential management tools and strategies for reducing the level of anxiety encountered by Saudi EFL learners. The researchers employed quantitative and qualitative approaches to collecting and analyzing the data. A 33-item questionnaire adapted from Horwitz et al (1986) distributed among 271 subjects has been used as the main tool for the data collection. All the four basic language skills were tested to elicit the data for measuring the level of anxiety in Saudi students learning English as a foreign language. In addition to the above quantitative approach, some semi-structured interviews were conducted with both EFL learners and teachers. The outcome of the present study can significantly contribute to the development of the quality of learning English as a Foreign Language. It can also serve as an effective mechanism to solve problematic issues among EFL learners in general and Saudi EFL learners in particular. The study offers to introduce researchers and teachers with certain reliable scales for the evaluation of Saudi EFL learners’ progress in their learning process. Five-point (5-point) Likert scale is one of these major scales used in the present study.

Keywords: affective domain, anxiety variable, English as a foreign language, foreign language anxiety (FLA), foreign language learning

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Introduction

Foreign language learning a sub-area of applied linguistics is deeply related to human psychology. Some affective variables such as attitude, motivation, anxiety, inhibition and self-esteem etc. have been found to have a devastating effect on the process of foreign language learning. Towards the late quarter of the 1970s and early quarter of the 1980s, a considerable number of research studies have been devoted to investigating the effects of anxiety on foreign language learning.

According to LeDoux (1996) emotion-free minds are not really minds. Spielberger states that anxiety refers to the “subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system” (as cited in LeDoux, 1996, p.3-6). It has also been called an emotional response to “a threat value that the individual holds essential to his existence as a personality” (Kleinmann, 1977, pp.93-107).

Anxiety in general terminology refers to an individual’s state of developing a feeling of anxiousness and nervousness during learning and demonstrating his/her skills when asked to read, write, listen or speak publically. Thus the feeling of unease, nervousness, worry, apprehension, etc. experienced while learning or using a foreign language is known as foreign language anxiety. These feelings might arouse in an individual because of the fear of not being able to explore his/her skills to fulfil his/her objectives as a result of one’s poor adjusting capacity.

Foreign language learning is deeply linked with the affective domain of human Psychology. Attitude, motivation and anxiety the most critically essential constructs of the affective domain are a predisposition to respond positively or negatively towards events of learning. Attitude includes the way a student feels about the teacher, classmates, classroom, institution and even learning materials. A Positive attitude has to do a lot with learning a foreign language. Motivation is an internal state that arouses, directs, and sustains behavior. It refers to learners desire to strive for particular goals while learning a foreign language. Another effective factor that interferes with learning a foreign language is language anxiety. This affective variable has a devastating effect on performance in oral communication particularly. Inhibition and Self-esteem are two more affective variables affecting foreign language learning. It has been found that learners with high levels of inhibition often choose not to participate in any sort of group work. They generally prefer to protect themselves from exposure to others because they usually feel lesser capable than their peers. Thus inhibition has generally been found to have a negative effect on performance of an individual while learning a foreign language. Self-esteem refers to the level of self-confidence and self-respect a person has. This affective variable plays a potential role in effecting the learning process positively or negatively.

The psychological foundation of foreign language learning is based on the individual differences of various learners. The process of learning a foreign language depends on a series of factors. These factors involve: cognitive factors (language aptitude, learning strategies), affective factors (attitude, motivation, and anxiety), metacognitive factors, and demographic factors. Brown (1994, p.134), argues that the emotional side of human behavior or the ‘affective domain’ involves a variety of personality factors, including feeling both about oneself and about others with whom one comes into contact. The other factors which have been a focus of attention in research on the
relationship between foreign language learning and affective variables are: self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, empathy, extraversion, motivation and anxiety.

Robinson (2005) states that examining the foreign language learning process relies on two complementary theories: the theory of transition and the theory of property. Transition theory takes into account the relationship between cognitive abilities, learning processes and mechanisms used to transfer knowledge from learners’ mother tongue/first language (L1) to their target language (TL)/second language (L2). The theory of property explores the features of knowledge from learners’ L1 to their L2. Individual differences in foreign language learners play a crucial role in the theory of transition.

There has been a growing interest and need for understanding of foreign language anxiety (FLA) in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was in early 1980s when Krashen (1982) attested the importance of understanding anxiety. He further asserted that, as a part of the learner’s affective filter, anxiety might interfere with learning process.

Keeping in view the privileged role of English across the globe, the researchers cannot afford to disassociate themselves from investigating certain issues concerning the language. Most of these issues are associated with the factors that result in better fluency in English speaking and hence leading to better performance in the language particularly when it comes to the questioning of learning English as a foreign language. One of those factors which have been underlined to influence the performance of language learners which in turn affects language learning is anxiety to speak English.

Studying anxiety is central to the second foreign language learning. Though Saudi students learning English as a foreign language encounter significant challenges in all four basic language skills, the most challenging skill the students face is speaking skills (oral communication). One of the reasons behind this is the less exposure of Saudi EFL learners to English. Another reason for facing difficulties while communicating orally in English is that these Saudi EFL learners use Arabic predominantly in various domains of their social activity including their EFL classroom situation. One more valid reason behind this weak performance in the oral communication in their target lies in the fact that the entire process of EFL learning and teaching in the Saudi Arabia’s higher education system is exam-oriented with a higher degree of focus on the teaching of reading comprehension, grammar and writing skill whereas the teaching of the subjects and topics related to oral communication receive a very little care and attention.

**Research Questions**
1. Do Saudi EFL learns experience anxiety while learning EFL? Does anxiety affect their process of learning positively or adversely?
2. Are there any apparent causes of anxiety experienced by Saudi EFL learners? Is it possible to cope with and treat the severe effects of anxiety?

**Literature Review**

As said earlier, foreign language learning with reference to anxiety emerged out to be the focus of research and subject of debate of applied linguists and language experts in late 1970s and early
1980s. The pioneering research in this area is generally regarded as one carried out by Scovel (1978) who reported mixed findings and observation on language anxiety. In a study examining anxiety in a Spanish language classroom, Ely (1986) devised scales to measure Language Class Discomfort (anxiety), Language Class Risk-taking and Language Class Sociability. Horwitz and Cope (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), with the purpose of providing the foreign language learning researchers with a standard tool for the measurement of foreign language learning anxiety. Aida (1994) used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al., 1986) in a study of American students learning Japanese as a foreign language. It was previously noted that the Japanese language students required around 1320 hours to reach the same level of proficiency as that of the students of French, Spanish or German reached in approximately 480 hours. Aida (1994) postulated that the students of such a difficult language had different experiences from those learning languages more similar to English. Her findings were consistent with other studies using Western languages, and the results indicated that there has been a considerable level of anxiety in Japanese class. It was also observed that the students with a higher degree of anxiety significantly scored lower grades than those of the lower anxiety group.

Price, (1988, as cited in Von WÔrde 1998, p.717) carried out another study on anxiety and language learning. In his study, Price investigated foreign language anxiety in relation to certain selected learner variables such as, sex, age, test anxiety, foreign language aptitude, and public speaking anxiety. In his study, it was noticed that foreign language anxiety was negatively associated with foreign language aptitude.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991c) conducted a study to manipulate the anxiety level of beginning language learners. In their study, the students were asked to think and report either positive or negative events from their own experiences. The learners were made to write half-page focused essays, which forced them to concentrate on their own reactions to events. To find out the range of anxiety, six anxiety scales were administered for the learner students who were under investigation. It was found that anxiety negatively affected language learning and production, which caused a disadvantage for the anxious students in the language classroom in comparison to their relaxed peers. The more interesting and useful finding revealed from the study was that the highest degree of anxiety was associated with the speaking skill. Young (1994) presented a comprehensive account on several previous investigations on language anxiety. He argued that a considerable amount of research on foreign language anxiety witnessed a negative language anxiety-language performance relationship. Sparks, Ganschow & Javorsky,(2000) have argued that FL learning is primarily based on the ability to learn a mother tongue (i.e., language aptitude) and FL learning anxieties are likely to result from FL difficulties for students.

Causes/sources of foreign language Anxiety
Working alone or in groups might be an important factor for some learners. The differences in the learners’ perception of the environment and language class might happen to be one of the factors that lead them to anxiety.

Researchers have identified five different characteristics of anxiety-provoking situations (Daly & Buss, 1984; Richmond & McCroskey, (as cited in Daly, 1991.p.3-13).
• While speaking a language, people may start being nervous after becoming conscious that their performance is being judged by someone.
• People are more comfortable in familiar circumstances. On their exposure to new/unfamiliar situation and problems, they start feeling discomfort.
• People are likely to become more silent if they do not know what they are being judged on.
• If people think that they are engaged in an activity where their competence is low, they generally prefer not to be the focus of attention.
• Students with previous positive experiences while learning languages are likely to be less anxious than those who develop the fear, anxiety and failure from previous experiences.

Three common causes/sources of anxiety found in EFL learners are: fear of not sounding as good as their peers in the EFL learning class, which leads them to “communication apprehension”, “fear of being evaluated by someone else/negative evaluation”, and “test anxiety” Howrtz et al (1986, as cited in Zrekat, Abu Bakar, Latif 2016, pp.188-202).

Young (1991) on the other hand, identifies six potential sources/causes of anxiety. These are:
1- personal and interpersonal anxieties
2- learner beliefs about language learning
3- instructor beliefs about language teaching
4- instructor-learner interactions
5- classroom procedures, and
6- language testing.

**Effects of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)**

MacIntyre (1999) argues that foreign language anxiety may have a number of academic, cognitive, social and personal effects. The academic effects of anxiety reflected in previous research showed that a high level of FLA is directly proportional to the low level of academic achievement in language courses (Horwitz, 1986; Young, 1991; Aida, 1994). A considerable number of research studies have demonstrated foreign language anxiety to be associated with broad-based indices of language achievement. According to MacIntyre and Charos (as cited in MacIntyre, 1999, pp.134-148), the anxious learner students show less willingness towards communication and tend to speak less frequently upon providing an opportunity to communicate in a natural atmosphere. On the other hand, successful language learners according to Skehan (1991) show a strong desire to talk in order to learn. Along with a relatively weak language achievement, deterioration of class grades is another noticeable feature of anxious learners.

Tobias (1979, 1980, 1986 as cited in MacIntyre, 1999, p.41) devised a significant model of effects of FLA. According to this model, the cognitive effect of anxiety is evaluated in three stages: input, processing and output. At the input stage, anxiety plays the role of filter, which discourages rather blocks the information from getting into the cognitive processing system. In the processing stage, anxiety distracts students’ attention as a result of which speed and accuracy of learning is affected adversely. Similarly, the quality of speaking or writing is influenced during the output stage.

The social effects of foreign language anxiety operate in different phases. MacIntyre (1999) suggests that for an individual language learner the personal effects of anxiety on a person may be the severe anxiety reaction, and for some learners, it is like a “traumatic experience” (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 39).
Four Basic Language Skills and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

There are four basic skills of language learning such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. The researchers who dealt with FLA investigated the effect of anxiety on the development of these skills of language learning in an elaborative way.

Reading Anxiety
Lee (1999) looked at the relationship between reading and FLA from pedagogical and cognitive points of view. He came forward with a few misapprehensions of the reading process. First of all, he discusses the misconception that “successful reading equals answering comprehension questions” (Lee, 1999, pp.49-63). He stresses that according to a typical reader, the comprehension questions strictly limits readers’ interaction to the text. Secondly, he argues that reading is a private act and readers feel isolated when asked to read alone. Lee suggests that teacher should give assignments focusing on working with fellow learners, activities based on reading, discussion or work groups. The third misconception listed by Lee suggests that “reading is a linear process” He observes that for some of the anxious language learners, the reading goal is “to get through the text, to reach the bottom of the page, or to get to the end of the chapter” (Lee, 1999, p.53).

Writing Anxiety
According to Leki (1999) writing is generally considered to be the least anxiety receiving skill. The main reason behind this fact is that unlike reading or listening, writers keep control of the content of the message, and while performing the task, they might make use of enough time to complete their task. Leki (1999) states that in some cases the leading cause of anxiety is poor writing skills whereas for others the source of anxiety might be their perfectionist character. Leki further admits that the fear of being evaluated by someone else (instructor) creates a feeling of anxiety among some learners. This is because the learners generally have difficulty in understanding the meaning of remarks written by evaluators on their writing assignments. Moreover, paying an extra amount of attention to grammar and criticizing the answers of learners gives rise to the fear of not sounding as good as their peers causes a higher degree of anxiety among a class of learners (Leki, 1999).

Listening Anxiety
Listening skill is generally considered NOT to be an anxiety-provoking skill. However, the latest studies witness a considerable number of situations wherein listening tasks may receive anxiety (Campbell, 1999). Since some students believe that they should understand every word they listen to, they feel frustrated and confused when they hear some unfamiliar words which cause anxiety in them.

Speaking Anxiety
Sundland and MacIntyre reported in numerous studies related to foreign language anxiety that it is the speaking skill in the foreign language learning process that receives the highest degree of anxiety (as cited in Donley, 1997, p.76-79). They also argue that the language courses wherein the students were forced to speak the foreign language were more likely to experience anxiety in comparison to the courses that did not focus on speaking. Moreover, Young (1990) claims that in a language class, the learners feel more anxious upon asking to speak in front of their peers.
Coping the Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Studies carried on foreign language anxiety have suggested quite a good number of techniques and ways reducing the anxiety level of EFL students. These techniques and certain classroom practices have been used by language instructors to lower the level of anxiety among various learners learning English as a foreign language. According to Donley (1997) these techniques have been grouped into four categories: 1- skill-building activities and programs, 2- procedures that promote self-regulation of emotions by bringing them under conscious control, 3- suggestions for making students more aware of the nature of language learning and 4- recommendations concerning ways to make language classes less anxiety-provoking for students. Each of these techniques has been discussed below in detail.

Skill-building

Foss and Reitzel’s relational model (1988) for managing foreign language anxiety is based on structured skill-building activities. For discussing the techniques of coping anxiety in foreign language learning classroom, they used a model of communicative competence as a starting point. They further believe that an increase in communicative competence will reduce the anxiety level of foreign language learners. According to Spielber and Cupach there are five fundamental processes operating in the competence model designed by them (as cited in Foss & Reitzel, 1988, p .85-98). Motivation is the very first process, which takes into account the affective approach. The second component is knowledge, which operates on a system of behavioral patterns and strategies on the basis of what an individual decides how to communicate effectively in a particular situation. The third component of the model is skill which is closely related to outcome of knowledge and context. Despite a higher degree of motivation, an individual requires certain skills to communicate successfully and appropriately in the new language. The fourth operational level in this model is outcome. At this stage, the learners are supposed to be aware of the fact that a negative outcome giving rise to certain dissatisfaction even if it is better than its alternatives. Context, the final component of this relational model, is based on the assumption that each individual creates an atmosphere that facilitates or hinders the language learning process (Foss & Reitzel, 1988). In order to encourage learners’ structure and maintain communicative interactions, Lucas (1984) also recommends skill-building in the form of patterns, dialogues and gambits. She further holds that the learners should be involved in extra-skill practice by exposing them to various activities such role-playing, cooperative story-telling, problem-solving, assignments etc., (Lucas 1984).

Self-Regulations of Anxiety

Certain anxiety management tools proposed by researchers from time to time have been found quite effective in coping with foreign language anxiety. These tools include: cognitive restructuring, anxiety graphing, systematic desensitization, and biofeedback and perspective building. Cognitive restructuring proposed by McCoy (1979) later developed in detail by Foss and Reitzel (1988), in their relational model of FLA was known as rational emotive theory. It was believed that anxiety could be minimized by encouraging learners identify certain illogical anxiety-provoking thoughts. The learners were also stimulated to understand the logic of these thoughts and replace them with more productive and reasonable cognitions.
Foss and Reitzel (1988) devised an anxiety management tool known as anxiety graphics. Once anxiety occurs, this tool helps in charting it immediately. It is believed that the anxiety graph was designed to encourage learners to gain an accurate understanding of nature of anxiety. Foss and Reitzel (1988) further argue that the anxiety graph can enable the students to realize that speaking a foreign language is not a uniform and easy process; it is rather difficult and causes anxiety.

McCoy (1979) proposes the use of systematic desensitization to lower the level of anxiety among foreign language learners. This technique was later fully developed at its greater length by Schlesiger (1996, as cited in Donley, 1997). This model was believed to describe the process of getting used to an anxiety-producing situation. The anxiety-prone learners are supposed to think about an anxiety-provoking situation during the process of systematic desensitization and then associate it with relaxing thoughts and visualization of dealing the situation appropriately and repeat this process until the anxiety reaches to its minimum level. McCoy (1979) further asserts that in certain situations that involve anxiety because of ranking of fears, the learners who feel anxiety would work through them until the whole learning situation was no longer associated with anxiety-causing feelings.

Schlesgier (2005) introduced three concepts: biofeedback, progressive relaxation, and autogenic training related to the treatment of foreign language anxiety (FLA). The operation in which an individual tries to gain voluntary control over the reflex-regulated body activities is known as biofeedback. It is during this biofeedback; an individual receives information about his/her physiological reactions. This mechanism enables a learner how to monitor and regulate the previously automatic and uncontrolled physiological responses. The technique of lowering/reducing the level of anxiety in learners by learning to ‘tense’ and ‘relax’ muscle groups in the body is termed as progressive relaxation.

**Awareness-Raising**

From the studies devoted to foreign language learning anxiety (FLA), it is presumed that teachers can play a potential role in minimizing the anxiety level of their students by adopting new strategies while teaching them a foreign language. Crookal and Oxford (1991) suggested that instead of using certain indirect tactics that would reduce the anxiety level of learners, the teachers should directly and unambiguously tackle the problem of anxiety. They would urge on several activities that could help learners gain a healthier language learning atmosphere. Their proposed set of activities would include: a simulation of an advice column in which the learners would communicate their anxieties to an imaginary person, exchange letters with other learners and would keep a diary of feelings about their anxieties regarding their learning process. Awareness – raising involves the sharing letters and responses among small groups of learners or with the whole class of learners (CrookaL & Oxford, 1991).

**Other Recommendations**

Oxford (1990), recommended certain strategies, which could help learners to lower their level of anxiety they develop during the process of learning a foreign language. These strategies are:

1. Physical/emotional strategies: These strategies include: progressive relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, enjoying good humor, listening to music etc.
2. Self-encouragement: positive self-talking serves as a good tool to minimize anxiety. In order to reward himself for doing well in the target language, an individual might encourage himself by taking certain sensible risks.

3. In order to find out one’s ideas, opinions, and attitudes about learning a foreign language, the teacher might also use checklists, or may ask the learners to maintain a language diary to record their feelings about the whole process of learning a foreign language.

Philips (1991) observes that teachers could have a potential role in encouraging and creating a good language learning atmosphere/situation. They should encourage and appreciate the learner students’ risk-taking behavior when attempting to communicate. The teachers can prepare the learner students to develop appropriate expectations about the learning process by identifying and modifying their anxiety-provoking beliefs about the learning.

Campbell and Ortiz (1991), carried out a series of workshops on foreign language anxiety (FLA). In their workshops, the participants were asked to deliberate on myths, realities, and qualities helpful and favorable for successful foreign language learning situations. Certain teaching techniques and teachers’ ways of teaching have also been found to create a situation conducive to make foreign language learning process less stressful. Some experts in the area of foreign language anxiety (FLA) came forward with the suggestion that there is still certain scope of modification in teachers’ methods of error correction. Moreover, those learners have been found more comfortable who treated the occurrence of errors as natural and expected phenomena in the foreign language learning process. Crookal and Oxford (1991) conducted a training session for teachers on how to deal with learner errors. In this workshop-cum-training program the participant teachers were given an opportunity to share their ideas with their colleagues on which errors needed to be corrected and why, and how the correction should be done.

According to Beauvois (1999), the use of computer classroom has been found to provide a conducive and favorable situation to reduce the level of anxiety experienced by foreign language learners. She observed that on availing an opportunity of being taught with the help of computer-aided instructions, the learners are likely to interact with each other and also with their teacher in their target language without fear of being criticized by others. Moreover, they were provided with enough time to think before they are asked to answer the questions.

**Research Methodology**

**Goals and hypotheses**

The main goal of this study was to find out the effect of anxiety on the performance of Saudi students learning English as a foreign language. Based on the review of the related literature, it was assumed that there is a very strong relationship between anxiety and how different learners perform while learning EFL.

**Sample and Method**

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. With a view to examining the subjects of the study and eliciting the required data related to learners’ level of anxiety while reading, writing, listening and speaking English, the researchers – being the teachers in the Department of English, Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University Abha, Saudi Arabia, managed to use a 33-item questionnaire adapted from Horwitz (Horwitz et al.,
In order to test their writing skills, the researchers conducted several written tasks throughout their academic session. For testing their reading skill the selected subjects were made to read some seen and unseen texts aloud. Similarly, for collecting data with regard to their listening and speaking skills, the subjects under study were involved in listening activities and were asked to give oral presentations. In addition to this, the qualitative approach of collecting and analyzing data via semi-structured interviews with learners and teachers was also used.

The entire population of the study consisted of 271 English major students from different levels pursuing their bachelor’s degree in English (B.A. English) at the Department of English, Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the qualitative part of the study, the researchers used semi-structured interviews with both the students and their instructors. Out of a sample of 271 students, 45 were randomly selected for the semi-structured interviews whereas three instructors teaching these students were also randomly selected for the individual interviews. All of the subjects under investigation were male and had a homogeneous pre-university and university background.

The Findings/Results of the Study

The main focus of the investigation in this study has been to find out the effect of learner’s level of anxiety on their learning English as a foreign language in relation to four basic language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. The level of anxiety encountered by Saudi EFL undergraduate students has been explored/presented on 5-point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The statistical analysis of the anxiety variable is based on this scale in which the overall result in terms of judgment depends on the students’ answers to the items mentioned in the questionnaire. The given table 1 presents the statistical analysis for the variable of anxiety.

Table 1: Statistical Analysis of Students’ level of Anxiety.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>271</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From table 1 and figure 1, it could be clearly noticed that only 3.7% of the students responded the items of anxiety variable with ‘strongly agree’. Majority of the students answered with ‘neutral’ with a percentage of 32.1 %. 26.1 % of the students responded to the items of the anxiety variable with ‘disagree’ that stands second highest item of the anxiety constructs in terms of receiving responses from the respondents selected for the study. 25.4% and12.5% of the respondents answered with other two items of the variable anxiety variable i.e., ‘agree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ respectively. To sum the findings of the study briefly, it can be stated that the percentage of respondents who experienced anxiety is much higher than those who did not feel it while learning EFL across its four basic levels such reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The findings of the present investigation correspond with the findings of the studies mentioned in the literature review of the study, particularly those carried out by Horwitz et al. (1986). The study is therefore very much related to Horwitz et al. ’s (1986) investigation wherein it was postulated that students experience anxiety while speaking in English on account of three factors such as “Communication apprehension” (CA), “fear of negative evaluation”(FNE), and “test anxiety” (as cited in Zrekat, Y.,Abu Bakar, N., Latif, H., 2016, pp. 188-202). In the present study, it was observed that certain anxiety-provoking factors such as fear of not sounding as good as their peers, fear of being evaluated by someone else and deterioration of their course grades have been found to be operational at a very high level. This phenomenon has resulted in the arousal of a high-level anxiety among Saudi students learning English as a foreign language.

**Discussions**

Findings of numerous studies of research including the present one devoted to investigating causes and effects of anxiety on foreign language learning in general and learning English as a foreign language in particular, ended up with the common consensus that the variable of anxiety adversely effects the process of learning a foreign language. Horwitz, (1980), Young 91986), and Aida, (1994), argue that that higher the level of foreign language anxiety, lower is the level of
Studying Foreign Language Anxiety with its Causes and Effects

Koka, Islam & Osman

academic achievement in language courses. It has been observed that out of four basic language skills, it is the oral communication skill wherein the learners experience the highest level of anxiety. Howrtz admits that fear of not sounding as good as their peers in the EFL learning class, which leads the learners to “communication apprehension”, “negative evaluation”, and “test anxiety” have been found to be three main factors responsible for creating an anxiety-provoking situation in a foreign language learning classes (as cited in Zrekat, Y., Abu Bakar, N., Latif, H., 2016, p. 192). As revealed by analyzing the data in the present study, the students with higher level of anxiety have been found to outnumber and outperform the students with a relatively lower level of anxiety in all basic language skills. Along with studying the disastrous effects and sources of anxiety, the researchers of foreign language anxiety have proposed a huge number of techniques and ways for minimizing the anxiety level of foreign language learners. Skill-building, self-regulation of anxiety, awareness-raising, physical/emotional strategies, self-encouragement etc., are some these techniques used by language instructors and trainers for lowering the anxiety level among foreign language learners. With the utilization of all these methods the concerned people be it the language instructors or learners have been found to be successful to cope with the issue of anxiety to a large extent.

Gardner, R.C and MacIntyre, P. D. (1993; 43(2), pp. 94-157 argue that “language anxiety is a type of situational anxiety, and study on language anxiety should utilize actions of anxiety encountered in certain L2 situations”. Language anxiety was conceptualized as “the stress and negative mental reaction triggered when learning or implementing a second language” (as cited in Heydarpour Meymeh M, Rashtchi M, Mohseni A, 2019, p.10).

The study is potentially contributory to the students, teachers and researchers of FLA in the sense that it enriches their knowledge with various effects, causes and sources of FLA. Moreover, having dealt with a considerable number of models used as tools and techniques for the treatment of FLA, the concerned students/learners could overcome the feeling of anxiety and their teachers could deal with anxiety-provoking situations very successfully.

Conclusion

Affective variables such as attitude, motivation, anxiety, inhibition and self-esteem have been found to play a very crucial role in a foreign language learning situation. Saudi EFL learners at Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia have been found to experience a high level of anxiety when they are asked to read, write, or speak in English. The findings of the studies outlined in this study and the results of this study itself demonstrate that foreign language anxiety is a devastating factor that deteriorates rather crumbles the academic achievement level of language learners. The example of Saudi EFL learners has been found as a case at this point.

Howrtz et al states that certain anxiety-provoking factors such as communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), and test anxiety (TA) are highly effective in producing anxiety among EFL learners (as cited in Zrekat, Y., Abu Bakar, N., Latif, H., 2016, pp.188-202). All these factors have been found to be highly operational in Saudi Arab’s EFL learning situation and learners are found to experience anxiety to a very high level. It has been observed that the findings of the present study coincide with those mentioned in its literature review considerably. In addition, on account of not expressing themselves correctly in front of their peers develops a
feeling of inferiority in them and leads them to an anxiety-provoking tendency during the course of EFL learning.

The findings of our study reveal that the majority of the respondents answered the items of the anxiety variable with ‘neutral’ with a percentage of 32.1%. 26.1% of the students responded the items of the anxiety construct with ‘disagree’ that stands second highest item of the anxiety constructs in terms of receiving responses from the respondents selected for the study. 25.4% and 12.5% of the respondents answered with the other two items of the anxiety variable i.e., ‘agree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ respectively. On the basis these results it can be logically stated in a nutshell that the percentage of our respondents who experienced anxiety is much higher than those who did not feel it while learning EFL across its four basic levels such reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Whereas the study explores various causes and effects of foreign language learning, it suggests certain management tools and techniques used to minimize the level of anxiety among EFL learners. Regarding the implications of this study, it adds a drop to the sea of knowledge. However, the findings of the study might guide researchers into new directions to discover profound insights about effects of foreign language anxiety.

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References:


**APPENDIX**

**Questionnaire on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, adapted from Horwitz et al (1986)**

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY** (Horwitz et al, 1986)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I never feel quite sure of myself when I speak in English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I DON’T worry about making mistakes in English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on in English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more English language classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During English class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I am usually at ease (comfortable) during tests in my English class.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t understand why some people get so upset over English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>In English class, I get so nervous that I forget things I know.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>It embarrasses me to volunteer for answering in my English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would NOT be nervous speaking the English language with its native speakers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I get upset when I don’t know what the teacher is correcting.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I often feel like not going to my English class.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel confident when I speak in English in my class.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I DON’T feel pressure to prepare very well for English class.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always feel that the other students speak the English language better than I do.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When English class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get nervous and confused when I speak in my English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get nervous when I don’t understand every word the English teacher says.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak the English language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am afraid that the other students in the class will laugh at me when I speak in English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the English language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven’t prepared in advance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Saudi MA Translators: An Evaluation Issue

Adel Salem Bahameed
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Abstract
This paper aims to enlighten the way for teachers concerning the translation assessment process. The main research question is whether the holistic method is applicable. The study highlights the appropriateness of adopting this method to evaluate students' translations of the final year translation project. The study has the importance of trying to find the most appropriate evaluative way for students' conversions. The evaluation was carried on five female MA students at the postgraduate translation final project at the Faculty of Languages and Translation at King Khalid University in KSA. The hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of using the holistic assessment method and the possibility to improve the quality of assessing the students' translations in the future based on this method wasn't verified. This study concluded that the main factor which is identifiable was translation competence. Also, this method was found out to be too lenient to give impartial translation quality assessment for the students' translations.

Keywords: evaluating translation, holistic method, MA students, translation project, translation errors

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1. Introduction

It is confusing for translation teachers to assess their students' performance in the translation final exams and projects because the types of translation mistakes are various, and there is no one translation method, strategy, or approach that can handle all these disparities of translation. If using one strategy by itself can make the teacher deal with some translation mistakes fairly, it might not be applicable for others. It is not logical to treat all the different religious, cultural, structural, and semantic errors in the same way. Each case should be processed and assessed on its own (See de Beaugrande, 1978, p.135; Hatim, 2001, p.155). The careful scrutiny at the relevant studies on evaluating translational outputs indicates that the previous related literature was mainly theoretical. They have focused mainly on (1) Establishing the criteria for a “good translation” (Newmark 1991); (2) Comparing translation errors with language errors (Kussmaul 1995); (3) Creating a pertaining system of translation errors (Kussmaul, 1995; Pym, 1992; Williams 1989); (4) Evaluation according to the psycholinguistic “scenes and frames” theory (Bensoussan & Rosenhouse, 1994; Snell-Hornby, 1995); (5) The need to assess quality at a pragmatic scale as an extra dimension (Hatim & Mason, 1997; Hewson, 1995; Kussmaul, 1995; Sager, 1989; Williams, 1989); among other things.

2. Literature Review

The empirical studies about the translation quality assessment have been relatively small in number. These studies are: (1) Campbell (1991) tries to see to what extent the translation tests have an impact upon the translator's competence, focusing on the processes of translation. The study was administered to 38 respondents who belong to four different ability groups. The test papers have been in English-Arabic translation. The researcher depended on certain analysis that included the length of the word, the ratio of lexical variety, omission in translation, among other things. This study is somewhat similar to other research conducted by Séguinot (1989, 1990) in the sense that both examine the processes of translation as reflected in the quality of the translator’s work. However, Séguinot concentrates on students' mistakes, while Campbell examines other aspects as well. These different aspects are mainly linguistic. Campbell neither pays no attention to the students’ ability to handle the pragmatic side nor consider the factor analysis to determine the nature of the elements of translation aptitude.

(2) Stansfield et al. (1992) produce a study depending mainly on a certain work that was done in favor of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to improve the staff translation capability for their job. Two skills were tested for FBI employees with the purpose of enhancing their competence. These skills include accuracy and the ability of expression. The researchers present descriptions for the different levels of translation skills for each aspect of translation competence. They applied them to the correcting process of the next exams. They concluded that accuracy appears to be “the more valid measure of translation ability” (Stansfield et al. 1992: 461).

(3) Waddington (2001) introduces related research focusing on experimenting in an academic university atmosphere. A questionnaire was sent to 52 teachers working in many universities in Canada and Europe. He aspires to discover the best correction way in the colleges of translations. Holistic approach (38.5%) and the way of error analysis (36.5%) were used by those teachers. The third way was a combination of error analysis with a comprehensive appreciation (23%). These ways constitute the results of his study.
4) Bahameed (2014) has experimentally given research using Hurtado's method of assessment on English department undergraduate students in a Yemeni environment. This method was followed on the correction of beginners' translations of the final exam containing different texts which were translated in both directions between English and Arabic. The review was administered to 43 respondents. This method was considered the best option as stated in the study results.

The current paper varies from Stansfield et al. (1992), Bahameed (2014), Campbell (1991), and Waddington (2001) in the following points:

(1) It concentrates on translation courses in a different setting (i.e., King Khalid University, Abha, KSA).
(2) This study has been administered to a higher sample of MA final year students.
(3) The researcher, who has been teaching translation courses for 12 years, approved the material of the students' final project to find out the kind of translation project and the suitable evaluation method.
(4) The researcher applied only one different approach, which is the holistic method, excluding the error analysis method because the researcher wants to see to what extent the former way is applicable.
(5) This paper considers the results obtained through applying this method to the evaluation process for purpose investigating the pros and cons of this final project in the MA translation program to improve it for academic years to come.

3. Description of Experiment
3.1. Holistic Method of Assessment

The holistic method of assessment is believed to be accurate and objective. It considers a project as a whole, rather than as separate parts. However, it has a limited range of flexibility and subjectivity depending on the corrector's appreciation and the kind and number of translation errors the candidate does. This range makes it different from the error analysis correction method (Kussmaul, 1995, p. 129). The holistic approach was described differently by teachers. The three descriptions which the researcher found have based their scales on the requirements of professional translators. This approach was consequently of little use for judging the quality of the translation of beginners students. As a result, I adopted Waddington's (2001) holistic method, as it seems to be more applicable and compatible with the sample level of this study. The scale is existing as a single unit and treats translation competence as a whole. However, it requires the corrector to consider three different aspects of the student’s performance, as shown in Table 1. Every one of the five levels has two possible scores to comply with the University marking system of 0 – 100. This method gives a range of freedom to the teacher. He can freely move within this range and give a higher mark to the respondent who did a good job that comes close form requirements of a higher level. He can give a lower score to the candidate whose translation was not as good as it should be.
Table 1. Scale for Holistic Method C (Waddington, 2001, p. 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Accuracy of conveyance of ST content</th>
<th>Quality of expression in TL</th>
<th>Degree of Task Completion</th>
<th>Mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Complete conveyance of ST information; only minor revision needed to reach a proficient level.</td>
<td>Almost all the translation looks like a piece originally written in English. There may be minor lexical, grammatical, or spelling errors.</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>95-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Almost complete conveyance. There might be one of the insignificance ambiguity. It requires a certain amount of revision to reach a proficient level.</td>
<td>Large sections look like a piece originally written in English. There are several lexical, grammatical, or spelling errors.</td>
<td>Almost completely successful</td>
<td>70-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Conveyance of the general idea(s) but with several lapses inaccuracy; needs considerable revision to reach a proficient level.</td>
<td>Certain parts look like a piece originally written in English, but others read like a translation. There are a considerable number of lexical, grammatical, or spelling errors.</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>50-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Conveyance undermined by serious imprecision; thorough revision required to reach a proficient level.</td>
<td>Almost the entire text looks like a translation; There are continual lexical, grammatical, or spelling errors.</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>30-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Inadequate conveyance of ST content; the translation is not worth revising.</td>
<td>The candidate reveals a total lack of ability to express himself adequately in English.</td>
<td>Totally Inadequate</td>
<td>10-29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. The Hypothesis

It is possible to develop the estimation quality of the students' translations in the light of holistic method. The appropriateness of using this method is high. To confirm the hypothesis, the results should be reasonable in the sense that students' failure cases should not exceed 40 %, and the highest top students should not exceed 20 %.
5. The Study Sample
This study focused on a sample of five Saudi MA female translation students. All the sample elements are female students, studying in the second and final year of their postgraduate study at the university for the academic year 2019. MA students were selected because they are supposed to have a relatively good command of English and Arabic (mother tongue). They also have integrated skills in translating texts from Arabic into English and vice versa. They have already attended translation courses in their BA degree program and the first year of the MA program to gain the necessary translation skills. These matters could help them handle the SL text properly.

6. The Final Translation Project
The translation project (Table 2) was quite similar to other final projects of the same course adopted last year. It consisted of long written text (50 pages), selected primarily by the students. However, it was approved by the supervisor. Inappropriate selections were excluded. Arabic is the mother tongue of the students, and students used different translation directions. Four students have chosen to translate their project text from English into Arabic, while the fifth one has taken the challenge and brought her material the other way around. Consider Table 2.

Table 2. The material of 50 pages translated by MA female students at KKU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate Translator 1</th>
<th>Title of the Book</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>pages</th>
<th>Direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Translator 1</td>
<td>Atomic Habits</td>
<td>Games Clear</td>
<td>1-50</td>
<td>From English into Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Translator 2</td>
<td>The Three Questions</td>
<td>Don Miguel Ruiz and Barbara Emrys</td>
<td>1-50</td>
<td>From English into Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Translator 3</td>
<td>تاجر السعادة</td>
<td>Merchant of Happiness</td>
<td>Eid Obaid Al-Rashidi</td>
<td>1-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Translator 4</td>
<td>Better Than Before</td>
<td>Gretchen Rubin</td>
<td>67 - 117</td>
<td>From English into Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate Translator 4</td>
<td>The Rules of People</td>
<td>Richard Templar</td>
<td>1-50</td>
<td>From English into Arabic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The material of these books is so recent and essential, and famous authors wrote them. These books speak mainly about social matters, the development of one's personality utilizing the experiences of others, and displaying contemporary methods to achieve one's goals in life. The selected part of the book is quite lengthy, and it is expected to contain diverse translation problems. Using dictionaries is allowed to translate this MA translation project. The total number of texts was about 12500 words long. Students were given a final evaluation out of 100 marks.

6. How the Method Was Applied
This method was employed to evaluate the MA students of the translation degree program, done by five English department female students to verify the hypothesis. This assessment method was used by a professional professor whose major is Arabic-English translation and has got 12 years of experience in translation teaching. He used this method for these 50-page projects in the final
These projects are the last essential requirement to get an MA degree in translation. The researcher considered the accumulative lessons, technical information, practical skills that those students acquired in the previous year. Applying the evaluation process was straightforward and systematic in the light of the holistic method. One red line is marked under the minor mistake, which doesn't affect the sentence general intended meaning. More than one red line is brought under the severe error that can affect the general intended meaning. After completing the marking process, the more lines the evaluator finds on the answer sheet, the less level the student gets under Waddington's (2001) holistic method. This is the way of assessment, carried out to get the result of a student.

7. The Study Findings

The evaluation process of the students' translation project was followed by an oral exam using an online blackboard method to make sure that the student herself did the translation. Students were also asked to submit a commentary report, which usually contains three main parts: (1) An introduction which generally includes the importance and reasons for choosing the source language (SL) text. (2) This second part constitutes the body that focuses mainly on the translation problems, which were encountered during translating the project and how they manage to tackle them. (3) This final part usually gives conclusions, suggestions, and recommendations to enhance carrying out similar projects in the future. That being the case, each student has submitted source text, target text, and the commentary report at the end of the semester. Having used Waddington's (2001) holistic evaluation method stated above, Table 3 shows the overall detailed result of the students.

Table 3. General detailed result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>The Holistic Method</th>
<th>Degree of Task Completion</th>
<th>Mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>Almost completely successful</td>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first look at Table 3 indicates that applying this correction method resulted in no failure cases. The student needs 60% marks to reach the lowest pass mark, which is compatible with the typical system at Saudi Universities. To precisely calculate the result with numbers and percentages, we can take a look at Table 4.

Table 4. General accumulative result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>Fail</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Almost completely successful</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 reveals that 4 cases (80%), which is equal to the sum of the successful and the small instances of the whole number of the study, were nil. The faculty educational system regards this as too high percentage of success rate, which does not typically exceed (20%) in most subjects taught in this particular English department. To carry on the data analysis, translation direction was also calculated to see whether this relevant factor has any influence. Table 5 shows a particular outcome of the students no. 1, 2, 4, and 5 who selected their translation to be from English into Arabic and student no. 3, whose text was translated from Arabic into English.

Table 5. Impact of the translation direction on the failure rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Direction to Arabic (100 marks)</th>
<th>Direction to English (100 marks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 displayed the students' results, bearing in mind the translation direction. It was noted that there is no impact of the translation direction on the overall effect. Having no failure cases in this program requirement is a strong indication that students' competence of the English language, especially in writing skills, is remarkably advanced.

8. Discussions

Critics may say that the holistic method is reasonable. However, it does not have enough degree of precision and objectivity because of its partial reliance on the corrector's anticipation and appreciation. For instance, the corrector can give 90 or 100 marks according to his ability to behave sensibly and make personal decisions. There is no technical standard to select either one as exactly as the error analysis method (Kussmaul 1995, p. 129) to produce an objective result without the corrector's interference. Also, this method did not show any failure cases. However, the holistic approach proponents defend it by saying that it is logically elegant. They also say this high percentage of success happened because the students are excellent in translation and writing skills. They have already undergone excessive practical courses in the MA first year, and this resulted in acquiring excellent and advanced command of both languages. They became experienced translators in maneuvering the text and handling different kinds of translation problems. However, critics would feel that the holistic method is more lenient in favor of the students. It gives more chance to the subjectivity in the correction process.

Furthermore, taking a close look at the students' overall accumulative result (Table 4) has offered a negative feeling that this method is too loose and flexible. It calls for some kind of rigidity. This is clear in the result, which contains 80% have got a successful level, which is the highest marking of the holistic method for the top students out of the translation class. Consider the illustrative diagram in Figure 1.
Therefore, when the majority gets such top markings, it will be considered too much. One could feel that students can quickly become part of this level without exerting much effort. Meanwhile, the excellent top students in reasonable typical cases are expected not to exceed 10 %. That being the case, the result indicates that the majority can make their translation reads like a piece initially written in the TL. Perhaps this happened because the holistic method pushes the corrector to consider lexical, grammatical, or spelling errors to be minor. Any spelling mistake, for instance, was considered a grave mistake by the error analysis correctors, while holistic translation teachers assume this to be a trivial mistake. However, the comprehensive teachers' assumption was unjustifiable. It is worth mentioning that the students took around three months long, which is considered enough time to check the spelling in a dictionary. This procedure supports the idea that the holistic correction method was not strict enough to make only the diligent respondents pass the project. Other students who might not be attentive enough can give the project too. The holistic method considers spelling mistakes to be dangerous if only such errors are many.

On the other hand, this method considers lexical mistake to be trivial unless they are many as well. In the error analysis method, the penalty of subtracting four marks is carried out for the inappropriate lexical item. This matter happens when a student chooses a wrong word or select a wrong meaning out of many definitions of a polysemous word. However, the penalty of the latter method is reasonable because committing such a grave mistake could negatively affect the general sense of the next sentences or the whole text. Other lexical errors include the omission mistakes such as skipping translating a word. The loss of meaning can occur when the corrector feels that the definition of a translated sentence is blurred or incomplete. The latter two cases were penalized severely, as these mistakes can negatively distort the meaning of all the SL text, so this constitutes a sensible way. But in the holistic method, these mistakes are severely penalized if they are many.

Moreover, the researcher observed that the direction of the translation was not a remarkable factor and didn't have a clear connection with the degree of difficulty of the project. The result in
Table 5 supports the assumption that translating into one's mother tongue is as equal as the other way around.

9. Conclusions

The conclusions are that if this holistic evaluation method is too lenient and allows top level students to be so many, it remains a dependable way because it was employed adequately to all students without any distinction. If we adopted other assessments such as the error analysis correction method (Kussmaul, 1995:129), the evaluation would cause the failure rate to exceed the reasonable ratio.

The other accusation of the holistic method is that it allows some range of assessment to depend on the evaluator's subjective intuition. This matter might be too flexible and hard to measure. However, this intuition is rather sensible since the personal range is limited, and the evaluation process is always performed by proficient translation scholars.

In addition, this method is accused of being unable to easily make a distinction among the diligent respondents as long as their number may reach 80% out of the whole translation class. That is to say, it can give senior positions to many students, and this might give a negative impression. Besides, this method is too lenient to the extent that it can give very little chance to see the individual differences among these many top students. The lenience of the holistic method is also manifested, according to the findings, in the fact that those students are not accountable for the minor lexical, grammatical, or spelling errors. These errors constitute a matter of the holistic method that it is too broad to measure. It was not made clear in this method about how many minor faults could be overlooked and excused by the project evaluator.

Indeed, being too lenient will be negatively reflected in the long run on the assessment quality system, and the general teaching process. This matter would lead the graduates to have a low standard. Consequently, this point would make us assume that the hypothesis regarding the appropriateness of using this holistic assessment method hasn't been confirmed.

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References


Stress Placement and the Difficulties Encountered by Female EFL Students in Saudi Arabian Context

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Abstract
One of the most essential skills for English Foreign Language learners is to learn how to assign stress on words correctly for efficient communication. The current paper aims at investigating the problems that faced English foreign language Female Students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University in assigning stress accurately. Besides, it attempts to identify the reasons of the inapplicability of the rules practically and adequately. The researchers use the descriptive- analytical approach as a method used in this study. A questionnaire consists of 10 items was given to 60 students, the sample of the study. The study is useful to teachers and learners as well as it exposes them to word stress assignment. The results indicate that Participants did not show evidence of rule application, even though they learn word stress placement rules. Lack of overexposing them practically and adequately to word stress placement, performance conditions as time limitations, absence of oral exams, and a large number of the students in the classroom are the essential reasons behind the insufficient command of the rules. Moreover, teachers are in need of more training in teaching pronunciation to be ready for their teaching work. The researchers suggested that more attention should be given to oral production alongside with teaching word stress placement rules.

Keywords: assign stress, inapplicability, pronunciation, Saudi learners, stress placement rules

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Introduction

The main aim of learning the English language is to provide learners with the knowledge of the language used so that they will be able to communicate it effectively and correctly. Knowledge of phonological rules by English foreign language (EFL) learners is of great significance. Learning how and where to assign stress on words for efficient communication will be very useful. Meanwhile, listeners process discourse more easily if stress is correctly placed. Despite the importance of assigning the stress on words or sentences, it is ignored in most teachers’ classes (Baker & Westrup, 2003; Nation & Newton, 2009; Hashemi, 2011; Nguyen & Tran, 2015). Most researchers pay much attention to study syntax and morphology; however, the phonological rules of L2 acquisition in general and stress placement, in particular, have been neglected (Liu, 2017). According to Mahripah (2013), EFL learners’ oral performance is affected by phonological rules as one of the main components necessary for accurate speaking. This indicates that stress placement rules should be included within the syllabus of learning phonology.

Purpose of the study

EFL students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation at King Khalid University do know the rules of word stress placement; however, they do not have the ability to apply this knowledge. The current study aims at investigating the problems faced EFL learners in assigning stress accurately as it affects their vocal performance. Further, it attempts to identify the reasons of their inability for applying the rules of stress placement practically and adequately and then to provide solutions to overcome this problematic issue.

Significance of the Study

Stress placement is one of the problematic issues that hinder EFL learners. Learning L2 pronunciation needs the potentiality to have the same experience as native-speakers when speaking their mother tongue. However, by observing the Saudi female students performance at the Faculty of Languages and Translation (henceforth FLT) King Kahlid University (henceforth KKU), the researchers trace the difficulty students face in applying the rules practically and adequately. This is a beneficiary factor to write this paper. Moreover, the study can be useful to teachers and learners as well when considering teachers-learners’ needs for assigning stress in English language teaching and learning context.

Literature Review

For efficient communication, second language (L2) learners are intended to learn the phonological rules of word stress of the target language, which proves to be the most challenging issues in language learning. Intelligibility cannot be obtained with the faulty application of word stress (Benrabah, 1997; Checkin, 2012). It seems that language learners are not able to communicate fluently and accurately because they do not have enough knowledge in this field (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). EFL students can speak the language fluently, if much effort has been given to the rules of stress assignment. To L2 learners, Stress placement causes difficulty because stress in English is “highly rule-governed.”

Wahba (1998) attributes the difficulty the Egyptian students face in the pronunciation process of the English language to stress as English is a stress language, while Arabic is not. In contrast, Anani (2009), indicates that to assign the stress on words; learners tend to confirm the
overall stress pattern of English to the total stress pattern of Arabic. Almbark, Bouchhioua, and Hellmuth (2014), find that in the course of phonetic realization of stress, EFL learners at the Arab world transfer stress assignment of their first language (L1) in the speech production of L2.

Mahripah (2013) finds that EFL learners’ oral performance is affected by phonological rules as one of the main components necessary for accurate speaking. In accordance, to uncover whether stress is problematic to EFL learners or not, Karjo (2016), explores the production of English word stress by Indonesian students. The results indicate that the difficulty of accounting the stress placement and recognition is attributed to phonological factors (p.199).

Betti & Ulaiwi (2018) investigate the difference between Arabic and English stress types and features. They conclude that stress as a phenomenon exists in both languages. Moreover, it is not phonemic; its primary function is emphasis and contrast. Contrary to this, Roach (2009) indicates that stress is signaling meaning. Meaning of a word is determined by stress placement.

Word stress placement is problematic not to the learners but the teachers as well. Checklin (2012) claims,

It is necessary for teachers to draw learners’ awareness to all features of word stress and to provide them with explicit training” to enhance the process successfully. He (2012) adds, “In principle, stress alone could serve to distinguish words, but in reality it seldom does (p.3).

To Ahmad & Nazim (2014), negligence of sound system of English in EFL classrooms is the core of non-mastering of pronunciation by the EFL learners as they had not been practiced English well at schools. On the other hand, the researcher put it clear enough to the EFL teachers to teach their students the sound system of English accurately to reduce problems of English pronunciation among L2 learners.

In their study, Yuan & Cheng (2017) attempt to find out to what extent Chinese-speaking learners whose native language has less evidence of stress can acquire English stress. The results showed that Chinese Learners from a no-stress native language appeared to experience more difficulty than learners from a stress language. Liu (2017) investigates the production of word stress by the Mandarin EFL learners, and he concludes that the lack of knowledge of rules is the real reason for the improper assignment of word stress. However, Brawata & Rybinska (2017) find that sensitivity is one reason for EFL learners to obtain stress. They tend to assign word stress successfully because they are more sensitive to acquire stress, and so they achieve proper pronunciation. Moreover, motivation can influence the components of language learning (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

To sum up, the above-related literature indicates that Stress Placement and the difficulties encountered by EFL Students in Saudi Arabian context has not been studied before to the researchers’ knowledge. The previous studies have investigated the process of pronunciation in the Saudi Arabian context but not the applicability of stress placement. Therefore, this paper aims at investigating the problems faced EFL learners in assigning stress accurately and to find out the factors and the reasons that stand behind the inapplicability of the rules of stress placement. To
fulfill the aim of the paper and to capture the entire phenomenon that happened in the classroom in a natural setting, it is hypothesized that L2 learners at FL&T at KKU have difficulty in assigning word stress.

**Methodology**

**Instrument and Procedure**

The researchers use the descriptive-analytical approach as they thought that it is an effective one frequently used to collect and analyze the data (Borg & Gall, 1989). A mixed-method combination of quantitative and qualitative design (Creswell, 2005) is used so that the researcher will have an opportunity to apply statistical operations. Through this method the researchers will be able to interpret the research aim and purpose comprehensively. Jick (1979) states, “above all, [mixing qualitative and quantitative] demands creativity from its user-ingenuity in collecting data and insightful interpretation of data” (P. 610). The data collected were computed in excel format to display the percentage of the results, the means and the standard deviation. The researchers then have given a descriptive analysis of the responses. Students have been observed by the researchers while teaching them stress placement in the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019. A questionnaire consisted of 10 items, then, was distributed as a method of collecting data to 60 students. The researchers used the questionnaire to obtain practical and valid views (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The participants’ responses were varied, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) on a five-point Likert scale. For the validity of the questionnaire, three experts were asked and requested to read it. After the feedback had been received from the experts, the items were modified and finalized (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

**Participants**

The participants of the study are female students at the English Department, Faculty of Languages and Translation King Khalid University who were taking phonology class in the Second Semester of 2018/2019. To ensure to what extent female EFL students at the Faculty of Languages & Translation, KKU encounter difficulty in assigning stress accurately and in addition to identify reasons of the inability of applying the rules correctly, 43 students Out of 60 students have responded to the items.

**Data analysis**

After collecting the data, they were analyzed carefully. The means and standard deviation for each statement were represented in excel format, revealing the percentage of the results in figures to present the responses of the participants more comprehensive. Finally, the findings were analyzed then discussed in the light of the previous literature review.

**Findings**

The researchers started to illustrate the findings, uncovering the means and the standard deviation as shown in the table 1.
Stress Placement and the Difficulties Encountered by Female EFL

Table 1. The means and the standard deviation of the students’ responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q10</th>
<th>Q9</th>
<th>Q8</th>
<th>Q7</th>
<th>Q6</th>
<th>Q5</th>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>StDev</strong></td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of the results, on the other hand, has been represented in the figures (from 1-6) revealing the students responses to the items of the questionnaire.

**Results and interpretations of the items**

1. **Do your English teachers speak English in the classroom when teaching?**

![Figure 1: The percentages of question no.1](image_url)

Figure 1. The percentages of question no.1

Figure 1. shows that the students’ responses to this statement are high in percentage as the mean score is 4.45, and the standard deviation is 1.02. 69.7% of the students positively agreed that their teachers are using English as a medium of communication and instruction in the classrooms. However, 4.6% disagreed with the above statement. Using English as a medium of instruction implies that perception of word stress should be high, contrary to this, students as observed by the researchers, showed no application of stress assignment. This finding goes with Mahripah, (2013) and Liu (2017). Although students perceive oral skills essential in their English teaching, their misplacement of stress might be due to less importance that attached to the learning of word stress.

2. **Do you have the opportunity of speaking English in classroom?**

Students’ responses to this question are high in rate as the mean score is 3.50, and the standard deviation is 1.11. 59% of the students’ responses to this item show that students, to some
extent, speak English inside the class. This might go with Mahirpah’s (2013) that students have positive attitudes towards improving their vocal performance. However, 23% occasionally speak English and 21% of students do not agree on the statement. The researchers thought that shyness, fear of making mistakes, and lack of exposure to the English language could be the reason behind the inability to speak English. This result corroborates with those of previous studies. Ahmad & Nazim (2014) find that the reason why they show negative response is because of the lack of motivation among the learners towards learning pronunciation.

3. Do your teachers instruct you on how to assign the most important stress in sentences?

![Figure 2](image)

*Figure 2. The percentages of question 3*

The students’ responses to this statement are high as the mean score for this item is 3.07, with a standard deviation of 1.09. This implies that the assigning of stress on a word or a sentence has been provided accidentally but not systematically. The result shows that the students, (46.5%), are aware of the problem. That is, they have cognitive knowledge; however, they lack the practical knowledge on how to practice the process correctly. The average between disagreement and agreement is equal. This result shows that the reason is purely pedagogical. Expositing the learners to the phonological rules is the responsibility of teachers of English. That is presenting stress patterns while teaching vocabulary, and the oral practice of new words should be included (Field, 2005 as cited in Checklin, 2012).

4. Do you practice new words after class?

The students’ responses to this question are high as the mean score for this item is 2.75, with a standard deviation of 1.22. The result shows that the students do not highly agree with this statement. Nevertheless, they were satisfied with what they have taken the classrooms. They showed no desire to practice the language outside. 51% agreed that they rarely practice any new words after the classroom. The lack of exposure to new words after the classroom seems to be another factor that prevents the students from practicing word stress placement.
5. Do you check the stress patterns of English words while looking up their meanings from a dictionary?

![Figure 3](image)

The response of the students to this item is also high as the mean score for this statement is 2.50, and a standard deviation is 1.11. It seems that there is no matching between the different components of language. According to the response of the students, 48.8% rarely gave attention to the stress patterns when looking for the meaning in dictionaries, which might affect the student assignment of the word stress. When looking for the meaning of words in the dictionary, an accurate placement of stress on a particular syllable is the key for communicating the intended purpose in English.

6. Do you practice word stress at home?

![Figure 4](image)

The students’ responses to this item are high as the mean score for this statement is 2.41, and the standard deviation is 1.37. The students negatively responded to this item implies that there is no enough evidence for the students to practice language at home. To accept this fact, a complete separation between school and home is revealed by answering this item. 44% profoundly disagreed with assigning stress on word or sentence when speaking English outside the class. It is convenient
that lack of practicing phonological rules, consciously or unconsciously influence word stress assignment.

7. Do your teachers assess your use of word stress while you are speaking?

Figure 5. The percentages of question no.7.

The students’ responses to this item are high as the mean score for this item is 2.70, with the standard deviation of 0.98. 60% of the participants agreed that they occasionally receive an assessment from teachers, whereas, 9% of students explained that the frequency of teachers’ assessment was somewhat rare. Teacher’s role as a guide in the teaching-learning process seems to be invisible. Generally speaking, teachers should follow up their students. Following up the students is a source of improving the students’ use of language. Nguyen and Tran (2015), claims that teacher’s feedback during speaking activities improves students’ speaking performance.

8. Are you highly motivated to apply word stress?

The students’ responses to this question are high as the mean score for this item is 3.16, with a standard deviation of 1.08t. The majority of the students agreed to have the motivation to learn how to apply stress. Such result contrasts the result indicated by Ahmad & Nazim (2014). They find that the reason why the students in their paper show negative response is because they lack motivation for learning pronunciation. Interestingly, students in this research know the rules of stress placement and have the motivation to learn these rules. Nevertheless, it proves that knowing the rules is not a sufficient factor for assigning stress. The finding here contradicts the result indicated by Liu (2014) who finds that students lack of knowledge of word stress rules is the main reason of the inability to assign stress on words correctly.

9. Do teachers use Labs when they are teaching stress to you?

Figure 6. The percentages of question no.9.
The mean score is 3.02, and the standard deviation is 1.62. The extensive use of labs as a tool of learning by teachers is a profound means to learn word stress. Students negatively responded to this item. 23% responded negatively and explained that teachers never use labs for teaching while 25.5% of them responded that rarely do teachers use labs. The negative response of the students shows that teachers do not use labs frequently. Consequently, lectures were given in classrooms. For a profound learning, classes should be provided with more training equipment to facilitate pronunciation, and to cope with teaching work (Liu, 2014).

10. **Does the large number in the classroom and time limitation prevent you from participating efficiently in oral tasks?**

11. The students’ responses to this statement are high as the mean score for this item is 3.20, with the standard deviation of 1.47. 54% (i.e. 23.26 “always”, and 30.23% “often”). The vast number of students in a classroom prevents them from acquiring the rules sensitively. So, classes should be divided into amounts where each class should consist of no more than twenty students to avoid large classrooms, and to achieve the flexibility to teach and learn English word stress effectively.

Discussion

According to the results, participants did not show any evidence of rule application. This result supports the finding presented in Walch (1972), as cited in (Guion, Clark, Harada & Wayland, 2003). The study reveals that even though they know the rules of word stress placement, they make errors. Making errors implies that they are not being able to achieve the expected proficiency. Reasons for the students’ inability of achieving proficiency in assigning stress are because of many factors; lack of exposing the students practically to stress placement rules. The result confirms Ahmed & Nazim (2014) findings in their study, “Saudi EFL learners’ views on English Pronunciation”. Certainly, practicing along with the accomplished application of word stress rules helps EFL learners master the language in question. Lack of rule application may cause problems in English pronunciation among Saudi EFL learners.

Besides, the lack of the use of Labs when learning English word stress is another reason. To Crystal (2001), new technology provides EFL learners opportunities to learn English effectively more than before. Moreover, it is indicated that students’ practice of stress assignment on words at school and home is rare. The paper shows that teachers do not give the students the opportunity to practice English in and out of the classrooms. Besides, the result extends Leong & Ahmadi (2017) findings that motivation can influence the components of language learning. Though the students have had the motivation to learn the rules, teachers’ assessment was rarely estimated. Teachers did not show up any feedback to assess the students’ improvement in word stress placement. To this, teachers should Present stress patterns while teaching vocabulary and during the oral practice of new words (Checklin, 2012). Students’ positive attitudes towards the improvement of their English speaking performance serve as a foundation for the success of the English language learning, which is consistent with Mahripah (2013). No doubt, then, exposing the learners to the phonological rules is the responsibility of all teachers of English. Further, the study shows that learning environment and the performance conditions such as time limitations, absence of oral exam and a large number of the students in the classroom is also another reason for the insufficient command of EFL learners’ language. To Mahripah (2013) finding, “without
supportive curricular and learning environment, this potency is likely to diminish gradually and at worse can be detrimental to the learners’ language learning process” (p. 298).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

To sum up, the results support the researchers’ hypothesis that the inapplicability of using the rules of stress placement practically and adequately is evident. This is, for instance, encountered as a problem, however, such a problem, as the researchers found, will be resolved by:

- First, overexposing the students excessively to the target pronunciation and the phonological rules of word stress placement.
- Second, under the guidance of their teachers, students should practice vocally, till their ability to pronounce the correct word stress is effective and accurate. The more proficient are the teachers in using the English language in their teaching classes, the more impact they impart upon the students.
- Third, students should be motivated and encouraged by the teachers to use the language they learn in the same way native speakers do.

**Recommendations**

There are many factors that affect students’ inability to apply word stress correctly. To overcome this problem, the researchers suggest the following:

1. Students’ oral production of language has to be given more attention while assessing their learning progress.
2. Students need assistance to overcome negative feelings toward learning of the target language.
3. Teachers have to urge their students to speak in English classes.
4. Teachers should choose practical techniques that keep the students involved in speaking.
5. Teachers should focus on supra-segmental features of the target language.

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Assessing English Grammar Assessment and Feedback: a Case Study of King Khalid University (KKU) Students

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Abstract
This article investigates strategies to improve communicative grammar feedback effectiveness. The motivation for the study is that instructing communicative grammar has been regarded as crucial to the ability to use language by English language learners (ELL). As the fundamental organizing principle of language, grammar plays a critical role in establishing communicative tasks, proficiency, and accuracy. It facilitates the syntactic system of the language, the structure which holds the language together. Moreover, a recent research literature review supports the contextualized grammar effectiveness, especially with EFL learners’ instruction, and has a considerable impact on the writing performance of adult English language learners (ELL). A renewed interest in grammar from teaching, learning and research perspectives has created the need for new approaches to assessing the grammatical ability of the ELL and evaluating the outcome of the assessment. The objective of this study is to provide insight into how to motivate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to welcome the assessment of their grammar in the student-centered and teacher-guided environment. It has been made based on the research, performed at the King Khalid University with basic level students, taking Intensive English Grammar course at the KKU. The article questions whether assessing Grammar appropriately in a well-organized, effective manner leads to the productive steps forward for EFL learners. Ultimately, the information obtained endorses, that the targeted grammar feedback tailored to the needs of the students of the particular EFL levels, should be organized in a certain constructive positive and practical way to meet the content of the instruction, and, finally, fit the target of the University education.

Keywords: corrective feedback (CF); grammar assessment; grammar feedback; grammar feedback assessment; grammar feedback effectiveness.

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**Introduction**

The studying of English grammar is considered to be an essential aspect of the process of learning English by Saudi students. In these regards, it is needless to point out the significance of assessing grammar feedback. Truly, producing grammar feedback by the Instructor is not only about the general language enhancement of the ELL students. So, what is the best way to respond to the errors of the students taking grammar classes?

Teachers continue to mark grammar errors with students embracing that, though “the literature abounds with proof of the futility of marking errors” (Leki, 1991, p.204). So, if English as a foreign language (EFL) Instructors decide that they would like to try alternative ways of commenting on students’ grammar errors, how can they justify the change to themselves and their students? With this question in mind, the current study is the report of the attempt to facilitate the performance of students undertaking Intensive grammar course at one of the top KSA universities by merely using the research, the study, by modifying the attitude of the instructor to the students’ errors and marking, as well as changing the feedback into positive interaction with students as a step forward from a nerve-racking and downgrading experience for EFL students.

Alongside with that, the attempt was made to prove that properly structured error revision techniques after initial assessments and evaluations lead to better marks and follow-up positive reinforcement of the students towards learning English Grammar. The presented study has conducted an English grammar feedback assessment, based on the response which has been provided by the students undertaking an Intensive Grammar credit course at the Faculty of Languages and Translation of King Khalid University.

This study was conducted through a method of series of discussions in class and also self-evaluation surveys of the students during the intensive study of the basic English grammar, and is believed to enhance the pedagogical skill of the instructor, teaching the course, as well as to have direct practical pedagogical implications for other instructors, who follow mentioned above tendencies in teaching EFL.

Ultimately, the linguistic progress momentum is very significant for the theory and practice of teaching EFL/ESL, when the assessment and evaluation can change the learners’ attitudes to teachers’ feedback, the students’ performance and even the professional career goals while improving their tests, quizzes and exams’ marks and directly influencing their future professional communications.

**Theoretical Framework**

There is a considerable amount of research literature on the topic. The importance of giving feedback has been emphasized by many teachers and researchers (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 2003; Leki 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Semke, 1984; Robb, Ross and Shortreed, 1986). On the other hand, it was underlined that instructors of EFL/ESL must avoid giving too much feedback or “overcorrecting” the students’ writing, especially of grammatical errors. Some linguistic scientists consider that no grammatical errors should be emphasized or marked (Truscott, 1996).
However, many students consider the number of marked grammatical errors should be used as the justification of the given marks for the written assignment, and most teachers agree with this as well. Many researchers and teachers, correspondingly, feel the same kind of a necessity when discussing and evaluating the response to the students’ writing. For example, Keh (1990) points out that teacher’s corrections, “red marks on students’ papers” might seem to prove “the superiority” of the teacher in the knowledge of the subject, and can show that this is the “demonstration” of the job well performed. As Ancker (2000) notes, the interviews with the instructors from different countries and various backgrounds prove the same statement. The review of the literature on this topic also points out that students want grammar correction as much as the teachers (Leki, 1991). Nonetheless, some literature reviews also underline the “futility” of marking grammatical errors, as this doesn’t lead to immediate result and avoidance of grammatical errors (Leki, 1991).

For example, Robb et al. (1986) conducted a study of various types of feedback and he divided the students into four groups:

1. Correction group (the instructor corrects all the grammatical errors and doesn’t comment on organization and content).
2. Coded feedback group (the instructor marks the errors with a code).
3. Non-coded feedback group (the instructor marks the errors with a highlighter only).
4. Marginal (the number of mistakes is counted and indicated on each line, but no distinct errors are identified and pointed out).

The researcher found that none of the feedback types resulted in “long-term grammatical improvement”.

In reality, improving grammar and as a result writing skills has a tremendous impact on the level of the second language acquisition. Currently, researchers underline that writing has a major role in promoting second language development. Writing is even perceived as an instrument for language studying (Manchón, 2011) that allows ELL to integrate new material, test hypotheses, and automatize knowledge (Williams, 2012). Within this standpoint, grammar feedback provided by instructors benefits the language learning process (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). That is why the importance of grammar instruction has never been more obvious.

Even though Ferris (1995) underlines that students’ writing provides “little evidence” that mere marking students errors assists students in improving their writing skills, at the same time, he claims that students do benefit from grammar comments and remarks about content and organization. (Ferris, 1995). Raimes 1983) compares understanding and producing accurate grammatical forms with composing, however, he claims it should not become the central focus of the Instructor’s feedback.

On Corrective Feedback
The research implies, that corrective feedback (CF) is defined as any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is false (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In their book “Written corrective feedback in second language acquisition and writing” the authors have formulated the
explanation of the corrective feedback as an indication that their use of the target language is incorrect. CF in writing is about incorrect grammatical or lexical use of the target language, and it is unconnected and unassociated with feedback on content. It is not about any comment, suggestion, or clarification request concerning the ideas, organization, or even style or rhetoric peculiarities of the text. Thus, corrective feedback is defined as any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is not error-free (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

There are two major kinds of written corrective feedback: direct CF and indirect CF. Direct CF implies the teacher’s provision of the correct form or structure and may take various forms, including crossing out a redundant or unneeded word or phrase, writing the correct form above or in the margin of the error. Indirect CF, on the other hand, refers to the Instructor’s indication that an error has been made, but without providing the correct form by the teacher. Certain scientists have stated that indirect CF is more likely to have long-term positive effects on students’ accuracy since it requires learners to self-discover the correct forms (Li, 2010). As a matter of fact, that will take place if the students’ motivation is indisputable and skill-oriented. Others have maintained that there are several cases in which language instructors should provide more direct feedback on errors. Ferris (2002), for example, has pointed out that learners benefit more from direct correction when they are at the beginning level of proficiency in English when they do not have enough linguistic knowledge to self-correct.

Since English language instructors spend much of their time providing corrective feedback on students’ writing in hope of helping them improve grammatical accuracy (Brown, 2012), “to correct” or “not to correct” question is not considered to be even applicable and admissible one. The question is how to provide corrective feedback effectively.

On Increasing Grammar Feedback Effectiveness Criteria
So what to do to increase the effectiveness of the feedback on grammar? Students associate grammar with errors and correctness. But knowing about grammar rules also assists to understand what makes sentences and paragraphs clear-cut and precise. This issue was highlighted when conducting a study via various class discussions and surveys performed with basic year students, taking an Intensive English Course of Grammar, during the second semester of 2017 (which is the year 1438 by the Hijri calendar) at the King Khalid University’s English Language Centre under the guidance of the Faculty of Languages and Translation.

Although many researchers agree that the students wish to see their work corrected and corrected in an organized and logical way with symbols, explanations, and comments, some of them put the effectiveness of the detailed corrections into question. During the study, the medical students of the basic year were requested multiple times to give their comments on which kind of feedback would be useful and reliable for them. They were also questioned about the level of the anxiety this corrective feedback could bring about. As a result, the students expressed the wish to have a “useful” CF, and they informed the instructor they would like to keep it confidential from other students in the highly competitive environment at one of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s top universities’ English Language Centre. As a matter of fact, they did not even question the necessity of the grammatical correction and providing of the CF. On the other hand, they were not convinced.
about the importance of noticing and marking every mistake, as they felt sure that only the main errors should be noticed and marked.

Nevertheless, Leki (1990) informs us that the students usually express the wish to have every error marked. However, he also points out that the students simply observe the main errors without paying much attention to the instructor’s corrections, symbols, and comments. Moreover, as the grade is very important, the grading feedback is the most important criteria for the students in receiving the feedback, and it can be overwhelming for them to spend emotional energy to cover the error content and symbols. A lot of English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) instructors wish to mark all the students’ errors, underlining, using circles, various editing symbols, aiming at the improvement and having the students’ best interest at heart. The time the instructors use for that is variable (depending on the tenacity of the instructor and his/her experience) and, of course, is valuable as well.

On the other hand, the time when the students are allowed to view the feedback of the teachers after progress determining quizzes, compositions, midterm grammar, and writing exams, is also extremely precious. That should be equally taken into account when producing feedback. And besides, the instructor must at some point provide the general feedback on most common errors, without going into much detail or, what is much worse, providing students’ names for the errors made. That especially concerns the larger EFL classes’ students, considering logical reasons provided earlier (time concerns and the students’ anxiety level apprehension, as well as KSA female students’ privacy respect rationale).

At the same time, it is important to emphasize the benefit of writing instructors that the researchers consider form-focused feedback ineffectual. (Sheppard, 1992; Kepner, 1991). The grammatical correction proves to be productive from the first draft to the revision and final draft (Hillocks, 1986; Truscott, 1996) but doesn’t hold long-term effectiveness. On the other hand, the research underlines how the correction comment is given, influences the length of the writing assignment. Indeed, no-comment and negative criticism affect the students in their wish to write shorter essays and fewer exercises.

Since grammar and in general language teachers should spend much of their time providing corrective feedback on students’ writing in the hope of helping them improve grammatical accuracy (Brown, 2012), it is important to understand in that sense corrective feedback as a multifaceted intricate practice, and therefore instructors must consider a number of factors and criteria when providing written feedback (Kormos, 2012; Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, & Woltersberger, 2010). This compound feedback takes into consideration a lot of factors: category of error (Syntax, spelling or vocabulary); motivation and skill level and past experiences of learners; curriculum guidelines, objectives, class sizes, frequency of classes provided, teaching philosophies of instructors, methodological variables, like diagnostic writing assignments, surveys, etc.

So, most of the studies (Bates, Lane, & Lange, 1993; Ferris, 1995; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hendrickson, 1978, 1980; Lalande, 1982; Walz, 1982) affirm that direct CF and indirect CF are two common types of written corrective feedback. In the case of direct CF, the teacher gives the
correct form to the students, and it is useful for lower-level-of-proficiency students who are unable to self-correct and might be unaware of the correct form. Even though it requires minimal processing on the part of the learners, it may not contribute to long-term learning (Ellis, 2009). A constructive study by Sheen (2007) suggests that direct corrective feedback can be productive in promoting the acquisition of only “specific grammatical features”. Nevertheless, CF proves to be effective, which has been proven by the researchers.

Many students in the study conducted by Dragga (1988), who ultimately wrote in favor of positive feedback and grading, noted that the positive attitude on feedback leads to the “ultimately rewarding experience” and might have even a long-lasting effect on the students’ aptitudes.

It is important to point out that positive feedback, even if it is a small step forward, has an enduring effect on the students’ motivation, leads to some advantage in solving the grammatical errors and, in the long run, has a tremendous impact on the students’ learning.

The necessity of producing the feedback in the most positive way possible, and the prospect of providing clear-cut “organized way of wrapping up the revision after the tests and exams, were equally tested during the instruction of Intensive Grammar to the students of the basic level. That experience changed the students’ attitude towards the Instructor’s response in a major way; the students became more self-confident and willing to go one step forward in preparing for the exams, as they became aware of the possibility of the positive outcome when constructively dealing with grammar issues. The students shared these observations while writing a grammar assessment feedback survey, as well as during the student-teacher discussions.

Method and Procedure
The design of the study was based on students’ surveys and mutual discussions with the students. The participants were the students of the sections number 1714, 1715 and 1717 (total of 136 students), who were undertaking the Intensive Grammar course during the second semester of 2017 (the year 1438 according to the Hijri calendar). The basic material covered in the course was about the foundations of the English grammar notions and the ability to build simple sentences using correct syntax, verb tenses, prepositions, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs, etc. The quantitative data survey method was employed, and the questions’ choice was determined by the obtainable depth of the study.

Moreover, the instrument, used in the study was a grammar feedback questionnaire, and the survey was performed during a very busy semester. Modes of inquiry had to be manageable for the author and the participants. Eventually, two modes were chosen: a multiple-choice questionnaire, and follow up discussions with the students. The participants of the written questionnaire voted to remain anonymous. Thus, the survey and the discussions were conducted among the students at the beginning of the intensive semester on the following questions and opinions.

1. How have your previous language teachers responded to your assignments and your feedback on their grammar correction?
2. What would you choose from the list if your teachers provided feedback based on your wishes?
   a. More praise than criticism while receiving grammar feedback
   b. More criticism than praise while receiving grammar feedback
   c. No feedback at all while receiving grammar feedback
   d. No praise while receiving grammar feedback
   e. No criticism while receiving grammar feedback

The option of utilizing multiple-choice questions was not accidental. According to Shohamy (1984) for example, who investigated the effect of different testing methods on the feedback, while using multiple-choice and open-ended questions, the learners responded better to the multiple-choice questions, especially with basic level EFL students. Based on these earlier studies, the present study aimed at making the questionnaire more comprehensive for the first-year University students.

The students didn’t respond effectively to the first question, only stating that the level of the instruction by local Arabic Instructors, working in the Aseer region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, didn’t prove to be effective for them. They explained that those students, who achieved better results, were in majority instructed by diligent private tutors, and as there were a lot of students in normal school classes and there was the limited class time according to the curriculum, no time was left for any corrective feedback. The teaching consisted only of lecturing and introducing new grammar material with basically no practice exercises.

Moreover, according to the current research, performed by the Arabic linguists teaching in Saudi Arabia, local instructors of English have more difficulty in teaching not only pronunciation but also the English grammar as the Arabic language belongs to the group of Semitic languages. Arabic has “unique linguistic characteristics”, and it shares with other Semitic languages “the root of pattern morphology” which functions as a generator of Arabic words (Al-Huri, 2015). Certainly, this is quite different from the English language system. Also, the Arabic language has an abundance of colloquial forms in the Arab World. All “varieties” are originally “derived from Classical Arabic” (Al-Huri, 2015), while English demonstrates the only widely accepted normative version, and also, the English dialects’ morphology and syntax are not much different from each other, at least from the grammar point of view. Moreover, regional diversity in dialect word formation is diminishing due to globalization, with normative English being a real-time instrument in it. Thus, the stated above obtained research results have a direct impact on the local Saudi Arabian style of teaching English grammar at schools by native Arabic speakers.

Based on the feedback of the students of the Intensive English program at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, the study confirmed the so-called “praise over criticism” preference of the students. It is gratifying, that most of the medical students, taking the course, showed a great deal of mature thinking by choosing only one of the options:

“a. More praise than criticism while receiving grammar feedback.”

Now let us regard the data analysis and the results of the study.
Data Analysis and Results
In figure 1 you can see the reaction of 136 students of the 3 sections 1714, 1715 and 1717, and it is obvious to note the prevalence of the “a” answer choice.

Figure 1. Response of the Basic Year Students to the Question on Grammar Feedback

Going forward, the second self-evaluation was conducted in the middle of the semester between the first and second progress tests. The question was concerning what the instructor should continue doing or stop doing during the instruction of the Grammar course. The majority of the students noted that the final marks were crucial for them, and they would get the most benefit from the structured revision, on their common grammar mistakes after first progress test, and also, from more exercises to avoid those particular errors.

Later on, the students’ performance during the second progress test showed the true effectiveness of the shorter more precise, positive and concise feedback, which was supplied by the Instructor even in the point form, underlining all the possible errors of the students when concluding the grammar material of each concerned unit. More grammar exercises are done in class and as homework assisted the students with the knowledge they require escaping the problematic areas during the stressful times of exams, especially when they take multiple skill exams during the same day. That is a crucial point that is not fully grasped by the instructors teaching EFL, especially in the eastern countries with teacher-centered education. More exercises assist students in achieving the knowledge they need to recall it during tests and exams while under pressure. Completing more practical exercises on grammar is an absolute necessity for the ELL learners, as well as, paying adequate attention to the positive reinforcement of the Instructor’s response, or the feedback, provided to the students.
Discussion
Analysis of the students’ survey outcomes at the end of the course indicated that structured revision plan related to the midterm and final exam preparation in combination with a positive attitude to the students’ work, alongside with a lot of practice on grammar rules and English syntax, provided more productive results in relation with the ELL students’ grammar errors. The exercises were meticulously developed by the instructor based on the taught grammar material. While the students continually engaged in practicing of grammar rules in simple exercises, they had a chance of developing better skills as compared to the beginning of the instruction of the Intensive English course when they lacked lexico-grammatical patterns’ choices and were anxious to avoid grammar mistakes in the written and oral communication activities. In turn, positive reinforcement instead of solely negative feedback played a crucial role.

As a result, the ELL students had more confidence in everyday practice, homework preparation and during the review and testing as well as the exams, getting the deserved results by the end of the course instruction. Learners’ increased linguistic aptitude due to the abundance of positive reinforcement would greatly assist them in their university education which implies the ability to write reports, surveys and simply better communicate: including orally, and using a higher level of English competence.

Findings
The study substantiated Leki’s and other researchers’ statements about English language students accepting Grammar feedback gracefully (Leki, 1991). At the same time, it contradicts the findings of the mentioned author, who emphasizes the “futility” of marking grammatical errors, as this doesn’t lead to immediate results and avoidance of grammatical errors (Leki, 1991). Though the researcher might have the upper hand with stating the pointlessness of marking the grammatical errors in regards to obtaining immediate success, the study underlines the usefulness of error focused practical exercises, which bring Grammar skills improvement gratification without real delay.

Furthermore, the results revealed that the students’ increasing awareness of language choices was accompanied by their enhanced assertiveness and desire to speak and write grammatically correct sentences as a result of the instructor’s encouraging compliments in the corrective feedback. This proves Dragga’s (1988) point of view that positive feedback and assessment testify in favor of “ultimately rewarding experience” for basic level students.

Needless to point out that the study within its boundaries was unable to measure the positive feedback’s effect on the long-term writing accuracy of the students, and the grammar precision and writing correctness of the low-level students might as well be delayed.

Nevertheless, the study has proved that the beginning EFL learners always require error-correcting and constructive grammar feedback, proving the current research on that matter (Ferris, 2002; Brown, 2012). Moreover, the students see their evaluation justification in this particular way of error-correcting, which implies positive corrective feedback. Furthermore, the improvement in the basic level students’ grammar performance would certainly be apparent in the Intensive Writing, Speaking, Listening and Reading courses taught at the ELC.
Ultimately, the findings suggest that combining more grammar exercising and productive revision techniques with positive reinforcement enables instructors to develop useful tasks and materials promoting the concurrent development of linguistic knowledge and writing ability even with the lower level of ESL/EFL students.

Limitations of the Study
This study is not a methodical and scrupulous experimental study with many experimental groups, or all the basic level students, taking the Intensive English course during the second semester of 2017 (Hijri 1438) at the English Language Centre of the King Khalid University’s Faculty of Languages and Translation. The reflections and observations expressed can be taken to represent the attitudes of the particular students under the specific circumstances of the study described.

Conclusion
Summing it up, it is not the fruitlessness of the grammar correction and grammar errors prevention that undermines the obtained results in teaching ELL, but the inadequacy, deficiency of the detailed study plan, provided by the EFL/ESL instructors. Each developed Grammar lesson plan should boast with an abundance of fruitful activities aimed at the ELL students’ grammar faults’ prevention, and, undoubtedly, the revision procedure should not be overdone with praise and neither be over perfected.

Unquestionably, it is a naiveté to expect immediate results without putting students’ motivation and energy into mastering a very important linguistic competence, grammar skill, like any other ability in progress, including, for example, vocabulary learning or contextualized listening skill. Certainly, content-based practice and targeted written and oral discourse exercises are essential for enhancing the most communicative of all the human aptitudes, the language communication, which includes mastering the system and the structure of the studied language, its syntax, and morphology. This development of students’ linguistic ability should be performed by the EFL/ESL instructors positively and engagingly, in a relentless battle with anxiety and demotivation, while bringing about even compelling drama and gripping role-play exercises, especially with basic level students.

Finally, from the pedagogical standpoint, the language students must be awarded more commend and appreciation, extra inspiration, better chances to find their courage to overcome their grammar errors in their everyday contextualized grammar “workout” activities, which will, for sure, be full of their “real-life” mistakes. Moreover, there are no two ways about it: the errors are unavoidable. The instructors and the ELL students should not be unaware of, but, on the contrary, fully mindful of that, and the study confirmed a complete grasp of this by the medical students at KKU, as well as the necessity of amending and revising each major grammatical error, as work for language improvement in progress.

As a result, grammar feedback positively provided by the instructors, alongside with praise and approval for more attempts during the grammar assessment, a structured revision plan is not a gatekeeper but a door opener for the EFL students, for the better English grammar learning aptitudes.
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Analyzing Speaking Errors Made by EFL Saudi University Students

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Abstract
This paper investigates speaking errors made by first-year Saudi university students. It aims to categorize these errors and identify their sources. The researcher follows Corder’s (1974) steps in error analysis. Three sources of errors are considered in this paper: interlanguage errors, intralanguage errors, and unique errors. Finally, the researcher seeks to explain why the students commit such errors. Speaking samples of 44 participants are collected. The researcher gave the participants feedback on the errors they made and asked them to comment on those errors. Data analysis shows two major types of errors: pronunciation errors and grammatical errors. The results of the data analysis show that most of the pronunciation errors (91%) are classified as interlanguage errors. These results indicate that the participants relied heavily on their mother tongue in their usage of the target language. The results also show that almost one-third of the grammatical errors made by the participants belong to interlanguage errors. However, more than half of the grammatical errors are attributed to intralingual effects. Unique errors have the lowest frequency of occurrence, with 10.6% of the grammatical errors made. The participants’ feedback about their errors reveals that lack of motivation and organization may be among the significant reasons for their errors. More evaluation and recommendations are given in the last two sections of the paper.

Keywords: Error analysis, grammatical errors, L1 interference, Saudi context, speaking errors

1. Introduction

In English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom setting, students are expected to make errors while learning English as a foreign language. Such errors are a valuable resource that can provide teachers with information about the students’ progress in their learning process and the obstacles they are facing. If both students and teachers are aware of these errors, the learning/teaching process is expected to be more focused and centered. This study aims to identify first-year Saudi students’ speaking errors, analyze them, and then provide some suggestions on how to utilize these errors to help both students and teachers achieve their teaching/learning goals. Students should be informed of their errors, and teachers can tailor activities and assignments to focus on those errors. By studying their students’ errors, teachers become aware of their students’ level. Students also can use their errors to improve their English language. The claim that the errors made by EFL/ESL (English as a second language) learners are systematic and expected (Corder 1967; Nemser 1971; Selinker 1972; Adjemian 1976) should help make the learning/teaching process more transparent and the goals more achievable.

2. Literature review

2.1 Error Analysis

As a branch of Applied Linguistics, Error Analysis (EA) is concerned with learner’s performance errors. It has shifted the researchers’ attention from focusing on similarities and differences between the First language (L1) and Second language (L2) to concentrating on the regularities and types of errors made by different learners of English. Corder (1967) stresses the importance of learners’ errors as a developmental stage in the learning process. Strevens (1969) argues that teachers should view their students’ errors as learning ‘strategies’ used by the learner, not as a problem. EA has evolved as a hypothesis that would explain what Contrastive Analysis (CA) could not explain. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was first started by Fries (1945) and adopted later by Lado (1957). It compares the similarities and differences between learners’ native language and the target language in an attempt to grasp the effect of the native language on the target language (Brown, 2007). CA studies similarities and differences between L1 and L2 to explain and predict which grammatical aspects in L2 would be easy to learn and which ones are expected to be complicated. Comparing two grammatical systems to justify the learner’s errors has been a major ‘defect’ in CA, as Richards and Sampson (1974) puts it. The fact that CA could not explain specific errors that are not related to L1 weakened the researchers’ reliance on it as a means to study learner’s errors. EA, on the other hand, compares many aspects of the learning process of EFL/ESL learners to the developmental stages children go through in their acquisition of their L1. In other words, errors made by L2 learners are as natural and expected as the ones made by children acquiring their L1 (Richards, 1971; Corder, 1974).

Richards (1971) classifies the errors made by the learners into three types:

1. Interlanguage errors (interference errors): These are the errors caused by the ‘interference’ from L1, i.e., errors that result from some ‘characteristics’ of the mother tongue ‘carried over’ to the learners’ target language.
2. Intralingual errors: “those which reflect the general characteristics of rule learning, such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply” (pp. 5-6).
3. Developmental errors: those errors that “illustrate the learner attempting to build up hypotheses about the English language from his limited experience of it in the classroom or text-book” (p. 6).

Dulay and Burt (1974) merge developmental and intralingual errors as one type of error and add another one that they term as ‘unique errors’. Such errors refer to errors that are neither interference errors nor developmental (intralingual) ones. In the present study, three types of errors will be considered: interlingual errors, intralingual errors (developmental), and unique errors.

2.2 Previous studies

The fact that most ESL/EFL error analysis studies have been conducted on writing samples can be attributed to two factors: first, collecting written ESL/EFL written samples is easier compared to collecting speaking samples. Second, it is less time consuming and relatively easier to analyze written samples. In the Saudi context, two studies have been conducted on speaking errors in the last few years, namely, Alahmadi and Kesseiri (2013) and Alahmadi (2014).

Alahmadi and Kesseiri (2013) study language transfer speaking errors among Saudi students. The authors conducted interviews with 30 students in Saudi Arabia and asked them general questions to elicit speaking samples from them. The subjects appear to be students who have studied English for six years with no reference to their age or which level they are at during the collection of the speaking samples. They report that the participants committed the following grammatical errors: an unmarked form of verbs, third-person pronouns, misused singular and plural, articles, sentences without a verb, and sentences with pronoun copying. The authors sporadically discuss the findings referring to some errors as direct results of the knowledge of L1 and labeling others as cases of generalization. They stress the importance of studying such errors for both teachers and students.

Alahmadi (2014) analyzes grammatical errors made by 30 Saudi students who study in the foundation year at the University of Tibah in Saudi Arabia. The author reports analyzing nine different types of errors made by the participants who were interviewed for an average of ten minutes. The nine categories are: an unmarked form of verbs, misuse of the verb tense, misuse of articles, misuse of singular and plural, misuse of prepositions, use of sentences without a verb, sentences with pronoun copy, third-person pronouns, and misuse of regular and irregular verbs. She refers to these errors as ‘interference errors’, ‘intralingual errors’, and ‘unique errors’. She classifies the following errors as interference errors: use of the singular form of the noun instead of the plural form, misuse of the definite article, deletion of the definite article, and deletion of prepositions. The ‘use of plural forms of nouns instead of singular ones’ and ‘third-person pronoun errors’ are classified as intralingual errors. Finally, she classifies examples of incorrectly adding a definite article that is not found in the Arabic equivalent sentences as unique errors. The addition of unnecessary prepositions (preposition redundancy) is also classified as a unique error in the study. In sum, she concludes that most of the errors made by the participants were cases of L1 interference.
3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study are 44 first-year male students majoring in English at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia. The participants studied English for at least nine years before joining the university. All the participants speak Arabic as their first language and have learned English as a foreign language. The average age of the participants is 18 years. All the participants were my students who studied ‘Listening and Speaking 1’ with me. In this course, instructors generally spend about one hour weekly on teaching speaking and two hours on teaching listening for about 14 weeks in the semester. In speaking sessions, specific topics are raised for discussion, and students practice talking about those topics. Students are encouraged to speak as many sentences as they can about each topic; short answers are not accepted. A minimum number of sentences is required for each topic. The topics covered in this course range from talking about self and family to talking about their daily routines and special occasions. Other topics taught include a physical description of a person or a place. Students are encouraged to write notes and use those notes as they practice talking about a specific topic. In later stages of practice, students are not allowed to use notes. Students practice speaking in class as one group where a student speaks in front of the class, and the teacher will comment on the student’s performance. Students are also asked to practice talking about the specified topic in pairs. During the speaking sessions, students can ask about the meanings of certain words or how they are pronounced. Instructors always make sure that they focus on the speaking errors the students make or the ones that the students are expected to make. Students are always asked to take note of those errors. From the beginning of the semester, students are encouraged to use speaking dictionaries to help improve their pronunciation. Major pronunciation errors are mentioned in class, and the students are asked to repeat the correct pronunciation.

3.2 Data Collection

The data for this paper were collected during the final exam of the course. In this course, the students take two speaking exams, a midterm and a final. The exams are administered in my office, where each student is tested individually. The fact that each student is tested individually gives the students more confidence since some of them are reluctant to speak in front of the whole class. Each student is allocated ten minutes to take his exam, and all sessions are recorded. To break the ice and lower the tension, the researcher welcomes and greets the students in Arabic and asks them to relax and do their best. The students know that they need to speak a minimum number of sentences for each topic. For example, they need at least six sentences when they talk about self and at least ten sentences when they talk about their daily routine.

Each student is given feedback on his performance. The following questions are asked after each student finishes his exam:
1. Why did you make those errors? (To most students)
2. Have you used speaking dictionaries? (To all students)

The first question is asked to the students who make a significant amount of errors. The students who do very well with minimum or no errors are excluded from this question. The second question is asked to all students. The purpose behind these questions is to see how motivated and committed
the students are. About 70% percent of the students passed the exam although most of them got low to good grades. Only 11% of students got A.

In the present study, the author follows Corder’s (1974) five steps of error analysis: a collection of a sample of the learner’s language, identification of the errors, description of the errors, explanation of the errors, and evaluation of the errors.

3.3 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

4. What are the errors committed in the spoken language of Saudi EFL college students?
5. What are the categories that these errors fall under: interlingual, intralingual, or unique errors?
6. Why are these errors committed?

4. Data Analysis

The researcher recorded the final speaking exam of 47 students. Three samples were excluded for lack of enough material where students said little to nothing on the exam. The remaining samples were analyzed: errors were identified, classified, and explained. Table 1 shows the steps used to analyze the data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>Speaking Final Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Identify errors</td>
<td>Different types of errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Classify errors</td>
<td>Is it related to pronunciation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is it related to verbs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Count errors</td>
<td>How many errors are there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Identify source</td>
<td>What is the cause behind these errors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on their nature, the errors are classified into two groups: pronunciation errors and grammatical errors.

4.1 Pronunciation errors

Many students make errors in pronouncing English words during the different stages of their learning process of English as a foreign language, and Arab students are no exception. English programs and teachers do not give pronunciation a priority in their curricula and classroom activities although students often view pronunciation as a priority in their learning activities (Willing, 1988; Brown, 1992; Fraser, 2000; Yates, 2001). Speaking without paying attention to the pronunciation of the words may result in conveying different meanings or misunderstanding.
The collected samples for this study indicate that pronunciation needs to be given more time while doing classroom activities and self-study activities.

Table 2 illustrates with examples the types of errors made by the participants. It also shows the frequencies of these errors and their percentages among the participants and the errors in total.

Table 2. *Errors and their frequencies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Errors</th>
<th>Number of students who made the errors</th>
<th>Percentage among students</th>
<th>Percentage among errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sound replacement errors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. $[p] \rightarrow [b]$</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- prayer -&gt; brayer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- play -&gt; blay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. $[v] \rightarrow [f]$</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- five -&gt; fife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- every -&gt; efery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. $[ə:] \rightarrow [eɪ] / [iː] / [i]$</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- first -&gt; [feɪrst] or [firəst]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- first b -&gt; [firəst]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- early -&gt; [ɪrli]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Syllable breaking errors</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- [firəst]; [workəs]; [workəd]; [nɪkəst]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mispronounced words</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- eyes -&gt; [iz]; [izi]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- beard -&gt; bird/bread</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- height -&gt; heat/hate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Errors</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 2 shows, the errors are made at the level of the sound by mispronouncing certain consonants or vowels. They are also made at the levels of the syllable and the word. The errors at the level of the sound can be safely referred to L1 interference since these sounds do not exist in Arabic and their pronunciation is difficult for the students. Students need to learn and practice pronouncing these sounds to have them correctly pronounced in words. It is clear that most of the students (75-82%) chose the closest Arabic counterparts for these sounds. The closest equivalent for $[p]$ is $[b]$, while the closest one for $[v]$ is $[f]$. For the sound $[ə:]$, there is no clear equivalent for it, so the options students chose were $[eɪ]$, $[i]$ and $[i]$. To work on correcting the pronunciation of these sounds, more effort from both teachers and students is needed.

The second type of pronunciation errors can also be safely attributed to L1 interference. Classical Arabic does not allow consonant clusters word or syllable initially. The following CV structures are permitted in Arabic: CV, CVV, CVC, CVCC, CVVC, and CVVCC (Abushihab, 2010; Chentir, Guerti, & Hirst, 2009). Accordingly, only one consonant is allowed at the beginning.
of the syllable, and a maximum of two are allowed in the coda position. To make it easier to pronounce, students tend to break the unfamiliar cluster by inserting a vowel between the consonants. For example, the word ‘first’ is a one-syllable word that has a cluster of three consonants in its coda, which is an unfamiliar structure for Arab students. To make the word easier to pronounce, they tend to break the cluster by inserting a vowel as shown in the Table 2.

The third type of errors is what we termed ‘mispronounced words’ because we could not identify a pattern, nor could I find a clear reason for making these pronunciation errors. Such errors show that the students are not putting enough effort into learning the correct pronunciation of such words. For example, the word ‘eyes’ is a relatively easy word to pronounce, and we have repeatedly practiced pronouncing it in the classroom. There is not a clear reason for why students make such an error other than lack of practice and lack of interest in learning the language. On the bright side, these are the least made errors in terms of the number of the students who made them (27%) and the least in the total number of the errors made (only 9%). Most of these errors can be easily overcome once a clear plan is devised and follow up procedures are taken. Table 3 summarizes the classification of the pronunciation errors made by the students and the causes of those errors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Errors</th>
<th>Cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Sound replacement errors</td>
<td>Interlingual errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Syllable breaking errors</td>
<td>Interlingual errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mispronounced words</td>
<td>Unique errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the next section, we will deal with the grammatical errors that constitute the majority of the errors made by the participants. As the next section shows, the number and frequencies of the grammatical errors made by the participants are much more than those of the pronunciation errors discussed earlier.

4.2 Grammatical errors

This section explores the grammatical errors made by the participants. For ease of discussion and presentation, the errors are grouped into three tables. The first table (Table 4) presents the grammatical errors that are related to ‘verbs’. These errors are classified into eight categories, namely: wrong verb, wrong form of verb, omission of 3rd person singular –s, omission of to-infinitive, addition of unnecessary to-infinitive, omission of ‘be’ as a helping verb, and omission of ‘be’ as a main verb.
Table 4. Verb errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of errors</th>
<th>Number of students who made the errors</th>
<th>Percentage of students</th>
<th>Percentage among errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Errors related to verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Wrong verb</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- has instead of is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(He has slim.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- is instead of has</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(He is white skin.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Wrong verb form</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He is teach Islamic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We are play football every day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My family is consist of 5 people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Omission of 3rd Person singular -s</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He work in the police.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He teach in school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Omission of to-infinitive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I go to mosque pray fajr.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Omission of ‘be’ as a helping verb</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Then I watching TV.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I playing football.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I reading Quran.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Omission of ‘be’ as a main verb</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He slim.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My father 48 years old.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first type of error, ‘using a wrong verb’, cannot be referred to as an interlingual error nor as an intralingual error. Two verbs are affected by this error: ‘is’ and ‘has’. The two verbs wrongly replace one another as the examples in Table 4 show. Such an error may be traced to the fact that the participant is unaware of the subtle differences in meaning and usage between ‘is’ and ‘has’. To him, both verbs are used to report the quality the subject has. In this case, the participants are referring to the quality of ‘being slim’ and the quality of ‘having white skin’. Notice that the frequency of this error is relatively low as 18% of the students committed this error, and it ranks low among other errors at 5.3% of the total errors made.

Using the ‘wrong form of the verb’ is an example of intralingual errors. According to Richards (1971), these cases can be examples of overgeneralization since the learner is creating a ‘deviant’ structure by reliance on his ‘experience’ of other structures in the target language. The ‘omission of to-infinitive’ is an example of unique errors because there are no signs of the effect of the target language on the learner to cause this error. In addition, a literal translation from Arabic will lead the participant to use ‘to’ before the verb ‘pray’ not to delete it. The ‘omission of the 3rd person –s’, on the contrary, is an intralingual error that has nothing to do with Arabic. The rule of adding a “3rd person singular –s” to the verb in the simple present when the subject is third-person singular can be difficult for learners, especially for beginners. Students tend to generalize the use of the verb without ‘–s’ as is the case when the subject is not third-person singular.
Another intralingual error is the ‘omission of “be”’ both as a helping verb and as a main verb. According to Richards (1971), these errors are common among learners with different mother tongues and should not be explained as resulting from L1 interference.

More grammatical errors are displayed in Table 5. These errors are related to the use of articles and prepositions.

Table 5. Articles and prepositions errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of errors</th>
<th>Number of students who made the errors</th>
<th>Percentage among students</th>
<th>Percentage among errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Errors Related to the articles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Omission of indefinite article</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I have big family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He has child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Addition of unnecessary indefinite article</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He is a single.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He has a straight brown hair.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Omission of definite article</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I go to bathroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I go to kitchen.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Addition of unnecessary definite article</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Then take the shower.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I go to the bed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I go to the grandfather.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Errors related to prepositions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Omission of prepositions</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He is 8th grade.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I wake up 5 o’clock.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Addition of unnecessary prepositions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Then I go back to home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I go to swimming.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Using wrong prepositions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My family consist for my father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My family consist from …</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since Arabic does not have an indefinite article, the ‘omission of the indefinite article’ as shown in Table 5 can be explained as a direct result of L1 interference. This error is made by 20% of the participants. However, the ‘addition of unnecessary indefinite article’ is recorded as the most frequent grammatical error among students (59%) and among the errors made (17%). This error can be explained as a result of the participants’ awareness of the importance of the indefinite article rule and the fact that their teachers might have repeatedly reminded them of not leaving out the
indefinite article. The fact that they have not mastered this rule yet could have resulted in the overgeneralization of the rule. This error can be categorized as an intralingual error because if it were an interference error, we would expect the omission of the indefinite article as mentioned earlier. With regard to the omission of the definite article, it cannot be categorized as an interference error either since the Arabic equivalents have a definite article. A direct transfer of the words in the sentence would require the student to use the definite article. There is also no logic in referring to this error as an intralingual error since the structure is not difficult for the participants and no analogy or generalization is evident. This is why we will classify this error as unique. The other type of errors regarding the definite article is ‘the addition of unnecessary definite article’. By examining the Arabic counterparts, it becomes evident to us that these errors are cases of interlingual errors since they all include an equivalent definite article in Arabic.

Both cases of the omission and addition of ‘prepositions’ can be explained as cases of L1 interference. For example, you do not need a preposition before ‘time’ in Arabic, unlike the case in English. Therefore, a student relying heavily on L1 knowledge is expected to make such errors. The same argument can be said about ‘the addition of unnecessary prepositions’. While English does not require a preposition with ‘go’ in the examples provided, Arabic does. It seems that we can argue that the omission and addition of prepositions errors made by our participants are interlingual errors; especially, we are dealing with errors made by beginner learners of English. The last type of errors in Table 5 is ‘wrong use of prepositions’. Koffi (2010) argues that the ‘polysemous’ nature of the English prepositions makes them so difficult to learn. Lam (2009) adds that prepositions are not easily understood in oral speech because many of them are ‘monosyllabic’ which adds to the difficulty of them being recognized. Richards (1971) states that “Analogy seems to be a major factor in the misuse of prepositions” (p.9). He argues that:

*He showed me the book leads to he explained me the book; he said to me gives he asked to me; we talked about it, therefore we discussed about it; ask him to do it produces make him to do it; go with him gives follow with him.*(p. 9)

The above examples presented by Richards (1971) show that the nature of the meaning and use of the prepositions makes it difficult for the students to master their usage easily. Indeed, analogy seems to be their best bid. Therefore, errors that result from the misuse of prepositions can be classified as intralingual errors.

So far, most of the errors appear to be related to factors other than L1 interference. This indicates that unlike pronunciation errors, grammatical errors can result from sources other than the mother tongue. Most of these errors seem to be resulting from some ‘developmental stage’ in which the learner relies on his knowledge of the target language more than on his knowledge of his mother tongue.

Finally, Table 6 shows the rest of the errors made by the participants. These errors include: omission of plural –s, omission of subjects, addition of unnecessary pronouns, using wrong pronouns, and errors related to word order.
Table 6. Errors related to nouns, pronouns, and word order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of errors</th>
<th>Number of students who made the errors</th>
<th>Percentage among students</th>
<th>Percentage among errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Errors related to nouns</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of plural -s</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I have two brother and 2 sister.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Errors related to subjects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of subjects</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- First, wake up at 5 o’clock.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- After pray almaghreb go with my friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Errors related to pronouns</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Addition of unnecessary pronouns</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My father he is 50 years old.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My mother she is 35 years old.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Wrong pronouns</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He works housewife.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I hair color black.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Errors related to word order</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Brother second name is Yazeed.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He has skin brown.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of errors</strong></td>
<td>152</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jain (1974) and Tan (1978) justify ‘the omission of plural morpheme –s’ as a simplification or overgeneralization strategy that is utilized by the learners. We cannot refer to the omission of the plural morpheme as an interference error since Arabic has its unique plural system that differs entirely from that of English. Such errors can be categorized as intralingual errors. On the contrary, the omission of the subject errors can be justified as cases of transfer from Arabic to English. Subjects can be deleted in Arabic, and they can be understood by the form of the verb. It seems that some students find it easier to follow that pattern and transfer it to English. More work needs to be done regarding this error since 25% of the participants made the error.

Errors related to ‘the addition of unnecessary pronouns’ can be attributed to the way the participants were practicing and preparing for their speaking exams. Students are encouraged to take notes to make it easier for them to remember the ideas they need to talk about. For example, a student may write a note ‘father’ and write next to it some notes about his father. When he starts speaking, he mentions the ‘note’ and then the sentence, which results in a sentence like, ‘My father he is a doctor’. This kind of error can be categorized as unique. However, using ‘the wrong form of the pronoun’ such as using ‘he’ to refer to the participant’s mother can be classified as an intralingual error. Arabic has a complicated system of pronouns that distinguishes case, gender, and number similar to the one in English. This kind of error may be justified as a case of overgeneralization or simplification. Finally, three students made errors related to ‘word order’. English noun phrases require the adjective to precede the noun, but the Arabic ones require the adjective to follow the noun. The errors made by the participants are straightforward cases of L1
transfer. For example, the participant said ‘skin brown’ instead of saying ‘brown skin’ placing the adjective ‘brown’ after the noun ‘skin’ as required in Arabic.

Table 7 summarizes the causes of all the grammatical errors that we have discussed in this paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interlingual Errors</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Intralingual Errors</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Unique Errors</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Omission of indefinite article</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1. Wrong verb form</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>1. Wrong verb</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Addition of unnecessary definite article</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2. Omission of 3rd Person singular -s</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>2. Omission of to-infinitive</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Omission of prepositions</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>3. Omission of ‘be’ as a helping</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>3. Omission of definite article</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Addition of unnecessary prepositions</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>4. Omission of ‘be’ as a main verb</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4. Addition of unnecessary pronouns</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Omission of subjects</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>5. Addition of unnecessary indefinite article</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Error related to word order</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6. Using wrong prepositions</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Omission of plural -s</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8. Using wrong of pronouns</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 7 shows, most of the errors are intralingual ones, which reflects the developmental stage the participants are still in. The effect of Arabic on the learners is evident as they continue to make errors based on their knowledge of Arabic. The percentage of the interlingual errors is close to the average found by Ellis (1985), which is around 33%. The unique errors, 10.6%, comprise the least percentage of errors.

4.3 Participants’ evaluation of their errors

To get feedback from the students, the researcher asked the following questions after giving each student feedback on his performance:

1. Why did you make those errors? (To most students)
2. Have you used speaking dictionaries? (To all students)

Out of the 44 participants, eight students expressed their lack of interest in studying English and that they were planning to transfer to another department. However, it is worth mentioning that these students knew that in order to transfer, they needed to pass the course and get a good score to raise their chance of transferring to another department. It was evident that those students lacked the motivation to improve their English since they are already planning to transfer to other departments. Eleven of the participants stated that they studied hard for the exam, and they expected to do better. The researcher explained to them that preparing for the speaking exam should be an ongoing task. The point here is that teachers make it clear to the students that speaking
is a skill that they need to practice daily and that studying a week or two before the exam is not a wise thing to do. The last group of the participants, 13 students, said that they did not have time to prepare for the exam. This reflects misjudgment and lack of organizational skills among those students.

The answers to the second question show a lack of motivation and carelessness among students. Only eight students said that they used speaking dictionaries. Again, the importance of using electronic devices to help the students in learning English is stressed repeatedly during the semester. It is also obvious that the time allocated for speaking practice is not enough. More time is needed for the students to practice speaking. Moreover, at least in the first semester of the students’ experience in the university, guided speaking practice and close follow up on the students’ progress is needed.

5. Conclusions

This study has reviewed the types and classifications of speaking errors made by Saudi university freshmen. The study aimed to investigate the reasons behind these errors. Two types of errors are found: pronunciation errors and grammatical errors. Careful analysis of the pronunciation errors shows that the effect of L1 on the target language is tremendous. Most of the errors made are classified as interlingual errors. More attention to the teaching/learning of pronunciation is required. The analysis of the grammatical errors shows that about one-third of the errors can be referred to as L1 interference, and more than half of those errors can be classified as intralingual errors. Unique errors form about 10.6% of the errors.

The brief feedback from the participants shows that lack of motivation and lack of proper management of time affected the students’ performance. Students need to be guided at the beginning of the semester by providing counseling on how to manage their time. Teachers need to track their students’ achievement and provide extra assistance when needed. Students need to be motivated and convinced that with hard work and guided assistance from their teachers, they will become successful language learners.

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References:
Analyzing Speaking Errors Made by EFL Saudi University Students

Al-Tamari


Exploring EFL Graduate Students’ Attitudes toward, and Use of, Mobile Phones in Language Learning

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Abstract
Mobile phones offer unique opportunities for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) to boost their language skills. Many studies have investigated the use of mobile applications in language learning, but little research has dealt with EFL graduate students. This study is an attempt to explore graduate EFL students’ attitudes toward the use of mobile phones in language learning and to shed light on the problems students face when using their mobile phones for language learning. For data collection, a 25-item questionnaire was developed and circulated online to 70 graduate EFL students at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. The results showed that students’ attitudes were positive, and there was a significant difference in attitudes in favour of female students. Also, the results revealed that most of the informants frequently use mobile phones, and also, there was a significant difference in favour of females. Additionally, the results showed that some students use smartphones effectively without facing any problems, whereas the majority of students face various challenges such as technical difficulties, the small size of the screen, distraction, becoming less patient, and getting tired. The findings indicated that further research is needed to scrutinize all these problems, with particular emphasis on health problems and distraction.

Keywords: attitudes, EFL, Saudi graduate students, mobile devices, mobile learning

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Introduction

The theoretical framework for this study lies within the field of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which is a subset of mobile-learning (m-learning). Crompton (2013) defines M-learning as “learning across multiple contexts, through social and content interactions, using personal electronic devices” (as cited in Niño, 2015, 75). Lan and Sie (2010) define mobile learning as “a new type of learning model which allows learners to receive learning materials without limitation of time and place through a wireless telecommunication network and the Internet.” (as cited in Hilao and Wichadee, 2017, p. 68). Research on using mobile phones in language learning (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007; Yang, 2012; Hsu, 2012; Kee & Samsudin, 2014; Ghrieb, 2015; Gomes et al., 2016; Nikolopoulou and Gialamas, 2017 & Fernandez, 2018) show that students have positive attitudes towards the use of mobile phones in language learning. Moreover, mobile phones can be used in various ways. They can be utilized for content delivery. For example, through text messages, it is possible to provide vocabulary items, quizzes, and surveys (Hayati, Jalilifar & Mashhadi, 2013 & Siddique, Nair, 2015). In addition to content delivery, mobile devices can promote learner-learner interaction and bridge the gap between formal and informal learning. Reinders (2010) suggest numerous ideas for the use of mobile phones in language learning such as using the camera to take pictures; recording conversations and language from various sources; using the text messaging feature to reinforce vocabulary learning, writing skills, and tandem learning; using mobile phones for social networking and blogging; distributing listening and reading materials; playing games; checking students’ comprehension; as well as researching and data collection. (Reinders, 2010).

When using mobiles in language learning, the features and applications of mobile phones are the crucial factors that make interaction and collaboration possible in different ways and various contexts. Ogata & Yano (2005) state that mobile learning has four main features: accessibility, immediacy, interactivity, and situating of instructional activities (Ogata & Yano, 2005). According to Marzouki (2013) and Sung (2015), m-learning has the following five principal characteristics:

1. Portability: It is possible to use a mobile phone anywhere.
2. Accessibility: Information can be accessed anywhere and anytime.
3. Personalization: Every person can adapt and use mobile phones according to his/her needs.
4. Social connectivity: This increases communication and collaboration between several learners.
5. The use of mobile phones increases learning motivation, both in formal and informal contexts. (Marzouki, 2013 & Sung, 2015).

In addition to the features mentioned above, MALL has many advantages, such as the ability to use language-learning resources anytime and anywhere, and the ability to communicate with classmates and instructors. Also, MALL helps students become active participants in the process of language learning, and makes language learning a student-centered process, where learners build their knowledge through interaction with other people via mobile devices. Students cited in various studies (Kukulska-Hulme, 2005; Kukulska-Hulme and Pettit, 2009 & Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008) pointed out that flexibility, portability, and access to learning resources are the major advantages of mobile learning. Bachore states that “the advantages of mobile-based language
learning are derived from the two main characteristics of mobile devices: portability and connectivity” (2015, p. 51).

**Advantages and Disadvantages of MALL**

**Advantages**

**Multimedia Ability**

Mobile phones have multimedia capabilities that can be used to improve language learning. To enhance their pronunciation and speaking skills, for instance, learners can easily record their voices and playback the recordings. Also, they can watch videos, create, and listen to podcasts.

**Internet Access**

Through the internet, students access YouTube, online dictionaries, thesauruses, digital libraries, and a vast number of websites that help them improve their language learning.

**Social Networking**

By using Facebook and Twitter, students can share information, thoughts, and ideas on various subjects. The use of such websites might be very advantageous for shy students who rarely participate in classroom activities. Subsequently, their performance may improve considerably in a social networking environment. Also, the use of multimedia and social networks can create real situations for learning, and as a result, language learning becomes more active. “It is generally believed that language learning can be most effective when language practice occurs in real and meaningful conversations instead of isolated linguistic settings.” (Gomes, et al., 2016, p. 190).

**Immediate Feedback**

Through the use of mobile phones, students can receive immediate feedback about their performance. Also, students can complete questionnaires, do exercises, quizzes, and tests. Some systems can immediately calculate scores and send the results to students and their instructors.

**Increasing Students’ Motivation**

Students use mobile phones as a means of communication. If this communication is utilized for educational purposes, it can increase students’ motivation (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009). Additionally, El Hariry (2015) listed the following advantages of mobile phones:

1. Personalizing learners’ environment.
2. Providing learning experience outside the classroom.
3. Making learning enjoyable by recording.
4. Helping in boosting the morale of the learners.
5. Providing means of accessing materials and knowledge besides the PC.

Even though mobile phones have many merits, they also have their disadvantages.

**Disadvantages of MALL**

**Technical Problems**

When students use mobile phones for language learning, they face many technical problems such as network failures, a slow internet connection, and difficulties in downloading certain files.
The results of the current study revealed that 34.28% of the students frequently face such technical problems.

**Distraction**
While students use mobile phones for language learning, they find themselves watching videos, playing online games, and using social networks for purposes unrelated to language learning. Many studies (Li, Benzimra, & Kay, 2017; Jawarneh, 2017 & Fernandez, 2018) report that distraction is one of the severe problems students face when using mobile phones for language learning. The findings of the current study also show that 14.28% of the students are easily distracted when using their mobile phones for language learning.

**Cheating**
Cheating is another problem which might be caused by using mobile phones. Students can look at dictionaries, or search for translations and answers during a quiz or a test.

**Social Isolation (Disconnecting)**

The overuse of digital devices may contribute to social isolation, where students feel that they are disconnected from the community around them. According to Jawarneh (2017), “the excessive usage of such devices not only affects the social life of an individual but also reveals a negative impact on the health of the user” (p. 44).

Furthermore, El Hariry (2015) listed the following limitations of mobile phones:
1. Small screen size
2. Limited memory size
3. Small keyboards
4. Limited battery life
5. High cost
6. Possibility for mobile devices to be stolen or corrupted
7. Difficulty to use mobile phones in a noisy setting
8. Communication failure due to poor network connectivity

**Statement of the Problem**
With the unprecedented and widespread use of smartphones, it has become necessary to investigate how students use their mobile phones to promote their language studies. This study aims at exploring the attitudes of graduate EFL students at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia towards the use of mobile phones for language study, and at describing how these students use their mobile devices for language learning. Also, this study explores the differences in attitudes to, and usage of, mobile phones between male and female students, and the problems and difficulties students face when using their mobile phones in language learning.

**Study Questions**
This study aims to answer the following questions:
1. What are students’ attitudes toward the use of mobile phones in language learning?
2. Is there a significant difference between the attitudes of male and female students toward the use of mobile phones in language learning?
3. How do graduate EFL students use mobile phones for language learning?
4. What are the differences between male and female students in the use of mobile phones for language learning?
5. What are the problems and difficulties students face when using their mobile phones for language learning?

**Review of Related Literature**

Al-Fahad (2009) examines students' attitudes and perceptions towards the effectiveness of mobile learning. The sample involves 186 female undergraduate students at King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. The results reveal that mobile technology could enhance teaching and learning. Mobile phones can be used anywhere, anytime, and mobile learning systems can improve communication and enrich students' learning experiences.

Khrisat & Mahmoud (2013) study the impact of using smartphones on the achievement of foundation-year students at King Abdul-Aziz University (KAU) in General English. The sample consists of 40 students who are divided into two equal groups: the experimental group and the control group. The findings show that the impact of using mobile phones on achievement is not statistically significant. On the other hand, the results show that students have positive attitudes toward using mobile phones in the EFL classroom.

Kee and Samsudin (2014) conduct a study to understand how often teenagers use mobile devices, the mobile device usage pattern, and teenagers’ attitudes toward using mobile devices in learning. Six teenagers participate in this study (3 males and 3 females), and data is collected through semi-structured interviews. The results show that participants have positive attitudes towards the use of mobile phones in learning. Moreover, the findings reveal that teenagers use mobile phones for a variety of purposes such as social networking, gaming, searching for information, and ubiquitous learning. Also, it has been found that female participants use their mobile devices more than males in ubiquitous learning.

Brick and Cervi-Wilson (2015) study how language learners, taking an Italian course at Coventry University, use their digital devices to reinforce their language learning. Learners are observed in the classroom, and they also complete a questionnaire. The findings show that students frequently use mobile phones in language learning. Learners also express a desire for blending mobile language learning with their current academic settings.

Dashti and Aldashti (2015) investigate EFL college students’ attitudes toward mobile learning. The sample consists of 300 female EFL undergraduate students. A questionnaire is used for data collection, and the results show that the majority (80.3%) of the students have positive attitudes towards the use of mobile devices in e-learning and teaching.

Demouy, et al. (2015) study how distance learners use mobile devices for language learning. This study examines the learners’ motivation for using mobile devices and the emerging practices of mobile language learners. An online survey and semi-structured interviews on Skype are used to collect data. The sample consists of 269 adult students (175 females and 54 males). The findings show that distance learners are aware of how to use their mobile devices, and of the importance of
this in learning the target language. In most cases, students use their mobile phones for listening to the target language. Moreover, students use mobile phones to access their courses and to download audio-visual resources.

Ghrieb (2015) investigates the attitudes of students and teachers towards the effectiveness of mobile-assisted language learning. The findings reveal that both students and teachers have a positive attitude towards mobile-assisted language learning. Listening, speaking, reading, and vocabulary are the language skills most suited to teaching through mobile phones. Also, students express their willingness and motivation to use their mobile devices for language learning.

Niño (2015) studies language learners’ perceptions of, and experiences in, the use of mobile applications for independent language learning in higher education. The sample consists of 286 language students at the University of Manchester. This study explores how students use MALL, students’ perspectives regarding the usefulness of MALL, integrating MALL in language learning, and future implications. The results show that students use mobile phones for different purposes, the most frequent of which are: looking up words, phrases, idiomatic expressions; translating words/phrases into their mother tongue and vice versa; listening to how words are pronounced; looking for definitions in the target language; and revising and practicing vocabulary. Additionally, participants indicate that mobile phones are useful in learning writing, speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and assessment.

Kétyi (2015) explores the impact of integrating mobile devices in language teaching practice on students’ language learning efficiency. This study is conducted at the Budapest Business School. The mobile language learning application that is chosen for the project is Busuu (https://www.busuu.com/enc/). The sample consists of 49 students who are studying four different foreign languages (German, English, Spanish, and Italian). The findings show that there is a significant difference in favor of the experimental group in the language test results. Besides, the results show that female students perform significantly better than male students.

Calabrich (2016) investigates English language learners’ perceptions of mobile-assisted language learning. The results reveal that students’ perceptions are generally positive. Most of the students believe that they get the utmost benefit in their language learning when the information is provided on paper. Distraction is one of the serious problems students face when using mobile devices in the language classroom. The results also reveal that individual differences and learning styles should be taken into consideration when introducing mobile technology to language learning and teaching settings.

Nalliveettil & Alenazi (2016) conduct a study at Aljouf University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to explore the impact of mobile phones on English language learning. The sample consists of fifty-two male undergraduate EFL students and five teachers. The findings reveal that English teachers and most of the students think that mobile phones can accelerate students’ English language learning. Also, teachers are of the opinion that mobile phones can improve students’ pronunciation and communication skills and help them become autonomous learners. The results also suggest that using a mobile phone for an unlimited number of hours a day may cause health problems and increase the potential for stress.
Hilao and Wichadee (2017) compare how male and female students use mobile phones to learn English. The sample consists of 108 students (65 females and 57 males) enrolled in a fundamental English course at a private university in Thailand where the course is provided for first-year students. The findings show that male and female students did not differ in their use of mobile phones, or attitudes toward their use, for language learning. Also, the major difficulties students faced were the small screen, keyboard, and limited memory of the mobile phone.

Botero et al. (2018) study the actual use and the acceptance of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) by higher-education students. The results show that performance expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions influence students’ attitudes towards using MALL. Also, the study concludes that students in higher education in developing countries such as Colombia have a positive attitude towards MALL.

Walsh (2019) studies the role of smartphones in communication language teaching (CLT). The findings show that it is possible to use phone devices for communicative purposes in the EFL classroom, and smartphones provide opportunities to implement the communicative approach more successfully. Additionally, most of the students think that MALL classes are enjoyable, exciting, and motivating.

**Limitations of the Study**

Like any piece of research, this study has some limitations. First, this study explores EFL graduate students' attitudes and use of smartphones in an online language learning environment; it does not explore how students use their smartphones for non-academic purposes. Second, students rarely use their smartphones in traditional classes. Subsequently, this area was not included in the current study. Third, this study only pinpointed some of the serious problems students face when using smartphones for learning. It does not delve deep into the causes and treatment of these problems; further studies are needed in this area.

**Rational of the Study**

The Faculty of Language and Translation, King Khalid University incorporated e-learning in the teaching-learning process in 2007 (Al Zumor et al., 2013, 95). Graduate students take more than 50% of their classes online. Consequently, they have the chance to use their smartphones to interact with their tutors and classmates in many different ways such as sending and receiving emails, participating in online discussions, attending synchronous online sessions, raising and responding to questions, giving presentations, sharing academic papers. The rationale for conducting this study can be attributed to several reasons. First, as a teacher of graduate students, I noticed that they frequently use their mobile phones when taking online courses. Therefore, it becomes necessary to understand how they use their smartphones in language learning and their perceptions about this device. Second, technology is not a panacea that will solve all our pedagogical problems. Consequently, it is imperative to figure out problems and difficulties students face when using smartphones in an online learning environment.
Methodology
The author of this study employed the descriptive analytical method. This research design was used to collect both quantitative data from the Likert scale items as well as qualitative data from the open-ended question included in the questionnaire.

Instrument
Based on many studies in this area, a questionnaire was developed to explore three main aspects: (1) EFL graduate students’ attitudes towards the use of smartphones for language learning; (2) how students use smartphones for language study; (3) difficulties and problems students face when utilizing smartphones in language learning. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first part involved items related to specific variables such as sex, academic level, and field of study. The second part included ten 5-point Likert scale items aiming to investigate students’ attitudes towards the use of smartphones for language learning. The third part involved twelve 5-point Likert scale statements related to how students use smartphones for language study, and the last part was an open-ended question which aimed at pinpointing difficulties and problems students face when utilizing smartphones in language learning.

Questionnaire Validity
The questionnaire was sent out to four professors in applied linguistics to evaluate its validity. In the light of the feedback given by the reviewers, some items were reworded, others were modified or deleted, and an open-ended question was included to explore problems and difficulties students face when using mobile phones.

Questionnaire Reliability
The questionnaire was given to 30 graduate students to calculate their reliability. Cronbach’s Alpha was computed by the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), and as shown in table (1) below, Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.892. This high value indicates that the questionnaire is reliable for data collection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Items</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Valid cases</th>
<th>Excluded items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants
As shown in table (2) below, the number of students enrolled in graduate programs at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University in the second semester of 2017/2018 was 101 (23 males and 78 females). Seventy students (14 males and 56 females) agreed to participate in this study and completed the survey. The total percentage of participants was 69.30%; the percentage of male students was 60.86%, whereas the percentage of female students was 71.79%.
Table 2. Description of the Study Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Year and Level</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Male Students</th>
<th>Female Students</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MA in Translation</td>
<td>First year (level 2)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second year (level 4)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA in Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>First-year (level 2)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second year (level 4)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.86%</td>
<td>71.79%</td>
<td></td>
<td>69.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

The questionnaire was circulated via email to all MA students in the Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University. Seventy three students agreed to take part in this study, but only 70 of them (14 males and 56 females) were able to complete the questionnaire successfully. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis.

Results

Concerning the attitudes of EFL graduate students towards the use of mobile phones for language learning, table (3) below shows that the average mean score for students’ responses is 3.9314. This result indicates that graduate EFL students, in general, have a very positive attitude toward the use of mobile phones in language learning.

Table 3. General Description of Students’ Attitudes Toward the Use of Mobile Phones in Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning on the mobile phone creates a cheerful learning environment.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.9314</td>
<td>.68303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the mean score was calculated for all items that gauge students’ attitudes. Table (4) below shows that the calculated mean ranged from 3.04 to 4.05; this means that the level of agreement is high for all items on the questionnaire and the most preferred items for students were: The mobile phone makes learning language easier (4.2571), the use of mobile phones in language learning helps students become active learners (4.1143), learning on the mobile phone develops students’ language performance (4.0143), and learning on the mobile phone encourages students to learn English (4.00).

Table 4. Detailed Description of Students’ Attitudes Toward the Use of Mobile Phones in Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning on the mobile phone creates a cheerful learning environment.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.9000</td>
<td>.93483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning on the mobile phone gives me more control over my learning.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.6143</td>
<td>1.08070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning on the mobile phone enables me to accomplish learning tasks more quickly.

Learning on the mobile phone helps me develop my language performance.

Learning on the mobile phone makes learning language easier.

I think learning on the mobile phone is useful for my language studies.

Learning on the mobile phone encourages me to learn English.

The use of mobile phones in language learning improves my thinking skills.

The use of mobile phones in language learning helps me become an active learner.

The use of mobile phones in language learning helps me become an autonomous learner.

Concerning the difference in attitudes towards the use of mobile phones for language learning between male and female students, table (5) below shows that there is a significant difference in favor of female students (p=0.001; p < 0.005)

Table 5. Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward the Use of Mobile Phones for Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.3857</td>
<td>.61626</td>
<td>.16470</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4.0679</td>
<td>.63306</td>
<td>.08460</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the use by graduate EFL students of mobile phones for language learning, table (6) below shows that the use of mobile phones is very high for almost all items on the questionnaire. Furthermore, table (7) below shows that the mean score for students’ use of mobile phones was 4.098. This result means that the frequency of use of mobile phones for language learning was high among EFL graduate students.

Table 6. Detailed Description of Students’ Use of Mobile Phones for Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I search and download information from websites using my mobile phone.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.0571</td>
<td>1.03400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use LMS (Blackboard) on my mobile phone for my studies.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.2429</td>
<td>1.24453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use my mobile phone to watch authentic videos and TV to improve my listening and speaking skills.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.0857</td>
<td>1.17637</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7. General Description of Students’ Use of Mobile Phones for Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use my mobile phone to record language from media outlets.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.098</td>
<td>1.0629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use my mobile phone to learn English independently.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.1429</td>
<td>1.10710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use my mobile phone to share information resources.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.2857</td>
<td>.98013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I send SMS to my teachers and classmates to deal with my study (e.g. sending and asking about assignments)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.3143</td>
<td>1.01500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check my e-mail using my mobile phone.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.5143</td>
<td>.81192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use my mobile phone to take photos and record information for my study.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.4000</td>
<td>1.02717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I access online dictionaries using my mobile phone to look up new words.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.4571</td>
<td>.97335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the differences between male and female students in the use of mobile phones for language learning, table 8 shows that there is a significant difference in favor of female students; p=0.002; p < 0.005.

Table 8. Gender Differences in the Use of Mobile Phones for Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.2738</td>
<td>.90902</td>
<td>.24295</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4.2396</td>
<td>.60283</td>
<td>.08056</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for problems or difficulties students face when using mobile phones for language learning, the results revealed that 17.14% of the students face no obstacles. One of the students wrote: “Actually, I haven’t really faced any problems worth mentioning; it just makes learning and contacting my classmates and instructors easier and saves time. In other words, I completely rely on my phone for everything that is related to learning, except attending online classes, for which I use my laptop”. Additionally, 5.71% of the students stated that they did not rely on mobile phones for learning. One of them said: “I primarily use a phone that only has calling and texting functions - not a ‘smartphone’ to connect to the internet. Most of my internet activity is on my desktop and laptop”.

Also, 34.28% of the students reported that they frequently face technical problems such as network problems, a slow internet connection, and difficulties in downloading certain files, and 18.57% of the students think that the small size of the screen is a serious problem. One student wrote: “A small screen causes me to have eye strain, which is the only drawback that limits my use of the mobile phone for learning.”
Moreover, 14.28% of the students are easily distracted when using their mobile phones for language learning. A student said: “I strongly believe that the main problem associated with the use of mobile phones for learning is the easy distraction caused by it. When I use it while studying to look up words or take pictures of some pages, I am always distracted and tend to go to other social applications; consequently, I waste time that should be devoted to study.”

Finally, 10% of the students reported a variety of other problems such as the accuracy and authenticity of the information, health problems, becoming less patient, and getting tired. One student wrote: “I feel tired after spending many hours on my phone; that does not happen with books.”

Discussion
Like many other studies (Khrisat & Mahmoud, 2013; Kee & Samsudin, 2014; Dashti & Aldashti, 2015; Brick & Cervi-Wilson, 2015; Nalliveettil; Alenazi, 2016; Botero et al., 2018 & Walsh, 2019), the current study reveals that EFL graduate students have a positive attitude toward the use of mobile phones in language learning. This result can be attributed to the vast number of advantages of using mobile phones in language learning. Unlike Hilao and Wichadee’s study (2017), this study shows that there is a significant difference in attitudes towards the use of mobile phones for language learning between male and female students in favor of female students. The reason behind this result might be attributed to the fact that female students, In King Khalid University, take more online courses than male students. Consequently, this may have a more positive effect on their attitudes.

Also, similar to other studies (Al-Fahad, 2009; Kee & Samsudin, 2014; Demouy et al., 2015; Niño, 2015), the present study shows that EFL graduate students are high-frequency users of mobile phones for language learning. Unlike Hilao and Wichadee’s study (2017), which showed that male and female students did not differ in their use of, or attitudes toward the use of, mobile phones for language learning, the current study shows that there is a significant difference in the use of mobile phones for language learning between male and female students in favor of female students. This result is in line with Kétyi’s study (2015), which showed that female students performed significantly better than their male counterparts.

Like other studies (Nalliveettil & Alenazi, 2016 ; Hilao & Wichadee, 2017), the findings of the current study show that the majority of students face many problems when using smartphones for language learning, such as technical problems, the small size of the screen, distraction, accuracy, and authenticity of information, health problems, becoming less patient and getting tired. These results lead us to stress the fact that, although mobile phones have many advantages when used in language learning, they also have their disadvantages. The way smartphones are being used is a crucial factor.

Conclusion and Suggestions
The current study reveals that graduate EFL student has a positive attitude toward the use of mobile phones in language learning. Also, this study shows that there is a significant difference in attitudes towards the use of mobile phones for language learning between male and female students in favor of female students. Moreover, the present study shows that graduate EFL students are high-frequency users of mobile phones for the purpose of language learning and that there is a
significant difference in the use of mobile phones for language learning between male and female students in favor of female students.

Furthermore, the findings of the current study show that students face many problems when using smartphones for the purpose of language learning, such as technical problems, the small size of the screen, distraction, the accuracy and authenticity of information, health problems, becoming less patient, and getting tired. As mobile technology is developing, it is possible to find practical solutions for these problems. Since these problems might have a very negative effect on learners, further research is needed to examine these problems with special emphasis on individual differences, learning styles, distraction, isolation, and health problems. To conclude, the use of mobile phones in language study involves a number of factors, the most important of which is the motivation and the will of the learner to use mobile devices as a means to improve his/her language skills.

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Using Technology towards Promoting Online Instructional Scaffolding: Literature Review

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Abstract:
Technology offers opportunities for teachers to interact with students in a very authentic and compelling way. This review aims at answering the review question: Can technology promote online instructional scaffolding in teaching and learning? To answer this question, the researchers review different studies that investigate the implementation of applications and software in English language teaching and learning. The study highlights methods of using technology to overcome problems of time limitations and other barriers and create more meaningful teaching and learning. Technology makes learning more student-centered through instructional scaffolding, which promotes teaching and learning and enhances student’s interaction skills. Moreover, using technology helps to teach as it has an emotional influence that encourages students to develop their personality and learning skills.

Keywords: CALL, CMC, learning, instructional, promoting, scaffolding, skills, technology

Introduction

Language teachers today are faced with so many fascinating options for using technology to enhance language learning that could be overwhelming. Many compelling opportunities for teachers are linked with technology trends, including social media, collaborative and instructional software, and virtual learning platforms. These technologies are familiar to many people, and the use of them in personal lives has become an expected societal norm. However, using these technologies for language teaching is often overlooked. Many language teachers are unfamiliar with the research and practice produced by professionals in the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) (Kessler, 2018).

There is a considerable gap between all the tools teachers have used in the past, and what they are using now to teach their students. In spite of this development, students attention and motivation to learning are not satisfying compared to old times. Hence, educators try to get their students attention to learning using all available methods that can help convey their message.

Five benefits of educational technology in learning English are indicated in Computer-Aided E-learning (CAE) (Dexway, n.d). It is the best complementary tool for teachers in the classroom. Technology is motivating and stimulating for students. It is easy to manage and monitor students progress via technology. Moreover, educational technology creates as well a unique experience as much for the teacher as the students. It also promotes interactivity and collaboration within learning and teaching.

On the other hand, the technology explosion made students frustrated, and they are busyminded with applications used for social media. Teachers could catch their students attention by using these beloved applications to students and make extreme advantages of them.

Significance of the Review

This review investigates the extent to which teachers can leverage technology-mediated social interactions to promote online scaffolded teaching. Moreover, it shows how they can engage students in learning experiences in ways that will encourage them to practice language extensively using collaborative Blackboard virtual classrooms, WhatsApp, as well as Zoom App, and software. This review highlights the impact of these Apps and software on promoting scaffolded distance learning as well as students engagement and motivation.

Review Question:
This review paper attempts to answer the following question: Can technology promote online instructional scaffolding?

Review of Literature
The researchers review different studies to find the impact of using certain technologies (i.e., virtual classrooms of collaborative Blackboard, WhatsApp, Zoom App, and software) towards promoting online instructional scaffolding.
The studies are reviewed about using collaborative Blackboard virtual classrooms, WhatsApp and Zoom App and software used for blended learning (BL) as examples of educational technology methods that could help in promoting online instructional scaffolding.

**Studies Related to Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)**

Ahmadi (2018) reviews many studies on using technologies in improving language learning skills and states specific recommendations for the better use of these technologies, which assist learners in enhancing their learning skills. The results of the literature review he explored indicate the effectiveness of using new technologies in improving learners’ language learning skills.

Tarhini et al. (2016) propose a theoretical framework that might help understand the various factors that are expected to influence the adoption and acceptance of e-learning systems in the context of developing and developed countries in the context of higher educational institutions.

Fageeh and Mekheimer (2013) indicate that the students experiences of using computers, the internet, and Blackboard vary. The longer the students experience, the more positive their attitudes were toward the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) to develop academic literacy. Students who experienced Blackboard communication had a more positive attitude toward the factors of productivity, collaboration, and participation. Results show that Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), mainly in the form of online discussion and online peer review activity, facilitated students interactions and scaffolded teaching within their online community.

CMC refers to those communications that occur via computer-mediated formats (e.g., instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms, e-mail, online forums, and social networks). It also applies to other forms of text-based interaction, such as text messaging. Numerous studies have explored the potential of instructional applications of popular CMC tools. These tools are typically identified as either synchronous or asynchronous. Communication using synchronous tools tends to resemble face-to-face spoken communication and includes technology such as texting and chats. In contrast, asynchronous communication typically involves a period of time between turn-taking and requires technology such as e-mail, online discussions, and blogging (Kessler et al., 2012).

**Studies Related to Instructional Scaffolding**

Instructional scaffolding is the support given during the learning process, which is tailored to the needs of the student with the intention to help the student achieve his/her learning goals. This learning process is designed to promote a deeper level of learning. The support and guidance provided to learners facilitate the internalization of the knowledge needed to complete the task. This support is weaned gradually until the learner is independent. The term scaffolding first appeared in the literature when Wood, Bruner, and Ross described how tutors interact with learners to help them solve a problem (Wood et al., 1976). Then, it was proposed by a Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, in 1978, who emphasized that high human level of mental activities exist in social interaction.

An article about instructional scaffolding presented by Northern Illinois University (n.d.) answers the question: Why using instructional scaffolding? One of the main benefits of scaffolded instruction is that it provides a supportive learning environment. In a scaffolded learning
environment, students are free to ask questions, provide feedback, and support their peers in learning new material. Scaffolded instruction is a unique teaching style that offers the incentive for students to take a more active role in their learning. Students share the responsibility of teaching and learning through scaffolds that require them to move beyond their current skill and knowledge levels. Through this interaction, students can take ownership of the learning event.

Larkin (2002) lists eight essential elements of scaffolded instruction that teachers can use as general guidelines contained in different sequences. The first is *pre-engagement with the student and the curriculum* in terms of associating appropriate tasks with curriculum goals and the students needs. Scaffolded instruction also helps *establish a shared goal* as teachers work with each student to plan instructional purposes to make students more motivated and interested in the learning process. It also *actively diagnoses student needs and understandings.* The teacher must be aware of the students background knowledge. Scaffolded instruction *provides tailored assistance,* which includes cueing, prompting, questioning, modeling, telling, or discussing different topics or ideas. The teacher uses such techniques of learning to meet the students needs. Scaffolded instruction *maintains the pursuit of the goal.* The teacher can ask questions and request clarification as well as offer praise and encouragement to help students remain focused on their goals. In this way, this method allows teachers to give *feedback* to help students learn to monitor their progress and note behaviors that contribute to each student’s success. It *controls frustration and risk.* Teachers encourage students to try alternatives to create an environment in which the students feel free to take risks while learning. Scaffolded instruction also assists internalization, independence, and generalization to other contexts, that means the teacher provides the opportunity to practice the task in a variety of settings to help the students to be less dependent on the teacher’s extrinsic signals to begin or complete a task.

There are three essential features of scaffolding that facilitate learning (Meyer & Turner, 2002). The first feature has to do with the interaction between the learner and the teacher. This interaction should be collaborative for it to be effective. The second feature is that learning should take place in the learner’s zone of proximal development. To do that, the teacher needs to be aware of the learner’s current level of knowledge and then work to a certain extent beyond that level. The third feature of scaffolding is that the scaffold, the support, and guidance provided by the teacher, is gradually removed as the learner becomes more proficient and independent.

**Studies Related to Blended Learning (BL)**

Al Bataineh, Banikalef, and Albashtawi (2019) allude to the positive impact (BL) has on the learners’ English grammar performance, satisfaction, and motivation. They conclude that (BL) is used as an effective method of teaching English grammar in EFL settings.

Cohen (2018) asserts that technology is a tool; it is not the solution. It is not an either/or proposition, for example, I only use technology in my class, or I don’t use technology in my class. It is used when needed either in a flipped classroom setting or a blended classroom setting.
Hamad (2017) confirms that although students prefer regular classrooms, students results in the electronic test are much better than in the paper test. She adds that in spite of students preference for traditional classroom lectures, the students agreed that using blackboard for (BL) helps them in different ways. It helps them get lesson-materials or watch recorded lectures when they are absent. They also learn from their classmates’ mistakes in discussion blogs. Moreover, they learn according to their learning styles. They feel dependent and secure to have regular contact with their instructor and get quick feedback for their questions and confidential tests grade results. These findings help to reinforce students motivation and affect their learning outcomes positively, in spite of the negative effect that results from lousy internet access, which sometimes affects using the Blackboard on time.

Hussin et al. (2015) show that there is a significant change in students attitudes toward writing after they had engaged in the writing process approach and CMC applications in the course. They explain that there was a positive effect on students writing performance and improvement on their writing anxiety level, mainly through the use of CMC applications.

Alharbi’s (2015) findings indicate that after using Blackboard’s Discussion Boards, Blogs and Wikis, the students performance on an integrated reading/writing test was improved, and so were their attitudes towards literacy skills. The findings also show that the e-course tools facilitated students interactions and supported learning of the reading/writing skills in a growing online discourse community by developing positive attitudes toward these tools.

Larsen (2012) asserts that (BL) affects student perceptions of the English as a second language (ESL) writing course and makes them feel more responsible for their knowledge. In other words, students take ownership of their education.

Kozma (2005) points that putting computers into schools is not enough to have an impact on students’ learning. Still, specific applications of information and communication technology (ICT) can positively impact student knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as teaching practices, school innovation, and community services.

**Studies Related to Using Zoom Program in Teaching & Learning**

Miller (n.d.) highlights many reasons that make ZOOM a very useful App and software for teaching according to her experience. It can be easily connected by clicking a URL link and instantly be transported into a conversation with teachers. It helps small group discussions in group classes by creating “breakout rooms.” In Tech Land, a breakout room is an equivalent of putting learners with a partner (or partners) in the classroom so that the teacher can facilitate small group discussions, and then bring everyone back together. It has control over recording and saving their sessions to their hard drive by video recording. Zoom’s connection quality is more reliable than Skype, and lets teachers easily share their desktop and then “annotate” or write directly on top of whatever is showing. It also lets teachers play audio files on their computers just as quickly as it enables any student to play an audio file off their computer. Besides, Zoom webinars are the simplest and cheapest platform that allows teachers to start a presentation and have full control over the viewers’ experience and then later switch to two-way communication, where you give attendees the option to speak with teachers.
Ermeling (2018) suggests that using Zoom helps as segments approach to overcome problems of time limitations and other barriers and create more meaningful teaching and learning opportunities. This study proves that using ZOOM helps students get to a deeper understanding and achievement of learning goals. This study also suggests that teachers who use pivotal segments report: increased satisfaction with team planning and clarity about what they are teaching, a better understanding of how their instructional choices affect student outcomes positively, and a renewed commitment to the ongoing refinement of teaching and learning.

Obari and Lambacher (2014) confirm that students were satisfied with their flipped classroom lessons by the (BL) environment that incorporated mobile learning.

Previous Studies on Using WhatsApp and Twitter in Teaching & Learning

WhatsApp is the most common used App among the students that do not need a computer. It is an available and cheap application to activate. Also, students favor using it, and according to the development in the digital world, they always have their smartphones in their hands.

Aktas and Can (2019) reveal that using WhatsApp outside the course leads to a significant differentiation in the self-efficacy beliefs of the students for both reading and listening. They also indicate that using WhatsApp has an emotional influence in the form of happiness, joy, excitement, and pride. Hence, students considerably support the use of WhatsApp in their learning process.

The findings of Annamalai (2019) reveal that the majority of the students express their preference to use WhatsApp in their reflections. Although there are many problems which are identified by the students such as: overloaded messages, small screen, technical issues, and being swamped by too many words that upset the receivers and consume their storage.

Hershkovitz et al. (2019) point that WhatsApp has a unique contribution between teachers’ and students out-of-class communication, and it should be considered by policymakers while formulating policies for the use of online social networks in educational settings. This relationship has two main effects on society at large. The first is promoting better student-teacher communication that can improve teaching and learning. Second, if communication is carried out properly, the students will learn to behave in a correct way in their digital age.

Kootbodien et al. (2018) investigate the use of emoji and text messages as a replacement to the interpersonal communication that conventionally occurs in the process of face-to-face interaction. They find that Abu Dhabi University students consider WhatsApp to be an effective interpersonal communication medium. Although miscommunications often occur while using WhatsApp, the perceptions of the respondents varied greatly due to their own experiences and feelings regarding its use between acceptance and refusal.

Cetinkaya (2017) indicates that WhatsApp has the potential to provide a natural and unstructured learning environment through academic support by sustaining the cooperation and problem-solving processes of students towards courses and their content in and outside the school. It also helps in organizing educational activities and allows students learning unwittingly, regardless of time and place, and it helps students in sharing the materials and resources.
Rajab et al. (2017) explain that Saudi learners showed a positive perception of using Twitter in learning English. They believe that Twitter is employed as an English learning tool that promotes learning English among EFL Saudi learners.

Hamad (2017) explains that WhatsApp can be an alternative to virtual classes that help absent students to catch up. It can help students feel secure by having continuous interaction with their instructors, even when they are not around. WhatsApp helped students develop their writing and learn from their colleague's mistakes. Using WhatsApp helped students to believe in their abilities and to have confidence and increase motivation towards learning.

The researchers used the systematic qualitative method to review the previous studies, which have been tackled using technology in teaching and learning to determine the impact of the used methods as well as their shortcomings. They were trying to shed light on the benefits of these technologies; Apps and software, to make teaching and learning more enjoyable. Moreover, the results of this review may help educators to use different technological methods that can promote instructional scaffolding. Considering the widespread use of the applications and software among students, it became necessary for teachers to update their knowledge about what is new in this field. Teachers should look for Apps that their students are familiar to. In other words, the results of the studies reviewed above reveal that teachers can make use of technology in promoting instructional scaffolding.

**Results and discussion**

The researchers reviewed different studies to find the impact of using technology, and how it enables teachers promote online instructional scaffolding. The results revealed the following: Using technology can help teacher promote online scaffolding learning and teaching by creating opportunities for students to collaboratively co-construct their knowledge, and developing autonomy over students learning, and increasing their motivation, and contributing to their engagement Reinders & Hubbard (2012). Moreover, introducing such practices to teachers in preparation would help them toward considering possible future applications. The results also revealed that the potential for adapting our digital social practices in teaching and learning contexts is vast and should be more explored. Such technologies have a positive impact on students’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as well as teaching practices, school innovation, and community services. These applications and software also help to reinforce students’ motivation, and affect their learning outcomes positively. They facilitate students interactions and support the learning of reading/writing skills in a growing online discourse community. They also have a positive effect on students writing performance and improvement on their writing anxiety level, mainly through the use of CMC applications, which can facilitate students’ interactions and scaffolded learning within their online community. Besides, they overcome problems of time limitations and other barriers, and create more meaningful teaching and learning. These applications help teachers increase clarity about what they are teaching, a better understanding of how their instructional choices affect student outcomes positively, and a renewed commitment to the ongoing refinement of teaching and learning. Using technology leads to a significant differentiation in the self-efficacy beliefs of the students for both reading and listening as they have an emotional influence on students. These applications create a unique contribution between teachers and students out-of-class communication towards promoting better student-teacher communication that can improve
teaching and learning. They can create effective interpersonal communication medium for learning and education, and help absent students to catch up. It can help students feel secure by having continuous interaction with their instructor even when they are not around. Through using these applications, teachers can organize academic activities and help students learn unwittingly, regardless of time and place. Students can share materials and resources using these applications.

Teachers use the appropriate App or software that is more used and preferred by their students and suit the learning environment. Teachers must update their information about Apps and software to know which one is suitable to apply, and how to apply it effectively to succeed in scaffolding teaching and learning. The results of the studies reviewed above reflect how using technology promotes education and different learning aspects, such as enhancing students learning, helping teachers in education, and providing a positive effect on attitude and skills. However, the results also reflect barriers and problems that are associated with using technology such as: inadequate internet access, using small screen, technical issues, storage consume of devices, and acceptance and refusal of using these Apps. These problems and barriers affect the strength of achieving lessons objectives. Pointing and researching advantages, durability, obstacles, challenges and shortcoming associated with using these Apps as a technological method, will be a potential field for studying by other researchers to find solutions for these problems and failures, to make the maximum use of technology in the different pedagogical areas, whether it is used as a tool that facilitates scaffolding teaching and learning.

Conclusion

This study has presented and reviewed the theories of opportunities to embrace certain technologies and the associated social practices they promote to make technology integration relevant and engaging. Teachers must be familiar with a variety of online learning contexts to appropriately prepare for more robust and sophisticated future interpretations of these domains. Under teachers’ strategies of online scaffolded guided learning, students proved to achieve more progress in the learning process.

Understanding previous attempts helps to expect various challenges and solve problems that can associate the adoption of using technology in education. This makes learning more student-centered through instructional scaffolding, which is necessary for anyone who wants to strive to create the individualized and intelligent data-driven learning systems of the future.

This review sheds light on techniques and approaches that can help in motivating researchers to do further studies on using technology to promote instructional scaffolding. Using such Apps as an educational tool or a method that facilitates teaching and learning is found to be of real significance. While researchers are trying to develop the pedagogical process by using any means that are attainable and practical, there is a need for further studies about using all Apps and software, which influence the students learning and bring learners together as a substitute to real classroom learning, as presented in the review of the literature. The analysis of the literature shows how using different Apps and software require knowledge and training to use them properly, making use of the advantages of these Apps and software and overcome their limitations. Further studies on using technology to promote teaching and learning will help to focus on different types of Apps and software for blended teaching and learning. A review of differences between separate...
applications is needed to help teachers choose the appropriate Apps and software, that suit their students educational system, learning environment, curriculum or text content that to be taught for a specific required pedagogical process. These apps can be educational tools that support traditional teaching, enhance students learning, and help to shed light towards technological methods, which promote instructional scaffolding.

Acknowledgement:
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References


Refusal Strategies of Saudi EFL Undergraduate Students

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Abstract
This study aimed to explore the refusal strategies used by Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) undergraduate students as well as to examine the relationship of these strategies to social status in the situations of request, invitation, offer, and suggestion. It provided an answer to the research question, what are the strategies used by EFL undergraduate students when performing the speech act of refusal and whether these strategies vary according to status in the situations of request, invitation, offer, and suggestion? The participants were 150 Saudi EFL students. Data were derived using a discourse completion task. It was composed of three request situations, three invitation situations, three offer situations, and three suggestion situations. Each of those situations consisted of a refusal to a person of a higher status, another one for a person of equal status, and finally one for a person of a lower status. Beebe et al. (1990) taxonomy was selected as the most comprehensive one for the analysis of refusal strategies. The results indicated that the most popular refusal strategies the participants used were the indirect ones, followed by the direct ones and then by adjuncts. The results also revealed that the participants refused differently in each of the four types of situations. On the other hand, the results showed that social status has no significant influence on their use of refusal strategies. Based on these findings, some recommendations for the integration of pragmatic teaching were suggested to foster pragmatic competence among undergraduate students.

Keywords: Invitation, offer, refusal strategies, request, Saudi EFL students, social status, speech acts, suggestion

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Introduction

The utterances that people produce which require responses from the hearer and performing some actions are called speech acts. Refusal is a speech act that is receiving increasing concerns nowadays. Refusal can be used in response to requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions. Refusals occur in all cultures but not in the same way; what may be appropriate in one culture may not be so in another.

The lack of knowledge of these differences may create communication breakdown. Wannaruk (2008) states “Communication breakdowns can occur during cross-cultural communication due to different perceptions and interpretation of appropriateness and politeness” (p.318). Successful communication and performance of speech acts depend largely on pragmatic competence. Thomas (1983) defines pragmatic competence as “the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand the language in context” (p. 92). Performing speech acts in cross-cultural communication needs mastering the pragmatic competence of the target language speakers.

Furthermore, refusal speech acts are categorized as face-threatening acts. They are response speech acts which are initiated by the speaker. Yamagashira (2001, p. 260) views the refusal speech act as “a sensitive pragmatic task” as speakers handle refusal situations with sensitivity, and use different strategies to make sure that others are not offended. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that face can be lost maintained, or enhanced, and must continuously be attended to in interactions. Using politeness strategies can save the face of speakers and addressees. Saving speakers face requires using strategies that take into consideration status and context.

Statement of Problem

The speech act of refusal occurs in all languages and is mostly used by speakers in different ways. Culture plays a significant role in the choice of refusal strategies. Any failure to refuse appropriately may threaten the face of the speakers. Learners’ ability to use appropriate speech acts has received increasing concern in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. Undergraduate students show differences in expressing rejections and in showing politeness when they do so.

Students need to be aware of these differences to communicate effectively. They have to attain a pragmatic knowledge of speech acts of the target language in order to avoid being considered impolite. Reinelt (1994) suggests that non-native speakers should recognize refusals and learn some strategies to save their listener’s face and reduce the negative effect that refusals might cause.

Objectives

This study aims to explore refusal strategies employed by Saudi EFL undergraduate students and examine whether these refusal strategies vary in the contexts of request, invitation, offer, and suggestion situations, or vary according to higher, equal or lower social statuses. The findings will be beneficial to undergraduate professors and others who are involved in the teaching of EFL undergraduate students.
The following major research questions are specifically addressed.
1. What are the strategies used by Saudi EFL undergraduate students when performing the speech act of refusal?
2. Do Saudi EFL students utilize different refusal strategies in the situations of request, invitation, offer and suggestion?
3. Do Saudi EFL students utilize different refusal strategies based on social status?
4. Significance of the Study

Kiok (1995) believes that pragmatic errors are more serious than phonological or syntactic ones. The speech act of refusal requires a high degree of pragmatic competence as it may threaten the interlocutor's face. The way people say the negative answer “no” differs in different cultures and has a great impact on communication success or breakdown. Barron (2003) states that refusal speech act takes more time to be developed than the other speech acts. The lack of mastery of pragmatic competence leads to violating conversational and politeness norms which in turn lead to communication breakdowns. Meier (1995) as cited in Morkus (2014), states, “Teaching pragmatic aspects of language can minimize intercultural communication breakdowns and reduce cultural stereotyping” (p. 1).

Therefore, students need to learn strategies to avoid such situations. They have to learn the appropriate forms used in the target language, their functions, and the context for using them.

The present study aims to examine the students’ refusal speech act performance in the contexts of request, invitation, offer, and suggestion situations, and based on the social status of the interlocutors. The results may raise the pragmatic awareness of both Saudi professors and students. Lecturers can integrate speech acts in the language classroom to help students acquire the pragmatic competence to succeed in social interactions in the target language and to perform refusal successfully.

Theoretical Framework
The Speech Act of Refusal

Speech acts can be understood as utterances that have communicative functions such as requesting, refusing, greeting, thanking, apologizing, inviting, and giving orders. Kempson (1977) states, that in uttering a sentence, a speaker is involved in three different speech acts, where the speaker utters sentences with a particular meaning (locutionary act), and with a particular force (illocutionary act), in order to achieve a particular effect on the hearer (perlocutionary act).

Refusal is an important speech act in our daily life, and it requires a high level of pragmatic competence. Sadler and Eroz (2001) define the speech act of refusal to reject the speech acts of requests, invitations, suggestions, and offers. According to Beebe et al. taxonomy (1990), refusal strategies are of two types, direct and indirect. The direct strategies are divided into three types, and state clearly what the speaker means. The indirect strategies are classified into eleven types, and state the intended meaning, but not as clear as the direct one.

I. Direct strategies: It refers to the refusals that are told directly. It includes two subtypes:
   a. Performative verb, (“I refuse.”).
b. Non-performative statements (“No.”, “I cannot.”, “I don’t think so.”).

c.

II. Indirect strategies. It refers to the refusals that are delivered by using mitigating patterns to maintain politeness. It involves the following subtypes:

a. Statement of regret (“I am sorry…”, “I feel terrible…”).

b. Wish (“I wish I could help you…”).

c. Excuse/Reason/Explanation (“My children will be home that night…”, “I have a headache…”).

d. Statement of alternative “I can do X instead of Y…”, “I’d rather …”, “I’d prefer…”, “Why don’t you do X instead of Y?”, “Why don’t you ask someone else?”).

e. Set condition for future or past acceptance (“If you had asked me earlier, I would have …”).

f. Promise of future acceptance (“I’ll do it next time.”, “I promise I’ll… or “Next time I’ll…”).

g. Statement of principle (“I never do business with friends.”).

h. Statement of philosophy (“One cannot be too careful.”).

i. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor by:

1. Threat (“I won’t be any fun tonight.”).

2. Criticize the request or requester (“Who do you think you are?” - “That is a terrible idea!”).  

3. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.

4. Let interlocutor off the hook (“Do not worry about it…”, “That is okay”, “You don’t have to.”).

5. Self defense (“I am trying my best…”, “I am doing all I can do…”).

j. Acceptance that functions as a refusal, by using unspecific or indefinite reply, and lack of enthusiasm.

k. Avoidance by the topic switch, joke, repetition of part of the request (“Monday?”), or postponement (“I’ll think about it…”).

l.

III. Adjuncts to refusals. It refers to the expressions used to protect the interlocutors’ face. It includes the following subtypes:

a. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement. (“That is a good idea…”, “I’d love to… ”).

b. Statement of empathy (“I realize you are in a difficult situation…”).

c. Pause fillers (“uhh”, “well”, “oh”, “uhm”).

d. Gratitude/appreciation.

e.

Politeness Systems

Politeness is one of the important factors that may influence refusals. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that the essential concept of politeness theory is “face” which means “the public self-image”. They proposed that individuals whether speakers or hearers like to save each other’s faces when facing threatening acts by using politeness strategies.

Scollon, Scollon and Jones (2012) divided politeness systems into three types, deference, solidarity and hierarchical. Two factors help in the distinction of these systems. They are power
relationships and social distance. The first politeness system is deference. The participants of communication see themselves according to this system as being equals or near equals with a distant relationship. They employ independence strategies in interaction. This type of politeness system can be seen when two professionals who have the same status but a distant relationship address each other with deferential terms such as "Ms. or Mr. and surname.

The second politeness system is solidarity. In this system, the participants of communication see themselves as being equals with a close relationship. They use politeness strategies of involvement that save each other’s face, e.g. colleagues.

The third type is hierarchical. In this system, the participants of communication see themselves as being different in social status. They use different strategies to talk to each other. The higher status individuals use involvement strategies whereas the lower status individuals use independence strategies, e.g. a professor with a student.

In general, both of the two types of deference and solidarity are symmetrical, which means using the same types of politeness strategies mutually by the two parties in a conversation. The third system “hierarchical” is asymmetrical which means one party is in a superior position and the other is in a subordinate position.

**Teaching Refusal Strategies in the EFL Classroom**

Mastering the speech act of refusal requires a particular level of pragmatic competence that helps in successful communication. Developing the students’ pragmatic competence in the target language is necessary. Martinez-Flor and Beltran-Palanques (2013) suggested a deductive/inductive approach to teach refusal strategies to EFL students. It consists of four phases to integrate pragmatic competence in an EFL context.

The phases are pragmalinguistic awareness, sociopragmatic awareness, pragmatic production, and feedback on pragmatic production. According to this pedagogical model of pragmatic competence students have to be exposed to appropriate contextualized refusal input, first to develop pragmalinguistic awareness; next, they have to be aware of the sociopragmatic issues, such as the influence of some aspects such as social distance, power, age and gender on language use; then, they have to be provided with communicative activities for practicing the knowledge acquired. Finally, students receive feedback on their refusal performance.

**Empirical Studies**

Much investigation on pragmatic competence and refusal speech acts has been done. However, among the several studies carried out was a study of Beebe et al. (1990) that investigated the use of refusal strategies by Japanese speaking Japanese, Japanese speaking English, and Americans speaking English. A written discourse completion task was used to collect the data. It consisted of second language (L2) refusal situations that involve refusal of requests, invitations, suggestions, and offers based on social distance. The data were analyzed using three category classifications of the semantic formula, direct, indirect and adjuncts. This coding scheme was used by most studies of refusal strategies. The findings showed that there were significant differences
in the use of refusals between Americans and Japanese in relation to the order, frequency and content of semantic formulas.

Similarly, Al-Shalawi (1997) examined the speech act of refusal among Saudis and Americans. The aim of his study was to identify the influence of their culture on the speech of their community and their communication style. Data were collected by using a discourse completion task. The participants were 50 Americans and 50 Saudis. Results revealed that both groups used almost similar semantic formulas in performing refusals. The only difference was in the use of the direct strategy “No”.

Al-Issa (1998) examined the refusal strategies used by Jordanians compared with those of Americans. Data were gathered using a discourse completion task. Results indicated that both nationals used the indirect strategy of refusal by giving reasons or explanation. Besides, the Jordanian explanations were lengthy when compared with the American ones. Jordanians used more indirect refusal strategies using regret statements more than Americans.

Al-Eryani (2007) compared the refusal strategies used by Yemeni EFL learners and Americans native speakers of English. A discourse completion task was used as the major data completion instrument. The findings indicated that Yemenis used indirect strategies of refusal by giving reason or explanation. On the other hand, Americans used regret as an indirect refusal strategy most frequently.

Abed (2011) conducted a study to examine the differences in useful strategies between Iraqi EFL learners and American native speakers of English. The tool used in the collection of data were a 12-items written discourse completion task. The findings indicated that Iraqi EFL learners used the statement of reason/explanations, regret, wish, and refusal adjuncts more frequently than American native speakers of English. Besides Iraqi EFL learners are more sensitive when they speak to people of lower status than when they speak to people of higher or equal status.

Al-Ateeq (2016) investigated the use of refusal strategies of 30 Saudi male and female students. Data were analyzed and classified as proposed by Beebe et al. (1990). Results showed that students apply more indirect refusal strategies than direct ones. They also use adjuncts in their refusal statements.

Al-Mahroqi and Al-Aghbar (2016) examined the refusal speech act performed by Omani EFL college students. The participants were forty-one English as foreign language learners. The tool used in the collection of data was a discourse completion test. Students were asked to refuse in four different situations i.e. requests, suggestions, invitations, and offers. Results revealed that Omani EFL students used indirect refusal strategies most frequently than direct ones. The direct refusals were performed mostly when refusing requests and suggestions. Moreover, Omani EFL learners used regret more when refusing requests and they showed consideration for the interlocutor’s feelings when refusing offers. Besides, Omani learners were not sensitive to the social status of the interlocutors when using the speech act of refusal.
Methodology

Research Design
A descriptive quantitative research was conducted in the present study to examine the performance of Saudi EFL students of the speech act of refusal.

Participants
A total of 150 Saudi female undergraduates from King Khalid University were selected randomly to represent Saudi EFL undergraduates. The study was administered in semester one of the academic year 2018-2019. Four intact classrooms participated in the study. Each classroom consisted of 30 to 40 students. They were all in their third year at the English Department. Their ages ranged between 18-25 years.

Instruments
Spencer-Oatey (2008) states that the main instruments used in the collection of data of pragmatics are discourse completion tasks, multiple-choice and rating scale questionnaires. However, despite discourse completion tasks having a limitation of allowing respondents to take enough time to complete a task, and unlike the situation in a natural setting, data collected using a discourse collection task has authentic conversations (Beebe & Cummings, 1996).

A discourse completion task was used as the tool to collect the data. It was designed by the researcher (See Appendix A). The aim of the task was to identify the students’ performance in the speech act of refusal. The task consisted of three requests, three offers, three suggestions, and three invitations. Each situation included a refusal to a person of higher status, another one to a person of equal status, and finally one more to a person of lower status. Students had to provide written data to express their refusals in situations that revolved around university, home, friends, and bosses.

The data collected from participants were codified based on a classification of refusal strategies designed by Beebe et al.’s (1990) which is one of the most widely used taxonomies for refusal studies. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to provide concrete findings regarding Saudi EFL undergraduates’ implementation of refusal strategies.

Results
This section provides a holistic description of refusal strategies used by the Saudi EFL undergraduate students. Data were coded and analyzed quantitively by the researcher using Beebe et al. (1990) taxonomy of refusal. The semantic formula was classified into three categories, direct refusals, indirect refusals, and adjunct refusals. Next, descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages were computed and noted.

The results of the study will provide answers to the research questions:

What Are The Strategies Used By Saudi EFL Undergraduate Students When Performing The Speech Acts Of Refusal?
Analysis of the data obtained using the discourse completion task from 150 Saudi EFL students, indicated that they used a total of 2696 refusal strategies. These strategies were divided
into three categories, direct, indirect and adjuncts. Table 1 lists the refusal strategy categories used by Saudi EFL undergraduate students, the frequency of each category, and their percentages.

### Table 1

**Frequency and percentage of refusal strategy categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refusal strategy type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect strategies</td>
<td>1556</td>
<td>57.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct strategies</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>32.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjuncts strategies</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>9.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2696</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the category level, Table 1 above shows that Saudi EFL undergraduate students used indirect strategies most frequently 1556 (57.72%), followed by direct ones 876 (32.49%), and the least used was adjuncts strategies 264 (9.79%). Saudi EFL students knew well how to soften the negative effect of their refusals by using many indirect strategies such as using excuses, reasons, explanations and statements of regrets. Even when they used direct strategies, they preceded them with indirect ones or adjuncts.

At the individual level, descriptive statistical analysis of the data obtained based on the types of refusal strategies of Beebe et al.’s (1990) taxonomy, indicated that Saudi EFL students used a variety of refusal strategies summarized in Table 2. It illustrates the variation in the use of several strategies.

### Table 2

**Variation in the use of individual refusal strategy by Saudi EFL students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy type</th>
<th>Refusal strategy</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct refusal strategies</strong></td>
<td>Performative verb</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonperformative statements</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>32.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement of regret</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>21.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wish</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excuse/Reason/Explanation</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>26.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement of alternative</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set condition for future or past acceptance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promise of future acceptance</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement of principle</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement of philosophy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Indirect refusal strategies</strong></th>
<th>Attempt to dissuade interlocutor by:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat or statement of negative consequences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticize the request or requester</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows that the most frequent individual refusal strategies used were “non-performative statements” 850 (32.27%), followed by “excuse/reason/explanation” 716 (26.56%), then by “statement of regret” 578 (21.44%), next by “gratitude/appreciation” 143 (5.30%), and finally by “statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement” 93 (3.45%).

The least refusal strategies used at the individual level were “statement of philosophy” 3 (0.11%), followed by “avoidance by postponement” 4 (0.15%), then, by “request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request” 5 (0.19%), and finally by both “threat and statement of negative consequences” and “performative verb”, both scored 6 (0.22%).

Two refusal strategies were not used at all “self defense” and “acceptance that functions as a refusal” 0 (0.00%). Saudi EFL students used the direct strategy “non-performative statements” in which “No” or “negative willingness or ability” is used such as “I can’t”, “I won’t”, and “I don’t think so”. This strategy is usually combined with indirect strategies or adjuncts.

The second most frequent strategy used was the indirect one that includes providing excuses, reasons, and explanations. It is used to avoid direct refusal and maintain the relationship.

The third most frequent strategy used was the indirect one which includes expressing regret such as “I’m sorry”, “My apology”, “I feel terrible”, “Unfortunately”. They used this strategy to avoid hurting the feelings of others.

The fourth most frequent strategy used was an adjunct to refusal. When using this strategy, learners express gratitude such as “Thank you”, “Thanks”. Adjunct strategy is usually followed or preceded by direct or indirect strategies.

Finally, the most frequent strategy used was also an adjunct to refusal, where Saudi EFL students tended to express statements of positive opinion, feeling or agreement such as “That is a good idea”, “I’d love to”, “That is great”, “and That is so sweet”.

On the other hand, Saudi EFL students never tried to defend themselves when they refuse by saying “I’m trying my best”, or “I’m doing all I can do”. They also never used acceptance that functions as a refusal. They liked to be clear in their refusals but at the same time, they wanted to be polite.
Do Saudi EFL Students Utilize Different Refusal Strategies In The Situations Of Request, Invitation, Offer, And Suggestion?

The data showed that there is some variation in the use of refusal strategies with regard to situations of “request, invitation, offer and suggestion”. Table 3 summarises the differences in the use of refusal strategies in different situations.

Table 3

Frequency and percentage of refusal strategies in the situations of request, invitation, offer, and suggestion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>Adjuncts</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>26.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>26.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>24.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>22.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that there were variations in the use of strategies according to situations. At the category level, students reported the use of refusal strategies most frequently when refusing an invitation, 711 (26.37%), followed by refusing a request 709 (26.30%), then by refusing an offer 671 (24.89%), and refusing a suggestion 605 (22.44%) was the least frequent.

Furthermore, the data analysed showed that all students used indirect refusal strategies most frequently in all the situations. This result indicated the students’ special concern to keep a good relationship with the interlocutors.

On the other hand, students used mainly, more direct and adjuncts refusal strategies with suggestion and offer than with invitation and request. Besides, the indirect refusal strategies were used more with request and invitation than with offer and suggestion.

With regard to the individual level of strategies used in each situation, three strategies were used most frequently, but they differ in order (See Appendix B). The most frequent strategies used by Saudi EFL students in the situation of request was “The non-performative statement” 211 (29.76%) such as “No”, “I can’t”, and “I won’t” followed by “statements of regret” 209 (29.47%), then by using “excuses, reasons, and explanation” 188 (26.52%).

On the other hand, the most frequent strategies used in the situation of invitation were refusal by using “excuses, reasons, and explanations” 206 (28.97%), followed by the direct refusal strategy “non-performative statements” 200 (28.13%), then using “statement of regret” 192 (27.00%).

In the situation of offer, students used the direct strategy “non-performative statements” most often 224 (33.38%), followed by “excuses, reasons, and explanations” 164 (24.44%), and finally, by “statement of regret” 90 (13.41%).
Similar to the situation of request, Saudi EFL students used “non-performative statements” most frequently in the situation of suggestion 235 (38.84%) followed by using “excuse, reasons, and explanations” 158 (26.12%) followed by “statements of regret” 87(14.38%).

Do Saudi EFL Students Utilize Different Refusal Strategies Based On Social Status?

Another analysis of the refusal strategies used in each of the situations of “request, invitation, offer and suggestion” will be done in the following lines. This analysis will determine the influence of social status on the use of refusal strategies. Table 4 summarizes the use of refusal strategies in different situations of request, invitation, offer, and suggestion with regard to social status.

Table 4
Frequency and percentage of refusal strategies used in the four situations based on social status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social status</th>
<th>Request</th>
<th>Invitation</th>
<th>Offer</th>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>33.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>892</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
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<td>252</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>33.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>2696</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows that social status has no influence on the frequency of refusal strategies used by Saudi EFL undergraduate students. In other words, Saudi EFL students refused similarly when dealing with the three types of interlocutors, higher, lower, or equal status persons. They do not change their refusals according to the distance and power of the interlocutors.

With regard to individual refusal strategies, the data analysed revealed that Saudi EFL students used different strategies when both the speaker and the interlocutor, have the same social status, and one has to refuse a request, an invitation, an offer or a suggestion.

The most frequent one used was “non-performative statements” 292(32.52%), followed by “excuse/reason/explanation” 265(29.51%), then by “statement of regret” 194(21.60%), next by “gratitude/appreciation” 59(6.57%), and finally, by “statement of positive opinion” 25(2.78%). All the rest of refusal strategies were used least frequently.

On the other hand, when the speaker has to refuse a request, invitation, offer or suggestion, from someone of a higher social status, several different strategies were used. The most frequent refusal strategies used were “non-performative statements” 280(31.39%), followed by “excuse/reason/explanation” 256(28.70%), then, by “statement of regret” 208(23.32%) next, by “gratitude/appreciation” 49(5.49%), and finally, “statement of positive opinion” 38(4.26%). All the rest of strategies were used least frequently.

Finally, when the speaker had to refuse a request, invitation, offer or suggestion from someone of a lower social status, the most frequent strategy used was “non-performative
statements” 298(32.89), followed by “excuse/reason/explanation” 195(21.52%), then, by “statement of alternative” 176(19.43%), next, by “gratitude/appreciation” 35(3.86%), and finally, by “statement of positive opinion” 30(3.31%). All the rest of the strategies were used least frequently.

In general, the refusal strategies of “non-performative statements”, “excuse/reason/explanation”, “statement of regret”, and “gratitude/appreciation” were all the most frequently, used strategies with some differences in the frequency sequence.

Discussion
In answering the research questions of the study, the findings revealed that Saudi EFL undergraduate students could handle refusal situations with sensitivity. They positively, used the indirect strategies most frequently, followed by direct ones and then by adjuncts.

In other words, Saudi EFL students preferred to express their refusals indirectly by finding appropriate expressions to soften the negative effects of a direct refusal. They used excuses, reasons, explanations, and statements of regret to mitigate the refusal and convince others that their refusals were due to circumstances out of their control.

The results were in line with the results of previous studies which reported that EFL learners used more indirect refusal strategies (Al-Issa, 1998; Abed, 2011; Al-Ateeq, 2016). More investigation is needed here to see if students are following their sociocultural norms and if there is a pragmatic transfer from first language.

Besides, when Saudi EFL students refuse directly, they use non-performative statements such as “No”, “I cannot”, “I do not think so” to avoid offending the speaker. In addition, they used the adjuncts strategies least often. This type of strategy is not very common to them. They are not used to giving many positive opinions and statements of empathy while refusing.

Another analysis of their speech acts of request, invitation, offer, and suggestion revealed that students refused to accept an invitation or a request by using many indirect strategies more than when refusing an offer or a suggestion. They do not like to appear inappropriate in English; they combined their refusals with expressions to mitigate the negative effects of refusal. They give the impression that they care for whatever the speaker offers or requests.

On the other hand, students used more direct and adjuncts strategies to refuse a suggestion and an offer. They stated directly their refusals using “non-performative statements” or they supported the interlocutors by using “statement of positive opinion” and expressions of “gratitude and appreciation”.

In general, results indicated that the situation of invitation gets the highest score as well as the situation of request. This means that the subjects feel hard to make the greatest efforts to refuse people when being invited or requested. On the other hand, the situation of the offer gets the lowest score followed by suggestion. This indicated that the subjects exert the least efforts to refuse but they showed their concern by using more adjuncts refusal strategies.
In response to question 3, the findings indicated that there was no influence of social status on the use of refusal strategies in the situations of request, invitation, offer and suggestion. Saudi EFL students reacted similarly to social statuses of equal, higher and lower. In terms of individual refusal strategies, the findings displayed that “non-performative statements”, “expressions of excuse”, “reasons”, “explanation” and “statement of regret”, “gratitude/appreciation” were the most frequently used strategies by Saudi EFL students with some differences in the order of occurrence. The insensitiveness of Saudi EFL students to their interlocutor’s higher, lower and equal statuses needs more attention. It requires more emphasis to be given to teaching EFL students the types of politeness systems. Teachers could focus on the factors that influence the choice of refusal strategies, such as power relationship and social distance, as suggested by Martinez-Flor and Beltran-Palanques (2013).

**Recommendations for EFL Teachers and Educational Professionals**

Nowadays, it is becoming essential for language learners to have knowledge of speech acts to develop communication competence; failure to do so may result in miscommunication. However, the present study showed some deficiencies in Saudi EFL students’ implementation of refusal strategies in relation to social status. Therefore, it is recommended for educational professionals to integrate the teaching of refusal strategies with practical methodology at the university. Consciousness-raising training could be given as well to learners on politeness systems.

Further studies can investigate the use of refusal strategies of the Arabs. This could be a useful area for future research to decide which refusal strategies transfer most readily and which ones do not. Another area can be investigated the similarities and differences in the use of refusal strategies of both rich and poor people.

**Conclusion**

As refusal strategies vary from culture to culture, it is crucial for the students to know the cross-cultural techniques of face-threatening acts. By doing this, they could achieve successful communication and avoid violating any social-cultural norms. The study examined the speech act of refusal in the context of English as a foreign language. The findings revealed that Saudi EFL students acted differently about the frequency of strategies used for refusal in different situations. Saudi EFL students favored the indirect refusal strategies to save the interlocuter's face and protect the relationship and harmony.

With regard to the relationship of refusal strategies and the situations of request, invitation, offer and suggestion, students used indirect strategies in invitation and requests, more than with offer and suggestion. Besides, students used more direct and adjunct strategies to refuse suggestions and offers.

Finally, the findings indicated that social status does not affect the choice of refusal strategies of Saudi EFL students. Thus, English teachers could give considerable attention to improve their students’ pragmatic competence, and help them avoid communication breakdown within an EFL context.
Teachers can expose their students to the pragmatic features that native speakers adopt to communicate in certain situations. Pragmatic competence should be added to students’ curriculum theoretically and practically. More emphasis should be given to raise students’ consciousness of the types of politeness systems, and the strategies used with each system.

About the Author
Wafa Ismail Saud holds a PhD in English from the faculty of Language and Linguistics, University of Malaya, Malaysia. Her Master degree was in English as a second language from the International Islamic University, Malaysia. Her Bachelor degree was in English language with honor, from the College of Education, Makkah, Saudi Arabia. She is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5010-7891

References


**Appendix A - Discourse Completion Task**

**Discourse Completion Task**

**Instructions**: Please consider the following situations you may find yourself in with other people. Respond by **refusing** and respond as naturally as possible as if you were in the actual situations.

Please write what you say to them.

1. **Request (A person of equal status makes a request.)**
   You are a university student. Your friend needs to do a presentation using her laptop. She accidentally drops it and needs to borrow one. She comes to you asking to borrow yours.
   You **refuse** her request by **saying**:

2. **Request (A person of higher status makes a request.)**
   You are a university lecturer and the head of your department requests you to stay late at the office and finish your work before leaving.
   You **refuse** her request by **saying**:

3. **Request (A person of lower status makes a request.)**
   You are a lecturer at the university. You have some useful books that can help your students finish their projects. One of them requests borrowing one of the books.
   You **refuse** her request by **saying**:
4. **Invitation (A person of equal status makes an invitation.)**
Your friend invites you and her other old friends to her house for dinner.
You **refuse** her invitation by **saying:**

5. **Invitation (A person of higher status makes an invitation.)**
You are a lecturer at a college. Your dean invites all of the faculty members for lunch.
You **refuse** her invitation by **saying:**

6. **Invitation (A person of lower status makes an invitation.)**
You are the manager of a bank. One of your employees invites you to her wedding party.
You **refuse** her invitation by **saying:**

7. **Offer (A person of equal status makes an offer.)**
You are at a friend’s house for dinner. Your friend offers you a pie.
You **refuse** her offer by **saying:**

8. **Offer (A person of higher status makes an offer.)**
You work at a company and your manager offers you to work overtime for good pay.
You **refuse** her offer by **saying:**

9. **Offer (A person of lower status makes an offer.)**
Your servant burns one of your expensive dresses while ironing it. She insists on paying for it.
You **refuse** her offer by **saying:**

10. **Suggestion (A person of equal status makes a suggestion.)**
You are a college student. You live far away from your college and every day you miss the first lecture. Your friend suggests to you to move near to the college.
You **refuse** her suggestion by **saying:**
11. **Suggestion (A person of higher status makes a suggestion.)**
You are a good at writing poems. Your teacher suggests to you to specialize in English literature.
You refuse her suggestion by saying:

12. **Suggestion (A person of lower status makes a suggestion.)**
You are a university lecturer. You call the secretary to make an appointment to meet the dean tomorrow. She suggests coming and meeting the dean now because of her busy schedule tomorrow.
You refuse her suggestion by saying:

---

The End

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix B - Table 5. Research Data for Direct Refusal Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refusal Strategy</th>
<th>Request Status</th>
<th>Invitation Status</th>
<th>Offer Status</th>
<th>Suggestion Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal</td>
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<td>Lower</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Performative verb</td>
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<td>B. Non performative statements</td>
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Appendix B - Table 6. Research Data for Indirect Refusal Strategies

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<th>Offer Status</th>
<th>Suggestion Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Statement of regret</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Wish</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Excuse/Reason/Explanation</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Statement of alternative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Set condition for future or past acceptance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Promise of future acceptance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Statement of principle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Statement of philosophy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor by:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Threat or statement of negative consequences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Criticize the request or requester</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Let interlocutor off the hook</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Self defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Avoidance by postponement</td>
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## Appendix B – Table 7. Research Data for Adjuncts to Refusals

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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Offer Status</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Suggestion Status</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>B. Statement of empathy</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Pause fillers</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Gratitude / appreciation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>90</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Elicitation: A Powerful Diagnostic Tool for Actively Involving Learners in the Learning Process

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Abstract
This paper attempts to show the importance of elicitation in language classrooms for teachers and learners as well. Elicitation helps in motivating English language learners. Most of the teachers think that applying elicitation in language classrooms promotes interest among students, set a stress free environment, and increases students' participation. However, all teachers do not share the same attitude towards elicitation because of some drawbacks. Therefore, this paper discusses the effectiveness of using elicitation as a powerful diagnostic tool for actively involving learners in the language classrooms, the merits and demerits of elicitation, necessity of language teachers to focus on this technique in a skilled way that helps the learners develop their English language skills, and some factors affecting the teachers in using the elicitation techniques. For this purpose, a mini-research was conducted where 30 undergraduate students and 15 non-native language teachers of a university in Saudi Arabia were chosen as participants in carrying out the study. This paper also offers some suggestions for both experienced and novice teachers to focus on some criteria for applying elicitation techniques for motivating students and having variety in the language class.

Keywords: Application, demerits, effectiveness, elicitation, merits, motivation, language classes, teachers’ awareness

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Introduction
Drawing out language or information from students helps in creating a more learner-centered classroom and a stimulating environment, getting the students more involved and engaged in the lesson. The process by which a teacher tries to get all the language and other answers from the students before finally giving them the solution is known as elicitation. The British Council Teaching English website defines elicitation as a “technique by which the teacher gets the learners to give information rather than giving it to them.” According to the Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1985), elicitation is defined as “Techniques or procedures which a teacher uses to get learners to actively produce speech or writing.” According to Scrivener (2012), eliciting is a technique of drawing information from students, generally by asking questions, instead of using teacher explanation. It leads to greater involvement, encourages thinking, and pushes students to self-discoveries.

Elicitation can be applied in all language classes, especially skills courses such as Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The teacher can elicit ideas, feelings, meaning, situations, associations and memories. Elicitation is a useful diagnostic tool for the teacher, providing vital information about what the learners know or do not know, and therefore, a starting point for planning a lesson. Eliciting also encourages teachers to be flexible and to move on rather than dwell on information which is already known.

The attention of the researchers about elicitation in class was drawn by the fact that in most of their classes, the majority of the learners preferred to remain silent or inattentive if they were asked to volunteer or participate in class. There were only a few students who showed activeness during elicitation. As a result, the researchers began to ponder whether students liked to be passive only in their classes or in other classes as well. Therefore, the researchers wanted to find out about the experiences and interactions of their other colleagues in applying elicitation techniques in class.

In spite of the merits of the techniques of elicitation, all teachers who participated in this study do not share the same positive attitude in using elicitation in their class. Some teachers feel that as modern classes are student-centered, elicitation is a must for the learners. Still, others think that elicitation is a waste of lesson time because of the reluctance of most of the learners to volunteer or participate in class. Moreover, there are other issues such as inexperienced teachers’ lack of skill in applying the elicitation techniques in their class, and sometimes experienced teachers overuse elicitation in their lessons. Apart from these, there are other factors such as dealing with learners who are extremely weak in using the target language and lack of confidence of learners in using the target language correctly. This study has a lot of import in the Saudi EFL context because before teachers are recruited in any institution, it needs to be ensured that teachers have at least some kind of teaching experience. They need to be familiar with some elicitation techniques which they can apply effectively in stimulating all learners, mainly passive learners.

Based on the teaching experiences and observations of the researchers, it has been found that lack of teaching experience and training of teachers, both the learners and teachers have a difficult time having an interactive class. Hence, all teachers need to have a thorough knowledge of designing elicitation in the class to make their students actively produce speech or writing. Before moving on to the objectives of this paper, we can take a look at the positive and negative sides of
elicitation and try to relate with the teachers' mixed attitude towards applying this technique in their classes.

1.1 Merits of Elicitation in the language classroom

Eliciting is an essential technique and should be used regularly, not only at the beginning of a lesson but whenever it is necessary and appropriate. There is no specific time for elicitation during a lesson. It can be used during any of the engage, study, and activate sections of the lesson. Anything in a lesson can be elicited: vocabulary, grammar, experiences, and ideas. The following are the advantages of elicitation:

1. Students are focused during elicitation: According to Case (2009), when teachers ask different types of questions to the learners, they are focused and try to participate actively in class.
2. Eliciting shows what students already know: By starting with easy questions and working your way towards more difficult ones, you will be able to boost their confidence with the first ones and realize the limits of their knowledge once their answers start to become incomplete or wrong. Finding out what students do and don't know will also help you spend lesson time on the most important things, and help you plan future lessons with that in mind.
3. Learners take a more active role in the learning process by bringing their life experiences and knowledge of the language with them into the classroom.
4. Elicitation shows teachers if the students are listening and grasping in formation.
5. During elicitation, there is more student talking time (STT) rather than teacher talking time (TTT).
6. Students learn to guess during elicitation. They are encouraged to try, even if they can only answer partially.
7. Students are exposed to useful incidental language during elicitation.

1.2. Demerits of Elicitation

There are some limitations in elicitation which are as follows:
1. Eliciting can be time-consuming: Teachers need to plan their elicitation and make sure when they use some visuals, it will cut down on the amount of time eliciting will take.
2. Elicitation does not always mean more student talk time (STT) because if they do not have any idea, students can be silent (Case, 2009).
3. During elicitation, learners are allowed to participate in the learning process by expressing their acquired or intuitive knowledge, but a particular student can dominate answering elicitation questions.
4. Students might show reluctance during elicitation because either they are shy or afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers. Ur (2012, p.118) states that the students are often frustrated to speak in a foreign language in the classroom because they are scared of criticism or losing face.
5. Eliciting can be culturally unsuitable: Some students are used to the teacher giving all the answers and do not expect teachers to wait for them to come up with it.
6. Eliciting can be annoying or repetitive: To avoid this, teachers can introduce variety by using different methods of elicitation such as pictures, realia, sketches, mime, guessing from context, questioning, short student-directed activities, etc.
7. Too much reliance on elicitation: Inexperienced teachers may dwell too long with the elicitation techniques, so the valuable class time gets lost from the main focus of the lesson.
2. Objectives of the study

Eliciting is a useful diagnostic tool for the teacher, providing vital information about what the learners know or don't know, and therefore a starting point for planning a lesson. The research paper aims to find out answers of the following research questions:
1. Do all teachers have a positive attitude towards using the elicitation techniques in their class?
2. Is it essential for teachers to discover how much their students already know before giving information in their lessons?
3. Do teachers feel that when they encourage students to come up with some answers before or during a lesson is a waste of time in the class?
4. Are all teachers familiar with the elicitation techniques, and how often should elicitation be applied effectively in the language classes?

3. Literature Review

Elicitation is an essential tool used for engaging students in a lesson and facilitating students' participation. The term elicitation was introduced by Sinclair and Coulthard in 1975 to describe utterances in the classroom, which elicit verbal responses (Ramiro, 2002). Nunan (1999, p. 306) explains that elicitation is a procedure by which teachers stimulate students to produce a sample of the structure, function, and vocabulary items being taught. During elicitation, learners are involved in the process of understanding and discovering language. Walsh (2013) defines elicitation techniques as 'strategies used by teachers to get learners to respond.' He believes that during elicitation, questioning is one of the principal ways in which teachers control the classroom discourse. In other words, these are techniques used by teachers before or during the lesson to get information about the depth of knowledge of the students. Later, Tsui (as cited in Jafari, 2014, p.3) adopted the term elicitation and defined it as any utterance whose function is to elicit an obligatory verbal response.

The types of questions selected by teachers for elicitation and the kind of responses to these questions have been investigated by some researchers. The types of questions asked by teachers are classified as: open and closed questions, display and referential questions, and yes/no questions. According to Thornbury (1996), most of the questions that teachers ask in classrooms are display questions. He also defines display questions as the questions to which teachers already know the answers. In the view of some linguists, teachers prefer the display questions for elicitation, but these do not lead to communicative responses from students that much. Dalton-Puffer, (2007, p.69) observes that 'answers to display questions are seen as notoriously restricted, quite often consisting of one word.' As a result, it is felt that display questions are not aimed to promote discussion but to check comprehension. The other types of questions that teachers hardly ask are the referential questions that have no specific answers. Further, he adds that 'referential questions are frequently seen as more 'natural' and are expected to generate student answers that are somehow qualitatively better, more authentic, more involved, longer and more complex' (p.69). Similarly, Ellis (1994) finds that the reason for asking this type of question is to let students express opinions and exchange information. Elicitation is commonly used to involve students in the teaching and learning process actively. Hence, the most common exchange in the classroom is eliciting exchange.
Alsubaie (2015) observes that teachers need to work harder on their elicitation skills, especially the ability of asking open questions to practice actual elicitation in the classroom, which will generate learners’ more comprehensive responses and classroom interaction. In her findings, she indicated that teachers used three types of questions to elicit information from their students: Yes/No questions, Closed/Display questions, and Open/Referential questions. In the findings of her study conducted in the English Language Institute (ELI) at King Abdul Aziz University, Saudi Arabia, she concluded that not all referential questions were enough for successful interaction. Moreover, during elicitation, teachers at King Abdul Aziz University used yes/no questions more frequently than the other types of questions. Similar to the view of Alsubaie (2015) on the mastery of elicitation techniques by teachers, in the study of Husna & Amri (2018), it has been pointed out that before entering the class and starting the lesson the teacher has to prepare to support the teaching process. Having proper training with the skills of applying some elicitation techniques will help teachers to increase the confidence level being sure of what they have to do in class. In another study conducted by Usman et al. (2018), the importance of elicitation has been emphasized, especially in speaking classes. The study highlights that speaking as the most essential skill needs to be taught by various strategies, and one of them is by using elicitation effectively in the classroom by which teachers can provide opportunities for students for practicing speaking. According to Usman et al. (2018), teachers used six types of elicitation: elicit: inform, elicit: confirm, elicit: agree, elicit: commit, elicit: repeat, and elicit: clarify in their speaking classes to improve the speaking skill of the learners.

As some studies have found that teachers overuse the yes/no questions to elicit, it can be said that a balance is needed between all types of elicitation questions for a positive classroom atmosphere where students can practice and experiment with the language. Not only that, teachers need to be skilled enough to use elicitation techniques effectively.

From the studies of other researchers, it is evident that elicitation is a powerful diagnostic tool for actively involving learners in the learning process. Still, every practicing teacher needs to be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of this technique because it has been found that there are many cases when teachers have to deal with extremely low levels of learners and applying the elicitation technique becomes difficult for them. In the studies carried out by researchers so far, it has not been mentioned about the factors which affect the teachers in using the elicitation techniques in the class effectively.

4. Methods

The research instruments for this study were derived from quantitative as well as qualitative research methods. The quantitative method included two different questionnaires for teachers and students; the qualitative method included a semi-structured interview only for the teachers. The semi-structured interviews were analyzed using the content analysis method because according to Berelson (1952), it is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of the communication. As for the responses of the questionnaires, they were counted and calculated without using any software because the simple computational technique was preferred for this study.
4.1. Data Collection

In order to find out if the English Language teachers of a university in Saudi Arabia used the elicitation techniques correctly and effectively in their classes, and how often they used elicitation with their learners, a survey was carried out through a combination of questionnaire and an interview for the teachers. For the students, only a paper-based questionnaire was administered to them. The questionnaire for the students consisted of closed questions, but for the teachers, there was a mixture of closed and open-ended questions. The interview (only for the teachers) was a semi-structured one. According to Nunan (1992), in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a general idea of where he or she wants the conversation to go, and what should come out of it, but does not enter the interview with a list of predetermined questions. Topics and issues rather than questions determine the course of the interview. This type of interview gives the interviewee a degree of power and control throughout the interview. Not only that, this form of interview gives one privileged access to other people's lives. Keeping in view the advantages of the semi-structured interviews, the researchers have used this because of its flexibility. Regarding the paper-based questionnaire for students, this tool was used because a questionnaire is a relatively popular means of collecting data. In the opinion of Nunan (1992), as questionnaire items can be relatively closed or open-ended. As closed questions are easier to collate and analyze, our questionnaire consisted of simple questions and asked about one thing at a time. It was not confusing for the students because the language level of the students, the brevity and clarity of the questions, and the extent to which learners have the knowledge needed to answer the items were taken into consideration. As the investigators work at the tertiary level, they have employed the observational, descriptive, and analytical approaches to come to a conclusion about the findings. Along with the tools of the present study, they have used their observations, experiences, and interactions with their EFL learners as well.

4.2. Participants

The survey was carried out at the Department of English at a university in Saudi Arabia, where fifteen non-native language teachers/ instructors (all female) and thirty undergraduate female students participated. The students were Arabic L1 speakers doing B.A. Honors in English. Because of the ease of assembling the sample, simple random sampling was chosen for this study.

While selecting the population for conducting this research, a large number of population could not be taken. In the case of both teachers and students, they were apprehensive of answering or discussing any real classroom scenarios although they were assured that they would not be subjected to any harm in anyway. However, the population who participated in this research was informed that the confidentiality of their names and the responses involved in the study would be maintained.

4.3. Data Analysis

For analyzing the data, first of all, the researchers selected random samples of interviews and questionnaires. Next, the semi-structured interviews of fifteen teachers were transcribed. Then they counted and calculated the percentages of the responses obtained from teachers' questionnaires and interviews and students' questionnaires.
4.4. Limitation of the Methodology: From the observations, experiences, and interactions with the colleagues of a working place, it can be said that sometimes, when teachers are being interviewed, some answers are given just for the sake of answering questions. There is no way of verifying how far the answers are correct; therefore, the researchers have to rely on the given answers of the interviewees. For this study, actual classes were not observed because most of the teachers felt threatened about their classes being observed.

5. Results and Analysis of Data
5.1. Analysis of Data of Teachers

The results of the study show that 66.66% of the experienced teachers used some elicitation techniques in their classes, and they noticed that motivated learners were the first ones to respond. They have strongly expressed their views that elicitation is very important for the learners because, through the application of elicitation, teachers can know about the depth of knowledge of the learners. These teachers believed in the learner-centered class and planned their lesson accordingly. The techniques used by the experienced teachers were as follows:
* Brainstorming ideas
* Pre-lesson discussion
* Rhetorical questions/ Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
* Showing a picture or a video clip, etc.
* Asking for synonyms and antonyms (especially in vocabulary class)

The experienced teachers observed that a group of students was not used to elicitation, and they were shy to participate. Not only that, some of the students knew the answers to the questions asked during elicitation, but they were not confident. These teachers also pointed out the drawbacks of using the elicitation techniques in their class because most of the learners were used to the passive way of learning rather than volunteering to take an active role in the class.

The teachers with no teaching experiences or training that is, 33.33% of them did not know how to use the elicitation techniques with their learners and revealed that there was a shortage of motivated learners to be found in their classes. The investigators have found that in the classes of novice teachers, students had only restricted opportunities to participate in the communicative and interactive uses of language and hence had restricted opportunities for language learning. Most of the time, students were silent and listened to the teachers talking the whole time in the class.

Table 1: An Overview of Experienced and New Teachers' Attitude towards the Elicitation Techniques.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Experienced Teachers (N=15)</th>
<th>New Teachers (10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Experienced Teachers having positive views</td>
<td>66.66%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) New Teachers (not skilled in using elicitation techniques)</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2. Analysis of Data of Students

The findings show that of the two groups of learners- active and passive learners, the active learners wrote that they expected their course teachers to use the elicitation techniques in their class. Still, the passive and reluctant learners wrote that they did not want their teachers to use the elicitation techniques during the lessons. In answer to the question, if the learners preferred to be elicited in the class, 66.66% of them expressed that they liked to be encouraged by teachers and wanted to be active learners. On the other hand, 33.33% of the learners showed that it was a waste of lecture time when teachers tried to draw out information from them, and they preferred to be passive recipients of information in the class.

Table 2: An Overview of Active Learners and Passive Learners' Attitude towards the Elicitation Techniques.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Participants (N=30)</th>
<th>Active Learners (20)</th>
<th>Passive Learners (10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Active learners with positive views</td>
<td>66.66%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Passive learners with negative views</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Discussion

Based on the data analysis of both teachers and students, the researchers concluded that most of the experienced teachers tried to apply the elicitation techniques in their class. On the contrary, due to a lack of teaching experience, the new teachers faced some difficulties in using elicitation in their class. It is felt that all the teachers need a proper knowledge and skill. This is also the view of Alsubaie (2015), who observes that teachers need to work harder on their elicitation skills, especially the ability of asking open questions to practice actual elicitation in the classroom, which will generate learners' more comprehensive responses and classroom interaction. It is also mentioned that a skillful teacher will balance all types of elicitation questions. In the same study, it has been pointed out that after asking questions, teachers should give ample time to the learners to help them to think and formulate answers. However, in the present study, the researchers felt that weak learners were not aware of the importance of the elicitation techniques, and because of their low proficiency in English, they were shy or unwilling to participate in class. Hence teachers sometimes have to move on when there is a long silence on the learners' part. Sometimes it is also the case that the same kind of silent response is being repeated almost regularly. In such a case, teachers sometimes feel that instead of waiting for the learners to answer, they decide to move on with the lesson or focus on display questions. As Dalton-Puffer (2007, p.69) points out that 'answers to display questions are seen as notoriously restricted, quite often consisting of one word.' The researchers here support the technique of using display questions as it helps learners with low proficiency levels to at least participate in the class.

It has been mentioned earlier that elicitation can be applied in all language classes, however, in the study conducted by Usman et al. (2018) and Husna & Amri (2018), the researchers have emphasized on elicitation which is to be used in speaking classes because they felt that of all the skills, speaking was the most important skill for the learners. However, the findings of this research
show that the technique of elicitation should not only be confined in the speaking classes. This is a technique that should be applied in all language classes.

Based on the above discussion, the findings of this research indicate that there are some factors which affect the teachers in using the elicitation techniques in the class which are as follows:

**Lack of skill and knowledge of teachers:** Recruitment of inexperienced teachers in some institutions is an essential factor that is responsible for those novice teachers lacking in knowledge and expertise in using the techniques of elicitation in their class.

**Lack of confidence of students in class participation:** Students might show reluctance during elicitation because either they are shy or are afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers.

**Passive recipients of information:** Some students are used to the teacher giving all the answers and do not expect teachers to wait for them to come up with it. They do not like to be autonomous learners and feel that the lesson time is wasted during elicitation.

**The short duration of a class:** In some institutions of Saudi Arabia, all the lectures are not of one and a half hours. Some of the classes are of only 50 minutes, and while planning their lessons, teachers find it quite challenging to include the techniques of elicitation in the class.

**Late arrival of students in class:** Some students have the habit of coming late in class. The late arrival of these students disrupts the lesson, and both the teacher and the other students are disturbed, especially during elicitation.

**Reluctant students:** There are times when teachers come across extremely reluctant students to speak in class or volunteer to answer some questions or so. In these circumstances, teachers are at a loss in drawing out information from the students and wasting the lesson time.

**Large class size:** It is a fact that although some institutions are aware of the ideal class size nowadays, still it is found that in some classes, there are 45-50 students in one section. For a large class size, teachers have to struggle hard to include elicitation techniques. Also, it is seen that during elicitation, sometimes all the students would raise their hands to answer a question. In such a case, teachers find it difficult to select the student to answer the question. Some students could feel that the teacher is not paying attention to them. If this practice goes on a few times in class, other students might be demotivated and prefer to remain quiet.

**Low level of learners:** It is often found that in some classes, there are students who do not have an excellent linguistic competence. Therefore, applying the techniques of elicitation with such students becomes ineffective for teachers.

It is because of the above-mentioned factors that teachers have a mixed attitude-positive and negative towards using the elicitation techniques for their learners.
8. Conclusion:

Traditional teacher-centered classes are given a new outlook when elicitation techniques are used because it is an effective way of getting learners to produce language. Students have some knowledge, both of the language and the real world, so this knowledge needs to be activated and used constructively. However, teachers should not try to use it at every opportunity, as it will result in repetition. If used effectively, elicitation can turn the English Language classes into a more learner-centered class. It is evident that certain factors are responsible for not allowing teachers to use elicitation effectively in their classes. Although most of the teachers would like to have active learning in their classes, very often, they come across the obstacles mentioned above. There is no denying the fact that the key to successful eliciting lies in an artful interaction between the teacher and the learner. Hence it is worth taking a look at the following techniques which can be used by teachers to make their classes more learner-focused:

1. Students who volunteer during elicitation needs to be praised with gestures or short comments.
2. Students should be provided with some input from the teachers such as prompts, associations, and reminders to jog their memories.
3. If it is a class on vocabulary, teachers should present the meaning of a word first, rather than going from word to meaning.
4. During elicitation, students should be provided with sufficient context or information. Language and ideas cannot be elicited without some guidance from the teacher.
5. During brainstorming activities, learners can extract from each other, building their confidence.
6. If there is a long silence on the part of the learners during elicitation, it should not be continued, and learners need to be provided with the language. Besides, teachers should wait to give students time to think and formulate their responses. Moreover, while dealing with such students, teachers can focus on the display questions or only on the yes/ no questions to help the learners in having some class participation.
7. Open-ended questions are to be avoided because learners may not have the language to answer them.
8. Concept checking techniques can be used to ensure that learners are on the right track.
9. Students should be allowed to practice saying any complicated item, first together with others (choral drilling), then nominating students randomly so that you can focus on individual learner problems (individual drilling).
10. Teachers should allow students, especially shy students, to discuss questions in pairs or threes, and then ask the groups to report back. According to Boynton (2003), students need to know that group work is practice.
11. According to Scrivener (2012), while applying the elicitation techniques, teachers need to make sure that the class can hear both the question and the answer. It is essential that everyone can listen to the answers given by other students.

It needs to be remembered that eliciting is just one of the many techniques which should be used in the classroom. Teachers need to have thorough knowledge about using the elicitation techniques for their learners, and they must be skilled in applying this tool for an active language learning environment. Further researches on the elicitation techniques with both Arab and non-Arab teachers could be undertaken by researchers who would like to investigate how teachers can be trained in an effective way to master the art of elicitation and promote higher levels of interaction in the class.
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References


**Appendix A: Questionnaire for Teachers**

*Drawing out information from the learners*
This survey aims to find out if students are encouraged to come up with information before or during a lesson rather than the teachers giving it to them.
Please answer the following questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you think that it is essential to discover how much your students already know before you give the information in your lessons?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you feel that teachers are supposed to pass on all information to students rather than asking students to participate in class?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. During a lesson, do you think it is vital to notice students who like the process of discovering and understanding the target language themselves?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you think that when you encourage your students to come up with some answers before or during a lesson, it is a waste of time in the class?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Please write briefly *how* you try to draw out any information from your learners before/during a lesson, and *how often* do you apply the technique of drawing out any information in your class?

**Appendix B: Questionnaire for students**

Please answer the following questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do your course teachers try to discover how much you know before they give you the information in your lessons?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you like the idea of brainstorming a topic before your teachers help you out?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you feel that teachers are supposed to pass on all information to students rather than asking students to participate in class?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is learning in an active way better than learning passively?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. During a lesson, do you like the process of discovering and understanding the target language yourself?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you think that when your teachers encourage you to come up with some answers before or during a lesson is a waste of time in the class?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multicultural Diverse Classroom
Addressing the Instructional Challenges and Reflections, from a Teacher’s Perspective

Rakhshinda Jabeen
Faculty of Languages and Translation-Female Campus
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Abstract
This paper focuses on personal experience and observation of a multicultural and diverse classroom. The main aim of this reflective study is to find out the effects of individual culture on a student’s life and how different cultures interact positively and negatively in an EFL class. The significance of this study is to devise some plans, to meet the demands of all the lifestyles in the EFL academic background. This experience led to some beneficial results based on the understanding of diverse classroom requirements and teacher’s challenges in handling the students of different cultural backgrounds. A group of students coming from various nationalities form a community inside the classroom; bear their learning styles based on their cultural history. This idea is quite challenging for the teacher. The author has discussed intensively: how culture and language relate to each other along with the role of a teacher in managing a diverse classroom. Finally, the author has recommended that the teacher’s special role in creating a methodology that addresses different cultures is essential. In this triangle of teacher, student, and institution, all three corners are equally imperative to form a strong EFL multicultural classroom entity.

Keywords: diverse EFL classroom, multinational classroom, culture, multicultural, teaching methods, teacher’s challenges

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1. **Introduction**

Some teachers consider a diverse multinational classroom as an enjoyable experience. They think that the range of nationalities in the classroom is an asset (Waugh, 2012). Their differing cultural personalities provide a vivid scope to the teachers to experiment with the English language teaching in an innovative style.

Many teachers today find themselves in a situation where they face the students belonging to various nationalities, which can sometimes prove challenging when keeping an atmosphere of equality and respect within the class (Scott, 2016). It creates an atmosphere of debate in Speaking and communicative relationship in Writing and Reading, inside the school. It depends upon the teacher’s perspective, how they take this diverse classroom: as an exciting challenge or an overwhelming threat. Teacher’s own cultural beliefs also play an essential role, which should be under control and used positively. The teacher’s role should be unbiased and kind. So the prejudice reduction describes lessons and activities teachers use to help students develop positive attitudes towards different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups (Bank, 2010).

A teacher is fully aware of this challenge, and it requires a thorough study on the part of the teacher also. Achieving learning objectives is not an easy task in a diverse classroom, so a comprehensive teaching plan is the responsibility of the teacher as well as the department. A teacher’s role lies in supporting multicultural understanding between pupils creating mutual respect, a positive working environment that prepares students for an active role in this diverse world we live in (Scott, 2016).

2. **Literature Review**

2.1 **Definition of Multicultural Diverse classroom**

A diverse multicultural classroom is an environment where both students and teachers belong to different ethnic backgrounds, accepting all races, cultures, and religions. (Hoosein, 2014)

A multicultural classroom has been defined as one in which there is a blend of students from various cultures, and it forms a diverse learning environment. (Nadda, 2017)

2.2. **Investigating the phenomenon of a diverse multicultural classroom**

First of all, when a teacher faces a diverse classroom, it is believed that teachers should investigate the components of a different class. Alismail (2016) suggests that all the Teachers need to understand multiculturalism in detail to provide equal education for all the students.

Linton (2018) concludes this in a vivid style. It is necessary for today’s teachers to come forward and face the challenge. The teacher should approach the students individually and try to stay impartial towards the students, to maximize individual learning experiences.

2.3. **Management strategies in handling a diverse classroom**

The teacher should encourage the students to speak freely and discuss their culture, ethnicity, and traditions with the teacher as well as the fellow students, to make others aware of their culture. (Friswell, Lowett, Reed, Turner, & Ponder, 2013). The third important step is: which strategies should be chosen by the teacher in English as a foreign language (EFL) diverse classroom. Viafara (2010) suggests
Teachers lead, organize, and monitor activities in the classroom providing ample occasions for students to listen to or engage in dialogues with them. Since they are regarded as expert users of the target language, teachers become models to show how the language works. (p.58)

2.4 **Teacher’s endeavor inside and outside the classroom**

Burnett (1999) further emphasizes the role of the teacher in this context: The good teachers of the culturally diverse students understand the differences of individuals and culture effectively and try to judge these differences in a positive way.

He also recommends the use of instructional strategies and learning activities that should have variety, because variety helps them to develop and strengthen other approaches to learning. Getting reliable information about the students will depend on the type of assessment and ethnographic sources (Ovando, Combs. 2018, p.27).

2.5 **Modification of Curriculum**

The last thing is the curriculum that every institute should choose and modify very carefully. Nadda (2017) refers to this point strongly, “thus today one of the major challenges faced by teachers in the transaction of the curriculum in the class is for these culturally different students” (p.741). The new curriculum will consist of a wide variety of teaching strategies that embrace the diverse cultures in the classroom (Parkerson, 2019).

3. **Methodology and Motivating factors leading to the discussion**

As a teacher, the author encountered a diverse classroom setting, while teaching the Intensive English course (a blend of all English Language Skills) to the students of level 1 of King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia.

There came the students from various nationalities (Saudi Arabian, Yemeni, Algerian, Egyptian, Syrian, Sudanese, Palestinian, Indian, Pakistani, Burmese, etc.) in the classroom. Their ages were between 16-20 years. The class consisted of almost 40 students. The author observed all the students and addressed them individually inside and outside the classroom. They appeared in office hours and found the freedom to talk about their cultures and learning styles. It was a classroom that initiated different challenges to meet the learning requirements of all these students, coming from different cultures, carrying their customs and rituals. Understanding their backgrounds and learning styles was another challenge. The author has highlighted these challenges and their solutions also.

4. **Analysis and Discussion**

While analyzing a diverse classroom, the author noticed that there are two major types of students: Arabs and non-Arabs. They were different based on their mother-tongue. In an EFL classroom, these students behave differently, and dealing with them was a challenging task. Students from South Asia (India, Pakistan), had their cultural background; on the other hand, students from the Middle East had their specific culture and social norms. So teaching to such a variegated group has been an uphill task that proved very beneficial in discovering comprehensive teaching methodologies.

**Comparison of Arab and non-Arab students**

The Arab students (Algerians, Palestinians, Egyptians, Yemenis, and Sudanese), although belonging to different nationalities, almost share the same mother tongue and same culture. Such students vary
in their understanding of a foreign language. The reason is that their schooling was in their native country with specific settings of their homeland. Later traveling to another state and exposing it to a different environment and contexts may hinder their ability to learn a foreign language.

Although Arab students share the same language (Arabic) to communicate with each other, but still, some colloquial expressions vary from country to country. They feel difficulty in understanding different aspects of the English language such as grammatical structures, including tenses (present, past, and future), parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.), and pronunciation as they mix English sounds with Arabic. They are very poor in fluency and developing dictionary skills. Their native language and local colloquial expressions create a barrier in learning a foreign language (Husain & Wahid, 2008).

The second type of student is those who are entirely from another culture (non-Arabs), carrying an educational background in their natural settings or at least bearing a different native language. Such students feel disturbed and are upset when they are sharing a classroom with Arab peers and learning a foreign language. So they face a dual challenge: communicating with peers of different native languages and learning a new language.

The second type of student mentioned above develops two kinds of reactions: Negative and Positive. Positively they may like to share and communicate with their peers and try to learn from them in their typical way. Negatively their reaction may be of anger, frustration, fright, and confusion. In addition to communicating their peers, they have to learn a new language, in a unique academic setting and environment. So many things are simultaneously unknown and unique for them. These obscure and new things may block the learning process until the threat goes.

5. Challenges faced by the teachers
The challenges faced by the teachers are also diverse:
   A) Addressing the multicultural groups
   B) Developing the know-how of individual cultures and behaviors
   C) Developing strategies and materials to facilitate the learning process of a foreign language
   D) Understanding the learning styles of a variety of students

These challenges are discussed collectively under the following headings:
   1- Behavioral problems
   2- Environmental Challenges
   3- Curriculum Challenges

5.1 Behavioral Problems (faced inside the classroom)
It is a fact that a teacher faces different types of behaviors inside the classroom during his/ her teaching process. Some students are unwilling to learn English grammatical rules as they find them challenging, and at the same time, some students show weird behaviors when they are asked to speak in a classroom. Some students feel demotivated in learning a foreign language. These behaviors become more complicated when teachers face a multicultural classroom. Here the knowledge of background and cultures play an important role in modifying the classroom behaviors.

5.2 Environmental challenges
Teachers create an environment that is supposed to be friendly enough for students to learn a foreign language. In a diverse, multicultural classroom, it’s a massive challenge for the teacher to create such an environment that makes every student feel at home. Certain students are shy and reluctant to such a limit that they don’t participate in any classroom activity. The teacher has to devise a plan to encourage and support them by creating a friendly and socially free environment, inside the class.

**5.3 Curriculum Challenges**

The challenges faced by the teachers regarding a particular curriculum are intense and complex, because, in a diverse classroom, the students often face trouble in understanding certain materials and instructions, presented in specific EFL syllabus. Again their backgrounds and cultural diversity make it hard for them to understand a set of instructions. The teacher should independently choose, modify, and reconstruct such a syllabus or specific areas of the prescribed curriculum to make it understandable for a diverse group of students. For years, I have convinced the teachers to improve and modify their curriculum and it’s not difficult to do. (Linton, 2018)

**6. Findings- The Importance of researchers and qualified teacher**

Teacher’s responsibility is to meet all the challenges, inside and outside an EFL classroom, in a very effective manner.

To prove the importance of qualified and experienced teachers and researchers, an example of a project funded by the National Center of Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning in Tucson, Arizona, in 1993, is worth mentioning.

The findings of this project are practicable and adaptable for the teachers of universal settings. I also suggest following the same strategies to become effective teachers in a culturally diverse classroom. This project emphasized three main areas:

1. The Community—Teacher’s interaction with the families, visiting them, studying “funds of knowledge.”
2. Teacher’s labs—Allowing the teachers to share their findings with other teachers and researchers to form a collaboration.
3. The teachers would examine the Schools—the existing teaching methods, and make innovations according to the study of “funds of knowledge.”

The result presented in this project was very positive and beneficial: an emergence of teachers who were ethnographers as well as qualitative researchers. The relationship between teachers and students changed.

The institutions should adopt this type of planning and they should bring forward all the available resources to produce a lot of teachers who are active in solving the problems of a multicultural diverse classroom. These teachers will also suggest effective strategies for their colleagues.

The author has studied the individual behaviors, and developed a friendly relationship with students, questioned them about their country and their schooling. The author posed her image as a neutral observer, having no emotional attachment with any specific nationality. These curious efforts
to make English classes the most effective and spontaneous were based on patience and devoting ample time. If a teacher provides these students confidence and treats them equally, they may prove themselves the best communicators inside and outside class. After applying the same technique, they started putting efforts in learning a foreign language, in the presence of a healthy competitive environment.

7. Role of Teacher to overcome the challenges of a Diverse EFL Classroom
The role of a teacher is discussed extensively, keeping in mind the above-mentioned challenges of a diverse and multicultural classroom. Moore & Hasen (2012) are of the view “today’s classroom must celebrate diversity.” (p.4)

7.1 Developing a keen knowledge of cultures and their relation with language
The teacher should know that the students inside the classroom carry their learning, customs, rituals, and social norms. While standing in an EFL classroom, the teacher should bear in mind that although these students have different cultural traits, still they share some common traits. The teacher should try to use these common traits in the classroom and eliminate prejudice. For example, in a Saudi classroom setting, although there are different nationalities, they are all Muslims and share Islamic culture. The teacher should realize their values and make them learn a foreign language by respecting these values and traits. In this context, Hinkel (2014) suggests a strategy that:

In EFL settings, learners can work on short questionnaires that also have the goal of identifying the manifestations of culture in language use and heightening learner’s awareness of politeness, norms, socio-cultural variables, pragmatic functions and linguistic forms of speech acts (e.g., the types of “softening” devices and their variability) in their first language. (p.25)

7.2. The nature of a cultural shock needs attention
The students in a diverse classroom setting have cultural similarities, and dissimilarities, different traditions, and education systems. The teacher teaching EFL course should understand these cultural differences that result in cultural shock.

English as a foreign language, carrying a specific curriculum taught in non-native classrooms is culturally different. The teacher should create an association of cultures or familiarize the students with a new cultural context, in a very effective way, to avoid cultural shock.

The best way is to create a multicultural environment inside the classroom where all the students having their unique cultures are provided equal opportunities to participate in all the activities. Teacher’s respect for their cultural backgrounds will facilitate EFL learning and bridge the gap between cultures and eliminate cultural shock.

7.3. Understanding non-verbal symbols
In a multicultural classroom, students, sometimes express themselves with symbols, like gestures, facial expressions, and body language. These symbols must be interpreted well by the EFL teachers. For example, an Indian student will express herself in an entirely different way as compared to an Arab student. Indian students will be extrovert and expressive whereas, an Arab student will be soft-
spoken and timid in her body language. Her spoken style and accent will also be unique as compared to the Arab student. This may create laughter and sometimes embarrassment on her part. The teacher should assist such students shrewdly, in adopting the cultural norms and classroom environment in which they are at that time.

7.4. Creating an emotionally positive classroom climate
The teacher should show respect for all the cultures, and students belonging to different cultures, by creating a positive classroom climate.

The teacher can learn a few phrases in their native language, can label items inside the classroom, can create opportunities and praise, can provide supportive feedback, etc.

Robins, Lindsey, and Terrell tell a story that a person viewed icebergs through special glasses. He could see the whole structure of each iceberg above and below the waterline. After examining multiple icebergs, it was clear to him that each was unique; no two were the same. Using this illustration, the researchers concluded that, as teachers become proficient at comprehending the cultural traits, they will learn more about their students. They will view each student from a particular set of lenses that helps them recognize and appreciate him or her as a unique individual. (Linton, 2018)

7.5. Emphasize Co-operative Learning
Cooperative-Learning has proved the best results so far. According to Nadda (2017), “The general idea behind co-operative learning is that making small heterogeneous groups of students so that they can master the various aspects of a particular task” (p.743). This approach will help to motivate the students and develop interpersonal skills among the students. They will learn from their peers and promote a definite social relationship between culturally different students.

7.6. Teacher’s behavior should be unbiased and neutral
The teacher should develop a fair, positive behavior in her and avoid favoritism, discrimination, and prejudice. The teacher should provide equal opportunities for learning, to all the students in a multicultural classroom. Personal likings based on racism and favoritism needs to avoid strictly. It affects negatively on the learning process and emotionally disturbs the students. The teacher should recognize achievements justly. It’s vice versa; even the students should also learn to be unbiased and impartial while learning a foreign language.

7.7. Understanding different learning styles
A teacher is a judge as well as the analyzer, who differentiates between different learning styles by sharp analysis and then judges the potential of the individual student. Reiff (1997) writes, “Even when teaching college students, culturally responsible instruction and assessment should promote learner sensitivity by recognizing student style differences.” (p. 62)

Every teacher knows that students, mainly belonging to diverse cultural backgrounds, have different learning styles. For example; some are auditory learners-who learn best by hearing, some are physical learners- who learn best through hands-on activities. Sensitive teachers can identify learning styles and factors, affecting the learning process, through careful observation. Teachers
should accommodate these differences in learning styles, by showing flexibility and willingness to experiment with different techniques. It will maximize the learning of a foreign language. For visual learners, teachers can use diagrams (posters, web), visual projects (ppt), videos, graphic design software. It will also help other learners, as seeing enhances learning.

7.8. Realistic Expectations from students
Teachers have many expectations from the students as they are the product of their hard work. Moore and Hasen, (2012) explain, “Teachers need to set realistic expectations for all the students when making assignments, giving presentations, conducting discussions, and grading examinations.” (p.6). These expectations are formed by keeping in mind the diversity of the classroom. It requires such tasks by the teachers that are easy to perform, by all the students. For example, Non-Saudi students (Indians, Pakistanis, Syrian, and Algerians, etc.) are good at speaking English, whereas, Saudi students are good at visual arts and English accents. Thus, teachers should keep in mind all these diversities in the classroom.

7.9. Understanding the students with special needs
Another issue regarding the individual needs of the students that our institutions often ignore. “Thus, teachers must be prepared to identify diverse student’s strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, limitations, and special needs.” (Moore & Hasen, 2012. p.7)

Every diverse classroom has some students with special needs. The role of the teacher is very tough here. They have to identify such students and devise the specific strategies to teach these students. “For example, they create outlines, concept maps, and other visual aids for students who have difficulty processing complex concepts.” (Moore & Hasen, 2012. pp.7-8)

Teachers need to plan for working with students who have special needs. Listening teachers may use recorded audios inside classes. Especially during exams, teachers should use modifications in assignments as well as exam papers.

7.10. Understanding student’s differences
In a multicultural classroom, there are some gifted students, along with weak and slow learners. A teacher should use such techniques as peer group learning, co-operative learning, peer tutoring, community problem solving, self-directed learning, etc. to make foreign language learning easy for the students having different learning capacities. There is no hard and fast rule to understand the differences. Rather, it is a style of thinking about teaching and learning that gives value to the individual students and can be implemented in the classroom in many ways.” (Moore & Hasen, 2012. p.22)

8. Recommendations
After going through this experience and a careful study of the diverse groups, I found that there are specific requirements to be fulfilled, to make this diverse EFL classroom perfect and producing positive learning. These are my suggestions:

1- There should be a friendly communicative relationship between students and the teacher
2- The teacher should devise new methods of teaching to fulfill the learning needs of the students.
Multicultural Diverse Classroom: Addressing the Instructional Challenges

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3- There should be room for modifying the curriculum according to the student’s learning styles.

4- The teachers should play the role of researchers, always planning, investigating the needs of a diverse classroom, and sharing their experiences with their peers.

9. Conclusion
The teachers should be skilled and trained enough to manage and provide effective teaching in a multicultural EFL classroom.

Malik, Rehman & Ajmal (2011) has recommended that the new teachers should be trained according to the requisites of a multicultural classroom so that they are fully aware of the procedure of dealing with students of a diverse cultural background. The institutions are also responsible for selecting such innovative teachers to address the needs of a diverse classroom. The teachers should be monitored and facilitated in doing research work, experimenting, and carrying different projects to enhance the learning process in a diverse classroom.

To fulfill the demands of multiculturalism, the schools need to strive for the implementation of the specific policies for all classrooms to follow. However, there are plenty of initiatives that individual teachers can take to help their classes specifically (Scott, 2016).

Teaching a multicultural classroom is a phenomenal experience and it becomes enjoyable and produces maximum learning outcomes. The teachers should utilize this diversity inside and outside the classroom, in planning specific teaching methodologies and research work.

About the author
Rakhshinda Jabeen is teaching English at King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. She has 16 years of teaching EFL & ESL experience at University level. She is the author of different articles and papers on English Language and Literature.

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Multicultural Diverse Classroom: Addressing the Instructional Challenges

Jabeen


Saudi EFL Learners’ Perceptions about the Teaching of English by Native and Non-native English Teacher

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Abstract:
The issue of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) has been controversial in debates by all the stakeholders. There is a variation in the imparting of knowledge and working style by these two different groups of teachers due to their educational and cultural backgrounds. The main aim of the study is to investigate the students’ positive or negative perceptions related to the learning of English by their NESTs & NNESTs at King Khalid University. Also, it does stand to answer the main question of this study that to whom do the learners in Saudi Arabia perceive as their ideal group of English language teachers among their NESTs & NNESTS at various levels? The study is significant specifically to investigate the Saudi EFL learners’ preferences about the teaching performance of their teachers regarding content knowledge, teaching methodology, interaction with learners as well as personal characteristics of native English speaking, non-native Arabic speaking English teachers and non-native Asian English teachers. The research method included the quantitative approach. The data was collected through a questionnaire from a sample of 136 participants at the department of English, KKU. The findings indicated that NESTs & NNESTs have a number of strengths and weaknesses. However, the findings recommended that the collaborative model of NESTs & NNESTs can be more successful for teaching of English as a foreign language in Saudi context.

Keywords: English as a foreign language (EFL), native English-speaking teachers (NESTs), non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), perceptions

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1. Introduction:

For the last few years a trend about hiring / recruitment of NESTs in academic institutes is getting popularity in Saudi Arabia. Many employers simply give more preference to NESTs. Eventually, a large number of NESTs are recruited than NNESTs to teach English at various universities in Saudi Arabia.

When NESTs & NESTs work together then a comparison with respect to their working behavior, subject competency, pedagogical strengths and weaknesses is brought in view by almost all the stakeholders.

On one hand, Native English speaking teachers’ (NESTs) teaching performance attracts attention of all the stakeholders since the time they start their teaching. On the other hand, the recruiting companies usually make selection of teachers just to fulfill the employers’ demand. It can be implied that a proper screening process for the selection of native English speaking teachers is not carried out in accordance with the requirements of the profession of English language teaching. It is also perceived that regardless of teachers’ professional teaching aptitude and qualifications their first language (L1), nationality and travelling document (Passport) are considered important for their selection as a language teacher.

A few examples can be referred, such as an American fellow was working as a male nurse in a hospital but his hiring company made him a language teacher. One fine Canadian fellow had been in different ventures such as soldiering and taxi driving but his recruiting company brought him as a language teacher. Likewise, many other fellow native English-speaking teachers studied and worked other than the English language teaching before joining the profession of teaching.

This study on comparison of native and nonnative teachers’ work performance is a strikingly interesting phenomenon, as many native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and Non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) are already teaching English language at various academic levels in Saudi Arabia. This study slightly deviates from other previous studies as it focuses on three different kinds of English language teachers.

In this study, specifically, “The teaching performance” of the following three groups of teachers will be brought in an analysis with respect to the Saudi students’ perceptions who are studying English.

i. Native English-speaking teachers (NESTs)
   (Americans, British, Canadians, Australians, South Africans)

ii. Non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs / Arabs)
    (Saudis, Sudanese, Syrians, Jordanians, Egyptians and Yemenis)

iii. Non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs / Non-Arabs)
    (Indians, Pakistanis, Bengalis)
2. Literature Review:

a. Research Studies on learners’ insight towards native and non-native instructors in Saudi Arabia:

A number of significant studies in Saudi Arabian context have been made previously as many native and non-native English-speaking instructors are working/teaching at various academic institutes of public and private sectors.

Alseweed (2012) carries out his study in Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. The participants of the study had been taught English by both NESTs & NESTs. The study sample consists of 169 male graduates who believe that NNESTs contribute effectively in terms of their role, first as language learners and then as language instructors. The learners’ opinion about their NESTs is positive than the NNESTs. The respondents give more importance to their NESTs over NNESTs and this is for the reason that majority of the learners tend to study abroad for their higher studies. The learners believe that their NNESTs provide them a serious learning environment though they have preference to NESTs. The respondents indicate that they evaluate both groups of teachers for their strengths.

Alenazi (2012) a faculty member at King Saud University, Saudi Arabia, conducts a study on hiring EFL teachers. The study focuses on the major aspects of the recruiting process i.e. the selection criteria, effects of the applicants’ status as native and non-native for their employments. It reveals that the applicant’s status as NESTs & NESTs does definitely affect their employment probability. It ends up when the employers are asked to appraise the applicants’ qualification; the employers unconsciously disregard the native English-speaking applicants’ academic qualification, teaching experience and consider nationality and accent as their qualification indicators.

Ahmed & Ahmed (2014) work on measuring non-Arab non-native English speaking instructors’ opinions in Saudi context and conclude that non Arabic speaking teachers are highly experienced and appropriately qualified teachers in the TESOL job market in Saudi Arabia. They find themselves professionally motivated and successful about their skill of English language teaching. Their inability to speak Arabic language does not pose any serious hindrance in their classroom practices as EFL teachers.

Ahmed (2016) indicates in his study about the academic supervisors towards non-Arab non-native EFL instructors’ attitudes and according to the results, the supervisors believe that they had their strong and weak areas. He finds out that non-Arab non-native teachers use more effective teaching techniques compared to native counterparts and that being native or non-native is not an advantage or disadvantage, an effective teacher is someone who is qualified in TESOL/TEFL/ELT and has relevant experience.

b. Studies on learners’ perceptions about native & non-native teachers in general context:

Apart of the Saudi Arabian context, this issue of NESTs & NNESTs has already been brought in research in various academic institutes such as Spain (Lasagbaster & Sierra, 2002),
Hungry (Benke & Medgyes, 2005), Korea (Butler, 2007), Turkey (Ustuniuoglu, 2007), Hong Kong (Lai Ping Florence Ma, 2012), Taiwan (Enchong Liaw, 2012), Turkey (Erhan Aslan, 2016), Turkey (Emrah Ekmekecil, 2016) but specifically a brief survey of the past research work can be linked with the present study in the Saudi context.

Medgyes (1992), the pioneer in the field of teachers' nativeness and non-nativeness, opens the discussion in the 1990s by claiming that although native and non native speakers teach differently, both can become equally effective language professionals.

(Reves & Medgyes 1994; Liaw 2012) report about an international survey on EFL or ESL teachers. In this study three areas of teaching are explored: i-Making practice English language, ii- Common teaching methodology, iii- Distinctive language teaching approach. It discovers that non-Arab non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) lack spoken competence including fluency and language accuracy. The study reveals that they face problems with effective use of English. It is found that they had a little familiarity of context. They learn and are taught a language which is totally different from their first language in isolation. On the contrary, NESTs teach language in comparatively better and creative way in more closely related context. Their teaching techniques are found more innovative and effective.

(Canagaragah 1999; Kachru 1996) discover another aspect regarding the difference between NESTs & NNESTs. These researchers reveal that NNESTs are increasing or exceeding over NESTs in the world. Around three quarters of English teaching workforce worldwide either as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) is from NNESTs.

Liu (1999) discovers a perceptional discrepancy between instructors and ESL students when judging the native speaking ability of the instructor. (Arva & Medgyes 2000; Liaw 2012) report native and non-native teachers’ performance in different categories i.e.: i. General disposition, ii. Approaches to teaching the language, iii. Use of English. NESTs with effective and superior command of English tend to set fewer tests and homework. They give preference to more deregulated activities, such as collaborative activities and more flexible approaches using various materials. On the contrary, their nonnative counter parts prefer more regulated activities such as translation exercises or drills. They use more controlled approaches requiring text book and homework. Native teachers are found partially devoted to teaching and partially sympathetic to students’ cognitive process of acquiring skill or knowledge, whereas NNESTs are stricter and have more realistic expectations of students’ learning. NESTs emphasize the elements such as oral fluency and colloquial register, whereas NNESTs focus on grammar rules, accuracy and formal register.

Lasagbaster and Sierra (2002) reveal that Spanish EFL learners have an inclination to learn pronunciation, listening, speaking and culture from NESTs. They prefer NNESTs, for learning the skills of grammar & learning strategies.

(Mehboob 2004; Liaw 2012) indicate in their studies that students appreciate and criticize their NNESTs for various reasons. NESTs are preferred for their oral language proficiency and knowledge of their social values but they are criticized for their weak grammatical concepts and students’ learning knowledge, whereas NNESTs are preferred by the students for their strong
grammar structured language and their empathy for students’ learning but these teachers are judged for the ineffective quality of their spoken language and lack of social awareness. Liaw (2012) investigates Taiwanese college students’ frame of minds about their NESTs & NNESTs. There are many studies made earlier for examining students’ attitudes toward NESTs but (Moussu, 2010; Pacek, 2005) explore the effects of NESTs in a background where qualifying language skillfulness is considered to be very significant for learners’ professional development in time to come.

Benkae & Medgyes (2005) contribute on the issue of NESTs & NNESTs performance in Hungarian background. They find that NESTs increasingly inclined on spoken language and cultural knowledge. NNESTs are more skillful and motivated for lessons and correction work in language classes.

Butler (2007) discovers that Korean students have different attitudes and preferences for their teachers’ pronunciation, fluency and confidence who speak English in American and Korean accents. However, they do not find any significant differences regarding teaching strategies.

In the Turkish EFL context, Ustunluoglu (2007) reports that NESTs and NNESTs are different in communication skills, teaching roles, and individual characteristics. It is perceived that non-native (Turkish) instructors are stricter than NESTs. They adapt the mode of imparting knowledge (teaching) more successfully and their lectures on English language are more knowledgeable than NESTs. On the contrary, it was found that NESTs are more talkative than NNESTs for various reasons such as “fun” during the teaching and the use of their physical postures, gestures and facial expressions to communicate non verbally with their students.

Aslan & Thompson (2016) indicates that NESTs and NNESTs are found opposite to each other in specific areas like approaches to skillful language teaching and classroom management. Aslan & Thompson (2016) explain further that students give importance to both NESTs and NNESTs in various areas of language learning process differently.

The learners do not perceive the superiority of one group of teacher over other. In conclusion, Aslan & Thompson (2016) states that learners’ language experience simply affects students’ perspectives regarding the language learning process but they also affect the construction of believes, when learners get experienced with NESTs and NNESTs. It is therefore, considered that learners may find changes in their perspectives towards the English language teachers or the context. Moreover, it is advocated in the study that program administrators who usually advocate the plus points of NESTs with the objectives of increasing students’ registration must also explain the positive points of NNESTs too. Other studies have also noticed the effects of English proficiency. (Chacon 2002; Shin 2001; Liaw 2012). It is found that teachers with higher levels of language proficiency use more interactive and communication oriented approaches in their class rooms.

(Liaw 2012) reveals that university students prefer NESTs for communication oriented skills and culture. However, this preference is not reflected by their parents and education administrators, especially when passing English proficiency test is involved. Conversely, NNESTs are believed to be better for their skill of test preparation because of their knowledge and experience of test preparation. Additionally, it is perceived that students’ selection for language
teachers is affected due to areas and reasons of language learning. It is a fact that both native and non native teachers contribute differently to the task of language learning.

(Liaw 2012) explores further that university students did not prefer their language teachers because of their status of being native English speaking teachers. Instead, they prefer teachers’ subject knowledge competency, language teaching experience, lesson planning and teaching techniques as the most important qualifications. This fact contradicts previous study of Arva & Medgyes (2000) and showed that students emphasize practical learning requirements and not only speaking ability, particularly when the passing language proficiency test is the main goal for many students. Therefore, for making teachers’ selection students ranked knowledge and experience more significant. However, preference is different for different tests. Finally, (Ekmekcil 2016) discovers that the findings of the assessment of EFL students’ oral proficiency by NESTs & NNESTs showed statistically no significant variance in the marks given by both groups of teachers. The results assigned by NESTs & NNESTs revealed similar rating behaviors. However, the only difference in behavior is in the appraisal of “pronunciation” intrinsic element of the scale. The study can be taken as a representative for the dependability of NNESTs’ assessing or ascertaining behavior in contrast with that of NESTs. The study finally concludes that each of the two types of teachers have their distinctive features with reference to the critical analysis of language skills and both the groups of teachers can be the counterpart to each other to many matters related to the appraisal of students’ language skills.

2.1. Objectives of the study:
This study aims to explore students’ positive or negative perceptions related to the learning of English by their NESTs & NNESTs at King Khalid University. The results of this study will help decision making authorities to recruit suitable and needful teaching staff in accordance with the certain requirements of Saudi students and their culture regardless of the native or non native backgrounds of teachers.

2.2. Limitations of the study:
There are some constraints related to the study due to some cultural restrictions. The scope of this detailed critical investigation focuses on the male native and non native faculty members who are working at the King Khalid University and likewise only male students’ perceptions will be brought in the process of analysis. Female faculty members and female students have been excluded from this study due to the prevailing social constraints.

3. Method

3.1 Research Questions:
The study will seek answers of the following questions.

Q1. What strengths and weaknesses do learners find for learning English from a native English-speaking teacher (NEST)?

Q2. What strengths and weaknesses do learners find for learning English from a non-native English-speaking teacher (NEST)?
3. To whom do learners in Saudi Arabia perceive as their ideal group of English language teachers?

3.2. The research tools:
The research instrument is questionnaire for the students of English department at King Khalid University.

3.3 Research sample:
A sample of 136 students was chosen and a questionnaire was distributed to get the participants feedback about different groups of their teachers such as native English speaking teachers (NESTs), non-native Asian English speaking teachers (NNESTs), non-native Arab English speaking teachers (NNESTs). It was decided that students of level 6 and 7 will be the intended contributors of this study. These students are at senior levels of their graduation studies in faculty of Languages and Translation at King Khalid University. The participants studied English as major in their graduation. The students have learned English from different groups of teachers like native English, non-native Arab and non-native Asian teachers.

3.4 Instruments
The quantitative approach was employed and the research instrument was constructed. The questionnaire will cover the important aspects such as (Part A) students’ personal preferences for their NESTs & NNESTs (1-5 items), (Part B) teachers’ pedagogical skills(6-10 items), (Part C) teachers’ class room management (11-17 items), (Part D) teachers’ subject / content competency related to reading, writing, grammar, listening and speaking skills (18-44 items) at various levels in their respective courses.

3.5 Data Collection
The data was collected from 136 students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation – (Graiger Campus) of King Khalid University, during the fourth week of the second semester of the academic year 2019. A questionnaire consisting of 44 items was distributed. However, 121 students returned the completed questionnaire.

3.6 Data Analysis
The data was examined carefully and methodically by using descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages. The graphs have been plotted to represent the findings of the study.

4. Results:
The results have been inferred from the responses of the questionnaire and which have been presented in the tables given below. The data has been classified under four categories

Table-1. Overall view of Saudi EFL learners' perceptions regarding the teaching of English by Native or Non-native English Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Native</th>
<th>Non-native Asians</th>
<th>Non-native Arabs</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td>Fr</td>
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</table>
Saudi EFL Learners’ Perceptions about the Teaching of English

Abdul Qadeer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Native</th>
<th>Non-native (Arabs &amp; Asians)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>56.80</td>
<td>41.76</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.06</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Part A: Students’ Personal Preferences about English Teachers

Figure 1. view of Saudi EFL learners’ perceptions regarding the teaching of English by Native or Non-native English Teachers

Figure 2. Students’ Personal Preferences about English Teachers
Table 3. Part B: Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Personal Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>33.24</td>
<td>11.60</td>
<td>8.53</td>
<td>37.80</td>
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</table>

Figure 3. Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers' Personal Characteristics

Table 4. Part C: Students’ Perceptions about Student - Teacher Interaction

<table>
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<td>27.94</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>8.09</td>
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</table>

Figure 4. Students’ Perceptions about Student - Teacher Interaction

Table-5 Part D: Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Competency on the Listening Skill.

<table>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Saudi EFL Learners’ Perceptions about the Teaching of English  Abdul Qadeer

**Figure 5.** Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Competency on the Listening Skill.

**Table-6** Part E: Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Competency on the Reading Skill.

<table>
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<tr>
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**Figure 6.** Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Competency on the Reading Skill

**Table-7** Part D: Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Competency on the Writing Skill.

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Figure 7. Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Competency on the Writing Skill.

Table-8 Part D: Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Competency on the Grammar Skill

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</table>
Figure 8. Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Competency on the Grammar Skill

Table 9. Part E: Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Competency on the Teaching Methodology

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</table>

Figure 9. Students’ Perceptions about English Language Teachers’ Competency on the Teaching Methodology

5. Discussion:

The study focused on to determine Saudi EFL learners’ perceptions about their different groups of teachers such as native, non-native (Arab & Asian) English speaking teachers. The outcomes of the study revealed that 41.76% of learners considered NESTs as their preferred teachers on the basis of the teachers’ personal characteristics. The learners seemed in the favor of Philopson’s (1992) argument about the perceived supremacy of NESTs which he later termed as native speaking Fallacy. It links the belief that, the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker.

The second theory in the realm of teaching English to the speakers of other languages (TESOL) is that NNESTs can be more successful in the teaching of English because they themselves had been accomplished language learners, here the study outcomes seem closer to this theory by inferring the results that NESTs consisting upon Arab and Asian teachers have been comparatively more successful for making effective student-teacher interaction. The learners liked NNESTs (Arabs and Asians) due to their positive, friendly and pragmatic behavior. 

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related to teachers’ professional competency in the use of teaching methodology, the learners were found comparatively more satisfied and appreciative than NESTs.

With respect to teachers’ content knowledge including grammar, reading, writing, and listening the learners indicated that NNESTs (Arab & Asian) were comparatively well equipped, efficient and competent than NESTs. Keeping in view the major findings of the study, the learners supported NESTs for their personal characteristics and this can probably be due to the generally established belief that NESTs are better English teachers. However, the learners’ categorical feedback about their native and NESTs & NNESTs revealed their preferences for NNESTs. The learners’ this feedback might emphasize that NNESTs had been successful language learners.

Ahmad (2016) concluded in his study by referring several other researchers like Medgyes (1992), Canagarajah (1990), Cook (1999), Llurda (2004) who stated in their studies that NNESTs were comparatively better in motivating, using teaching methodology and establishing student-teacher relationship because they are accomplished language learners. However, NNESTs lack in effective native like communicative language skills and this deficiency of NNESTs takes them behind over NESTs. The findings come closer to the Cook’s (1999) study which states that a limited use of learners’ first language can be useful particularly at junior level English language teaching.

The findings of this study have close relevance with the education system in Saudi Arabia whereas the students at school levels have very little communicative exposure to the English language as the state run schools mainly have non-native Arab speaking English teachers.

6. Conclusion:

Students’ perceptions regarding the teachers’ work progress is always very much valued in the realm of education. Students can be considered as the judges of their teachers. The study has tended to analyze students’ perceptions about their NESTs & NNESTs which ultimately can help recruiters to make their preferences about native, non-native Arab and non-native Asian teachers on the basis of the facts revealed by this study.

The findings indicated that there are several kinds of differences and similarities among NESTs, NESTs(Arab) and NESTs(Asian) teachers. Besides, it is also evident that NESTs & NNESTs have a number of merits and demerits among the focused groups of teachers. The overall findings discovered that majority of the students showed the first preference to their non-native Arab teachers, whereas native teachers were rated as second according to their inclination. Non-native Asian teachers were taken into the last category. However, the collective ratio of Non-native Arabs and Non-native Asian teachers exceeds over NESTs instead of their western nationality and accent. Non-native Arab and non-native Asian teachers are considered more successful according to the Saudi EFL students’ perceptions for the teaching of Reading, Grammar and Writing skills. On the contrary, NESTs were considered more proficient and skillful for teaching listening and speaking skills.
Consequently, the collaborative model of native and non-native teachers can be more successful for teaching of English as a foreign or second language in Saudi context. It can be inferred that native, non-native Arab and non-native Asian teachers can complement to each other because the weaknesses of a certain group can be covered/compensated by the strengths of the other group of teachers to bring effectively harmonized teaching benefits.

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Abdul Qadeer has been working as a Lecturer in English at King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia since 2003. He did his M.A in English literature from University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan and M.Ed. from the University of Karachi, Pakistan. Currently, he is working on his Ph.D. at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0323-7807

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Text, Reader & Pedagogy: A Reflection Upon Teaching English Poetry to EFL Female Students at a Saudi Arabian University

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Abstract
This study is a descriptive-analytical investigation of the current approaches of teaching English poetry as a vital component of the English Department curriculum for English as a foreign language (EFL) female students at Faculty of Languages and Translation (FLT), King Khalid University (KKU). It aims at identifying teaching methodologies adopted to teach poetry and demonstrates learners’ responses towards these practices. The study was conducted at the English Department of the female campus during the academic year 2018-2019 (1439-1440 H). Forty students who studied poetry (Eng-430) in first and second semester participated in the study. The study adopts a qualitative methodology with the questionnaire as the primary tool to collect data and descriptive analysis as a method to interpret data. The study finds out that most of the teaching methodologies practiced in teaching poetry are traditional teacher-centered. It view poetry subject as a type of “knowledge” where teachers are mediators to impart information about poets and poems, and the students are passive recipients for information without interactive, critical, creative and evaluative abilities. Resultantly, students’ involvement in the class, interest in the subject, and comprehension of the genre are affected. The study finds the effectiveness of an interactive multimodal pedagogical model of interacting reader-centered educational tools and literary theories to promote language and literary competence, critical thinking, knowledge-cum-creativity in poetry classroom. The suggested methodology would help to provide a motivating medium for English language and literature learning as per the requirements of quality modern education.

Keywords: EFL, female students, King Khalid University, pedagogy, Saudi Arabia, teaching poetry

Introduction

There is a broad agreement on the fact that literature subjects in EFL classrooms play a significant role in fostering students’ intellectual awareness and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) and developing essential skills needed for foreign language academic literacy. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) postulate the advantages of teaching literature. They advocate that literature can offer relevant linguistic models such as excellent writing and linguistic diversity, an extension of linguistic competence, mental training, authenticity, openness for interpretations, memorability, and cultural enrichment. Hence, including literature in universities and schools’ curriculums is vital for the acquisition of linguistic and cultural knowledge of the foreign language.

Poetry is one of the significant literary genres and a vital segment of the EFL curriculum in all English departments around the world. Many controversies charge poetry to be lexically and grammatically complex structure that is personal and not easily understood, particularly in EFL scenarios. Nevertheless, English Departments include different poetic texts to their EFL curriculums believing in its advantages in language learning. Poetry is a bite-sized and digestible form that can be easily handled and memorized, unlike fiction and drama. It offers a feel for the sounds of its language, facilitating learning pronunciation, and promoting language vocabulary. Poetry also gives unique access to the culture behind the writing, and students can learn all about art and literature from different cultures through poems. Language learning is somehow “messy”, but poetry, when read and memorized, helps to provide a secure anchor back to the language to come out again when it’s needed. Poetry empowers language learners and gives them the confidence required to handle the target language by re-enacting the experiences of poets through the medium of writing and making of it something newly real. Thus, poetry provides an essential tool in language learning.

Poetry can often be scary or intimidating in any language, especially a foreign one. However, achieving the goals of poetry and other literary subjects depends mainly on the methods, strategies, and techniques adopted to deliver it in the classroom. Brandes (1986) states: “Learning what is meaningful and relevant depends partly on what is taught and partly on how it is taught”. (Brandes and Ginnis, 1986. p12)

Furthermore, the modern digital age, with its advance in science and technology, has swapped people from reading to the world of digitalization. Hence, teaching methodologies should be research-guided and up-to-date to meet the requirement of quality modern education, which focuses on the development of student information processing skills (Dresang & McClelland, 1999). According to Wagner (2005), literature shouldn’t be taught as mere knowledge, but as a tool of investigation skills and critical thinking. Other scholars like Knapp (2004), Rosslyn (2005), and Showalter (2004) assert the idea that teaching literary subjects should be in line with the needs of the 21st-century education, which demands the development of students’ higher-order thinking abilities and suggest varied pertinent activities to invigorate them.

Approaches to teaching poetry and other literature subjects can be listed as follows:

**The critical literary approach**

According to Maley (1989), this approach focuses on the ‘literariness of the texts’ including features as the setting, themes, plot, characterization, motivation, value, psychology, background,
etc. This approach can only be practical if students have already grasped the intermediate levels and are at a higher level with ample knowledge of literary conventions.

**The stylistic approach**
This approach concentrates on literature as ‘text’, and it is precisely what EFL/ESL teachers need for their language classes. In contrast to the first approach, this approach includes explanations and analysis of language preceding to interpretations.

**Language-based Model**
In this model, the decorative feature of literature is reached only through the linguistic and discoursal quality of literature (Lazar, 1993). However, care should be taken into account not to let the linguistic surface distort the pleasure of reading literature (Lazar, 1993). This approach to teaching literature is similar to what Maley (1989) calls the *stylistic approach*.

**Literature as Content or Culture Model**
In this model, literature is a perfect tool for presenting the cultural concepts language such as the history, literary theories, theory of genres, biography of the authors (Carter & Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993), geography, custom, politics, art, etc.

**Literature as Personal Growth or Enrichment**
This approach considers personal experience as a method to engage the students in literary works (Carter & Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993). Here, the students not only work out on the linguistic features but appreciate the *literary experience* which is in line with the learners’ own real-life experience.

**The Story Grammar Approach (SGA)**
This approach establishes an interaction between the reader and the text. The reader gets aware of the text structure. It is nearly associated with genre-awareness in textual analysis to better students’ understanding. Recognizing the difference between two different text types will serve the learners to make better guesses about the text types and how ideas are developed in a certain text.

**Reader Response Approach (RRA)**
Reader Response Approach (RRA) has been having a significant influence in EFL literature teaching (Carlisle, 2000). It is the approach of teaching “literature for literature’s sake” rather than for mere knowledge. (Ali, 1994). Readers in this response are not passive learners but active having response to whatever they read. This reaction has been given four elements by Benton and Fox (1990), which are anticipating, picturing, interacting, and evaluating. RRA is grounded on constructivism that views reading as an interactive transactive process between the reader and the text to determine the meaning (Ali, 1994). The reader constructs a reflective and creative process where meaning is self-constructed. The meaning of the text is not innate in the text but invited by the writer and attributed to the text by the reader (Swaffer, 1988). Thus, readers are the meaning creators.
**Integrated Approach**

Timucin (2001) and Savvidou (2004) offer an integrated approach to teaching literature where two or more approaches are reconciled in a systematic way. This approach may be proved to be the best alternative approach for EFL/ESL classes. Timucin (2001) implements a combined approach containing language-based approach and stylistics in the Turkish EFL context. He explores the students’ attitudes towards this mixed approach and its effectiveness. The results of his study show that there was a noteworthy association between the methodological approach the researcher adopted and the students’ level of motivation, involvement, and appreciation of the literary texts. Savvidou (2004) put the following as the stages in her integrated model: (1) preparation and anticipation, (2) focusing, (3) preliminary response, (4) working at it – I, (5) working at it – II, (6) interpretation and Personal Response.

Moreover, literary theories that emphasize on the reader and assign the responsibility of meaning making on him like New Criticism, Stylistics, Poststructuralism, feminism, Marxism, Postcolonialism, New historicism can help to achieve the aims of modern education and can also help to overcome the limitations of the traditional approaches towards the teaching of literature (Yaqoob, 2011). Reader-based poststructuralist approaches offer an operative cognitive learning framework. Cognitive learning theories assert that comprehensive and meaningful learning occurs when learners are dynamically involved in the learning process. Literary theory working on the principle of cognitive learning engages readers independently in the process of meaning making. Students reading literature with literary theory see literature as a part of larger society outside the text and classroom. They are skilled to read a text in construction with the social and cultural realities and institutions. This helps them take the reading of literature as a meaningful activity (Yaqoob, 2011).

All the above-mentioned methodologies can be overall divided to two categories: teacher-centered and reader-centered. Teacher centered approaches like the ‘cultural model’, linguistic model’ and ‘personal growth model’ and other where practice tends to promote students’ aesthetic and linguistic understanding and assist them to read history as discussed by the author and poets. Students “shut out the world from [their] classrooms and[their] minds” (Lindblom 2003). All these mechanistic teacher-centered approaches only succeed in conveying the language, the culture and ideologies behind the text. While reader centered approaches such as RRA, literary criticism, and literary theories are in line with the actual objective of teaching literature, which is to empower students with the required analytical skills to create meanings, evaluate information, and grow a critical understanding of the world outside the classroom. Whatever methodology is observed, it should aim at the development of students’ higher-order thinking abilities and make the reader the center of learning, allowing them to actively engage in the text to help the process of meaning making.

**Study Questions:**
The study aims at answering the following questions:
1) What are the current teaching practices in poetry classrooms at FLT female campus, KKU?
2) What are the students’ responses towards the effectivity of these practices?
3) What effective pedagogy can be suggested to promote language and literary competence, critical thinking, knowledge-cum-creativity in poetry classes?
Literature Review

Literature thrived as the key basis of input in teaching in language classes in the epoch of the Grammar Translation Method. After that, it went on declining with the advent of structuralism and audiolingual models (Collie & Slater, 1987). Moreover, and with CLT, literature was entirely ignored as focus was centered on practicality in the EFL classroom.

Literature in EFL/ESL has started getting its value back by the 1980s (Duff & Maley, 1991). Abundant publications have brought literature back in language classes such as Collie & Slater (1987); Duff & Maley (1991); Hill (1986); Lazar (1993); Maley & Duff (1989); McRae, (1991) and Belcher & Hirvela (2000). These and other scholars advocate the uncountable advantages of literature as a promising tool in EFL/ESL class rooms. They view literature as an integrally authentic source of knowledge that provides authentic input for language learning (Ghosn, 2002; Shrestha, 2008). Literary texts are identically motivating owing to its genuineness and the meaningful context it offers (Ghosn, 2002, Van, 2009). Literature indorses cultural and intercultural consciousness (Van, 2009) especially in the era of globalization where there is a dire need for understanding of the whole world.

On the other hand, Literature is promoting extensive and intensive reading and the finest literary text for intensive reading purposes is poetry where students read verses meticulously to delve deeper into the text and dig out hidden meaning articulated through literary figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, allegory, etc. This can lead them to extract deep meanings embedded in texts. Literature can advance sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge, as demonstrated in communicative competence models (McKay, 2001). Additionally, vocabulary and grammar knowledge can be expanded through extensive contact with literary texts which present both formal and informal language. (Van, 2009). Literature is rich with innumerable authentic tokens of language for the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills (Belcher & Hirvela (2000); Crain (1993); Erkaya (2005); Fitzgerald, (1993); Knight (1993); Latosi-Sawin (1993); Nasr (2001); Spack (1985); Stern (2001); Vandrick (1996). Reading literary texts also enhances emotional intelligence (Ghosn, 2002). It is a good medium for critical thinking development among language learners (Gajdusek & van Dommelen (1993); Ghosn (2002); Van (2009).

However, some scholars claim a few possible inconveniences Literature might cause in language classes. This includes syntactic and lexical difficulty of literary texts, deviation from normal phonetic, phonological and semantic structure, improper selection of texts, unfamiliarity with literary genres, conventional, religious and cultural barriers.

In the Arab world, teaching literature in EFL classrooms has been a vigorous topic of research and studies. Studies from different countries argued the effectiveness and validity of Literature as teaching instrument in classes. One of the fundamental issues considered by earlier studies since 1983 is the structure of the curriculum in English departments of Arab universities. Bader (1992) and Zughoul (1983, 1986 & 1987), for example, argue for increasing the number of language and linguistics courses at the expense of literature courses. Due to the moral, religious and social values embedded in foreign literature which often conflict with the students’ Arab and
Muslim culture and values, Asfour (1983); Dahiyat (1983) & Zughoul (1983) stress that some English literature courses taught in universities do not meaningfully enhance students’ competence because they primarily focus on content rather than on mode of expression (Bader 1992). Likewise, Zughoul (1983, 1986 & 1987) chiefly claims that the failure of English departments in the Arab world is due to the fact that the literature component of the curriculum is overrepresented at the expense of language and linguistics, which are the basic needs of needs of the communities.

Quite oppositely, Salih’s (1986) survey on 118 Arab students majoring in English investigates their views on whether literature helped them improve their language skills. The study reveals students’ general satisfaction with literature as it empowers their language competency. Obeidat (1997) agrees with Salih that the dominion of the language and linguistic subjects in the English curriculum hardly improves students’ language competence. Literature benefits students in obtaining a native-like linguistic competence, practicing sound English, acquiring modern English linguistic features, speaking fluently and eloquently and becoming creative, critical, and analytical learners. Ben Zid (2015) also supports the same notion in a study at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman that determines students’ positive views towards literature as a powerful tool for language competence enhancement. In Kuwait, Haggan (1999), surveying seventy-one of Kuwait University students, arrives at the conclusion that forcing unwilling students to study linguistics or literature courses could be counter-productive. Therefore, she proposes allowing students to choose either linguistics or literature as their area of specialization within the Department of English. Later, a similar study conducted at the Hashemite University in Jordan by Al-Kharabsheh, Al-Azzam, and Obeidat (2009) surveys seventy-five 4th year students of the English department to collect their views on different curriculum components. It reveals that students differently like subjects according to their interests and future planning.

In Saudi Arabia, literature subjects have always been put on the table as an apple of contention. Teaching literature has always been an unnerving mission due to many reasons such as Saudi religious and cultural restrictions, limitation of school texts books and the outdated teaching methodologies to teach them, views of western literature as a threat to identity, the focus on memorization as prevalent tool in learning, low language proficiency and learning outcomes.

The number of researches addressing teaching and learning English Literary subjects in Saudi Arabian universities is scarce in comparison with the hugeness of literature focusing on the topic of EFL. Among these studies, Mekheimer (2011) is prominent with his research that explores the perceptions and attitudes of faculty and students towards English literature at King Khalid University. The study concludes positive attitudes towards teaching/learning English literature by both instructors and students as they recognize the vital role of literature in learning language and culture. Mekheimer imparts the rigid socio-religious context, inappropriate selection of literary texts, and the inadequate employment of technology as main issues that negatively affect the teaching/learning of English literature. Similarly, Adam and Babiker (2015) support teaching of literature as it offers opportunities to improve student’s language skills and enhances their creativity and critical thinking. Another study by Hussein and Al-Emami (2016) investigates the difficulties that face English instructors while teaching literature courses at the university of Hail. It concludes that student’ low language proficiency, unfamiliarity with the cultural and social
background of the texts are main issues beside other issues related to the text selection and teaching practices.

All the above-mentioned studies, in general, conclude some sort of disappointment of both learners and educators and highlight issues that need to be studied and focused on more narrowly and precisely. They have tackled literature generally, but non-yet has tackled each literature subject individually to investigate further the situation of teaching and learning on the basis of the subject nature. Each literary genre stands differently from other genres: fiction is different from poetry, and drama is different from prose, and each requires separate focus. The present study aims at adding to the body of literature of teaching and learning literature courses in Saudi universities. It targets teaching poetry as the most challenging literary subject and emphasizes the role of teaching methodology in achieving the learning outcomes of the course. The study suggests significant practices that help the effective delivery of poetry lessons and engage the students in the process of meaning making, promoting their linguistic and literary capabilities.

Study Context

The study was conducted at King Khalid University, Faculty of Languages and Translation, Department of English (Female Campus) during the academic year 2018-2019 (1439-1440 H). King Khalid University is one of the Saudi government universities which is located in the city of Abha in the southern region. KKU hosts more than 73000 students in more than 47 colleges and departments spread in the south region of Aseer.

Faculty of Languages and Translation (FLT) is one of the dynamic and significant faculties of KKU. So far, English is the only language being taught in the college. The college offers bachelor’s degree (B.A) in English language and master’s degree (M.A) in Applied Linguistics and Translation. Male and female campuses are set separately. The curriculum in the English department has been designed to cover Language skills, Linguistics, Literature, and Translation courses that are integral for EFL learning. Students study English skills for the first two years, then get introduced to core Linguistics, Literature, and Translation subjects in the second half of their academic tenure. All courses have course specifications which are approved by The National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment and are followed strictly by all instructors in both male and female campuses. Literature courses constitute 10% of the total courses the students are required to complete to obtain the B.A degree.

**Table 1. Literary Courses of in B.A Curriculum, English Department, FLT. KKU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>LITERARY SUBJECT</th>
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<th>PREREQUISIT</th>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Introduction to Literary Forms</td>
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</table>
Poetry is taught in two courses: Introduction to Literary Forms (Eng-331) and Poetry (Eng-430). Introduction to Literary Forms is taught to level 5 students. students are briefly introduced to the definition, forms and characteristics of poetry along with a few poems, while Poetry (Eng-430) is taught in level 7 to reinforce the theory of poetry previously studies in the in Introduction to Literary Forms course and exposes the students to fourteen poems taken from the 19th and 20th century English poetry. The learning objectives of the course are stated in the course specification as following:

- To reinforce the students’ knowledge of the literary genre of Poetry (including but not restricted to the definition of poetry, the characteristics of the language of poetry, figures of speech, musical devices, themes, symbolism, etc.)
- To provide students with the basic literary and critical terminology and skills necessary for appreciating poetry.
- To enable students to analyze a variety of poems.
- To reinforce students' skills of comparison, analysis and critical thinking.

The learning outcomes of the course are stated as below:
“By course-end, students will be able to understand and evaluate poems belonging to different literary movements, pointing out both the original contribution of the author and the elements that they share with other poems belonging to the same literary movement.”


**Methodology**
The study aims at examining the teaching methods adopted to teach English Poetry to EFL students from students’ perspective. For this purpose, qualitative method was adapted. The data collection instrument is the students’ questionnaire. The chosen method is particularly suite for obtaining a specific type of data (Lawthom and Tindall, 1994). Questionnaire is an effective research instrument that consists of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. The questionnaire consists of forty questions divided into four parts: the first part is related to the students’ responses to literary courses especially poetry, the second part asks
questions pertaining to course syllabus, the third part focuses on the text, and the fourth part targets the teaching practices and students’ attitude towards these practices.

Findings
The data collected has shown significant indicators of certain aspects of teaching Poetry in the English department. In the part related to poetry as a subject as shown in figure 1, students were asked if they believe that poetry and other literary courses are as important as other subjects, more than 47% percent voted no. A similar percentage believed that poetry is a difficult and tedious subject while 70 percent claimed that reading poetry in their mother language is easily accessible and more appealing to them than to read in English. This shows that students are not aware of the learning objectives and not convinced of the importance of poetry in polishing their English and refining their language skills.

![Figure 1. Students’ response to poetry as a subject.](image1)

The second part dealt with the teaching methodology. As shown in Figure 2, 50% of the students believed that the teaching is “teacher-centered”, 73% asserted that teachers typically focus on explaining the poem’s general structural elements like setting, themes, glossary, figures of speech while students only listen and write notes. Only a few agreed that teachers make them participate in the interpretation and criticism of poems. This demonstrated the traditionality of teaching methodologies in poetry classes, which has been a vital role in lowering students’ interest in the class and understanding of the genre, and that has been undoubtedly a huge hindrance in the learning process.

![Figure 2. Students’ response to the teaching methodology in poetry classes](image2)
In the section related to the extent of students involvement with the poems they study, more than half of the participants, as shown in figure 3, agreed that the only thing they get is information without the ability to work with the text. Students play the role of a passive listener in the class, storing superficial knowledge about the text they are reading with no chance to get involved in the text. Critical thinking, brain-storming discussions, cognitive development, and literary creativity looks quite ignored in such teacher-centered practices.

![Figure 3. Students’ response to involvement with poems](image)

The data has also shown the lack of poetry related activities in the classroom, which engage students with poems and break the traditional shackles of “read and memorize” learning activity. This is evidently noticed in figures 4, where 50% of the students state that they have been deprived from any kind of activities that help relating the poems they read to their real life. Simultaneously, 65% reported that they were never encouraged to put themselves in the place of the author and were never fortified to try writing similar poetry to the poetry they study. This has created a gap between the students and the poems they read, stopping them from active indulgences with the poems, and instilling the sense of boredom, insignificance and impracticality of poetry course.

![Figure 4. Students’ response to activities in poetry classes.](image)

Answers to the question of using literary theories in teaching poetry and other literary subjects show that students are rarely introduced to literary theory for criticism. The sole aim of students’ attendance in poetry class is to comply with the requirement of course attendance and passing the courses at any case, even if with average or passing marks. Poetry as a vital literary genre is not
being taught using reader-based literary theories that would strengthen the student’s bond with literary texts and boost their interest in the class. This is prominently noticed in figures 5 as the majority of the students agree that they attend poetry class to pass exams and that they are being given notes and summaries to prepare for exams.

![Figure 5. Students’ response to attendance in poetry classes and poetry exams.](image)

**Discussion**

From the afore mentioned results and finding of the study, we can summarize the findings of the study as following:

1. Students study poetry in level 7 where their language proficiency and knowledge of literary forms is considerably normal and above low.

2. Poetry curriculum has been recently revised, and selection of poems in the course took place considering diversity of poems and easiness of English language. Most of the poems are from the 19th and 20th century English poetry, which is substantially easier than classic poetry and old English.

3. The majority of students lack interest and motivation in literature classes, especially poetry, considering it difficult, boring, and unnecessary for language learning.

4. Teachers teach poetry in traditional teacher-centered models: language model, cultural model, and personal growth model, which are important but not enough as per the requirement of the modern digital era and quality 21st century education.

5. Modern reader-centered approaches like Readers Response Approach and Literary Theories are not used in the poetry classes due to which students’ involvement in poems and their critical and creative abilities are low.

This study engages a specific focus on the subject of poetry. Poetry is not only a piece of writings, it is knowledge, culture, and personal development. The twenty-first century is the era of advancement and technology, globalization and multiculturalism. Education is regarded as a significant apparatus and operative resource for boosting creativity and empowering human
resources (Gould 1993). Modern educational theory and practice researches advocate evolving students’ higher order thinking capacities. Stress is placed on enabling students to take decisions, create opportunities, evaluate available resources, work out multiple solutions for practice problem solving and be flexible to manage the globalized and multicultural world of today (Geertsen, 2003; Ruggiero, 1988; Feden and Vogel, 2003; Halpern and Hakel, 2003). Literature subjects are vital components of educational syllabuses. Therefore, the teaching of literature should “make the most sense in the context of the twenty-first century needs to be student-centered and guided by the research on education in the twenty first century” (Yaqoob, 2011). The findings of the study significantly show that beside what previous studies has established about the role of socio-cultural, religious, linguistic, and curricular factors that are challenging teaching literature in English departments at Saudi universities, teaching methodologies play a vital role. Traditional teacher-based teaching methodologies give rise to students’ disinterest in poetry subject, their passiveness in the classroom, their failure in critical analysis, and dependence on memorization rather than comprehension. This has resulted into low academic achievement in the course. It is very well suggested by Dymoke (2009) that:

“If you leave poetry on the page in your classroom you will be in danger of sounding its death knell: it is an organic, enriching communication tool, which taps into all our senses and is constantly renewing and reinventing itself to afford us new ways to express ourselves” (Dymoke, 2009, p.80)

Based on Dymoke’s statement, the study recommends some suggestions for promoting the process of teaching and learning in poetry course:

1. Students must be introduced to the importance of poetry in language learning. Course objectives and learning outcome should be clearly explained at the commencement of the course, and interest and motivation should be developed from the very first class.

2. Poetry should be related to students’ life and culture. Students should be encouraged to read poetry which is related to their circumstances. Emerging Arabic & Saudi poetry in English can be referred to in order to upgrade the interest and familiarity and develop the poetic taste of students. Student may be given the task to choose the poetry they like and read & discuss it in the class.

3. Multimodal teaching using technology-assisted pedagogical practices should be adopted to narrow the gap between literature and the generation of iPad and social media. Students' visual and digital literacy skills should be tapped to enable them to, for example, create audio and video poems, podcasts, hypertexts and Wikis and other new ways of using language and experiencing poetry.

4. Teaching should be modern and interactive with focus on the students. Reader-centered methodologies should be adopted in line with traditional methodologies.

5. Teaching should include wide variety of activities related to poetry. Students must be all the time involved in the poem. Relations between poems and other forms of art should be
established to create the poetic world in the minds of students. Different poetry reading assignments, poetry slams & writing contests, poetry reciting presentations, and poetry forums and debates can be included in the course evaluation plan. Such activities allow students “to gain a much greater understanding and appreciation of how language and structure create effects and convey meanings” (Dymoke, 2009, p 82).

6. Higher order critical skills of students, rational thinking, critical and analytical writing should be encouraged in poetry classes. Focus should be shifted from mere memorization of information to criticism and self-interpretation.

7. Reader-bases literary theories like poststructuralism, new historicism, postcolonialism, feminism, and other critical theories should be introduced and practiced in poetry classes as well as other literary courses to promote critical consciousness and instill the notion of reflexivity in the reader.

8. Action researches should be done from now and then to assess the effectiveness of teaching methodologies and students’ attitudes towards them.

9. Reading and research in the field of English poetry by both teachers and students should be boosted.

Conclusion:
The current study was intended to examine teaching and learning Poetry to female EFL students at FLT, KKU from students’ perspective. Data analysis reveals that the teaching methodologies are traditional teacher-centered which may give students the knowledge of literature but doesn’t assist making them critics and creative writers. As a result, students lack interest and motivation which results in low understanding of the literary genre and consequently low academic achievement. The study emphasizes adopting new reader-centered strategies and other corresponding activities and multimodal designs to impart motivation and interest to poetry classes and cultivate students’ interest in the subject, their critical thinking as well as creative writing. This study highlights some of the aspects of the teaching and learning process of English poetry at one of the Saudi public universities from the students’ perspective. Further investigative studies are recommended for more understanding of the topics mentioned, beside other related matters, on the level of the selected university and other universities from different standpoints.

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References


Practical Application of Learners’ First Language to Teaching Meaning in EFL Classes: A Case Study Conducted in the Department of English at King Khalid University

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Abstract

There has long been a question of whether learners’ first language can help with teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) when the focus is teaching meaning. This issue has always been controversial. The study, therefore, aims at exploring how learners’ first language (L1) can be applied effectively in EFL classes to help with the teaching of meaning with the minimization of L1’s potential negative impact. The study examined (a), faculty members’ general opinion about the use of L1 in EFL teaching, (b) the effectiveness of L1 use in teaching meaning, and (c) the students’ views on L1 use. The study was undoubtedly of great importance as it solved the question of how much L1 could be used in teaching meaning in EFL classes in the most practical way. The method adopted was primarily qualitative involving semi-structured interviews with lecturers and professors who had experience of language teaching. A survey conducted on the first-year students also provided the researcher with some quantitative data. The result revealed both positive and negative opinions. The positive ones remarkably outnumbered the negative ones. The findings also helped the researcher ponder some pedagogical implications. The study concludes that learners’ first language can be a fascinating and effective tool for teaching meaning provided that the teacher has full control over the class to ensure that the classroom still has the target language environment.

Keywords: EFL classes, L1’s negative impact, L1’s positive impact, learners’ first language, practical application of L1, teaching meaning

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Introduction
Indeed, the use of learners’ first language in language teaching has long been in the balance. Although research in the field of language teaching has so far given rise to a lot of approaches and techniques, the status of L1 use is still in a confused state. In most modern teaching methods, the idea of using L1 in a language class is almost always considered problematic. One of the obvious reasons is that using L1 in language teaching is closely associated with the Grammar-Translation Method. For the time being, it is reasonably logical to believe that the learning and teaching of meaning with the help of learners’ L1 is strictly old-fashioned. However, sometimes old ideas emerge as new ones being effective through a revolution in language teaching. Therefore, old ideas are often incorporated with new methods because of their potential usefulness in language teaching. The Principled Eclecticism, for instance, supports all kinds of techniques, either modern or old, that can be applied in order to make language teaching a success. It is therefore important to realize that any teaching techniques can be fruitful provided that they are applied in the most practical way. The key idea, therefore, is that rejecting the idea about using L1 in explaining or teaching meaning is baseless and illogical.

Literature review
It is of crucial importance to explore the scholarly authors’ and researchers’ belief about the use of learners’ first language in teaching meaning. We shall explore both the first language’s advantages and disadvantages in the case of teaching meaning.

There has been a lot of evidence that advocates the view that the application of learners’ first language to language teaching is problematic rather than advantageous. Al-Rifa’i’s (2014) recent study reveals that translation activities may result in misconceptions about language learning among students because of the lack of correspondence between two languages. Maximum target language exposure is obviously necessary for teaching meaning to avoid the above-mentioned problem (Juárez & Oxbrow, 2008). Limited and appropriate use of L1 in class is useful, but such use should not reduce the target language exposure (Jadallah & Hasan, 2010). A study by Almoayidi (2018) shows that teaching English only through English with complete avoidance of learners’ mother can bring better learning outcomes. This research also argues that teaching through proper second language exposure is the appropriate teaching method.

There have been a number of opinions by scholars that support the use of learners’ L1 in language teaching. We often forget the fact that translation itself is labeled as a cognitive activity (Albir & Alves, 2009). Palmer (1976) emphasizes translating from obscure and technical terms into words for clear understanding. Learners’ L1 can be useful in understanding meaning. In this case, our primary purpose for applying learners’ L1 will be “pedagogical” (Kaudy, 2003, as cited in Vermes, 2010, p. 83), not general translation. Some research shows the effectiveness of using L1 in giving new instructions (Sali, 2014). Also, in dealing with low-level students, L1 can be very useful in clarifying the appropriateness of a lexical item (Khresheh, 2012). It also encourages learners to understand the similarities and differences between the two languages (Juárez and Oxbrow, 2008). Furthermore, in a study conducted by Lee and Macaro (2013), it is found that code-switching instructions are more beneficial for adult learners than English-only instructions. L1, no doubt, can play a significant role in teaching meaning, giving instructions, explaining grammar rules (Sharma, 2006). In the Arabic context, L1 can play an essential role in explaining
new lexical items and grammar points (Alshammari, 2011; Storch & Aldosari 2010). Unquestionably, L1 can play the role of an effective pedagogical tool in a language class, as concluded in a study conducted by De la Campa and Nassaji (2009). A quantitative study conducted by Jingxia (2010) shows that most of the teachers (81.7%) and students (75.3%) were in favor of code-switching to Chinese, which is of great benefit in EFL classes.

As regards L1 use, learners’ level is worth considering. For example, low-level students are unlikely to understand the meaning of a particular grammatical structure if explained in the target language. If students do not have enough English proficiency, according to Mahmoudi’s (2011) research conducted on Iranian students, L1 should be used in class. Her research also shows that L1 is more beneficial for explaining rules and giving examples. Level of proficiency is a crucial factor in the case of a pedagogical decision on the use of L1 which is also emphasized in Mouhanna’s (2009) study.

Undoubtedly, the use of L1 straightforwardly saves time. Thornbury (2002) focuses on time-saving while discussing how vocabulary is learned. He emphasizes that a second language learner always looks for a short-cut way, for example, to learn new words. Thornbury (2002) states, “if a German-speaking learner learns the English word table, rather than creating a direct link from table to the concept of the table, they are more likely to create a link to their L1 equivalent” (p.19).

The semantic difference between the first language and target language structures can be easily explained in learners’ L1, which is, more accessible and more straightforward. “The first thing to remember is that, especially at beginner levels, students are going to translate what is happening into their L1 whether teachers want them to or not. It is a natural process of learning a foreign language” (Harmer, 2007, p.38).

It is, therefore, illogical to believe that the use of Learners’ L1 adversely affects the language learning environment. Overall, the use of L1 “makes instructions clear” (Al-Rifa‘i, 2014, p.36).

Conceptual framework

The teaching of meaning: An overview

We shall discuss now the essence of teaching meaning in different areas of language teaching. It is not surprising that it is almost impossible to think of language teaching without the concept of understanding meaning.

By ‘meaning’, we understand “what a language expresses about the world we live in or any possible or imaginary world” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 355). It is obvious that ‘meaning’ is everywhere in a language, and of course, in language teaching. Teaching meaning is closely associated with vocabulary teaching. A learner learns a particular lexical item successfully once he or she understands its meaning accurately. Learners, once the meaning is understood, gradually become used to using the lexical item in different contexts. Understanding and using vocabulary are, of course, essential in four skills. Comprehension (listening and reading), for instance, is meaningless if the meaning of a lexical item is not properly understood. In other words, there is a positive correlation between successful comprehension and the proper understanding of meaning. Apart from the receptive skills, productive skills such as speaking and writing even involve the
perception of meaning. For instance, a speaker or a writer uses a lexical item keeping a particular meaning in his or her mind while speaking or writing.

Apart from skills, learning grammar entails understanding meaning as well. A teacher, when explaining grammatical rules, emphasizes the meaning involved in the structure he or she is teaching. Teaching singular and plural nouns, for instance, involves a proper understanding of the idea that the singular noun is ‘one thing’ while the plural noun indicates ‘more than one’. Also understanding the semantic distinction between the present simple and present progressive tense is essential. The teacher, in this case, has to explain that the latter indicates an action in progress. There are also various semantic layers of modal auxiliary verbs and conditional sentences that require a clear explanation.

Meaning, therefore, is ubiquitous in language teaching and learning. The key idea, at this point, is that in language teaching and learning, the proper understanding of meaning is paramount.

Research methodology

Study design
The study was primarily qualitative. The researcher opted for this because of its flexible nature (Dörnyei, 2007). The target group included lecturers and professors teaching skill courses in the department of English at King Khalid University. The questionnaire was proofread and approved by two professors for its validity. The research also involved a survey on level 1 and level 2 students.

Tools
Three tools were used:
- Interviewing teachers
- A survey on level 1 and 2 students
- General observation

In order to interview the teachers, an online questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent through Google forms to twenty of them, of which ten responded. The main reason for sending an online questionnaire is that the researcher wanted the participants to feel confident and respond at their convenience. In qualitative research, questions are in general open and informal (Seliner & Shohamy, 2003). Also, free-form answers from open questions usually result in insightful data and “more accurately reflect what the respondent wants to say” (Nunan, 2002, p. 143). The questionnaire, therefore, comprised some semi-structured interview questions.

In addition to this, a survey was conducted with the help of a task (Appendix B) given to twenty-five first-year students (level 1 and 2) for them to choose one teacher and express the reason for their choice. That survey helped the researcher understand their behavior and opinions (Nunan, 2002). They had to look at PowerPoint slides with two pictures. One picture showed teacher ‘A’ explaining the meaning of a word and a grammatical structure using the target language. Another one showed teacher ‘B’ doing the same using learners’ L1 very tactfully so that the English environment was not hampered. That survey provided the researcher with some quantitative data as well.
In qualitative research, observations are a major data collecting tool (Seliger & Shohamy, 2003). Apart from the questionnaires, the researcher’s general observation provided some more qualitative data as well. Such observation aimed at finding the effectiveness of L1 in teaching meaning and its potential negative impact. This included careful classroom observation while meaning was explained and taught to students in different ways.

**Data analysis**

For qualitative data (the primary research), the participants’ responses in the Google forms sent were stored in a word file and categorized. Students’ responses were kept in tables in a word file and later calculated with Microsoft Excel for the quantitative data.

**Results**

The findings split into four parts: demographic details of the participants, thematic analysis, general observation, and learners’ views.

*Demographic details of the participants*

**Table 1. Teachers**

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<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters and PhD</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Table 2. Students**

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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Thematic analysis of the data (based on interviews with teachers)*

The study reveals four main themes:

1. Language teachers’ general views on the use of L1 in teaching
2. The potential negative impact of L1 on language learning
3. Minimizing the negative impact of L1
4. Effectiveness of the use of L1 in teaching meaning

1. Language teachers’ general views on the use of L1 in teaching

L1, as stated by some participants, must be avoided as much as possible as it is an obstacle to learning and using the target language. Therefore, minimizing its use is practical in an EFL situation. They emphasize the L1 use in early levels (1 and 2), but not in the other levels. However, many participants speak in favor of L1. For example, L1 in EFL teaching may facilitate the learning process, states one teacher. Mother tongue is one of the important tools of teaching in terms of getting the information easy and in little time, he adds. One participant emphasizes code-switching between L1 and L2 so that students can best benefit from both. He adds that a dedicated language teacher will always shape his or her own style of making L1 and L2 work together harmoniously, based on immediate or long-term objectives, the students’ needs, and their proficiency level. We should use L1 wisely and to the minimum, states one of the participants. We have to do our best to encourage our students to use L2 as it is, without looking at L1, adds the teacher. A judicious use of L1 in L2 teaching settings helps language learners, and can contribute to a positive learning situation, states one participant. Teachers can use his or her students’ L1, he adds, only when they have exhausted all possible means to get their message across in the target language. Generally speaking, a controlled use of L1 could be of great help in the classroom depending on the level and proficiency of learners of the second language, states another participant. Therefore, he adds, L1 should not be used on a large scale.

2. Potential negative impacts of L1 on language learning

If L1 is used excessively, students will not get much opportunity to build solid communicative skills in L2, states one participant. Also, L1 can sometimes interfere with L2 and hinders the learning outcomes, he adds. For example, he says, teaching EFL students with L1 in the productive skills, namely speaking and writing may lead to many errors such as copying the use and structure of L1 and apply them to English. Some participants mention the fact that the L1 structure can influence the target language structure. It can have an adverse effect on learners’ cognitive skills and critical thinking, they emphasize. They may lose the opportunity to think in the target language. It is vital to help students think and speak in English, but using L1, on the other hand, fosters the habit of translating from L1 to L2 and vice versa when speaking or writing in the target language, he adds. The main drawback of using L1 in EFL class is the broad L1 context compared to the limited L2 exposure that EFL students need the most, states one participant. Another participant states that the overuse of L1 makes learners over-dependent on their instructors and the whole instruction will be derailed from learner-centered to teacher-centered. Moreover, he adds, the learners will be more analytical comparing L1 and L2 at every juncture resulting in a situation that hampers real communication in the target language. The main long-term negative effect, as stated by one teacher, is the fact that the students will not be able to "think" in the foreign language and thus will never rid themselves of mother-tongue interference. Any uncontrolled or unguided use may create problems, and there might be a kind of conflict or intervention between L1 and L2, he adds. In the case of Arabic and English, he clarifies, some nouns in English are singular only (non-count nouns), but in Arabic, they have singular and plural as well.
Some participants, however, overgeneralize the L1 use by stating that L1 has no serious negative effect on the process of learning at all.

3. Minimizing the negative impact of L1

One participant states that the issue here is how much of L1 is used in the L2 class. A learning environment that is characterized by rich L2 input, he adds, which is meaningful and professionally introduced will not be negatively harmed by little recourse to the students L1. If the teacher teaches only in English and the use of L1 is limited to an explanation of tasks only, L1 may not affect the learning process, states one faculty member. In this case, he adds, learners are supposed to use English in class all the time and depend on L1 just for the purpose of understanding complicated concepts still speaking in English about the L1 version, and the only way to minimize the negative effect of L1 is to encourage students to use the target language in the classroom. One states that in order to minimize the negative impact, if any, teachers have to be reflective. The intensity of the negative impact, he adds, should be accurately diagnosed as a first step. One teacher states that it is always better to use L2 to teach L2 meaning. When there is a need for using L1 for this purpose, seize it as an opportunity to develop students’ critical thinking by asking them to evaluate and compare using the target language.

4. Effectiveness of the use of L1 in teaching meaning

L1 can be very useful when the target language does not clarify the exact meaning of what the teacher is trying to say, states one participant. In EFL grammar and reading, he adds, the use of L1 in explaining the grammatical similarities and differences between L1 and L2 can facilitate the learning process and make students cautious to adjust such grammatical usages. Using L1 in teaching EFL reading can help students to make use of the reading strategies already used in L1 such as scanning and skimming, states one faculty member. In teaching meaning, even in more advanced levels, one participant states, the use of L1 by the students can be beneficial when this is aimed at developing their metalinguistic awareness of lexical fields, collocations, functional equivalence, cross-cultural pragmatic phenomena, and so on. Using L1 in teaching non-related culture words such as religious, technical, or environmental words can be of help, states one teacher. L1 can be used only with beginners and when explaining abstract concepts, or when visual aids are not available, states a faculty member. Using L1 can be even preferable - for class management purposes; for comparative purposes, i.e. when students are required to be aware of structural, semantic, or stylistic differences and similarities between L1 and L2, says one teacher. He adds, in explaining the meaning of a particular grammatical structure with beginners, L1 greatly helps and also helps improve reading strategies and explain abstract words. One faculty member mentions his application of L1 to teaching L2 proverbs, and he found it useful because of the element of culture. His students enjoyed comparing similar proverbs in L1 and L2, which are different at the surface level but identical at the deep structure. L1 is useful in teaching vocabulary, as stated by one teacher, such as explaining false friends, partial synonymy, idiomatic expressions; in advanced translation classes when dealing with equivalence in all its complexity; for contrastive or comparative purposes in linguistics: grammatical gender in Arabic vs. English, for instance.

**Researcher’s general observation**

From the point of view of teaching, the use of L1 can lead to L1 environment in class. If, for instance, the teacher depends on L1 in explaining meaning all the time, learners may develop a
habit of translating all target language lexical items into their first language. This is an outright negative impact.

L1 grammar can adversely influence the target language grammar. For instance, in the case of the target group of learners, post modification of adjectives is prevalent. Below is an example of a Saudi elementary learner trying to speak about his vacation.

“I go…err….went to Jeddah last week. I drive to Jeddah. We stay in hotel expensive. Next day, I visited a mall big. And it was trip interesting. ….”

It is evident that the first language can easily influence the target language in terms of structure. The overuse of L1, therefore, affects negatively.

However, in dealing with low-level students, learners’ L1, if handled carefully and judiciously, can be an overwhelmingly effective tool. If the teacher has little or no knowledge about learners’ L1, all he or she can do is nominate a fast learner in the group who can translate unknown words or expressions. The researcher applied this method in his teaching many times while explaining abstract words or concepts that were beyond learners’ understanding level. It was found that L1 was beneficial saving time.

The above-mentioned problem related to L1 influence can be easily overcome if frequent drilling takes place in class. Also, this problem is more syntactic than semantic. Once the meaning properly sinks in, such a problem disappears gradually after frequent practice. According to the researcher’s open observation, both level 1 and level 2 students benefited a lot from the use of L1. An unknown word or expression was better understood when explained in L1 by a nominated fast learner. Likewise, the researcher sometimes nominated fast learners in class to explain difficult grammatical concepts that were beyond their understanding level. Such a method was overwhelmingly effective.

**Learners’ views on the use of L1 in teaching meaning**

Interestingly, more level 1 students chose teacher ‘B’ (Using L1 when required) and explained their reasons for their choice both in the case of teaching vocabulary and grammar (Appendix C, table 3 & 4). In the case of Level 2 students, although the number of reasons in favor of teacher ‘A’ was slightly higher than those in the case of level 1, the number of reasons for choosing teacher ‘B’ was still higher than those for choosing teacher ‘A’ (Appendix D, Table 5 & 6). Figure 1 shows the statistical data (grammar and vocabulary) regarding learners’ choice in terms of their exam grades. Overall, from grade A to grade D, L1 use shows an upward trend. Also, except for level 2 grade B, more students found L1 more effective in the case of teaching meaning. Figure 2 shows the statistical data regarding learners’ choice in terms of levels. It remarkably shows a positive correlation between their progress and the learners’ preference to TL over L1.
Discussion
Major related issues
The most significant limitation associated L1 use is its failure to convey the exact meaning the target language expresses. The layers of meaning of a particular lexicon in one language overwhelmingly differ from those of the literal meaning in another language. Such a phenomenon substantiates the fact that nothing can be perfectly translated. In this regard, Bell (1991) states “There is no one-to-one correspondence between the items of one language and those of another” (p. 83). Given this fact, the danger is obvious, if the meaning is taught through the use of L1.

Another problem related to structure and meaning is the difference between count and non-count nouns in English. In this regard, Palmer (1976) writes, “in terms of ‘one’ and ‘more than one’, wheat and oats cannot be distinguished” (p.120). The example nouns above are
grammatically different, but in terms of meaning, they are exactly the same. In English, for example, the word *advice* is non-count and therefore cannot be plural, and to make it singular, we say *a piece of advice*. If we look at the word-for-word Bangla translation of this phrase, the meaning will be strange. In Bangla, speakers commonly say *an advice*. Exactly the same goes for the word *information*. Therefore, the use of L1 may not work smoothly in teaching meaning.

Let us imagine that a teacher is discussing an English word with a group of learners whose first language is not English. He or she has already told the learners the L1 equivalent of the word. Interestingly, not all the synonyms of the target language word will correspond to those of the L1 equivalent. For example, the English word *get* can have various layers of meaning such as *take, become, bring or fetch*, etc. In Bangla, for instance, we can never expect similar meanings of *get*. In Bangla, Hindi and Urdu, for example, *bring* is by no means related to *get*, but semantically closely related to *give*, because *give* and *take* are antonyms. Let us look at an example. The translation of *I will/am going to get you some paper* in Bangla is *Ami apnake kichhu kagoj pathachchi*. In this example, the word *pathachchi* means *I will fetch* or *I’m going to fetch*. This word can be easily replaced by *dichchi*, which means *I’ll give* or *I’m going to give*, which is strictly the opposite of *I’ll take*. At the same time, *get* and *take* are synonymous in English. In Bangla, the meaning of *get* is only related to *receiving* or *taking*, but never *bringing* or *giving*. Therefore, word-for-word translation, in this case, is impractical.

Another interesting example is the meaning of *take* in *taking examinations*. If we translate this expression word for word into Bangla, Urdu, or Hindi, the meaning will be opposite. In fact, in these languages, the meanings of *take* and *give* are completely reversed when it comes to *examinations*. While in English a teacher *gives*, and a student *takes* an exam, in Bangla, Hindi, and Urdu, in contrast, a teacher *takes*, and a student *gives* an exam. Let us look at the Bangla translation of *give* and *take*. *Give* means *deya* and *take* means *neya* (the letter *d* represents a dental voiced stop). The Bangla translation of *Examination* is *porikkha*. If we translate *giving examinations* and *taking examinations* into Bangla, the translations will be *porikkha neya* (*take*) and *porikkha deya* (*give*) respectively.

However, not depending on L1 can be a problem. Sometimes, understanding meaning by guessing leads to fossilization. In Bangladesh, based on the researcher’s personal experience, a very recent instance of fossilization is the meaning of *rally*. This word has long been overgeneralized and is now being used for a *procession*. Interestingly, at present, even many educated people in Bangladesh have already forgotten the word *procession*. The major reason behind this misunderstanding is the fact that in the 1990’s English newspapers in Bangladesh used the word *rally* frequently and fully appropriately when covering political news stories where both *processions* and *rallies* took place simultaneously. Some readers, presumably, tried to interpret the meaning of *rally* just by guessing. Such readers came up with the conclusion that *rally* and *procession* were synonymous. For almost three decades, the general population in Bangladesh has been using these words interchangeably with a little preference for the former, not realizing that there are exact Bangla equivalents for these words.
Rally – jonoshomabesh (i.e. a mass meeting of people making a political protest)
Procession – michhil, shobhajatra (i.e. a number of people moving forward in an orderly fashion, especially as part of a ceremony)

It is obvious that the readers, in that case, tried to pick up the meaning from the context, which unfortunately resulted in a failure and eventually fossilization. If, on the other hand, someone who was absolutely clear about the distinction between these words had told those readers the Bangla equivalent of the word rally (jonoshomabesh), such fossilization would perhaps have never taken place.

Traditional and modern pedagogical practices
The Grammar-Translation Method made substantial use of L1. In most of cases, learners were provided with an inventory of words with their meaning in L1 (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The researcher’s personal academic experience reveals that in the 1980s, in some countries like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, teaching meaning through translation was overwhelmingly a common practice. Phrases and idioms, for instance, were listed with their meaning in L1 followed by an example. Apparently, such an inventory is useful, but the learners are very likely to forget the idioms that are not contextualized, and therefore such an approach has little pragmatic value.

The researcher’s academic experience also shows that in old grammar books, grammatical structures were usually explained in L1. For instance, modal verbs such as should, may, might, have to were all explained in L1 along with their meanings. It was based on the assumption that a structure could not be successfully learned unless its meaning was understood in L1.

In the Direct Method, the Audio-lingual Method, Total Physical Response, on the other hand, L1 is entirely avoided. The Direct Method (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) is based on the principle that translation can never help with proper language learning. Meaning can be directly expressed, learned, or taught, if there is a context. In Audio Lingual Method, meaning is not emphasized at all. It only focuses on mastering structures through Rote Learning.

Apart from the traditional ones, some methods that emerged later also supported the use of L1. The most modern idea about the application of L1 is its judicious use. Such use is fully supported by Communicative Language Teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). The key idea is that in language teaching, we should have no logical reason why L1 is problematic.

Pedagogical implication
Abstract words can be expressed easily through the use of L1. It is often easier for learners to understand the meaning of words through L1 equivalents. Let us imagine that one teacher is trying to teach the meaning of the word exaggerate by concept checking and another one through explaining the dictionary definition. Undoubtedly, concept checking is the most modern approach to explaining meaning. The latter sounds a bit old-fashioned. We shall now look at what happens to the learning situation if they apply these techniques.

Teacher: Well, when I’m ‘exaggerating’ a story, am I telling you exactly what happened?
Student 1: No….err…yes….sorry… No. (Hesitant)
Teacher: Am I overstating it?
Student 2: Yes.
Student 1: No…..No…Yes. (Again hesitant)

The teacher is inevitably applying the right technique for explaining the meaning, but student 1 is not familiar with the word *overstate*, and therefore hesitant. Another teacher, in contrast, is explaining the meaning in an old-fashioned way.

Teacher: Well, when you exaggerate something, you are trying to represent it as being larger, better or worse than it really is.
Student: Is it the same as modify?
T: Not really, but similar.
S: I’m not happy with my essay. I want to modify it. Can I say, I want to exaggerate it?
T: Well, no! When you modify something, you are trying to make it better. You could say you are producing an improved version.
S: So, *exaggerate* is a bad thing?
T: Not necessarily. Say, you are exaggerating a story. It means you are not telling exactly what happened. You are overstating it by adding many things.
S: Not very clear!

The interactions above prove that explaining the meaning in the target language can often be misleading. In that case, the use of L1 can be useful. Below is how a teacher can opt for direct translation after some explanation in the target language (in this case, English). The example below shows how the first conversation above could have been continued.

Teacher: Well, when I’m exaggerating a story, am I telling you exactly what happened?
Student 1: No….err…yes….sorry …No.
T: Am I overstating it?
S2: Yes.
S1: No…..No…Yes (confused).
T: Well, in Arabic, you can say *يبالغ*.
S1: It’s very clear now!

L1 can also play a prominent role in teaching skills. In reading and listening, for instance, learners’ unfamiliarity with some lexical items leads to difficulty of understanding a text. If the meaning is clear, comprehension will be faster. It is evident that the keywords must sink in for successful comprehension. The most efficient comprehension takes place where the meaning of a text or discourse is fully understood. Lectures often go over learners’ heads because of their lack of understanding of the meaning of some vocabulary their teachers use. In comprehension tasks, therefore, L1 can be a very useful tool. Lexical items can be taught using L1 in advance before the main task.

L1 can have a significant role in explaining the meaning of grammatical structures. Scrivener (2005) states “When a new grammatical item is learned, encourage learners to think how they would say the same things in their own language” (p. 309). A teacher may be interested in explaining the difference between *have to* and *should* in Arabic.
T: If I say, you have to go, I mean عليك أن، but if I say, you should go, I mean يجب أن. This is less time-consuming and the most straightforward way to clarify the meaning of various similar structures. In Bangla, Hindi and Urdu, for instance, the modal verbs above can be precisely translated to express a clear distinction between the two. The present simple and present progressive sentences have exact Bangla equivalents. In this case, translating sentences into L1 can be more productive. The conversation below shows a teacher explaining this difference to a group of Bangladeshi learners using L1 (still speaking in English).

T: Please have a look at these sentences – I play football and I’m playing football. When you say I play football, you meanami football kheli, but when you say I’m playing football, you mean ami football khelchhi.

S: It’s clear! We understand.

chhi is a suffix marking present progressive in Bangla. If there is a direct L1 equivalent of the target language, translation works best.

**Conclusion**

Learners’ first language can be a very useful tool that helps with the clarification of meaning in language teaching. It often prevents a lexeme from being fossilized, if there is a proper L1 equivalent. If meaning is fully understood, there is minimal possibility of misconceptions. It is also true that concept checking in class, no matter how effective most of the time can be misleading and eventually does lead to fossilization. In this case, L1 saves time and straightforwardly expresses the meaning.

It is, at the same time, logical to believe that excessive dependence on L1 in language learning can be disastrous. Although it can help with understanding meaning, it can at the same time lead to misconceptions since vocabulary in the target language do not always have exact L1 equivalence. Also, overuse of L1 has an adverse effect on the cognitive process. Frequent use of L1 in teaching meaning reduces learners’ ability to think in the target language. If a learner, instead of looking for an L1 equivalent, frequently reads and tries to understand meanings of words in the target language using a monolingual dictionary, his or her cognitive development will successfully take place. Although L1 seems to speed up understanding meaning, it has the opposite effect of learners’ proper cognitive development.

The teacher must remember that L1 in teaching meaning can simply play a supporting role in the learning process in terms of understanding meaning. The most practical approach, therefore, should be the judicious use of learners’ L1. In other words, the use of learners’ first language must be fully controlled by the teacher in such a way that the classroom still has the target language environment and the potential adverse effect of L1 is entirely eliminated or at least minimized.

**Acknowledgement**

The author expresses his heartfelt thanks to the teachers and students who made a substantial contribution to this study. Also, the author is grateful to Dr. Ismail Al Refaai for the Arabic translation and Dr. Abdurrahman Ilias for translating students’ Arabic comments into English. Special thanks go to Dr. Mihaita Horezeanu and Dr. Ismail Al Refaai who proofread the questionnaire for its validity and reliability.
About the author
Mohammad Adil did his MA in Applied Linguistics & ELT from Dhaka University. He has also CELTA and DELTA from Cambridge. He is currently working as a lecturer in the Department of English, King Khalid University. He has been teaching English since 1996. So far, he has made many presentations and conducted workshops at different conferences and seminars.
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References


Appendix A

Practical Application of Learners’ L1 to Teaching Meaning in EFL Classes

This questionnaire comprises questions that will provide me with qualitative data for the following research objective:

Knowing how effective learners’ L1 is in teaching meaning with the minimization of its negative impacts on learning

Part 1: General opinion

1. What is your general opinion about using L1 in overall teaching?

2. What do you think is the potential negative impact of using L1 on a language class?

Part 2: Effectiveness of the use of L1 in teaching meaning.

Instead of writing a paragraph, you may use bulleted points to save words and time.

1. Mention a teaching situation or situations in which L1 can be successfully or effectively used in teaching meaning. (E.g. explaining the meaning of abstract words)

2. How do you think you would avoid or overcome the negative impact of L1 on learners’ learning process while using L1 in teaching meaning?
Part 3: Further comments or suggestions on the idea about using L1 in teaching meaning (if there is).

Thank you for your time

Appendix B

STUDENTS’ OPINION

Name _________________________________________________________
Level _________________________________________________________

Teaching vocabulary
Q 1: Look at the pictures. Which teacher is doing a better job? Circle A or B.
A  
B  
Q 2: Why? Write down the reasons in English or Arabic.
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Teaching grammar
Q 1: Look at the pictures. Which teacher is doing a better job? Circle A or B.
A  
B  
Q 2: Why? Write down the reasons in English or Arabic.
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time

Appendix C

Table 3: Reasons for Level 1 students’ choice - Vocabulary teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher A (Using only TL)</th>
<th>Teacher B (Using L1 when required)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The way is nice.</td>
<td>1. Explanation is clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Explanation is clear and easy to understand.</td>
<td>3. Helps with students’ weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. English helps with explanation.</td>
<td>4. He wants everyone to understand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. It is a good idea to use some Arabic words in class for students who don’t understand English very well.

6. Meaning can be better understood in Arabic.

7. Meaning can be better understood in Arabic.

8. Teacher B is asking a student for an answer. It means he is involving the students.

9. His technique is excellent.

10. He is friendly and wants to help the students.

11. He is testing his students understanding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Reasons for Level 1 students’ choice - Explaining the meaning of a grammatical structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A (Using only TL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Develop students’ talent and thinking ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Best teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. He can summarize ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The way he is communicating with students is better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The teacher is teaching English, not translation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Good idea to use Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Students are happy with L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The explanation is nice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Reasons for Level 2 students’ choice - Vocabulary teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A (Using only TL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. It is more useful to express the meaning in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students are learning English, not Arabic!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students are studying English. Arabic is not necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. We have to study everything in English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. It’s better to explain an English word in English. It helps to enhance his knowledge.

5. Arabic is better for low level students.

6. He is explaining everything in English and this is better. We are learning English, not Arabic.

6. Students don’t speak English very well, so Arabic is better.

7. He is testing his students’ knowledge and understanding.

12. It helps when a student knows the meaning in Arabic.

8. Clear explanation.

9. He is trying to involve the students who can’t speak English very well.

10. He is asking the students about it.

11. Students can understand better.

Table 6: Reasons for Level 2 students’ choice - Explaining the meaning of a grammatical structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher A (Using only TL)</th>
<th>Teacher B (Using L1 when required)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We have to study everything in English.</td>
<td>1. If students don’t know the meaning, they can’t use the grammatical structure properly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students are studying English, not translation.</td>
<td>2. He is trying to involve the students who can’t speak English very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Explaining an English expression in Arabic makes the lesson more difficult.</td>
<td>3. He is asking if anyone knows it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students need to know the meaning in context. Translation in this case can create an issue.</td>
<td>4. It’s clear to everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It helps when a student knows the meaning in Arabic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Relevance of Doing Virtual Classes: A Study of Postgraduate Female Students' Attitudes and Perceptions

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes and perceptions of postgraduate female students towards attending virtual classes under the Applied Linguistics and Translation program at King Khalid University (KKU). So, the main question is what are the attitudes and perceptions of postgraduate female students? Moreover, the chief concern of this paper is not only to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using virtual classes but also identifies the factors which affect the students' attitudes and perception towards using virtual classes. This paper is the first to investigate the postgraduate female students' attitudes and perceptions towards using the virtual classes in the master program at KKU. Twenty-three postgraduate students participated in this study. This study uses an electronic questionnaire to collect data. Moreover, it employs Microsoft (Excel) to produce percentages and mean scores from the questionnaire's closed questions. Also, it analyzes the questionnaire's opened questions by using content analysis. The results show that there are positive reactions (3.91 mean scores) from the students who use the virtual classes. Furthermore, the findings reveal that students faced some difficulties, such as technical problems (Internet connection (75%), sound problem (12.50%), and KKU blackboard problems (12.50%). Moreover, students' perception of interaction (12.73 mean scores), usefulness, and ease of the use (26.78 mean scores) of virtual classes differ significantly. Also, many positive and negative factors affect the students' attitudes and perceptions through using virtual classes. Finally, the results of this study will be useful for academic society and any person involved in using virtual classes.

Keywords: attitudes, online learning, perceptions, Saudi female student, virtual classes

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Introduction

Stiff and Mongeau (2003) define the word ‘attitudes’ as the reactions of people regarding a situation or an object. While Scott, Hiatt, Mcilroy, and Worthamm (2012) define the word ‘perceptions’ as the action of the mind which makes human beings to be aware of anything. Both of these concepts are part of students' behavioral characteristics which are affected by using technology in the learning process (Johnson, 2010).

The technology takes its way in education to enhance learning and teaching processes. Also, teachers and students start using computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in education all over the world (Bin, 2013). Furthermore, the virtual worlds are one of the CALL's features. Also, teachers adopt them as an online way of teaching (Perren, Kelch, Byun, Cervantes, & Safavi, 2018). So, this paper aims to study the students' attitudes and perceptions towards virtual classroom, its utilization and its characteristics: synchrony (which means connecting users at the same time (Gillmore & Warren, 2007 as cited in Parker & Martin, 2010, p. 137), sense of community (which means the relationship of students with each other and their experience of using virtual classroom (Parker & Martin, 2010), interactivity (which means the interaction which was described as the engagement in learning (Northrup, 2002 as cited in Parker & Martin, 2010, p. 137), usefulness (which means the functioning of technology (Parker & Martin, 2010), and ease of use (which means the degree of simplicity that it takes to become skillful in using technology (Parker & Martin, 2010).

The study also investigates the advantages and disadvantages of using the virtual classroom along with the factors that affect the students' attitudes and perceptions towards using the virtual classes at KKU.

The purpose of the present study

This study aims to achieve the following goals: (1) to study the attitudes and perceptions of female students towards virtual class and its characteristics in their master's program at KKU; (2) to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using virtual classes; and (3) to identify the factors which affect the female students' attitudes and perceptions towards using virtual classes.

Research questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of female students towards using virtual classes in their master's program at KKU?
2. What is the level of female students' perceptions of the characteristics of virtual classes?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using virtual classes for postgraduate female students at KKU?
4. What are the factors which affect the female students' attitudes and perceptions towards using virtual classes at KKU?

The significance of the study

This paper is the first to study and investigate the different attitudes and perceptions of the postgraduate female students at KKU towards the using of virtual classes in the master program. So, the findings of this study will be beneficial to the academic society (teachers, students, and program designers), considering the significant use of technology in the learning process (Ali, Miraz, & Kunasekaran, 2014). When we know the students' relationship with technology, especially their attitudes...
towards the virtual classes, we can meet their expectations and provide an authentic learning experience for them. If the results of this study are used to develop the process of using the virtual classes, there will be a massive increase in student intake and the educational process as a whole. To future researchers, this research provides a baseline for further study of virtual classes. Furthermore, it can be used as a reference when the virtual classes are used, designed, or chosen as a tool of communication and learning.

Hypothesis
First, if the postgraduate female students use virtual classes in their master's program at KKU, they will form some attitude towards it. Second, if the postgraduate female students use virtual classes in their master's program at KKU, they will have different perceptions levels of interactivity, synchrony, usefulness, ease of use, and sense of community. Third, if the postgraduate female students use virtual classes in their master's program at KKU, they will have some advantages and disadvantages of using it. Finally, if the postgraduate female students use virtual classes in their master's program at KKU, they will have some factors which affect their attitudes and perceptions.

Review of literature
Generally, students have positive attitudes towards using virtual classes (Ku & Lohr, 2003; Knowles & Kerkman, 2007; Parker & Martin, 2010; Huss & Eastep, 2013; Mosquera, 2017). There are many reasons behind their positive outlook towards virtual classes such as easiness of interacting and accessing classes at any time and everywhere (Ku & Lohr, 2003). Unfortunately, the use of virtual classes "took more time than they [students] expected" (Knowles & Kerkman, 2007, p. 76). Besides that, some students feel isolated and frustrated because of using virtual classes (Ku & Lohr, 2003).

Parker and Martin's study (2010), find some of the characteristics of the virtual class do not yield significant results. For example, the sense of community "Was not statically significant" because of the students' preference to work individually (Parker & Martin, 2010, p. 144).

Canchala (2010) focuses on the background of the students and their learning process on the use of virtual programs. The previous studies in this research did not mention this aspect. She also reveals that students were uncomfortable when they use virtual classes because of the "Level of English is very high" (Canchala, 2010, p. 146). Besides that, Mosquera (2017) find that students who use virtual classes face digital and time management problems, but still, show interest in using virtual classes for future studies.

Hussain (2007) covers the most crucial aspects which are related to the students' attitudes and problems. His study reveals that "The virtual education enhances the performance level of the learners (Hussain, 2007, p. 74). Also, students have enough knowledge of using virtual classes in their learning since they are "Highly qualified and accepting the E-Learning" (Almarabeh, 2014, p. 31).

There are some disadvantages (such as the distraction which is made by social networks and other entertainment sites (Mosquera, 2017) and advantages (such as being in a familiar environment) of using the virtual classes (Ku &Lohr, 2003; Mosquera, 2017; Indreica, 2014; Bogdan & Brindusa, 2018).

There are many positive factors (such as the flexibility to learn anywhere (Bogdan & Brindusa, 2018) and negative factors (such as the difficulty to follow the online courses (Bogdan & Brindusa, 2018) that affect the students' attitudes and perceptions (Bogdan & Brindusa, 2018).
So, all of the previous studies investigate the exhibited behavioral characteristics towards using the virtual classes (attitudes and perceptions), the advantages and disadvantages of using the virtual classes, and the factors which affect the students' attitudes and perceptions. The researchers describe and analyze the factors, advantages, disadvantages, attitudes, and perceptions in association with the effect of the virtual classes. They all agree that the use of virtual classes affects the students' attitudes and perceptions, either positively or negatively.

Research design and materials

The researcher designs an electronic questionnaire (Google forms) to collect data of the present study. It is a post-course questionnaire which is handed to the participants at the end of the fourth semester after initiating them to experience virtual classes and their uses.

The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire consists of eight fixed questions to test the level of agreement and nine open-ended questions to seek opinion and collect data on students' perceptions of the virtual class and its characteristics (synchrony, sense of community, interactivity, usefulness, and ease of use). The second part of the questionnaire consists of 11 fixed questions and four open-ended questions to collect data about students' attitudes towards using virtual class. In total, there are 32 questions in the questionnaire. All of the fixed questions will follow the scale values, as shown in Table 1. The participants cannot select more than one item. Each one of the participants is assigned a code, instead of using their names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Agreement</th>
<th>Scale value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA (Strongly agree)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (Agree)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC (Uncertain)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA (Disagree)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDA (Strongly disagree)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher analyzed the collected data from the questionnaire's fixed questions by using Microsoft (Excel) to produce percentages and mean scores. Also, each level of an agreement in the students' answers has a scale value ranging from 5 to 1, as shown in Table 1. The frequencies of strongly agreed responses, agreed responses, uncertain responses, disagree responses, and strongly disagreed responses are calculated. Finally, this research follows the content analysis to analyze the data which were provided from the open-ended questions.

Explicit rules of coding were used to compress more words into fewer content categories (Huss & Eastep, 2013). To do this analysis in detail answers were written (on Excel to produce percentages) for each question and a theme was chosen related to a category that can be used to organize the answers under areas such as technical problems, reasons behind feeling lonely, and improved performance. After that, a code (such as "E" for the theme "Enhanced time management") was chosen for each one of them. So, each answer had a theme and code. Then, each question had statistics and portions depending on the number of codes for each question (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

Participants
The participants of this study are 23 postgraduate students who are studying Applied Linguistics and Translation (class of 2018/2019) at KKU. All of them are females. They participated voluntarily in the study. Also, all of them use the virtual classes at the end of the final semester in their master's program.

Procedure
First, the questionnaire was sent to the participants by emailing the link to them at the end of the second semester in 2019. Also, the questionnaire sent via Whatsapp to the participants who do not have emails. The participants completed the questionnaire and sent it to the researcher by using Google forms. Each participant took about 10 to 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The data collection took six days in total.

Results
Results of students' perceptions towards using virtual classes
In Figure 1, we can see that the statement "using virtual classes reduced my time than attending classes face-to-face" is rated highly (57%) by the students as most strongly agreed response in synchrony, while the statement "I had technical problems while using the virtual classes" is rated 30% as the most disagreed response (see Figure 1 for the rest of the questions of synchrony & Table 2 for the mean scores of synchrony in Appendix A).

![Figure 1](image)

In the sense of community, the statement "I worked individually for most of the projects" has a 39% response, which is the most agreed upon response. On the other hand, the most strongly disagreed upon response (30%) is the statement "I am isolated and lonely" (You can find in Figure 2 the rest of the questions about the sense of community & in Table 3 the mean scores of the sense of community in Appendix A).
In the interactivity, the statement "It is easy to follow the class discussions" has a 35% response, then the statement "I did not face problems when I used the text-based chatting" has 30% as the most strongly agreed upon responses. On the other hand, the statement "I cannot interact with my colleagues because I cannot see them face-to-face" has 43% as the most disagree upon response (see Figure 3 for the rest of the questions of interactivity & Table 4 for the mean scores of interactivity in Appendix A).

As we can see in Figure 4, of the usefulness and ease of use, the statement "I could easily access the class" has 61% as the most agreed upon response, while the statement "My performance improved through the experience of using the virtual classes" has 22% as the most disagreed upon response (see Figure 4 for the rest of the questions of usefulness & ease of use & Table 5 for the mean scores of usefulness & ease of use in Appendix A).
The Relevance of Doing Virtual Classes

Students' attitudes towards using virtual classes

From Figure 5, 6, and 7 (in Appendix B) it is evident that the statements "I had the feedback provided by my instructor and my colleagues" has 57% and "I had a good experience through using the virtual classes" has 48% as the most agreed upon responses. On the other hand, the statement "I faced problems because of the fixed time of the classes" has 48% as the most disagreed upon response (see Figure 5, 6, & 7 for the rest of the questions about the students' attitudes in Appendix B & Table 6 for the mean scores of the students' attitudes in Appendix A).

Reasons that affect the students' perceptions

Technical problems

Students face some technical issues, and these problems often appear in the form of Internet connection (75%), sound problem (12.50%), and KKU blackboard problems (12.50%).

The feeling of isolation

Students feel isolated when they use virtual classes (30%). Some of the reasons for feeling isolated are no chance for face-face interaction, everything around the student is silent, and the student feels that there is nobody to hear her. While some students do not feel isolated (70%) because they can communicate with each other through Whatsapp and chat room in the virtual class.

The sense of being in a real class

The students feel they are in a real class because students get more chance to participate than before (42.86%). They prefer virtual classes taught by male professors, and it is better to meet online instead of going to college. They value virtual classes than video conferences in the college. Also, the teachers can ask questions at any time and call the students by their names to answer, which is similar to the real class situation. Some students feel that there was no sense of being in an actual class (57.14%) as they have video conferences in the college. The communication between the teacher and his students in virtual class is limited because some students do not attend the classes or participate appropriately,
they cannot direct their questions any time, they cannot see others, everything around them is silent, and they feel that there is nobody there to hear them.

**Working alone or individually with the help of virtual classes**

Many students work alone using virtual classes (72.73%) because teachers ask them to work independently. But it depends on the nature of the subject. Since some topics require individual work, as students are not collaborative and do not like to chat as groups, do not know who will work with them would prefer one way of thinking and processing. Moreover, they want to work individually to achieve proficiency and avoid making mistakes since some of their colleagues may not exert adequate effort when working on the project. On the other hand, some students work together using virtual classes (27.27%) because teachers ask them to work together, and the group work saves their time and effort.

**Problems related to the text-based chatting**

Students have problems while using text-based chatting (33.33%) because some instructors are not trained to use the virtual classes. So, they disable the chat. As they are not familiar with the keyboard, they send the message which have typos by mistake, and cannot omit the word. While there are students, who have no problems using the text-based chatting (66.67%) because it is close to face-to-face chatting and easy to use.

**The virtual class designs**

Students indicated that the virtual classes have a good design which provided an interactive environment (92.86%) because they can chat in the main room and privately with all the classmates and the professor, can share documents, can participate either through typing a text or using the microphone, and can use the virtual classes to encourage participation among students since some of them are shy to speak face-to-face, whereas there are students who indicate that the design of the virtual classes do not offer an interactive environment (7.14%) because face-to-face classes are better to be interactive.

**Microphone problems**

Students have problems when they use the microphone (50%) because there is no possibility to use the microphone by more than three students. Sometimes it depends on the accessibility given by the professors. On the other hand, some students do not have problems using the microphone in the virtual classes (50%) because some of the professors give access to the microphone from the beginning till the end of the class. While some teachers prefer students to ask for the microphone. Moreover, the microphone is easy to use, it transfers the voice immediately, it shows who opens it, and who is speaking at the moment.

**Using virtual classes to improve the students' performance**

Students develop their performance through using the virtual classes (78.57) because they become more comfortable and confident about their opinions, they can speak freely without fear, they participate more actively than in the real classes, It helps them to speak fluently, and to be more aware of their speech. Also, they can listen to their speech by using recorded lectures. While there are students, who do not improve their performance by using the virtual classes (21.43%) because their performance improves very much through face-to-face classes.

**Enhanced time management through using the virtual classes**
Students improve their time management (100%) because it gives them extra time to finish and achieve what is required; it gives them the chance to mediate between class time and other works. As the classes have fixed schedule to log in, it encourages them to wake up early and set the alarm to join the session early and to avoid any technical problems, whereas there are no students who do not improve their time management through using the virtual classes (0%).

**Reasons which affected the students' attitudes**

**Using the virtual classes for the students' future study**

Students want to use the virtual classes for their future study (69.23%) because they can attend the class from their homes comfortably without a wastage of time. The virtual classes allow them to listen to the lectures again to those who stay away from the university. The virtual classes have explicit content, provide extra time to do other works, are very useful, easy to use, and follow. On the other hand, some students do not want to use virtual classes for their future study (30.77%) because they prefer face-to-face classes and communication. It provides them with more interaction and information than the virtual classes. Also, their performance is better in face-to-face classes.

**The negative effects on the students' learning process by using virtual classes**

Students have negative effects on their learning process by using virtual classes (66.67%). The teacher does not motivate them to keep up with the classes, so they lost interest in completing the class or pay attention. The absence of the body language and lack of access to the microphone which must be given by the teacher are the reasons for their disinterest. While there are students who do not have negative effects on their learning process through using virtual classes (33.33%) because it helps them to participate with the male professors, it motivates them to interact and involve more than before, and it is one of the best strategies which used to enhance their learning process.

**Students' effort through using the virtual classes**

Students consider the use of virtual classes to be a time consumer (14.29%) because there is a preference for using face-to-face classes, whereas there are students who do not consider the use of the virtual classes to be a time consumer (85.71%) because it helps them to work from home without wasting time by going to the college. It does not require much effort to use virtual classes, and it gives them more time to work on their home works. Also, some students who live in remote cities prefer virtual classes. Furthermore, it is easy to join the session and to replay the session at any time and anywhere.

**Students' confidence after using the virtual classes**

Students have confidence when they used virtual classes (80%) because it raises their confidence to express their opinions to male professors. The use of the virtual classes is useful and beneficial, it is easy to fix any technical problems that may pop at any time, the teachers are understandable when technical issues appear, the students attend the class from their homes comfortably, there is no pressure, it is easy to be used by all the students, and there are many videos available there to inform students how to use the virtual classes without any problems. On the other hand, some students do not have confidence when they use virtual classes (20%) because of the Internet and headphone problems.

**Discussion**

To answer the first question based upon the previous results, students have a good experience and positive attitudes towards using virtual classes (Ku & Lohr, 2003; Knowles & Kerkman, 2007). Those positive attitudes are supported by many things such as the ability to do work at home, the easiness of
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access to the virtual classes (they are one of the likes in Ku & Lohr study's (2003)), and the availability of feedback (it is one of the likes in Ku & Lohr study's (2003)). Also, students are interested in using virtual classes, and they become motivated (Mosquera, 2017).

Furthermore, this study shows that we have a good number of students who do not feel isolated, while in Ku and Lohr's study (2003), students feel isolated. Moreover, students enjoy having feedback which is provided by their instructors and colleagues (Knowles & Kerkman, 2007). Also, students save their time by using the virtual classes, but they worry about the fixed time of the classes. In contrast, using the virtual classes take more time in Knowles and Kerkman's study (2007).

We have an interactive, flexible, and easy to use environment which is provided by the virtual classes. Also, students enhance their performance (Hussain, 2007). Furthermore, students feel comfortable and confident while using virtual classes in their study, which is similar to Huss and Eastep's study (2013) in contrast to Canchala's study (2010). This study reveals that students might feel uncomfortable and less confident because of the Internet and microphone problems, while in Canchala's study (2010) that doesn't happen because of the little previous knowledge of English.

So, the first hypothesis, which states that if the postgraduate female students use virtual classes in their master's program at KKU, they will have some attitudes towards it, is supported by these results.

To answer the second question based upon the previous results: interactivity, usefulness, and ease of use have significant results in this study, which is close to Parker and Martin's research (2010). Besides that, the sense of community does not have substantial results in this study, and the most probable reason behind that is that the students work individually (Parker & Martin, 2010). Moreover, students do not face problems in using text-based chatting, whereas it is a significant problem in Parker and Martin's study (2010). Furthermore, students in this study can effectively interact with their professors and colleagues using voice and text-based chat (Parker & Martin, 2010; Huss & Eastep, 2013).

Also, the students want to use the virtual classes in their future study (Mosquera, 2017) because they know the benefits of using the virtual classes such as the effectiveness and the opportunity to listen to the lectures again (Almarabeh, 2014). Besides that, students face some technical problems such as Internet connection, sound issues, and KKU blackboard problems. In Mosquera's study (2017), they just face digital issues and being on time, while in this study, students do not encounter issues with time management. Instead of that, students enhance their time management skills (Indreica, 2014) because of many reasons, which include extra time to work on other works, save time, and effort.

So, the second hypothesis which states that if the postgraduate female students use virtual classes in their master's program at KKU, they will have different perceptions levels of interactivity, synchrony, usefulness, ease of use, and sense of community, is supported by these results.

To answer the third question based upon the previous results, it was evident in this study that there are many advantages of using virtual classes such as saving time, ease of use, viewing the archived lectures, motivating students, providing the students with feedback from their instructors and colleagues, improving the students' time management, performance, and effectiveness. Also, it has an attractive, positive, and collaborative environment by using voice and text-based chats.

Besides these advantages, we have some disadvantages, such as technical problems. Also, the students need to work individually, feel lonely, or have no feeling of being in a real class. Furthermore, they may face difficulties while using the microphone and text-based chat. Moreover, they may have
negative effects on the learning process. Besides that, the use of virtual classes may affect their confidence. By comparing the result of this study with Ku and Lohr's study (2003), Mosquera's study (2017), Indreica's study (2014), Bogdan and Brindusa's study (2018) all of those advantages and disadvantages are unique to this study under its circumstances except "feel lonely" which mention in Ku and Lohr's study (2003).

So, the third hypothesis which states that if the postgraduate female students use virtual classes in their master's program at KKU, they will have some advantages and disadvantages of using it, is supported by these results.

To answer the fourth question and depending on the previous results, the open-ended questions in this study reveal many positive and negative factors that affect the students' attitudes and perceptions while using the virtual classes. So, the last hypothesis which states that if the postgraduate female students use virtual classes in their master's program at KKU, they will have some factors which affect their attitudes and perceptions, is supported by these results.

First, there are positive and negative factors that influenced the students' perceptions. The positive factors which affect the students' perceptions are the ability of communicating with each other through chat rooms, the chance to participate more than before, the preference of using virtual classes, working together for many reasons such as saving time and effort, the ease of use, the excellent design which provides an interactive environment, easiness of using the microphone, having more comfort and confident about their opinions, speaking freely without fear, participating more often than in real classes, providing the chance to be more active than in face-to-face classes, speaking fluently, being more aware of the students' speeches, listening again to the students' speeches by using the recorded lectures, and improving the students' time management skills. Additionally, it is the best way to meet their male professors, and the teacher can ask the students the same as in real classes.

The negative factors which affect the students' perceptions are technical problems, the disability to see others (students and teachers), the silence in the virtual classes, the preference to take face-to-face classes, the limited communication between the teacher and students, working alone for many reasons such as teachers ask the students to work individually. Moreover, the students face text-based chatting problems which cause by many reasons such as the students are not familiar with the keyboard, and microphone problems which cause by many reasons such as the disability of using it when three students are pressing it.

Second, there are positive and negative factors that influenced the students' attitudes. The positive factors which affect the students' attitudes are the preference to use the virtual classes in the future for many reasons such as the ability to attend the class from their homes comfortably without any time wastage, the positive effects on the students' learning process for many reasons such as the use of the virtual classes motivates the students to interact and participate more than before, saving effort because of many reasons that include the easiness of joining the sessions and replaying them at anytime and anywhere, and the students' increased confidence for many reasons such as the absence of the pressure.

The negative factors which affect the students' attitudes are the preference of taking face-to-face classes in the future since it provides them with more interaction and information than the virtual classes, the students' performance is better in face-to-face classes, the negative effects on the students' learning process which cause by many reasons such as the absence of body language, the use of virtual classes
consume their effort because of many reasons that include the preference of using face-to-face classes, and the students' decrease confidence for many reasons such as the Internet problems and headphone problems.

We can find some of these positive and negative factors which affect the students' attitudes and perceptions in Bogdan and Brindusa's study (2018) and Jovic, Stankovic, and Nesko's study (2017). But, in this study, we can find factors which do not appear in other studies (that mentioned in this study). For the positive factors which affect the students' perceptions which are not mentioned in Bogdan and Brindusa's study (2018) and Jovic, Stankovic, and Nesko's study (2017) are the chance to participate more than before, the preference of using virtual classes, working together for many reasons such as saving time and effort, having more comfort and confident about their opinions, speaking freely without fear, participating more than in real classes, providing the chance to be more active than in face-to-face classes, speaking fluently, being more aware of the students' speeches, listening again to the students' speeches by using the recorded lectures, and improving the students' time management skills because of many reasons that include the extra time that is provided by the virtual classes to finish and achieve what is required. Moreover, it is the best way to meet their male professors, and the teacher can ask students like in real classes.

Besides these positive factors we have negative factors which affect the students' perceptions which are not mentioned in Bogdan and Brindusa's study (2018) and Jovic, Stankovic, and Nesko's study (2017) are technical problems, the silence in the virtual classes, the preference to take face-to-face classes, the limited communication between the teacher and students, working alone for many reasons such as teachers asked the students to work individually. Also, students face text-based chatting problems which cause by many reasons such as the students are not familiar with the keyboard, and microphone problems which cause by many reasons such as the disability of using it when three students are pressing it.

Besides that, all of the positive and negative factors which affect the students' attitudes are unique to this study under its circumstances.

**Recommendations**

An expansion of this study can investigate the effect of using virtual classes on tests, the relationship between using virtual classes and students' achievement regarding age and gender, and teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards using the virtual classes. In this study, based on the conclusion, the following recommendations were set for e-learning:

1. Virtual classes should be developed suit for students' needs since we have a significant number of students who want to use it for their future study.
2. Teachers and students must be trained to use the virtual classes to avoid problems.
3. Virtual classes should be implemented in the learning process because of its advantages and effectiveness.

**Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the postgraduate students' attitudes and perceptions of the virtual classroom and its characteristics such as synchrony, sense of community, interactivity, usefulness, and ease of use. Also, it studied the advantages and disadvantages of using virtual classes and discussed the factors which affected the students' attitudes and perceptions towards using virtual classes. The study
revealed that the students had different attitudes and perceptions towards using the virtual classes. Generally, we had positive reactions from the students who use this technology. Furthermore, there were some difficulties faced by students, such as technical problems. But, we had a significant number of students who wanted to have online courses because of its effectiveness and usefulness (Parker & Martin, 2010). Besides that, interactivity, usefulness, and ease of use had significant results in this study. Also, this study revealed that there were some advantages (such as the ease of use) and disadvantages (such as having no sense of being in a real class) of using virtual classes. Moreover, many positive and negative factors affected the students' attitudes and perceptions.

We know that technology enhances the learning environment (Perraton, 1988 as cited in Schlosser & Simonson, 2006). So, in my opinion, having an effective learning process depends on having a better understanding of our students' perceptions and attitudes regarding the ways and the tools for teaching and learning. Also, it is essential to know more about the factors that will affect the process of learning through virtual classes besides the advantages and disadvantages of using virtual classes. Moreover, we use new technology (the virtual classes), which needs more understanding of how it works and how to use it (Qahmash, 2013). So, this study proved to be a useful guide for teachers when they consider using virtual classes. Besides that, it provides them with more information and experience to know how to meet their students' expectations. Also, this study formed a baseline for other researches since this area of research is related to Applied Linguistics (AL) and it has become a crucial significant area in AL recently (Bin, 2013). Generally, this study could help people involved in using virtual classes.

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Appendix A. Tables

Table 2. The mean scores of synchrony

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synchrony</th>
<th>Mean scores</th>
<th>The total of the mean raw scores of synchrony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I had technical problems while using the virtual classes.</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Using virtual classes reduced my time than attending classes face-to-face
3. It is easy to collaborate with my colleagues without being in the same place.

Table 3. *The mean scores of the sense of community*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of community</th>
<th>Mean scores</th>
<th>The total of the mean raw scores of the sense of community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. I am isolated and lonely.</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>9.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There is no sense of being in a real classroom when I used the virtual classes.</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I worked individually for most of the projects.</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. *The mean scores of interactivity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactivity</th>
<th>Mean scores</th>
<th>The total of the mean raw scores of interactivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. I did not face problems when I used the text-based chatting.</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>12.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. It is easy to follow the class discussions.</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I can talk freely using the microphone.</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I cannot interact with my colleagues because I cannot see them face-to-face.</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. *The mean scores of usefulness and ease of use*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usefulness and ease of use</th>
<th>Mean scores</th>
<th>The total of the mean scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. It is easy to use the Virtual Classrooms.</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>26.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My performance improved through the experience of using the virtual classes.</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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14. My effectiveness in learning has enhanced through the experience of using the virtual classes. 3.34
15. I can easily view the archived sessions. 4.13
16. I could easily access the class. 4.39
9. The design of the virtual classes provided an interactive environment. 3.52
17. The use of the virtual classes enhanced my time management techniques. 3.8

Table 6. The mean scores of the students' attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. I hope to use the virtual classes for my future study.</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I developed a positive reaction towards the use of virtual classes.</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I had a negative reaction to the use of the virtual classes.</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Using Virtual Classes makes me a motivated student.</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. There is a negative effect on my learning process because of the use of virtual classes.</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I had a good experience while using the virtual classes.</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I had a bad experience while using the virtual classes.</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. It was interesting to use the virtual classes.</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. The process of completing the semester using the virtual classes was time consuming.</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I was confused because there was no immediate feedback.</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I had the feedback provided by my instructor and my colleagues.</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I faced problems because of the fixed time of the classes.</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I am confident because I could complete everything at home.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
31. I was worried while accessing the class through online because of the Internet problems.
32. There is no confidence when I use the virtual classes.

Appendix B. Figures

Figure 5. The percentages of students' responses about their attitudes (question 18, 19, 20, 21, & 22)
Figure 6. The percentages of students' responses about their attitudes (question 23, 24, 25, 26, & 27)

Figure 7. The percentages of students' responses about their attitudes (question 28, 29, 30, 31, & 32)
From Cognition, Metacognition to Autonomy: A Framework for Understanding Language Learning Dynamics

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Abstract
Learning a language is not possible without cognition as cognition and language are inseparable. Metacognition and autonomy are well-established concepts in the domain of teaching and learning languages. Although these two constructs, metacognition and learner autonomy, introduced by John Flavell (1979) and Henri Holec (1980s) respectively, have received considerable attention, the close relationship of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy and their impact on language learning as a tripartite framework remain under-researched. This paper argues that understanding the role of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy substantiates the understanding of language learning dynamics. It concludes with a proposition of a framework of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy for language learning and an attempt to explain why this framework is essential and how it can be promoted in the language learning process.

Keywords: autonomy; cognition; framework; language learning; metacognition

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Introduction

Humans are uniquely attributed to learn and use language and even called language-specific species. Language is defined as “an observable manifestation of hidden and highly abstract cognitive constructions” (Escribano, 2004, p.89). Widdowson (1996) describes human language as “species specific”, “generic accomplishment”, and “genetic endowment” (p. 11-12). According to Encyclopedia Britannica. (n.d.), cognition is defined as:

…the states and processes involved in knowing, which in their completeness include perception and judgment. Cognition includes all conscious and unconscious processes by which knowledge is accumulated, such as perceiving, recognizing, conceiving, and reasoning. Put differently, cognition is a state or experience of knowing that can be distinguished from an experience of feeling or willing. (par. 1)

Cognition enables humans to exploit the best form of communication, using words that can carry along the semantic of not only concrete objects but concepts/ideas also. Taylor (1995) postulates that “language, being at once both the creation of human cognition and an instrument in its service, is thus more likely than not to reflect, in its structure and functioning, more general cognitive abilities” (p. IX). Indeed, language is “an essential human feature” (Escribano, 2004, p. 88), and the human ability to master languages indicates the presence of a cognitive specialization.

Language learning begins with cognition in the sense that cognition refers to the brain functions, but cognition involves many other mental processes as well. For example, metacognition plays a crucial role in learning languages. Flavell (1979) has introduced the term, metacognition, and defined it as “thinking about thinking” (p. 906) and later filtered it as “cognition about cognition” (Flavell, 1985, p. 104) to capture the core meaning. Metacognition enables language learners to monitor and control their cognitive processes. Therefore, when language learners employ metacognition, they start taking control of their language learning more effectively and thus gaining autonomy in their learning process.

Another important concept, which is deeply associated with language learning and holding the current trend of language research, is autonomy, coined by Henri Holec in the 1980s. Holec (1981) defines autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one's own learning” (p.3). Little (1994) broadly classifies autonomy into the general educational level and psychological level. The former refers to the responsibility of a state to ensure the development of its citizens’ capacity so that they can freely think and act as self-determining individuals, and the latter refers to the responsibility of an individual who turns himself/herself into an efficient learner by building up their capacity to assimilate new information from what is already known and to transfer their gained knowledge to a new learning context.

Research abounds in the area of language learning in connection with learner autonomy and metacognition (e.g., Benson, 2007; Little, 2010; Yaylı, 2010; Ismael, 2015). The research on the significant role of metacognition in fostering learner autonomy (e.g., Cubukcu, 2009; Koban-Koç & Koç, 2016; Haque, 2018; ZHIRI, 2019) is also reported. Similarly, much research is conducted in the area of language and cognition (e.g., Chomsky, 1981; Sangpanasthada, 2006; Perlovsky, 2010; Deak, 2014; Langley, 2016; Carlo, 2017). Anderson (2002) has emphasized the relation of cognition and
language and commented that “understanding and controlling cognitive processes may be one of the most essential skills that classroom teachers can help second language learners develop” (p. 3).

However, the holistic approach of combining cognition, metacognition, and autonomy as a tripartite language learning framework appears to remain under-researched. The relevant literature makes almost no reference to the implication that a comprehensive approach towards language learning, which integrates cognition, metacognition, and autonomy is an essential reality.

This paper examines the literature on cognition, metacognition, and learner autonomy in connection with language learning and presents a summary of research on these areas. It argues that understanding the role of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy in language learning substantiates the understanding of language learning dynamics and proposes a framework of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy for language learning. Finally, it explains why this framework is essential and how it can be promoted in the language learning process.

Cognition

It is not an easy task to define cognition because it is related to the human mind, much of which is yet to be explored. Minsky (1985) has appropriately pointed out this dilemma and commented that the knowledge of the human mind is still so little that it is even hard to confirm if ideas about psychology are appropriately aimed at. He has warned that it would be a mistake to define things that are still in the process of knowing. Pinker (1994) also opines that the serious investigation of the human cognitive system would prove to be as marvelous and intricate as the physical structures existing in the life of an organism.

In dictionaries (see Webstar’s 1913 edition and American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th edition, published in 2000), cognition refers to both a process of knowing and a state of knowing. However, researchers in the field seem to be in favor of defining cognition as a process of knowing. Neisser (1967) identifies cognition as “the activity of knowing: the acquisition, organization, and use of knowledge” (p.1) whereas the history of cognition informs us that cognition means knowledge. Brandimore, Bruno & Collina (2006) explain the reasons why cognition should mean to be a process: Cognition indeed refers to the mental process by which external or internal input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used. As such, it involves a variety of functions such as perception, attention, memory coding, retention, and recall, decision making, reasoning, problem-solving, imaging, planning and executing actions. Such mental processes involve the generation and use of internal representations to varying degrees, and may operate independently (or not) at different stages of processing. Furthermore, these processes can to some extent be observed or at least empirically probed, leading to scientific investigation by means of methods akin to those of the natural sciences. (p. 3)

To sum up, cognition refers to both the mental process of knowing and the product of knowing as two facets of the same coin. Humans employ cognition in their pursuit of any learning, using their brain as the fundamental instrument, and the uniqueness of human cognition lies in its creative abilities to build on the existing repository.
Cognition and Language Learning

Cognition is responsible for language learning. Perlovsky (2010) suggests that “human language and cognition have evolved jointly” (p. 7) whereas Matlin (1989) observes “[t]he use of language is … the one ability that most differentiates humans from other animals” (as cited in Sangpanasthada, 2006, p. 31). Deak (2014) comments that though it is not possible to draw a straight conclusion between language development and cognition, it is recognized in the language development research that “language processing is cognition, language use is distributed cognition and understanding children’s capacity for language means understanding the development and recruitment of general learning and cognitive processes” (p. 290).

Perlovsky (2010) has developed a hypothesis that postulates language and cognition as “two separate but closely connected mechanisms” (p. 2). He refers to language as the stores of cultural wisdom and cognition as the “mental representations modeling surrounding world” and the adaptation of “cultural knowledge to concrete circumstances of life” (p. 2). He argues that cognition requires experience, but it is not possible to acquire cognition directly from experience without using language as the necessary intermediary. In fact, “cognition cannot be learned without language” (p. 8).

Chomsky (1981) separates language from cognition. He argues that the particular module, LAD (i.e., Language Acquisition Device) is solely devoted to language and that the inborn leaning mechanism, UG (Universal Grammar) is responsible for the acquisition of complex language system. However, cognitive linguistics has rejected Chomsky’s claim about LAD and Universal Grammar on the ground that there is no difference between language and cognition, and cognitive linguists have tried to unify language and cognition.

Langley (2016) emphasizes that the acquisition of language skills occurs in stages in which the initial process starts with the comprehension and production of words. He points out that the acquisition of language incorporates the previously learned cognitive structures as important scaffolding. So, it is evident that cognition and learning are closely connected as “theories of cognition and intelligence were necessarily incomplete without an account of learning” (p. 4). However, “learning mechanisms are best viewed as additional components that interact with other elements in an integrated cognitive system” (p. 8).

While there is a consensus among researchers about the central role of cognition in learning, opinions differ on whether language learning requires the same cognitive abilities as other nonlinguistic learning activities do. Modular perspectives claim the involvement of cognitive abilities in the process of language learning, which is independent of other cognitive abilities, (i.e., “language specific learning processes and products”), whereas constructivist and biologically based perspectives seem to defy this claim of modular perspectives by favoring “domain general cognitive capacities and processes” for the development of language (Deak, 2014, p. 284). VanLehn (1995) tends to focus on a different aspect of cognition while defining cognitive ability as “acquiring the ability to solve problems in intellectual tasks, where success is determined more by the subjects’ [learners’] knowledge than their physical prowess” (p. 1).

Carlo (2017) shows the close relation between cognition and language. He defines language as a cognitive ability which cannot be separated from other human cognitive abilities because language is
used to “explain the nature of any other cognitive ability of human beings, such as conceptualization, reasoning, problem solving, and decision making, among others” (p. 115).

For all intents and purposes, language learning cannot be separated from cognition. It can be debated if language learning requires the same cognitive abilities used in other types of learning, but the prime role of cognition in language learning cannot be overlooked.

**Cognitive Strategies and Language Learning**

Language learners use various learning strategies for successful language learning and notably employ them when they encounter difficulties. Usually, learners are aware of the application of their learning strategies and can explain the way they use it while trying to learn something. Cognitive strategies are identified as one type of three learning strategies (the other two types are metacognitive and social/affective strategies). Cognitive strategies are the learning strategies which are used to organize new language, summarize meaning, guess the meaning from context, and use imagery of memorization as the deliberate manipulation of language for improving learning (Cognitive strategies, n.d.).

Ellis (1997) defines cognitive strategies as “...those that are involved in the analysis, synthesis, or transformation of learning materials” (p. 77) and exemplifies ‘recombination’ as one of cognitive strategies in which known elements of the second language are combined in an unknown way in order to construct a meaningful sentence. Similarly, O’Malley and Chamot (1990) describe that cognitive strategies are those which “involve analyzing and synthesizing information” (as cited in Koban-Koç & Koç, 2016, p. 60). Paris and Paris (2001) summarize the main points by identifying ‘cognitive strategy’ as a person’s mental processes which they apply to either acquire a particular goal or complete a learning task. They also argue that activating the cognitive strategy is a deliberate process, which involves an active role and control and that employing cognitive strategies should not be interpreted as a mere compliance with instructions. Acquiring cognitive strategies may take various forms. For example, learners as observers can acquire new cognitive skills and patterns of behavior by “observing the performance of other” (Bandura, 1986, p. 49).

In short, the realization of cognition in language learning comes through cognitive strategies. Cognition is an essential human attribution, which may even run unconsciously, but when cognition is exploited strategically, it becomes a conscious and controlled process to serve deliberate purposes. In the case of language learning, cognitive strategies seem to be synonymously used for cognition.

**Metacognition**

Metacognition refers to “the processes involved when learners plan, monitor, evaluate, and make changes to their own learning behaviours” (Cambridge, 2015, par. 1). The concept of metacognition is introduced by John Flavell in 1970s and is referred to as the knowledge and regulation of cognitive activities in the process of learning. Metacognition is popularly known as ‘thinking about thinking’ or ‘learning about learning’. Over the course of time, metacognition has eventuated in an umbrella term, which includes self-regulation, higher-order skills, executive skills, metacomponents, metamemory, comprehension monitoring, feeling of knowing, judgment of learning, heuristic strategies, and learning strategies as its associative terms and thus makes the research of metacognition a domain which is lacking consistency. Veenman, van Hout-Wolters & Afflerbach (2006) identify this proliferation of metacognition as the inconsistency that “marks conceptualization of the construct.
[metacognition]” (p. 4) and recommend that there is a need for more theoretical work to establish a unified definition for metacognition and its components. With that being said, there is no scope of minimizing the significant impact of metacognition on the process of learning as Flavell (1979) emphasizes that metacognition could help both adults and children “make wise and thoughtful life decisions as well as to comprehend and learn better in formal settings” (p.910).

It is said that the real character of metacognition cannot be identified if there is no distinction made between cognition and metacognition (see Nelson, 1999; Nelson & Narens, 1994). Nelson (1999) refers to metacognition as “the scientific study of an individual’s cognitions about his or her own cognitions” (p. 625). Therefore, metacognition can be termed as a subset of cognition, better to say, a certain kind of cognition as Mahdavi (2014) notes that “cognition is a general term for thinking, while metacognition is thinking about thinking” (p. 532).

Flavell (1979) has prescribed a model of metacognition and named it as ‘A Model of Cognitive Monitoring’. He describes the model as “the monitoring of a wide variety of cognitive enterprises” (p. 906), in which metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experience, goals (or tasks), and actions (or strategies) are the key components that act and interact. Nelson & Narens (1990) have developed three abstract principles of metacognition: the cognitive processes are split into two or more specifically interrelated levels, the meta-level contains a dynamic model (e.g., a mental stimulation) of the object-level, and there are two dominance relations, called ‘control’ and ‘monitoring’, which are defined in terms of the direction of the flow of information between the meta-level and the object-level. Their division of metacognition into ‘Object-level’ and ‘Meta-level’ help concretize the concept of metacognition.

According to Anderson (2002), metacognition is “the real key to learning” (p.3). He has identified metacognitive learners as the learners who “know what to do when they don’t know what to do” (p.3). His metacognitive model describes five primary components: (a) preparing and planning for learning, (b) selecting and using learning strategies, (c) monitoring strategy use, (d) orchestrating various strategies, and (e) evaluating strategy use and learning. He concludes that the reflective episode of how those strategies interact provides learners with the opportunity of improving their strategy use and that “strong metacognitive skills empower second language learners” (p.4).

To put it simply, metacognition is a mental process for monitoring and controlling cognition. Metacognition plays a crucial role in learning, and the use of metacognition indicates effective learning. Considering its vast impact on learning, different models for metacognition have been proposed so that metacognition can be utilized in its entirety.

**Metacognition and Language Learning**

Metacognition has “a crucial function in successful learning” (Naznean, 2010, p. 756) and is “a powerful predictor of learning” (Cambridge, 2015, par. 12). Flavell (1979) explains how metacognition impacts on learning a language and informs that metacognition plays a crucial role in language learning when language learners try “to select, revise, and abandon cognitive tasks, goals, and strategies in light of their relationship with one another and with learners’ own abilities and interests with respect to language learning efforts” (p.908). Kuhn and Dean (2004) establish the relation of metacognition and language learning by indicating that metacognition “enables a student who has been taught a particular
strategy in a particular problem context to retrieve and deploy that strategy in a similar but new context” (as cited in Lai, 2011, p. 5).

Haque (2018) reports that “metacognition and language learning are tied together” and “learners who employ metacognition turn out to be better at language learning” (p. 189). Wu (2008) has conducted a longitudinal study on implementing metacognition in English as a foreign language (EFL) writing class and discovered that three metacognitive components, namely metacognitive strategies, metacognitive assessment, and metacognitive experiences, mainly play active roles in the EFL writing class. She suggests that providing EFL learners with metacognitive instructions can help improve their writing performance. Guo (2012) analyses the relationship between metacognition and English autonomous listening ability and identifies the contributory functions of metacognition in enhancing autonomous listening. She holds the view that “the cultivation of students’ metacognition is favorable for the improvement of their ability to learn English listening autonomously” (p. 2446). Zhiri (2019) has conducted an experimental study in Morocco to understand why Moroccan learners of English perform poorly and found that the lack of training on self-directed learning and metacognition can be held responsible for that. He suggests that quality education in English can be materialized “by willingly adopting elements such as metacognition, learner autonomy, and meaning oriented instruction” (p. 572).

In summary, the effective learning of a language requires planning, monitoring, and evaluation, and metacognition serves those purposes as a reflective process. Research on metacognition provides the evidence that the application of metacognition enhances language learning.

**Metacognitive Strategies and Language Learning**

Language learning strategies are considered to be the critical factors in enhancing autonomy (see Wenden, 1991; Brown, 1994; Oxford, 1996) whereas metacognitive strategies play a decisive role in increasing language learner autonomy as they direct toward more individual instructions (see Fewell, 2010). Metacognitive strategies also help to develop learners’ metacognition (see Du Toit & Kotze, 2009).

According to Flavell (1981), when learners are consciously monitoring their cognitive strategies to gain specific goals, they are employing metacognitive strategies. For example, when learners ask themselves questions about their works and then observe how well they answer these questions, they are engaged in metacognitive strategies. Anderson (2002) points out that the importance of teaching students about metacognitive strategies along with the cognitive strategies and that there is a particular need for second language learners to be able to think about their language learning process because it helps learners develop stronger learning skills. Importantly, the mere focus on the cognitive process may prevent the metacognitive process from taking place.

Graham (1997) goes further to claim the supremacy of metacognitive strategies over cognitive strategies and stresses the importance of distinguishing between cognitive and metacognitive strategies because it leads to the realization of the appropriate strategy use in making the learning most effective. Rahimi and Katal (2012) conclude that there is a significant relationship between the use of metacognitive strategies and higher achievement and better learning outcomes. Boghian (2016)
describes metacognitive strategies as the “strategies for acting on what you know - i.e., directing, improving, increasing, etc. what you know” (p. 58) and explain how metacognitive strategies can be effectively used in an English language classroom.

To sum up, successful language learners use more metacognitive strategies than unsuccessful language learners. This establishes the close relationship of metacognition with high achievement and better learning outcomes in language learning.

**Autonomy**

According to Holec (1981), autonomy is “the ability to take charge of one’s learning” (p.3). Little (1991) defines autonomy as “a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action” (p.4). Benson (2001) identifies autonomy as “the capacity to take control of one’s own learning” (p. 47). Benson and Voller (1997) seem to cover all the possible aspects of autonomy as they use the term, autonomy for situations in which learners study entirely on their own, a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning, an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education, the exercise of learners’ responsibility for their own learning and the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

Omaggiro (1978, as cited in Wenden, 1998, p. 41-42), has mentioned seven distinguishing features of autonomous learners in the educational context: autonomous learners have insights into their learning styles and strategies; they take an active approach to the learning task at hand; they are willing to take risks, (i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs); they are good guessers; they attend to form as well as to content, that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy; they develop the target language into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply; and finally, they have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language.

Dam (1990 as cited in Gathercole, 1990, p. 16) situates autonomy in terms of willingness and capacity by which learners control their learning. She will call a person autonomous if he/she can independently choose aims and purposes, set her/his goals, select materials, methods and tasks, exercise choice and purpose in organizing and executing the tasks chosen and finally set criteria for evaluation.

Littlewood (1996) views an autonomous person as “one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions” (p.428) and believes that this independent capacity depends on ability and willingness. In order to explain why both ability and willingness are required for being an autonomous person, he points out that a person may have willingness “to make independent choices but not have the ability to do so” (p.428) or the other way round.

To conclude, autonomy entails the ability or capacity to make informed choices with learning. Autonomy should not be confused with independence, as interdependence is its default feature in the context of learning. Autonomy involves both ability and willingness, and the absence of one comes in the way of real autonomy.
Autonomy and Language Learning

The impact of learner autonomy on language learning is well documented in the research literature (e.g., Holec, 1981, 1988; Dickinson, 1987; Little, 1991, 2007; Dam, 1995; Ablard & Lipschultz, 1998; Smith, 2000; Benson, 2001, 2007; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Zhang & Li, 2004; Lamb & Reinders, 2006; Barfield & Brown, 2007). Dafei (2007) has conducted a study to explore the relationship between learner autonomy and English proficiency and reported that there is a significant positive relationship between learners’ English proficiency and their autonomy. He confirms that “...the more autonomous a learner becomes, the more likely he/she achieves high language proficiency” (p. 15). Little (2009) also believes that the relation between autonomy and language learning is proportionately distributed and points out that learners become more autonomous in language learning when learners can become more autonomous in language use. However, he warns that autonomy should not be interpreted as ‘100% free’ as learners “who are ENTIRELY free and detached from all responsibility are not autonomous, they are autistic” (p. 223).

Únal, Çeliköz & Sari (2017) have tried to find out the relationships between English learners’ perceptions of learner autonomy and their proficiency level in language learning. Although they can’t trace a significant difference between perceptions of English learners’ autonomy and their proficiency level, they recognize that English language learners have “a positive attitude towards learner autonomy” (p.121). Similarly, Yasmin & Sohail (2018) have investigated the relationship between learner autonomy and English language learning and found an active link between them. They argue that learners’ autonomy features such as curiosity, motivation, and confidence play pivotal roles in surviving the challenges related to language learning.

Godwin-Jones (2019) argues that learner autonomy has gained new momentum with the advent of modern language learning materials such as mobile devices and streaming videos. He explains why and how the informal language learning and learner autonomy are so connected on the basis of the fact “that learner autonomy in language learning entails the use of innate cognitive functions and a social tool—language—its manifestation necessarily combines independence and interdependence” (p.8).

In summary, it can be said that learner autonomy is a central concept in language learning theories and language teaching practices. The proficient language learners appear to be more autonomous, and autonomy in language learning is strongly connected to autonomy in language use.

Cognition, Metacognition, and Autonomy: A Framework

The discussions in the preceding sections show how cognition, metacognition, and autonomy are intertwined in the process of language learning. Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters & Afflerbach (2006) describe the relation of cognition and metacognition succinctly and comment that “one cannot split one’s self in two, of whom one thinks whilst the other observes him thinking” (p.5). They argue that it is almost impossible to have metacognitive knowledge without a good grip on cognition and identify metacognition as “(knowledge of) a set of self-instructions for regulating task performance” and cognitions as “the vehicle of those self-instructions” (p.6). Much research is also conducted to explore the significant relation of metacognition and learner autonomy (e.g., Vandergrift, 2005; Chen, 2008; Cubukcu,, 2009; Little, 2010). Therefore, the essential connections of these three constructs necessitate a holistic understanding of their interactions in language learning because dealing with them in a separate way leaves a knowledge gap, which may hinder a comprehensive approach to the language learning dynamics.
Autonomy is the ultimate goal of any language learning because the general aim of any language learning is to gain the ability to use language autonomously. But, learners cannot gain autonomy automatically; instead, autonomy comes through knowledge and skills and over time. It is a gradual complex process with the interaction of many factors. Apart from the factors lying beyond the control of learners such as teaching strategies, learning materials, and institutional supports, perhaps the most impacting factors are those related to cognition and metacognition as Darasawang and Reniders (2010) describe that “one way to develop learner autonomy is to train students how to use cognitive and metacognitive strategies so that they can manage their learning without the help of a teacher” (para. 3). Reinders (2017) recognizes the incorporation of cognition in building the theory of learner autonomy and “for theory building, it is important for LA to take into account, at least in part, cognitive aspects of language learning” (p.3) whereas Radovan (2019) explains how autonomous learning involves the integration of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

The significance of autonomy in language learning is paramount, and language learners’ success is the ultimate goal of any language learning and teaching. As autonomy never comes without effort, language learners must be prepared and supported before they become capable of taking the whole responsibility for their learning. Hurd (1998) puts a caveat for trying autonomy without preparedness: “if learners are not trained for autonomy, no amount of surrounding them with resources will foster in them that capacity for active involvement and conscious choice, although it might appear to do so” (pp. 72-73).

Admittedly, it is not possible to cater for individual language learners’ needs through classroom teaching because language learners differ in “their capacity to process, store, and retrieve information”, “terms of age, intelligence, beliefs about language learning” and “their approaches to learning” (Reinders, 2010, p. 42). Equally, language learning is a cognitive process, so any approach to language learning and teaching should not overlook the significance of cognitive functions. Language learners’ knowledge and regulation of their cognitive process enable them to exploit their cognitive abilities and thus help them utilize their metacognitive abilities. When language learners ‘go meta’, they become more autonomous in their endeavor to language learning. Language learners’ inner journey from cognition, metacognition to autonomy turns themselves into proactive, self-motivated, and confident learners: the features of successful language learners that any language program should strive to foster.

Therefore, the necessity of a framework which deals with the language learners’ mental capacities and the integrated interactions of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy is undeniable. The framework of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy focuses on the dynamics of the language learning process and revolves around a cyclic order of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy. While the practical realization of metacognition builds on cognition, metacognition is one of the important manifestations of autonomy. As the feeling of knowing indicates the presence of autonomy, the constructing components of this learning confidence could be gained from the maximum utilization of cognitive and metacognitive strategies/skills. The entire process starts with the activation of cognitive strategies which analyzes, synthesizes, and transforms linguistic information. Then metacognitive strategies are employed to plan, monitor, and evaluate the cognitive processes in the form of reflection. Once these cognitive and metacognitive processes are complete, language learners
become equipped with the ability or capacity to take responsibility for their learning. If this mental framework is applied to a particular language learning task and success is recorded, this provides the learner with the autonomy to replicate the whole process in a new learning context. Even if a case of the cognitive failure is reported, metacognition can be brought forward to identify the reasons during the evaluation stage and find solutions by selecting the appropriate cognitive method in the new planning stage. Thus, the interactions of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy are never parallel; rather any of them may intervene during this learning engagement based on their requirements.

Language learners’ frequent recourse to this framework enables them to get the most of what is available around them and what they are offered. More importantly, as the development of learner autonomy is often significantly interrupted because of practical reasons such as disadvantages of certain groups in the wider population, state-led education policies, school curricula and the prescribed use of textbooks (see Reinders, 2010), the proposed framework can provide a feasible and desirable solution to overcome these often unavoidable challenges in fostering learner autonomy.

Conclusion
In this paper, the relevant research literature on cognition, metacognition, and autonomy in connection with language learning has been briefly reviewed. Admittedly, a detail review of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy as well as their connections with language is beyond the scope of this article. However, the effort has been made to present a comprehensive summary of these key constructs and their significant impact on language learning and to establish the argument that a framework of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy for language learning is an essential reality.

Cognition can be thought of as a learning canvas on which metacognition works to maximize the learning through reflection, planning, monitoring, and evaluation, and the operation of metacognition as such leads towards autonomy. The proposed tripartite framework portrays the cyclic functioning of cognition, metacognition, and autonomy as a mental framework for language learning. Empirical research is required to transform the theoretical knowledge into practice. Therefore, future research may aim at finding the methods of measuring the interaction of these three constructs in the process of language learning.

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References


Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Virtual Classes and the effectiveness of Virtual Classes in Enhancing Communication Skills

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Abstract
The use of the Internet is increasing the possibilities for language learning and teaching (Sallbego & Tumolo, 2015). Virtual classes use computer-mediated technology to facilitate learning, teaching, and communication processes. The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers’ and students’ perceptions of English as a foreign language (EFL) virtual classes. Moreover, it also aims to highlight the effect of this kind of class on enhancing communication skills. Therefore, the main research question is about the perceptions that students and teachers have of EFL virtual classes. This study conducted in the Female English Department at King Khalid University in Abha. The participants were thirty teachers and students who were divided into two equal groups (fifteen in each group). Regarding that, participants answered a particular questionnaire. The results show that the majority of the students and teachers possess positive attitudes toward teaching and learning through EFL virtual classes. Moreover, they also agree with the significant role of virtual courses in enhancing communication skills. Thus, implementing EFL virtual classes can be recommended as beneficial. This study states some recommendations in light of its findings.

Keywords: communication skills, perceptions, virtual classes

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Introduction
According to Sarica and Cavus (2008), learning via the Internet is an alternative way to learn English. They state that new technology and powerful Internet connections provide a wide range of opportunities for the development of educational processes and enhancing language skills. Also, technological advances in computer systems have supported various possibilities in comparison with traditional classroom settings (Danesh, Bailey & Whisenand, 2015). Using computer-mediated communication can improve communication skills and has a positive influence on learning (Balaji & Digant, 2010, as cited in Danesh, Bailey & Whisenand, 2015).

Generally, the widespread use of the Internet in teaching and learning assists the progress of communication among learners, teachers, and sharing resources for knowledge (Cakiroglu, 2014). Distance learning settings have begun to be used all over the world and used various types of technologies such as videoconferencing, videotape, satellite broadcast, TV broadcast, Internet, virtual classes, and so on (Sarica & Cavus, 2008). “Virtual classrooms are one of the main components of synchronous settings that share certain similarities with real classrooms” (Cakiroglu, 2014, p. 1). It defined as an “electronic classroom” that can be expandable in time, space, and content” (Beatty, 2010, p. 171). It is called virtual because “it can relax the spatial constraints (users at different locations no matter how far about) and the temporal constraints (users interacting overtime via asynchronous communications)” (Beatty, 2010, p. 171).

This study aims to achieve three objectives. The first one is to obtain the perceptions of students and teachers on (EFL) virtual classes. The second one is to attempt to discover the effectiveness of using virtual classes in enhancing communication skills form the experiences of teachers and students with virtual courses. The third objective is to offer some recommendations for virtual courses in learning and teaching. It conducted in the English Department at King Khalid University.

The term communication skills refer to the messages passed between the learner and the instructor through electronic media (Gikandi, Morrow & Davis, 2011; Piccoli, Ahmad & Ives, 2001; Wilson, 1996; as cited in Wijesooriya, Heales, & Clutterbuck, 2015). Interactions’ types often occur in virtual classes. For example, learner-content interaction where the learners gain intellectual information from the session, learner-learner interaction during the exchange of information, ideas and dialog, and learner-instructor communication, which involves feedback and dialogue between the teacher and learner (Danesh, Bailey & Whisenand, 2015).

The statement of the problem
The kingdom of Saudi Arabia utilizes computer technology widely in various fields. As a result of the positive findings of numerous of empirical studies that aim to investigate the effectiveness of Internet technology in EFL teaching and learning, Saudi universities use this technology in teaching and learning EFL (AbuSeileek, 2007; Almekhafi, 2006; Laufer & Hill, 2000, as cited in Al-Tale, 2014). According to Al-Tale (2014), King Khalid University (KKU) used the e-learning program in 2005. The e-learning system includes the Blackboard program that facilitates e-learning system for learners and teachers. The virtual classroom is a kind of learning and teaching tools available in the Blackboard program. Virtual classes include a variety of learning and teaching facilities, such as chat, whiteboard, break-out rooms, application sharing, synchronized
web browsing, and feedback (Cakiroglu, 2014). Many types of research state the advantages of using virtual classes in learning and teaching, such as removal of geographical barriers, facility to record the session, and its activities may reduce anxiety and enhance motivation, it has a significant effect in improving communication and collaboration (Yadav, 2016). Additionally, previous researches conducted in the field of blended-learning have indicated the benefits that students and teachers can obtain through online communication.

The significance of the study
Many universities and colleges around the world now engage online classes and programs to allow access to higher education without geographical barriers (Butner, Murray, & Smith, 1999 as cited in McBrien & Jones, 2009). The use of the computer considers as a part of the curriculum in schools and universities. The integration of Internet technology into EFL learning and teaching becomes widely used in Saudi Arabia's universities. Virtual classes allow teachers and students to interact online synchronously by using many features such as communicating orally, exchanging texts through typing, audio chat, upload PowerPoint presentations, transmit video, and more (Yadav, 2016). As virtual classes use and integrate into learning and teaching, the author of this study feels it is essential to shedding light on perceptions of teachers and students regarding EFL virtual classrooms and its contributions in enhancing communication skills from the experiences of teachers and students on this site.

Research questions
1- What are the perceptions do students and teachers have on EFL virtual classes at the female English department in KKU?
2- Based on teachers' and learners' experiences, do EFL virtual classes play a role in enhancing communication skills?

Review of related literature
Many researchers have made numerous studies on virtual classes and their roles in learning and teaching. Researchers from different parts of the world conducted studies about engaging virtual classes in the education process. In this part, the researcher presents some of these related studies. Some studies relate to investigating teachers' and students' reflections on their experiences with virtual classes, and some relate to engaging learners through virtual environments. Others are about the advantages and disadvantages of virtual classes.

Students and teachers perceptions of online classes
Conrad (2004) investigates teachers’ perceptions of their experiences with online teaching. He uses the term online learning to refer to computer-mediated, web-based learning environments like virtual classes. The writer focuses only on asking the participants in the study to reflect on their roles as online teachers. He interviewed five instructors who were engaged in online teaching for the first time in a graduate program at a Canadian university. In the result of his study, he followed Collins and Berge's work (1996) in categorizing online instructional roles into four general areas: pedagogical, social, managerial, and technical. According to pedagogical issues, some of the teachers are happy and interested in that internet technology allows them to present information to their students clearly, and strengths their passion for the subjects. Others disagree on the side of content delivery by commenting that online structure does not give them enough
time on specific topics and a lack of physical presence like in face-to-face settings. On the side of managing the process of learning online, the instructors mention that each new instructor enters his virtual classroom with knowledge of the cohort model. The cohort model refers to collaborative learning and preparation to teach online and incorporating new technologies.

Additionally, Salbego and Tumolo (2015) investigate students’ and teachers’ reflections on their experiences with synchronous online classes in Brazil. They aim to obtain the perceptions of students and teachers on Skype language classes in relation to face-to-face classes. The results of this study point out that teachers and students consider that Skype language classes create possibilities for language learning opportunities and their advantages outweigh more than the disadvantages. All the participants in this study assure that speaking and listening are in advantage of online classes’ platforms when compared to face-to-face classes. The results also suggest that it is possible to increase the development of student language through Skype classes.

Cakiroglu (2014) evaluates students’ perspectives about virtual classrooms according to seven principles of good practice. Chickering and Gamson (1987, as cited in Cakiroglu, 2014) assert that effective teaching practices encourage seven principles, namely student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning. In this study, the researcher assesses distance learners’ perceptions about the quality of course delivery in virtual classrooms at the Faculty of Education in Turkey. The researcher focuses on investigating the quality of distance learning setting in three dimensions (teaching, learning, and interaction) by a questionnaire based on seven principles of good practice (SPGP). After analyzing the questions that relate to interaction dimension, the researcher came up with the following results, student-faculty contact considers as effective element in the virtual classroom, and he got highly satisfactory responses on this side. The researcher also finds that cooperation among students rarely practices in online instruction. In the context of analyzing questions that relate to teaching practices, the researcher finds learners’ overall assessments of time on task shows that the students satisfied. Most of the learners indicate that the course is organized in such a manner as to allow them to complete assignments effectively and sufficient time provided for learning activities. The mean response is (M = 3.58) regarding technical problems, especially when the line is busy, negatively affect the lesson time. The researcher states that the feature of lessons recording consider as an important advantage of synchronous sessions and assessed by students as excellent. The researcher receives some negative opinions about the delays in timely feedback. The results of student assessment of the high expectation questions through the virtual classroom are rated as highly satisfactory (from M= 3.33 to M= 3.99). According to the results of students’ responses about questions of learning, most of the students agree that the instructor succeeds in coordinating the learning activities through the virtual classroom. The participants evaluate the item that the instructor uses different kinds of instructional materials as highly satisfactory. This is convenient for learners to present their talents and is rating as excellent. The researcher in his study presents some of the potential of virtual classrooms for teaching, learning, and interaction, and some suggestions for instructors who wish to use virtual classrooms in their teaching.

Bolstad and Lin (2009) investigate the experiences of a large sample of students learning in virtual classrooms across New Zealand. Virtual classrooms establish in New Zealand to enable
students (particularly those in rural, remote areas, and small schools) to overcome issues of distance and resourcing. In these classes, students learn through videoconferencing with teachers, emails, contact management systems and relevant websites. The research includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection and was carried out over one year. Overall, the survey data suggests that students have different experiences (some positive and others less positive) with learning in virtual classes. Most students indicate that they are learning more useful study skills, and the learning is enjoyable through virtual classes. The findings suggest that students experience different degrees of success, and comfort in the virtual classroom environment. In the survey data of this research, four key themes selected. These are independence and support, shared learning, e-learning, and personalizing learning. In the analysis of independence and support data, the researchers found that 61% of students think they learn more independently in virtual classrooms than face-to-face classes. Other teachers see that they have a significant role in supporting learners through virtual classrooms. This occurs by adapting their teaching approaches and using different pedagogical strategies to keep students active and engaged. On the side of shared learning analysis as a feature of virtual classrooms, the researchers indicate that shared learning rarely occurs in the virtual classes environment. According to the use of e-learning materials in virtual classrooms, the researchers found that more than half (53%) of students search the Internet for useful websites through virtual classrooms. Only 58% use their own virtual classroom websites, or other websites recommend by their teachers. The researchers notice that virtual sessions focus largely on communication between teachers, students, and less between students to communicate with each other. In analyzing personalizing learning, the researchers came up with these findings, the most common activities during virtual classes sessions are the exchange of questions between teacher and students where teachers direct questions to their students rather than vice versa, so exchanges between students were less frequent.

Moreover, McBrien, Jones, and Cheng (2009) conduct a study at the University of South Florida. The study aims to collect students’ reflections about their experiences with virtual classes. Elluminate Live is the software that employs in the virtual classroom. The researchers constructed a short, open-ended survey to collect students’ responses to virtual courses. Questions design according to transactional distance theory that consists of three elements: dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy. Overall, the students get positive attitudes toward their learning experiences using virtual classes. In analyzing dialogue aspect in the virtual classroom, the researchers find that 91% of students’ comments were positive in terms of the quantity and quality of the dialogue experienced. Structure refers to the course organization and its impact on students’ participation (Moor, 1993, as cited in McBrien, Jones, & Cheng, 2009). They found that students reveal the need for clear and consistence structure, expectations, and roles in virtual classroom sessions to reduce their experience of distance. Most students agree that synchronous online classes offer convenience. In the findings, the researchers mention some limitations of virtual classes such as confusion that result from too many simultaneous interactions, lack of non-verbal communication, and technology issues.

On the other hand, Iqbal, Neittaannmaki, and Kankaanranta (2010) conduct a study of engaging learners through virtual worlds. They try to explore how virtual worlds could support the engagement for learning. They review the results of studies that utilized the virtual world to engage learners and for education. The researchers state the effectiveness of the use of educational virtual
worlds or technologies on facilitating the learning of different subjects and improving students’ behavior. For example, several researchers reported the development of learning outcomes in relation to the use of virtual worlds in science classrooms. Based on the literature review, the researchers define engaged learning as a situation in which learners are active, and it has five aspects: learner activeness aspect, cognitive aspect, socio-collaborative aspect, behavioral aspect, and emotional aspect. They mention that a virtual environment in education should include three elements, namely education, entertainment, and social commitments, to make sure that learning through the virtual world is meaningful, engaging, and understandable. They state that the virtual world has many benefits or affordances for learners, such as enhancing interaction between students and communication materials. They also mention that a virtual world is fundamentally social and enables collaboration between the learning community in many ways. It also can provide practical ways to create authentic and challenging tasks that are contextual as well. The researchers suggest that virtual classes also offer many new ways to evaluate and assess the progress of students, such as performance-based assessment for engaged learning. They conclude that learning through a virtual world can be engaging for learners and can affect their test scores as well as their attitude and motivation toward it.

**The advantages and disadvantages of virtual classes**

Yadav (2016) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using computers and the Internet in education and discusses the role of teachers in Internet education. Yadav states how the use of the Internet and web lead to the significant changes in educational models and in communication tools that are adapting easily with learning methods. He mentions that virtual classes are a new term of E-learning, where the students will be present with their professor and fellow learners in a classroom via the Internet. He also states that the availability of different communication materials between teachers and students in virtual classes considers as a beneficial role is of synchronous online classes. It plays an important role in maintaining interaction. Moreover, he points out the interaction capability of the synchronous virtual classroom and the importance of learner-learner, learner-instructor, learner-content, and learner-interface interaction within the virtual classroom. He also concludes with the need for training and technical problems consider as disadvantages of virtual classes.

Similarly, Danesh, Bailey, and Whisenand (2015) highlight the role of technology in interaction and communication as relates to distance education. They state that many universities in higher education are expanding their online course. They focus on technology and media as its relation in collaboration, interaction, and communication. They also mention that the increasing interest in distance education attributes to two significant factors. These factors are the progress of computing and telecommunication technologies, the second is the change in the demographic population of college students. They also assert that communication plays a significant role in the success of distance education and is a collective activity. Effective communication is possible when participants share a similar ground relates such as mutual knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions in a conversation. According to extending the interaction model by Moore's interaction model in 1989, Danesh et al. (2015) point out that there are three essential types of in distance education interaction. Learner-content communication occurs where the learners obtain intellectual information from the session. The learner-learner occurs through exchanging information, ideas, and dialog among students about the course. The learner-instructor interaction
involves the feedback and dialogue between the teacher and learner. To determine the impact of various interaction methods use in distance education on the success of the educational outcome, the researchers constructed a questionnaire. The courses were from both Master of Business Administration, and Management Information System disciplines and all classes use a mixed-mode format, combing face-to-face and online classroom discussions. The results reveal that sixty-two of students showed that learner-instructor and learner-learner interactions as useful discussion modes and play an essential role in the success of the class when use synchronously and asynchronously. Sixty-four of the students mention that they participate more in synchronous sessions. Secondly, the students participates more in online sessions than in face-to-face discussions. Thirdly, the combination of face-to-face and online classrooms discussion is preferable to understand the materials better.

Bower, Groom, and Cram (2010) define virtual worlds as an electronic environment that minimizes sophisticated physical space, where people can interact with each other via virtual objects. They also describe a blended reality as a combination environment where the physical and virtual combined in the service of interaction goals and communication. Their study investigates the use of a blended reality environment for learning and teaching in a tutorial setting. In their study, a virtual classroom includes a live video stream of activity that is occurring in the face-to-face classroom. The face-to-face classroom includes a projection of virtual classroom space. Through that, they could examine issues and potentials associated with the use of blended reality classes. Their project evaluates how people participate in physical and virtual worlds. The participants were three researchers, students, and seven volunteers associated with the department of education at Macquarie University by using several items of equipment. Their study point out to some advantages for learning and teaching, such as enhanced remote access to face-to-face classes, increased online interaction, and the influence of both worlds within the one learning environment depending on needs.

Methodology
This study uses a quantitative methodology. The quantitative method can be easily validated (Liebscher, 1998, as cited in Ahmad, Shah, & Al Ghamdi 2009). This study focuses on teachers' and students' reflections on their experiences with EFL virtual classes and the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills. To answer the two research questions of this study, two paper-based questionnaires designed for data collection. The participants are fifteen EFL teachers and fifteen EFL students who have experience in teaching and learning via virtual classes. The following parts explain the employed methodology in detail.

3.1 Participants
The study designs to elicit responses from at least fifteen students and fifteen teachers who have experienced using EFL virtual classes during their learning and teaching. In total, the participants of the study are thirty female Saudi teachers and students in the English female department, KKU, Abha, Saudi Arabia, in 2019. All of the participants are English learners and teachers at the female English department in KKU. Participants divided into two groups, (a) students who have had an experience with virtual classes, and (b) teachers who have a sustained involvement with teaching virtual classes. The students and teachers participated voluntarily in the study. The students are
undergraduate students of different levels, including master students. All participants have experienced virtual classes in many EFL subjects.

**Design and materials**

The researcher used two paper-based questionnaires. These questionnaires aim to obtain the students’ and teachers’ experiences and attitudes towards teaching and learning through virtual classes as well as to investigate the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills. The two questionnaires are the same, and the only difference is the substitution of the word "learning" for "teaching" in the questionnaire for teachers. The questionnaires consisted of ten questions. Six of them design to answer the first research question. To elaborate, four of these six questions are structured questions where the respondents have to choose one of two choices. These questions are 1, 2, 3, and 5. See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for a sample of both the students’ and teachers’ questionnaires, respectively. The other two questions are open questions that aim to allow the respondents to elaborate on their views, to comment or to provide examples of their answers. These questions are 4 and 10; see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. Question number four aims to list the major difficulties that the participants have encountered in virtual classes, and question 10 asks about the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual class.

The remaining four questions investigate the effectiveness of virtual classes in enhancing communication, based on the experiences of English students and teachers within the virtual class environment at KKU. These questions are 6, 7, 8, and 9. See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. Question 9 is an open question that tests how do virtual classes enhance their communication skills while questions (6, 7, and 8) are two-choice questions.

**Procedures**

After dividing the participants into two groups, (a) students who have had an experience with virtual classes, and (b) teachers who have a sustained experience with teaching virtual classes, the researcher started in distributing the questionnaire between students and teachers for two weeks. The author of this study started in distributing the questionnaire between students after ensuring that they have experience with virtual classes and used it in many EFL classes. In the second step, the participants took the questionnaire and handed it back to the researcher the other day. After collecting students’ responses, the writer started distributing the questionnaire between teachers. Then, analyzing the obtained data of the responses of students first. This included analyzing the responses regarding the six questions about students’ attitudes toward virtual classes first and then analyzing the responses of the second research question. The same process in data analysis applied to teachers’ questionnaires.

**Results and discussion**

The results are classified into two sections: results of students' and teachers’ perceptions of the virtual class and the second part is about results of students' and teachers’ attitudes about the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills.

**Results**

The questionnaire inquires participants about their perceptions regarding EFL virtual classes. It also investigates the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills in the female English department at King Khalid University. The results in this section divides into four parts: (a)
students’ perceptions of EFL virtual classes; (b) students’ opinions on the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills; (c) teachers’ perceptions of EFL virtual classes; (d) teachers’ opinions on the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills.

**Students’ perceptions of EFL virtual classes**

Fifteen students participated from different levels, including both bachelor and master students. All students have experienced learning through virtual classes in many EFL classes. The questionnaire includes six questions that aim to obtain students’ attitudes towards virtual classroom learning. One of these questions is an open question that allows the participants to mention the advantages and disadvantages of EFL virtual classes from their experiences, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *The responses of students regarding the advantages and disadvantages of EFL virtual classes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual class?</td>
<td>“Comfortable environment”</td>
<td>“Technical problems.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It makes the process of learning easier.”</td>
<td>“The internet problems”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It saves our time and effort.”</td>
<td>“The lack of facial expression and body language.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The availability of recording feature”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Enhance listening comprehension.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Relax atmosphere, and we can attend our classes from home.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“No pressure to answer.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Shy students can interact easily.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Ease of using educational websites during the lecture.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 shows that 57% of students’ responses towards their experiences in virtual classes are positive. Through students’ experiences with EFL virtual classes, 43% percent of students indicates that students prefer face-to-face classes in their learning. The total of respondents is sixty. Thirty-four of them point out that students possess positive feelings toward learning through virtual classes. In contrast, twenty-six of the respondents state that some students have negative perceptions of EFL virtual classes.
Figure 1 Students’ perceptions of EFL virtual classes

Students’ opinions on the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills
The researcher designed four questions that aim to investigate the effectiveness of virtual classes in developing communication skills from the experiences of students in the female English department at KKU. The results of items 1, 2, and 3 show in Tables 2, whereas Table 3 explains the open question regarding the responses of students to the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills.

Table 2. Summary of student responses to the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Virtual classes enhance comfort and engagement in dialogue&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you believe that it is possible to develop the four EFL skills</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through virtual classes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do virtual classes play a significant role in enhancing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication skills?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Summary of student survey responses to the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Students’ data</th>
<th>Contrary views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. From your experience in learning, how does this type enhance</td>
<td>&quot;Shy students communicate easily.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;It limits my ability to communicate effectively.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication skills?</td>
<td>&quot;Some students feel more confident in virtual classes because they can talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>better than face to face classes without feeling embarrassed. This allows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>them to communicate better.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;It cannot enhance our communication skills.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"This through the beneficial features in virtual classes that enhance communication skills like typing easily and sharing content and other educational sites easily and the availability of recorded lectures."

"It allows everyone an opportunity to talk."

"The student can use the internet to learn and get information which helps them to communicate with teacher easily."

"The student can do their homework and attend the class any time, so I can relax."

**Teachers’ perceptions of EFL virtual classes**

As shown in Figure 2, 62% of teachers’ responses indicate that the majority of teachers, in the female English department in KKU, prefer teaching through virtual classes, and they have positive attitudes towards this kind of class. Table 4 shows teachers’ responses about the advantages and disadvantages of virtual classes. The researcher received 38% of responses that point out that some teachers possess negative feelings towards teaching through virtual class.

---

**Figure 2** Teachers’ perceptions on EFL virtual classes

**Table 4** The responses of teachers regarding the advantages and disadvantages of EFL virtual classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual class?</td>
<td>&quot;The chances provided to the teachers to use multimedia and sensory-rich environments which are very motivational for the students.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Technical problems that could occur.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Increased convenience, effective time management, sharpened digital skills, immediate feedback."
"Facilitating tool to enhance the overall learning."
"Share more information. Can be accessed anytime anywhere."
"Implementing new technologies rather than the old one."
"Equal chances for students to learn."
"Remove the limitations of time and place."

"The need for extra training."
"We cannot depend on virtual classes totally, and blending is a good way."
"Difficult to check students' comprehension."
"Students are not serious about punctuality."
"It is not enough alone."

**Teachers' opinions on the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills**

The questionnaire includes four questions designed to shed light on the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills. Table 5 explains teachers’ responses regarding these questions. They provided many examples of how this type of class can support communication skills. Five of teachers realize that virtual classes have no vital role in enhancing communication skills, and they preferred face-to-face classes on this side. Table 6 shows teachers' responses regarding the open question in this regard.

**Table 5** Summary of teachers’ responses to the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “Virtual classes enhance comfort and engagement in dialogue”</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do virtual classes play a significant role in enhancing communication skills?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you believe that it is possible to develop the four EFL skills through virtual classes?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6** Summary of teachers’ responses to the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Teachers data</th>
<th>Contrary views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. From your experience in teaching, how does this type enhance communication skills?</td>
<td>&quot;It provides me plenty of time, so I can discuss with students in detail all that they need to know. Moreover, the students who feel shy in a face-to-face class can participate easily.&quot; &quot;It can enhance listening and speaking skills.&quot; &quot;By using blogs, discussion, and chats.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;It does not enhance communication skills at all.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By providing timely feedback and doing many activities."

"There are many options provided for both teachers and students to enhance communication skills and this kind of class is very motivated for students."

"It gives them the opportunities to speak and ask questions and enhance critical comprehension."

"Activating all students ‘participation and giving time and chance for all."

"The students will feel relax, talking and communicating."

**Discussion**

In this study, one of the research questions is intended to address students' and teachers’ attitudes towards using virtual classes in learning and teaching in the female English department at KKU. Six items in the questionnaire design to elicit respondents regarding the perceptions of the participants on EFL virtual classes. In general terms, regarding the first two questions in the questionnaire that directly intended to ask participants about their attitudes and what kind of classes they prefer in their learning and teaching, virtual classes seem to raise positive attitudes concerning learning and teaching. Similar results find in the study conducted by Salbego and Tumolo (2015), the participants possess positive perspectives towards their experiences with online classes. The other three questions in this part aim to ask participants about the difficulties of virtual classes that may handicap their learning and teaching process and the difference between face-to-face classes and virtual classes in facilitating learning and teaching. The majority of respondents realize that virtual classes facilitate their learning and teaching process in the same manner when compared to face-to-face classes and do not cause difficulties that may handicap the educational process. Eighteen of participants agree that there is no difference between virtual classes and face-to-face classes in facilitating the process of learning and teaching. This finding confirms Cakiroglu’s (2014) belief that virtual classrooms are one of the main components of synchronous settings that share certain similarities with real classrooms. Similar results find by Hampel and Stickler (2012), as cited in Salbego and Tumolo’s study (2015), online classes offer a variety of similarities to face-to-face classes in presenting the same contexts of language learning and the ease of negotiation of meaning and social conversations. Some of the participants mentioned that technical problem is the main problem that they usually face in using virtual classes. Similar findings found in the study conducted by Cakiroglu (2014). The researcher stated that technical issues, especially when the line is busy, it is negatively affected the lesson time and caused occasional limitations and influence the time management of the course. As shown in Tables 2 and 4, the majority of teachers and students enjoy the experiences of virtual classes, and they mentioned many advantages of using virtual classes in the learning and teaching process. Some of the participants point out that the absence of body language, the lack of training, and the difficulty of checking comprehension as the main disadvantages of virtual classes. Similarly, in Conard’s study (2004), most participants expressed that virtual classes do not offer them visual
access to their learning. They state that the absence of physical presence influences the success of teaching process.

On the other hand, the second research question in this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills. The questionnaire includes four questions to extract how this type of class can enhance communication skills from the experiences of teachers and students. The first questions ask participants about their opinion about the role of virtual classes in enhancing comfort and student engagement in dialogue. Seventeen of respondents agree that virtual classes enabled them to increase their engagement in conversations. In the study conducted by McBrien, Jones, and Cheng (2009), they found that the majority of comments about comfort and student involvement in dialogue were positive (91%), both in terms of quantity of dialogue and the quality of dialogue experienced. The second question asks about the possibility of EFL virtual classes, in developing EFL skills. The majority of students believe that they could improve their EFL skills through EFL virtual classes whereas only six teachers agree with that. The majority of the teachers mention that only speaking and listening skills can improve quickly and efficiently through virtual classes. Similarly finds in Cakiroglu’s study (2014), he assures that virtual classes enable instructors to use presentations, documents, code pieces, and video and other formats of contents synchronously that encourage learners to develop EFL skills. Besides, the study conducted by Sallbego and Tumo’s study (2015) about Skype classes, they found that all the participants highlight that speaking and listening are an advantage when compared to face-to-face classes. According to the last two questions that ask participants about their reflections on the role of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills. Ten of the teachers realize the significant role of virtual classes in enhancing communication process. Tables 5 and 6 illustrate teachers' data related to the position of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills and demonstrating the range of responses, with the main trust being positive. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, eight of the students agree and provide several examples of how teaching through virtual classes support communication skills. The results in this aspect show that more than half of students believed that using virtual classes in their learning enhanced their communication skills, particularly in the following aspects: increasing confidence, the helpful features of virtual classes that develop their communication, and the availability of participate chances.

Similar findings are found in research conducted by McBrien, Jones, & Cheng (2009). The researchers state that the synchronous online system offers different modes of communication that increase the amount of interaction and enhance communication. In addition, the study conducted by Cakiroglu (2014) about evaluating students’ perspectives about virtual classrooms found that in the aspect of assessing communication between teachers and students, he received a highly satisfactory percentage.

**Conclusion**

Nowadays, technology has been used widely in education, and it has changed the way of learning and teaching delivery (Wijesooriya, Heales, & Clutterbuck, 2015).

This paper aims to shed light on students’ and teachers’ perceptions of their experiences with learning and teaching through virtual classes in the Female English Department at KKU. It also
had another goal that is trying to investigate the effectiveness of this type of class in enhancing communication skills from the experiences of the teachers and students.

The findings of this study reveal that the majority of teachers and more than half of students have positive feelings toward their experience with virtual classes.

The second goal of this study is the effectiveness of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills. The findings show that the majority of teachers agree with the significant role of virtual classrooms in enhancing communication skills, especially in these aspects: the availability of time, enhancing listening and speaking comprehension, the useful features of virtual classes setting, timely feedback and enabling powerful environment for interaction and participation.

To some extent, the findings encourage the use of virtual classes in language learning and teaching in the Female English Department at KKU, particularly in the elements of a comfortable environment and facilitating communication skills. The researcher seeks further researches and studies about the attitudes of teachers and students towards the EFL virtual classes environment to determine the validity and the effectiveness of this type of class.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended to conduct studies that could highlight the perceptions of students and teachers on EFL virtual classes, especially in the Saudi context. Furthermore, because of the limited number of participants in this study, it is also recommended conducting similar research with a large number of participants. This kind of study will clarify the attitudes of teachers and students toward using virtual classes in their learning and teaching. It also could clarify the limitations of virtual classes, its role in enhancing the learning and teaching process, and the differences between virtual classes and face-to-face classes. According to many researchers in the same line, this mode of education has been growing substantially and has begun to be used all over the world (Salbego & Tumolo, 2015; Cakiroglu, 2014). There is a need for more investigation regarding synchronous online classes since it allows more access for people to learn a language (Hample & Stickler, 2012; Gue, 2013; Verjano, 2013, as cited in Salbego, & Tumolo, 2015). The following recommendations stated according to the findings discussed in this study.

First, for teachers, teachers who teach virtual classes could be encouraged to:

- Because of the main feature of EFL virtual classes that is virtual classes enhance comfort and engagement in dialogue, a teacher should try to motivate and improve students “communication skills. This can occurs by using practices that other teachers and students find it helpful in this side.
- As many researchers confirm the role of using virtual classes in supporting collaborative learning, interaction, developing EFL skills, and knowledge exchange, teachers should use the wide variety of virtual classes features. These different types enable instructors to use presentations, documents, code pieces, videos, and other formats to meet particular student needs, interests, and aspirations.
- Share their virtual classes teaching experiences with others, including those who have not experienced the virtual classes environments.

Second, students learning in virtual classes could be encouraged to:
• Share their ideas, feedback, and attitudes toward their virtual classes learning experience with their teachers, so the teachers could help them to overcome their barriers in using virtual class.

• Talk about how they learn and how they like to learn with other students and teachers, and this could help get advantages of virtual classes learning and raise their positive attitudes toward this type of class.

• Take advantage of the opportunities that contribute to shared learning, enhance communication skills, and develop EFL skills through their virtual classes.

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**References**


**Appendix A: Students’ Questionnaire**

A questionnaire regarding Students' Reflections on Their Experiences with EFL Virtual Classes and its Role in Enhancing Communication Skills at Female English Department in King Khalid University (group (a) students who have an experience with virtual classes).

1. Do you prefer using a virtual class in your learning rather than a face-to-face classroom setting?
   Yes _____ No ______.

2. What kind of attitudes do you have towards virtual classes?
   Positive attitudes              Negative attitudes

3. Do you think that using a virtual class can cause difficulties or problems that may handicap your learning process?
   Yes ______   No_______.

4. If Yes, list the major difficulties you have encountered?

5. Rate your opinion of the statement “Virtual classes facilitate the learning process in the same manner when compared to face-to-face classes.”
   Agree_____ Disagree______.

6. “Virtual classes enhance comfort and engagement in dialogue”.
   Agree _______   Disagree________.

7. Do you believe that it is possible to develop the four EFL skills through virtual classes?
   Yes______ No______.

8. Based on your experience, do virtual classes play a significant role in enhancing communication skills?
   Yes_______ No______.

9. From your experience in learning, how does this type of class enhance communication skills?

10. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual class?

**Appendix B: Teachers’ Questionnaire**

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A questionnaire regarding teachers' Reflections on Their Experiences with EFL Virtual Classes and its Role in Enhancing Communication Skills at Female English Department in King Khalid University (group (b) teachers who have experience with virtual classes).

1. Do you prefer using a virtual class in your teaching rather than a face-to-face classroom setting?
   Yes _______        No _________

2. What kind of attitudes do you have toward virtual classes?
   Positive attitudes       Negative attitudes

3. Do you think that a virtual class can cause difficulties or problems that may handicap your teaching process?
   Yes _____ No ________

4. If Yes, please list significant difficulties?

5. Do you agree with statement that virtual classes facilitate the teaching process when compared to face-to-face classes?
   Agree_______ Disagree

6. “Virtual classes enhance comfort and student engagement in dialogue”.
   Agree _______ Disagree______.

7. Do you believe that it is possible to develop the four EFL skills through virtual classes?
   Yes_______ No ______

8. Based on your experience, do virtual classes play a significant role in enhancing communication skills?
   Yes______ No______.

9. From your experience in teaching virtual classes, how does this type of class enhance communication skills?

10. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual class?
An Analysis of Undergraduate Saudi EFL Female Students' Errors in Written English Essays

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Abstract
This study aims to investigate the common errors made by 130 undergraduate Saudi female students at King Khalid University (KKU) in English writing and to trace the ratio of the frequency of different categories and types of errors. The significance of this study is to identify the reasons for the weakness of academic writing and thus find appropriate solutions and proposals for it. This study seeks to find answers for What are the most common English writing errors that are made by EFL Saudi female learners at the faculty of Languages and Translation at KKU? What is the ratio of the frequency of different categories and types of errors? What are the possible identified reasons behind those errors? The sample is chosen randomly from level four (elementary), five (intermediate), and six (upper-intermediate). This study uses a quantitative method as there were a close-ended questionnaire and an analytically quantitative design in which statistical and numerical data are investigated and analyzed for results. The analysis of written essays is derived from Corder’s (1967) method on error analysis. The findings of the study indicate that the common errors were committed under four categories as grammar, lexis, semantics, and mechanics. Most of the errors were committed in the mechanics' category (51.5%) which included punctuations, capitalization, and spelling errors. Furthermore, spelling was highly committed by all the students. The findings also revealed that the highest percentage was related to the teacher with much negative criticism due to students usually feel alienated and hate material when the teacher is bad (37.4%). In light of the findings, recommendations were made to improve the writing skills of Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) students.

Keywords: error analysis, exam, female students, KKU, spelling, writing skills, written errors

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Introduction

Writing is one of the most important and essential skills that must be practiced effectively (Byrne, 1993). In the language learning process, it is necessary to develop learners’ writing skills in order to enable them to communicate. Moreover, the ability to write well is not an inborn skill. It is usually learned through a set of instructional practices. It involves formulating new ideas and transforming information (James, 1988).

Learners of English as a foreign language in their various stages of study try to make their writing correct and clear to the readers. Therefore, the so-called error analysis has been used to help learners discover their errors, correct their errors, and avoid errors in their writing. Thus, "a number of researchers began to take a different approach to analyze learners' errors…which involved a detailed description and analysis of the kinds of errors made in the second language". (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 73). Error analysis (EA) is one of the most influential processes in second language acquisition (Alhaysony, 2012).

In addition, there are many definitions that are developed by other linguists. Corder (1967) views errors valuable information for three beneficiaries: teachers, researchers, and learners themselves. He lists three advantages of EA in indication of the progress of students for teachers, it provides evidence as to how language is acquired or learned, and this helps researchers; and for learners themselves where it gives them resources in order to learn (as cited in Maicusi, Maicusi, & Lopez, 2000, p. 170).

Considering that English writing skills play an important role in communicating and interacting with the world effectively, the findings of this study contribute to the benefit of society because it helps the students to improve their skills in writing which will make them ready to get their future job and contribute to improving their society. Therefore, several previous studies and articles are searched that have been published in several universities in different countries of the world.

Considering the abovementioned, the current study is intended: to investigate the errors in the writing of level four EFL female students at KKU, and to determine some possible factors that may contribute to committing certain errors in writing. In particular, the role of the first language (L1) and its impact on EFL writing are investigated. Other possible factors that may cause difficulties for Saudi learners, such as teachers and students themselves, lack of motivation, curriculum, teaching environment, and methods of instruction are discussed and investigated to trace the reasons which lead to the existence of these errors for Saudi female students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation at KKU in Abha, and pinpointing the best methods to be followed by both teachers and students to enhance writing skills.

Statement of the problem

Having good writing skills has become a very important factor for success in the academic and professional world nowadays. However, this skill is viewed by many linguists as the most difficult of all the four skills (Corder & Allen, 1974). It is not an easy task for both native and non-speakers as well to master this skill. Most EFL learners find it more frustrating and intimidating to acquire second language (L2) writing skills compared to other linguistic skills. Brown (2010) indicates that a substantial number of children who had received writing instruction in some developed countries cannot write in a clear and organized way. This difficulty is even more real when it comes to L2 writing. Ahmed and Abou Abdelkader (2016) mention that
Arabic writers of English are known to face problems in developing their writing skill in their university English composition courses. Recently, there have been several studies that have addressed some important issues about the processes of L2 composition. One of these important issues is analyzing the errors of L2 writing. English as a Second Language (ESL) and EFL writings of learners from different L1 backgrounds have been investigated. (p. 9)

The following hypotheses are tested in this project:

1. The most common errors for KKU female students are committed in the mechanics’ category as capitalization, spellings, punctuations … etc.
2. The most frequent causes of writing errors for KKU female students are teachers and students themselves, lack of motivation, curriculum, instructions, teaching environment, and negative interference of L1 research.

The significance of the study
Up to my knowledge, there is no research that has been done to investigate the errors in the writing of Saudi females’ students EFL at the faculty of Languages and Translation at KKU in Abha. The aim of this study is to systematically investigate the common errors made by Saudi female students at level four KKU in English writing. The significance of this study is to identify the reasons for the weakness of academic writing and thus find appropriate solutions and proposals for it.

The objectives of the study
This study aims to achieve the following goals:
1. To analyze the common writing errors of Saudi female EFL learners at level four at the faculty of Languages and Translation at KKU in Abha.
2. To trace the ratio of the frequency of different categories and types of errors.
3. To determine some possible reasons that may contribute to committing certain writing errors of Saudi female students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation at KKU in Abha.

The research questions
In order to achieve the study objectives, this study aims at addressing the following research questions:
1. What are the most common English writing errors that are made by level four EFL Saudi female learners at the faculty of Languages and Translation at KKU in Abha?
2. What is the ratio of the frequency of different categories and types of errors?
3. What are the possible identified reasons behind those errors?

Review of related literature
Language assessment
Language assessment plays a key role in pointing out students’ weaknesses and strengths to be either solved or enhanced. According to Frank (2012), assessment is perhaps "one of the most difficult and important parts of our jobs as teachers. Ideally, it should be a means to help us guide students on their road to learning" (p. 32). Assessment paves the way for teachers and researchers to deal with students' weaknesses in any skill or aspect of language. L2 Errors made by students while being tested can reflect a student gap, incompetence, or the inappropriateness of teaching method, as mentioned in Ulla (2014), “assessment of students is the way to determine if curricular content is appropriate and teaching methods are successful" (p. 41). However, to achieve the best results, it is important to clarify the difference between mistakes and errors. According to Sobahle (1986), "if a language learner
unconsciously breaks the rules of the target language as a result of faulty learning, he makes an error” (p. 25). On the other hand, he argues that making a mistake happens “when a learner breaks the rules of the language as a result of non-linguistic factors, he makes a mistake” (p. 25).

**Definitions of error analysis**

EA is defined as “the first approach to the study of second language acquisition (SLA) which includes an internal focus on learners’ creative ability to construct the language” (Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 40). According to Ulla (2014), error analysis is “the process to observe, analyze, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second language and then to reveal the systems operated by learner” (p. 22). As stats in Mezrag (2013)

From the analysis of the learner’s errors, teachers are able to assume the nature of his knowledge at that point in his learning and discover what he still has to learn. By describing and classifying his errors, teachers may build up a picture of the features of the language which causes him learning problems (p. 15).

As stats by Abi Samara (2003), EA can be viewed as "a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on errors committed by learners". Brown (as cited in Ridha, 2012, p. 26) defines EA as the process that observes, analyzes, and classifies the deviations of the rules of the second language and then to reveal the systems operated by the learner. According to James (2001, p. 62), EA refers to "the study of linguistics ignorance and the investigation of what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance". Crystal (1999, p. 108) explains EA in language teaching and learning as the study of the unacceptable forms produced by someone learning a language especially a foreign language.

**Errors taxonomy**

Brown (2002, p. 224) states that there are two main sources of errors. First, interlingual errors are those errors that are traceable to L1 interference, so errors occur as results of confusion between two languages. These errors are attributable to negative interlingual transfer. The term interlingual was first introduced by Selinker (1972) who uses this term to refer to the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both the learners and target language (Abi Samara, 2003, p. 5). According to Kavaliauskiene (2009, p. 4)

Transfer of errors may occur because the learners lack the necessary information in the L2 or the attentional capacity to activate the appropriate L2 routine. Second, intralingual errors which imply that the learner is processing the second language in his own way. These errors occur within the same language, for example, I and she study hard instead of she and I study hard.

Richards (1971, as cited in Mezrag, 2013) studies errors of learners from different language backgrounds (Japanese, Chinese, Burmese, French, Czech, Polish, Tagalog, Maori, Maltese, Indian, and West African Languages). His study shows different types of errors related to production, distribution of verb groups, prepositions, articles, and the use of questions. Subsequently, he distinguished three sources of errors.

First, interference errors: errors that resulted from language transfer of the learner's native language. Second, intralingual errors: errors which resulted from faulty or partial learning of L2, rather than from language transfer, "such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply" (p. 32). Third, developmental
errors: "errors occurring when learners attempt to build up a hypothesis about the target language on the basis of limited experience" (p. 32).

**Reasons behind the weaknesses of writing in English**

Most of the students were failed in the writing because of several reasons. In particular, the role of L1 and its impact on EFL writing is investigated. Other possible factors that may cause difficulties for Saudi learners, such as lack of motivation, curriculum, teaching environment, and methods of instruction are discussed and investigated. Huwari and Al-Khasawneh (2013) try to understand the reasons for the weakness of students’ writing at Taibah University, Yanbu branch, Saudi Arabia. They use a qualitative method. The participants were 10 male students. They invite them to talk freely about the reasons behind their weakness in writing in a face-to-face semi-structured interview of 20 minutes. They find that many students faced many problems when they are writing in the English language:

1. **Grammatical weakness**: all the 10 students agreed on their grammatical weaknesses in writing a short paragraph, article, or passage. They were unable to write without grammatical mistakes and errors due to many reasons such as they cannot express their ideas in the context, they do not know how to write even single sentences.
2. **Less knowledge and understanding**: some of them misunderstood the requirement of writing, they do not know how to write the main idea, or they cannot paraphrase easily. Huwari and Al-Khasawneh (2013) agree with Ansari (2012) by saying that the first and the most important reason is that the Arab students have no knowledge of basic English although they are taught English in schools (p. 6).
3. **Less practice**: most of the students do not ever write outside the classroom even for homework due to their hate of writing skills and English language.
4. **Educational background**: students believed they do not have full focus on writing at the early stages of school, for example, teachers have rarely asked them to write in English and curriculums are focused on reading and grammar rather than writing and speaking in English.

These weaknesses in writing clearly make mastering writing far more complicated than it is. Teachers and researchers must be cautious when generalizing the reasons for errors in writing.

**Error types cross-linguistically**

**Saudi learners**

Sawalmeh (2013) investigates the errors in a corpus of 32 essays written by 32 Saudi male learners of English at the preparatory year program at the University of Ha’il (city in the north of Riyadh, capital city). He uses the participants’ written essays to collect his data. He follows Corder’s way of error analysis as he starts with collecting written samples, identifying errors, then describing these errors. He finds that the Saudi Arabic speakers had made ten common errors. These errors are: tense, word order, a singular/plural form, subject-verb agreement, double negatives, spelling, capitalization, articles, sentence fragments, pronouns, and prepositions; for more examples see Sawalmeh (2013, p. 10-15). He suggests some pedagogical implications which might assist ESL/EFL teachers with some helpful suggestions and teaching strategies that will reduce future problems regarding writing English essays among Arab learners. Also, he suggests that teachers must be careful of the students’ mother tongue influence on their writing performance in the target language.

In a similar study, Albalawi (2015) investigates the academic writing spelling errors of the introductory year male students at the English language center at Tabuk University in Saudi Arabia (a
city in the north of Saudi Arabia (SA)). The study included 45 participants. He uses a qualitative-quantitative method. He also uses random sampling. According to his study, students committed several spelling errors which involved three main categories: omission, addition, and substitution. Also, he finds that these spelling errors may be attributed to mother tongue interferences in which they relate to the differences between the systems of both native language and foreign language. He recommends that future investigations be conducted in the area to confirm the results of the current research in order to examine from other perspectives such as age and grade.

Siddiqui (2015) evaluates capitalization errors in Saudi female students' EFL writing in the College of Applied Medical Sciences at Bisha University in Saudi Arabia (a city in the south of SA). She collects data through a mixed method. Moreover, there were 20 female students who are enrolled in Bachelor of Science in Nursing and are taking English language preparatory program. She asks them to write approximately 600 words consisting of five home-written assignments, two classroom written paragraphs, and one paragraph written in the final examination. She also interviews 10 of them. She analyzes and classifies the errors according to Ellis (1994, as cited in Troike, 2006) which have been used in the study: first, collection of the sample of the learner language, second, identification of errors, third, description of errors, fourth, explanation of errors (Interlingual and Intramural factors), and finally, evaluation of errors (Troike, 2006, pp. 39-40). The term "category" throughout the study has been used to refer to the rules of capitalization. She finds that the highest numbers of errors of capitalization are found in category nine which deals with malformation of individual letters and words. She also finds that the errors in forming the letters are due to the unfamiliarity of distinctions between upper case and lower case. She suggests that the curriculum of English language in Saudi Arabia should implement new pedagogical techniques in capitalization teaching to develop mastery in the principle rules of capitalization.

Recently, Nuruzzaman, Islam, and Shuchi (2016) examine the paragraphs written by ninety Saudi non-major undergraduate students from three different colleges namely College of Medicine, College of Engineering, and College of Computer Science. This study conducted at King Khalid University in Abha during the first semester in the academic year 2016-2017. This comparative study intended to find out the common errors made by those learners and categorize these errors into different types. The researchers use qualitative methods. They ask the participants to write one paragraph in 100-150 words in the final exam papers. They think that students answered the questions of the exam in a better way. They follow the steps which were followed by Corder (1974). First, they examine each paragraph word-by-word and sentence-by-sentence to ascertain the types and number of errors. Second, they put these errors under different categories by using coding and thus converted into percentage to examine the frequency. After analyzing the types of errors, the researchers compare the categories and number of errors made by the students of three faculties for similarities, differences, and connections. They classify the errors into four categories: grammatical, verb tense, word order, singular/plural, relative clause, subject-verb agreement, subject/verb omission, and sentence structure, lexical, noun, pronoun, verb, preposition, adverb, article, and word form, semantic, e.g., word choice, and mechanics, punctuation, capitalization and spelling (for more details see Nuruzzaman, Islam, & Shuchi, 2016, p. 34-38). They find that Saudi EFL learners made different types of errors namely grammatical (7.97%), Lexical (5.93%), semantics (1.02%), and mechanics (4.92%). They assert that grammatical errors especially verb tense and subject-verb agreement were the most common errors among the students. The researchers recommend students to be more aware of the difference between the structure of Arabic and English sentences.
Arab learners

Hourani (2008) explores the common types of grammatical errors made by Emirati secondary male students in their English essay writing. He conducts his study in five leading schools on the Eastern Coast of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as Fujairah, Khorfakkan, and Kalba. All the students who participated were in their third year of secondary education. All the participants were male students chosen randomly. The researcher thinks that science students are expected to write in more detail than arts students whose writing skill ability is limited, so he has chosen them. He uses a mixed-method design. He asks them to write essays about ‘The Danger of Smoking to Health’ in 120 to 200 words. Moreover, 105 students and 20 teachers participated in completing two separate questionnaires reflecting their attitudes towards English writing skills. He finds the most common grammatical errors in the students’ essays included passivation, verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, plurality, and auxiliaries. He classifies and tabulates these errors according to their number of frequencies in the students' essays. There were 472 errors (38%) in interlingual grammar errors and 658 errors (62%) in intralingual ones. The highest one is subject-verb agreement, for more details see (Hourani, 2008, p. 26-50). He finds that intralingual transfer errors were more frequent than interlingual ones. Furthermore, he suggests reinforcing and develop the English writing skill of the secondary male students in the UAE state schools.

In a more recent study, Atashian and Al-Bahri (2018) investigate the grammatical errors in academic writing that the Omani students of Nizwa University. They collect data from 200 students of Bachelor of the Arts (BA) who majored in English at the University of Nizwa in Oman. They ask them to write argumentative essays. They form a table of frequency to list the type of grammatical errors and the number of times the mistake was observed. Atashian and Al-Bahri (2018) find three grammatical errors made by participants namely, tenses, adverbs, and pronouns were students’ most frequent errors, subject/verb agreement, misplaced apostrophes, passive voice, and punctuation, (for more details see Atashian and Al-Bahri, 2018, p. 140-145). Then, they interview the students to figure out their perception of the mistakes in their academic writing skills. The researchers suggest some techniques and strategies that might help students to improve their writing.

Hamed (2018), moreover, investigates recently the most common types of linguistic errors and their frequency occurrence in writing. He chooses 40 non-English major Libyan students in the Language Centre at Omar EL-Mukhtar University, EL-Beida Campus, Libya. He asks them to write 150 words. He follows what Ellis (1997) and Gas and Selinker (2001) follow to analyze the data. The following four steps were followed: data collection, identification of errors, classification of errors, and a statement of error frequency. He divides errors into four categories as grammatical errors, syntactic errors, substance, and lexical errors, for more details see (Hamed, 2018, p. 226-229). Then, he divides grammatical errors into seven subcategories: tenses were the most common errors, followed by article errors, preposition errors, singular/plural nouns, adjectives errors, and possessive case and relative clauses had the least percentage of errors. Moreover, there are three subcategories of syntactic errors; the highest one was subject/verb agreement, followed by nouns and pronouns, and word order. He finds that spelling errors had the highest frequency (38.8%), followed by capitalization errors and punctuation errors. He thinks that these errors could be due to overgeneralization in the target language, resulting from ignorance of rule restriction and incomplete application of rules and interference resulting from L1 (Arabic) negative transfer.
**Learners from other countries**

Abushihab (2014) investigates grammatical errors in writing made by twenty students at the Department of English Language learning English as a foreign language in the Gazi University of Turkey. All the students were enrolled in a writing course during the first semester of the academic year 2011–2012. He asks them to write well-organized essays about the difficulties they face while learning English between 200–250 words. He classifies the errors into four categories according to Dulay et al. (1982), "there are four major linguistic categories of errors. These are orthography (spelling), lexicon, and semantics (vocabulary and meaning), syntax and morphology (grammar), and discourse (style)” (p. 215). Then he identifies errors into tenses, prepositions, articles, active and passive voice, and morphology. He finds that the highest figure was in tenses errors and the lowest one was in the use of passive and active voice (for more examples see Abushihab, 2014, p. 216-221).

Ho (2015), in addition; examines whether extensive writing helps to enhance students’ writing fluency. The participants were around 115 first- and second-years students in English-major. He assigns students to write journals every week, so they composed in five writing journals every week for 15 weeks. He finds that the four most common errors frequently occur in students’ writing journals are relating to tenses, collocations, spellings, and verb forms. Also, he confirms that extensive writing practices affect the students’ writing fluency in terms of length of writing. He finds nine common errors: tenses, spellings, articles, collocations, word forms, verb forms, subject-verb agreement, and adjective-noun orders. He finds that writing journals are a beneficial activity to encourage students to write correctly.

Sermsook, Liamnimitr, and Pochakorn (2017), in a recent study, examine the language errors in the writing of English major students in a Thai University and explored the sources of these errors. They select 26 participants (2 males and 24 females) who were in second-year English major students in a Thai university. They ask them to write sentences because they find that errors in Thai EFL students’ sentence construction may lead to miscommunication. They collect and analyze 104 pieces of writing essays. They find that the most frequently committed errors were punctuation, articles, subject-verb agreement, spelling, capitalization, and fragment. They also find that interlingual interference, intralingual interference, limited knowledge of English grammar vocabulary, and carelessness of the students were to be the major sources of the errors. They said, “errors found in EFL students’ writing are not wrong, but useful tools to help EFL students make fewer errors and write better in English” (p. 109).

**Methodology**

**Design of study**

A study is a quantitative method as an analytically quantitative design in which statistical and numerical data are investigated and analyzed for results is used in this research. It conducts in the second semester of the academic year 2018. The sample is chosen randomly because it is regarded as one of the most reliable methods to obtain a representative sample.

**Participants**

The study sample includes 40 female students who specialized in English at level four. There are two reasons for selecting this level. First, the first levels will not have academic experience in writing, while the higher levels are expected to be the opposite. Second, they have completed four specific courses in writing which support this selection. Moreover, they are between 20 and 21 years of age.
All of them are homogeneous in terms of their nationality, native language (Arabic), linguistic, educational, and social background. Moreover, all of them have experienced approximately the same number of two years and half of the education at the Faculty of Languages and Translation at KKU in Abha. They enrolled in the Writing-4 course (ENG-2 217). The reasons for choosing this course are to examine and analysis EFL female learners' writing errors in the final exam as well as to trace the ratio of the frequency of different categories and types of errors. Thus, the number of participants 90 female students from the fifth and sixth levels. The reason for the selection of two different levels is that the study plan for female students who tested writing in 2018 were not followed the plan and were therefore chosen from two different levels depending on their university numbers also to gather as many of the views as possible of students who had tested writing-4 in the second semester of the year 2018. In total, there were 130 participants in the current study. This study is carried out at the Faculty of Languages and Translation at KKU in Abha.

**Tools**

After reviewing the previous studies related to the subject of the study, the two tools are used. One of the writing long essays and the second one is a questionnaire. The sample is collected, there are around 80 writing sample assays from the final second-semester 2018 exam papers of the participants as well as 50 writing sample assays from the first and second midterms second-semester 2018 exam papers of the same participants. Moreover, the questionnaire is chosen for this issue in order to answer the study questions and achieve its objectives. The questionnaire contained 30 sentences to measure several factors, including the students’ psychology and motivation to write correctly, the relationship of students with their colleagues or with the teacher, some factors related to teachers, concerning the educational environment and its objectives, and the teaching methods and books used. The statements employed a five-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), for a sample of the questionnaire used.

**Data collection procedure**

The data was collected in the second semester of the academic year 2019. The following procedures were used. First, a letter of request is asked to the chosen female department at the faculty of Languages and Translation, English department, at KKU in Abha to inform them about the nature of the study. Second, after getting approval from them, the permission to see the exam papers of the writing-4 course which was held in the second semester of 2018 is obtained from the department of English in the Faculty of Languages and Translation. The reason behind choosing this method is as Nuruzzaman, Islam, and Shuchi(2016) point out that

> In exams, students deployed their utmost efforts to secure good grades. So, the exam papers projected their real skills and knowledge in writing. If the participants were asked to write paragraphs just for the research, they might not have taken it seriously. So, samples taken from English writing exams gave true pictures of the participants’ writing errors (p. 34).

Moreover, only one question was selected from all the exam papers, namely the question of writing an essay that asked the students to write a five-paragraph essay. The essays should be long and contain an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion without specifying the number of words. There were four suggested topics (my favorite memory, my first trip, how to make a dessert, and the importance of friendship) where students were asked to choose only one of them and write about it extensively. Third, the essays are read and marked for all the 40 participants’ written works word-by-
word. After that, all errors were recorded and categorized according to Corder’s (1967) taxonomy of writing errors which consist of finding errors, identifying errors, describing errors, and classifying the types of errors. Then, all the recorded errors are analyzed and labeled according to their types to get the frequency of numbers and their percentages of the total. Fourth, a questionnaire is given to the students, which is conducted in the Arabic language because one of the aims of this study was to identify exactly the causes of English writing weakness in Saudi female students at KKU from their point of view. Therefore, it is better to conduct the questionnaire in Arabic to avoid any misunderstanding. 100 questionnaires were distributed between the fifth and sixth-grade students with the help of their doctors and teachers. However, 90 students answered the questionnaires. Also, students' repeated opinions are merged and translated them into English.

Data analysis
The analysis of written essays is derived from Corder’s (1967) method on error analysis. This method has three steps: a collection of sample errors, identification of errors and description of errors. Furthermore, the questionnaire data were analyzed using the SPSS program and Excel.

Results
The frequency of different error categories and types
The findings of this study indicated that there is a difference in the number of errors made by Saudi female level four students.

Table 1. Frequency of error analysis categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Ratio of the frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical (n=123) = (29.4%)</td>
<td>Verb tense</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular/ plural</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word order</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject/ verb omission</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject/ verb agreement</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relative clause</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence structure</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical (n=77) = (18.4%)</td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word form</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic (n=3) = (0.7%)</td>
<td>Word choice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics (n=216) = (51.5%)</td>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>419</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The highest percentage was for mechanics category especially for spelling errors \( (n=121) = (28.9\%) \) and the lowest percentage was for semantic category, word choice \( (n=3) = (0.7\%) \).

![Error types graph](image)

**Figure 1.** Percentages for each category of the errors in writing

**Questionnaire results**

After completing the questionnaire from the fifth and sixth levels of Saudi female students, 100 questionnaires were distributed which examines the reasons for the weakness of academic writing, of which 95 were answered. After reading it, there are five incomplete data that are excluded. Thus, the number of participants 90. The statements of the questionnaire are divided into six main factors: students themselves, teachers themselves, teaching method, external environment, curriculum, time and rule of study. The percentages differed between supporters and opponents for each statement of the questionnaire.

Table 2. *Mean percent (Std Deviation) and percentage of responses on factors related to the students themselves*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lack of previous experience</td>
<td>3.044</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Writing in order to pass the exam only</td>
<td>2.633</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dislike writing in English</td>
<td>2.122</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lack of motivation</td>
<td>2.822</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Non-compliance with instructions during writing</td>
<td>1.667</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do not link grammar and spelling</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Negative psychological factors such as fear and frequency while writing</td>
<td>2.789</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Not doing homework and hiring other people to do it</td>
<td>1.933</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. The Effect of Arabic on English in writing 3.022 1.15 30.2% 11
10. Confusing the grammar of Arabic and English 2.6 1.20 26% 19
11. Do not find vocabulary easily 3.189 1.06 31.9% 7
12. Poor planning, unifying ideas and arranging them 3.156 0.99 31.6% 8
13. Accept collaborative learning during writing 2.9 1.53 29% 14
14. Confusing similar words and thus mistake in writing them 2.933 1.12 29.3% 13
15. The knowledge that the student has a weakness in writing 3 1.07 30% 12

Table 3. Mean percent (Std Deviation) and percentage of responses on factors related to the teachers themselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Teachers do not have good teaching experience</td>
<td>2.644</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Teacher negative criticism affects the student’s desire to write negatively</td>
<td>3.744</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The teacher does not alert the student to his mistakes</td>
<td>2.044</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Mean percent (Std Deviation) and percentage of responses on factors related to the curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. There is no correlation between goals, skills and curriculum</td>
<td>2.033</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The selected topics in the curriculum are neither useful nor needed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Curriculum does not contain activities that contribute to the development of writing</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. *Mean percent (Std Deviation) and percentage of responses on factors of writing errors of Factors related to teaching methods*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. There are no effective methods and teaching methods</td>
<td>3.411</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Class activities are appropriate</td>
<td>3.033</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. The blurring of the steps and the misunderstanding of the subjects led to weak writing</td>
<td>3.689</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Objective tests cause weakness in writing</td>
<td>2.467</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. The lack of high marks of the writing part of the writing caused the weakness of writing</td>
<td>2.256</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. *Mean percent (Std Deviation) and percentage of responses on factors related to the external environment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. There is no encouragement to write outside the classroom</td>
<td>3.733</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Frequent errors in the media have contributed to increasing awareness and urging to write correctly</td>
<td>3.444</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. There is no encouragement to write outside the classroom</td>
<td>3.733</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. *Mean percent (Std Deviation) and percentage of responses on factors related to the classroom and time*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30. Poor lighting and air conditioning and lack of time affect the student negatively while writing</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The highest percentage was in the factors related to the teacher which is teacher negative criticism affects the student’s desire to learn to write negatively (37.4%) and the lowest proportion of the factors related to the student which is non-compliance with instructions during writing (16.7%).

![Figure 2. The number of repetitions in each statement of a five-point Likert Scale ranging](image)

**Discussion**

Based on these results, the grammatical category of Saudi female students scored (29.4%). The highest percentage in this category was in subject/verb agreement (6.7%). Then verb tense (6.2%) which immediately is followed by sentence structure (5.7%). As for subject/verb omission (5.5%), it was the fourth one. The fifth one was single/plural (2.4%) then word order (1.7%), the lowest percentage was in the relative clause (1.2%). These results are consistent with that of Nuruzzaman et al. (2018). They found that Saudi EFL learners made different types of errors namely grammatical (7.97%). They asserted that grammatical errors especially verb tense and subject-verb agreement were the most common errors among the students (p. 34).

**Table 8. Examples of grammatical errors category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of error</th>
<th>Student’s incorrect sentence</th>
<th>The correct sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb tense</td>
<td>when we <em>arrive</em> in Istanbul.</td>
<td>when we arrived in Istanbul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular/ plural</td>
<td>Everyone <em>have</em> a first trip.</td>
<td>Everyone has a first trip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word order</td>
<td>I have a <em>party big</em>.</td>
<td>I have a big party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject/ verb omission</td>
<td><em>Everyone happy.</em></td>
<td>Everyone was happy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the lexical category, most of the errors were committed in the prepositions and articles. In this category, the highest percentage was in the preposition (37 = 8.8%) and the second one was in the article (34 = 8.1%). The lowest percentage was for word form (6 = 1.4%). Similar findings were found in the study of Sawalmeh (2013), he found students made errors in lexical category especially article (12.4%) and preposition (8.4%). The results of his study indicated that most of the students face confusion for the correct usage of prepositions and articles (p. 13).

Table 9. Examples of lexical errors category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of error</th>
<th>Student’s incorrect sentence</th>
<th>The correct sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>We go out in night.</td>
<td>We go out at night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word form</td>
<td>Friendship is importance in our life.</td>
<td>Friendship is important in our life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>On other hand,</td>
<td>On the other hand,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The highest number of errors were committed in the mechanics’ category which included punctuations, capitalization, and spelling errors. As can be seen from the table (1), the spelling errors were the highest (121 = 28.9%). Results are in line with the study of Nuruzzaman et al. (2018). In the study, spelling was highly frequently committed by all the students (college of medicine 2.03%), (college of engineering 6.27%) and (college of computer science 5.93%) in total (14.23%) (p. 35-34). The second area of difficulty is for punctuation; the Saudi female students scored (51 = 12.2%). In capitalization, the students committed (44 = 10.5%) errors.

The last category is the semantic category which is related to the students' word choice. The errors in this type were not significant compared to the other types of errors. The female Saudi students made (3 = 0.7%) errors. The findings match the study of Nuruzzaman et al (2018). Word choice was the lowest frequently committed by all the students (college of medicine 1.02%), (college of engineering 2.03%) and (college of computer science 1.86%) in total (4.91%) (p. 35-34).

Table 10. Examples of mechanic and semantic error categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of error</th>
<th>Student’s incorrect sentence</th>
<th>The correct sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>I mix the flour and sugar, oil and eggs in the mixer.</td>
<td>I mix the flour, sugar, oil, and eggs in the mixer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>I traveled to makkah.</td>
<td>I traveled to Makkah.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As for the results of the questionnaire, 30 statements are divided into six main factors to be the exact reasons for the weakness of academic writing among the female Saudi students. Furthermore, to make all the similar statements under one reason as students themselves, teachers themselves, teaching method, external environment, curriculum, time and rule of study.

The proportions were varying. Moreover, the approval and rejection ratios were calculated, and the neutral responses were excluded. The highest percentage was related to the teacher with much negative criticism. Students usually feel alienated and hate material when the teacher is bad (37.4%). Followed by the lack of encouragement to write outside the classroom (37.3%) which was a factor related to the external environment as some students believe that writing is a school duty only and does not like writing at home. The third one was factors related to teaching methods, especially the lack of clarity of the steps and the misunderstanding of subjects (36.9%). It is normal for students to make mistakes and errors in writing when the steps and instructions are not clear to them. The lowest percentage was related to the student factor (16.7%). The students responded that they always follow the guidelines while writing. This leads us to believe that students are following the instructions incorrectly or they do not fully understand it, so they make mistakes and errors.

A statement is added in the questionnaire to see if the students knew that they had a weakness in academic writing or not because knowledge of the imbalances and weaknesses will help them solve the problem easily. The answers vary it got (30%), so the problem is solved from one person to another, where 36 students replied that they do not know whether they are suffering from a lack of academic writing or not. Twenty-five students admitted that they had a weakness in their academic writing. Surprisingly 29 students answered that they had no problems with academic writing.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

The current study aimed to answer the three research questions that revolve around the most common errors of English writing that are made by level four EFL Saudi female students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation at KKU in Abha, to analysis students’ writing errors, and to know the ratio of the frequency of different categories and types of errors. The analysis of the participants’ errors indicated that their errors vary according to the category of the error as well as the type of the error itself. The most common error committed by female Saudi students who are in level four was under the mechanics category especially the spelling errors. Moreover, the percentages differed between supporters and opponents for each statement of the questionnaire. The highest percentage was in the factors related to the teacher which is teacher negative criticism affects the student’s desire to learn to write negatively and the lowest proportion of the factors related to the student which is non-compliance with instructions during writing. It is recommended that students must be more conscious of learning English correctly and positively. Also, it is recommended that more emphasis is placed on writing skills by increasing the number of hours of writing in universities. It is recommended to encourage the use of writing outside the classroom as homework or even as a dialogue in social media. It is also important to choose teachers who are well qualified to deal with students who take care of the psychological and educational aspects of their students.
Limitations of the study
The study has two major limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results of the study. The first limitation is that the sample is limited to the faculty of Languages and Translation at KKU female section, so we cannot generalize the findings to the male section or to other universities. The second limitation is the small number of participants makes it difficult to overgeneralize the findings or even to claim that all areas of students’ writing weaknesses were covered.

About the Author:
Roaa Hussain specializes in applied linguistics and teaching English. She did her undergraduate and master’s degree at King Khalid University. Roaa has excellent communication skills, a good public speaker and a docile learner who respects and appreciates her superiors. She is interested in discourse analysis, linguistics, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics.

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References
Literature in EEL: A Gateway to a Successful Teaching-Learning Experience by Stimulating Human Psyche

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Abstract
This article examines some key outcomes of researches on the human brain related to language learning in particular; and, then it highlights the role using literary texts can play, while employed as stimuli, for achieving success in the field of EFL. To narrow down further, the aim of this paper is to propose: by implementing literature-based course materials in different teaching methods like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-based language teaching (TBLT) and Cooperative learning (CL), EFL teachers can actually help their learners to learn the language more effectively, as it is more compatible with their brain functions.

Keywords: CA, CL, CLT, EFL, ESL, grounded cognition, interdisciplinary approach, literature-based classroom activity, neuroplasticity, neuroscience, TBLT

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Introduction

Communicative language teaching (CLT) or Communicative Approach (CA) gives importance to communication as both the medium and the crucial objective of the study (Brown, 1994), where the target language is taught by utilizing “authentic texts” (Nuttall, 1996). Cooperative Learning (CL) activities are compatible with the communicative approach; in particular, they also promote authentic use of the language and encourage student-student interaction providing learners more opportunities to practice using the target language (Oxford, 1997). Literature can function as a resource house of authentic pedagogical materials, and this possibility has yet to be unearthed fully by the EFL educators. Learning together with peers and others allows learners to have access to more data or stimuli – that would create a positive response in them as human beings. Kagan has argued that, to a remarkable degree, proper application of cooperative learning principles promote effective learning, where learning becomes brain-friendly learning (Kagan, Robertson, & Kagan, 1995). Instead of getting the sole input from the teacher, if learners can interact with each other in an EFL setting, they can learn the language more meaningfully; and it can be facilitated more when the educators can successfully motivate them with a literature-based course plan, which is pertinent to the target age-group. This motivation to interact and cooperate is a crucial factor in language learning.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) or task-based instruction (TBI), another branch of communicative language teaching (CLT), mainly utilizes practical tasks using the target language (Skehan, 1991). As the name suggests, “task” is the primary tool to execute this teaching method. A “task” is an activity, in which communication is required, that facilitates language-learning. Whereas language teaching approaches tend to be language-centered, learner-centered, or language learning-centered, tasks can be said to be learner-centered or language learning-centered (Kazeroni, 1995). Literary texts, when considered as “tasks” in the context of TBLT, which are meaningful to the students, can reasonably be brain-friendly. This claim can be made as recently significant outcomes of the researches on how human brain functions have been examined, and many of those findings prove that when teaching materials are appealing to the learners, they learn the language more effectively.

In this paper, we, firstly, would look into the challenge that is usually faced by the researchers when an interdisciplinary study like this one is undertaken. Then the researchers will justify the reason why they have chosen to use the term EFL instead of ESL to define their approach towards the target language based on their teaching background. As the researchers are engaged in teaching EFL in a Saudi Arabian university, they are more aware of the EFL scenario there, and most of their research attitudes are grounded on it.

Next, the traditional approaches towards literature will be considered, and the correlation between literature and teaching EFL will be evaluated. After that, we would present the outcomes of some researches that are pertinent to the EFL/ESL pedagogy suggesting that EFL/ESL teachers and program providers should consider the outcome of the researches related to brain functions and its related fields when they teach or design their pedagogical undertakings. Then, we would unearth the potentials literary texts can offer when they are adjusted to the concerned pedagogical strategies. Later in this paper, the researchers are going to show how literary texts, when used as
a resource in a cooperative language learning environment, can stimulate and activate certain brain functions responsible for language learning.

Lastly, this paper concludes by proposing that by incorporating teaching materials based on English literature with CLT, TBLT, and CL approaches, we EFL teachers can generate more effective learning conditions, as this learning process gears towards the brain function.

Why is this study a challenge?
In this paper, we choose to consider several studies on the cognitive processes that go on inside the human brain based on several brain imaging techniques such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Positron Emission Tomography (PET), and Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). These techniques are purely scientific in nature. On the other hand, the analysis of activities based on literature in different EFL teaching approaches is from humanities background. So, to fulfill the task we have undertaken, we need to take an interdisciplinary approach.

The question appears why a relatively small amount of work has been done in the direction that is proposed here. Whereas, within the sciences or the humanities such studies are problematic, between the sciences and the humanities it gets far more complex. Quality interdisciplinary research is challenging because of the fundamental differences in the nature of study that exist between science and arts. There are such substantial differences in how we learn to think and reason, that it would not be surprising if we fear of being misunderstood or judged by the other community. Most of the time, we, the researchers, do not manage to overcome such copious obstacles to collaboration. The uncertainty with which the humanities often encounter the sciences may also be a factor here:

Given their far greater command of funding and other resources, and the greater ease with which their research can be explained (at a basic level) and justified to government and the public, it might not be difficult to forget that the humanities offer things of value that are not simply overshadowed by all that the sciences can achieve – and furthermore offer them specifically back to the sciences (Burke & Troscianko, 2013, p. 145)

ESL or EFL?
EFL stands for English as a foreign language; ESL is English as a second language. There is no difference between ESL and EFL where the language itself is concerned, but the difference lies in syllabus content, why and where the language is learned. The term ESL was coined to refer to the teaching of English to speakers of other languages who live in a country where English is an official or essential language, English being notionally their second language. On the other hand, the term EFL refers to the teaching of English to students, who live in a non-English-speaking country and whose first language is not English (Brown, 1994). Cultural content is more critical in an EFL classroom than in the typical ESL classroom (Mitchell, 2016), and this scope for using “cultural content” opens the gateway for using literature in such classes.

EFL in Saudi Arabia
In Saudi Arabia, for example, English has been perceived by the majority as the most important foreign language. EFL is taught as a preliminary year major for almost all the science, arts, and business subjects. The universities also have English Departments where primary stress is put on
mastering EFL. In the upper levels of the bachelor program, several literature and linguistics courses are offered, the aim of which is to solidify the English language teaching-learning experience. Like many other countries, in Saudi Arabia, EFL/ESL as a discipline emerged after World War II (Smith, 2012). As much attention is given to EFL in Saudi educational institutions like schools and universities, materials based on English literature can enhance the chances of success.

Why Literature?
Literature, being authentic material, is a source of an unmodified language in the classroom and can be proved to be very useful because the skills the learners acquire in dealing with a somewhat tricky or unknown language, can be used outside the class. As literature is motivating and holds high status in many cultures and countries, students can sense a real sense of accomplishment at comprehending a piece of highly respected piece of literature. Also, literary texts are often more stimulating and thereby more engaging than the texts found in coursebooks (Clandfield & Duncan, 2004).

Different Models of Using Literature in EFL Classrooms
There have been various models that suggested using literature as course materials to ESL/EFL students (Carter & Long, 1991) (Lazar, 1993). How the teacher will use the literary texts depend on the model they choose:

- The cultural model considers literary texts as an artifact and basis of information about the target culture. When used as university literature courses, this traditional approach examines the social, political, and historical background, pertinent literary movements, and genres of a text. In this very teacher-centered approach, no specific language work is done on a text.

- A more learner-centered approach, the language model includes Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-based language teaching (TBLT), and Cooperative Learning (CL). The manner of using the language is brought to the attention through a literary text which increases their general awareness of English. Here, the primary focus is on general grammar and vocabulary or stylistic analysis, which involves the close study of the linguistic features of the text.

- Another learner-centered approach, the personal growth model, is process-based, which encourages learners to give their own opinions, feelings, and personal experiences. To make the language more memorable, the immense power of literature is used, and the interaction between the text and the EFL students is encouraged so that they can “make the text their own.”

Why do we, the EFL teachers, consider Brain Function researches?
The answer is: all teachers use strategies; the difference here is that we are proposing to use strategies based on real science, not rumor or mythology (Jensen, 2008), with particular consideration to the use of literary texts as classroom material to add a more humane qualities to this field.
Within this framework, we will consider the brain, more specifically the human brain that houses the cognitive systems, along with the circulation of blood, the systems of vision, motor planning, etc. Along with their role in behavior, the “cognitive organs” enter into activities traditionally regarded as mental: thought, planning, language learning, interpretation, evaluation, and so on (Chomsky, 1968). To assist this study, at first, we will resort to Neurolinguistics, which is a science related to the human brain mechanisms underlying the comprehension, production, and abstract knowledge of the language, be it spoken, signed, or written (neurolinguistics, 2019). Then, as an interdisciplinary approach, this field deals with findings from linguistics, cognitive science, and neurobiology, among others. The researches in brain functions, falling under the purview of neurolinguistics, is simply research on the human brain – how it develops and operates; it is often conducted with several brain imaging techniques such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Positron Emission Tomography (PET), and Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). The imaging technology has made it possible for us to observe neural activities in the brain (Jensen, 2005). In this paper, the term ‘brain function research’ is conceptualized in a broader sense, encompassing other brain-based disciplines such as biopsychology, neuroscience: which is a study of the nervous system, cognitive neuroscience, psychobiology, and behavioral neuroscience, to name just a few. They all study the human brain; how it relates to apparent behavior and interacts with the environment.

Learning, like any other human activity (e.g., Learning to cook, play piano, etc.), is integrated with our brain activities, and some people are quick in learning EFL and people who are not. A number of researches have been conducted to unearth the reason. For example, some of us think that they are not good at learning another language is because of their poor memory and other reason they are too old to learn another language. Recently, there are efforts to include theories and findings from human brain activity researches to explain the mechanisms of language learning, why there are differences in learning pace; furthermore, these researches give us valuable clues to enhance the process of learning EFL. Using this clue, in this paper, we are going to suggest the connection between using literature in EFL classrooms and successful language learning and thereby see that there are many practical and biological reasons for using literature in the classrooms.

**Brain Function Researches – EFL Classrooms – Literature**

**1.1 Effect of Reading on Broca’s Area, Wernicke Area, and Occipital Lobe**

The first person who undertook the study on the relationship between brain activity and speech was Paul Broca (1824-1880), a French physician, anatomist, and anthropologist. He discovered that the area of the brain responsible for speech production is the frontal lobes. The part is now named after him as Broca’s area (Carter, 1999). Karl Wernicke, a German scientist, discovered that there is a specific area of the brain; any damage in this part may cause language impairments. This area is also named after him as the Wernicke area (Carter, 1999). His findings confirm that our ability to learn languages depends on activities in specific areas of the brain. It is believed among language specialists and medical practitioners that the Broca’s area of the brain helps us produce coherent speech; whereas, the Wernicke area helps us process language stimuli and understanding the language (Thadhphooton, 2019). The coordinated functions of these two areas result in active language learning.
The brain is believed to be hard-wired, but plastic and malleable (Genesee, 2000). There are connections made by billions of neurons that send electrical signals to the brain when they are stimulated. In their study, Marcin Szwed and others used fMRI scans on the participants of their research program to weigh and equate their brain function. This scan was done when they responded to visual tasks, oral language, and written language. The occipital lobe of the readers, the visual processing center of their brain, and parietal lobes, which turn letters into words and words into thoughts, were strengthened and developed (Carter, 1999).

The finding of the research indicates that the readers would have more efficient visual information processing ability, enhanced imagination and creativity, better ability to visualize the future for decision-making and planning. Historically it is seen that the term “Reader” refers to the readers...
of literature, as it engages the readers fully, in every possible way, for a more extended period. Students with frequent reading activities improve every aspect of a person’s communication skills. The article, “How Reading Increases Your Emotional Intelligence & Brain Function: The Findings of Recent Scientific Studies,” explains: “Neuroscientists theorize that reading ‘rewires’ areas of the brain responsible for both vision and spoken language.” Also, in 2009, scientists Timothy Keller and Marcel Just asserted that intense reading rewires the brain and creates new white matter, especially in young children. According to researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, intensive reading exercises can alter brain tissue in positive ways (Keller & Just, 2009).

1.2 Lateralization of brain structures
Roger Sperry’s Split Brain Experiments (1959–1968) have assisted in developing awareness about language learning and lateralization. This experiment involved the cutting of the corpus callosum (a group of nerve fibers connecting the two brain hemispheres) and proved that the left and the right brain hemispheres have precise language functions. Therefore, both sides of the brain are required for comprehensive language understanding and use. As language learning process needs to be logical and creative, it involves utilizing the capacity of the whole brain (Lienhard, 2017).

![Figure 3: The Left and Right Cerebral Hemispheres](https://sites.google.com/site/sociopsychotejano/brain-hemispheric-dominance)
CL activities allow students to use both sides; thereby, CL activity is a whole-brain approach to learning; students develop their language skills as well as social skills. CL requires that teachers apply a wide range of classroom activities, which are designed to tap on the ability and potential from both hemispheres of the brain. This requirement is fulfilled in cooperative mind mapping which allows learners to exhibit their creativity as well as their critical thinking skills and it also covers a wide range of group activities and structures. The two hemispheres are inseparably interactive, irrespective of whether a person is dealing with words, mathematics, chemistry, crossword puzzles, music, or art (Caine & Caine, 1990). The brain perceives the world and process information using several parallel pathways. According to Parallel Distributed Processing Model, a sentence – which has phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic properties – is generated by a series of simultaneous interconnection of a multitude of brain cells (Sokolik, 1990). Literary texts traditionally offer the above-mentioned properties extensively and thereby expand language awareness. Asking learners to examine sophisticated or non-standard examples of language (which can usually occur in literary texts) makes them more aware of the norms of language use (Widdowson, 2014). After rigorous encounters with such literary texts, the brain can reasonably be stimulated to produce meaningful, practical sentences.

The following TBL activity in an EFL classroom can be an example to be used to achieve the goal as mentioned above:

Lesson: Using a single piece of literature

Source: Exploiting Literature in Project/Task-Based Learning, by Janet Orr TEAL Services, Arlington, VA
Questions: After reading the book as homework, the students can be asked to complete the chart in the as a classwork activity. What do you must know to plan a Halloween party?

1.3 Brain Wiring Drives Social Interactions
Culture plays a vital role in forming an individual’s worldview. Literature is a huge window through which we can have high exposure to different cultures, more specifically to the culture of the target language.

Though much is not known yet about the causal relationship (not just about the correlation) between environmental factors (such as culture or teaching) and patterns of brain adaptation in adulthood (Rastelli, 2018), based on the experiment done by implanting electrodes into the brains of animals Christopher Wanjek hypothesized, “brains likely don't operate in isolation” (Wanjek, 2017, para. 3), it can be argued that both language acquisition and learning are social processes, thereby, brains need social stimuli (Thadphoothon, 2019). Social stimuli influence brains, as Carter has shown that brains get more active in learning when it interacts with others than when alone, reading or listening to a lecture (Carter, 1999). This argument supports group work or CL activities. The existence of mirror neurons in our brain implies that group support and positive interdependence among group members help create a sense of togetherness, which is helpful for L2 learning.

Even in the institutions where the syllabus is externally imposed, and one of the most crucial examination requirements is to meet the deadlines, group-work can be the best solution to attain certain levels of proficiency by whole groups of learners, regardless of their individual aims and abilities. That is why, it can be argued that group-work or cooperative learning can at least allow flexibility in the manner of attainment and, if well organized, increase the speed and efficiency of the process (Long, 1977). Also, humans not only learn by doing something meaningful or from first-hand experience but also from indirect experience, i.e., by observing the natural and social phenomena. Learners as observers can acquire new cognitive skills and patterns of behavior by “observing the performance of other” (Bandura, 1986, p. 49). Social stimuli are abundant in group activities, such as cooperative learning, where teacher talk is reduced, and student-student interaction is increased.

According to Bandura, when learners pay attention to the modeled activities or events, they remember and transform them into their cognitive representational systems (Bandura, 1986). These “modeled activities” could be a performance of a play, recitation of poetry or reading aloud an excerpt from a novel selection, which is often rich in multiple layers of meaning, and can effectively be utilized for discussions and sharing feelings or opinions. By examining values in literary texts related to the world outside the classroom, teachers can encourage learners to develop attitudes towards them, thereby educating the whole person. In an EFL classroom, following activities based on drama can serve this purpose:

- Students can read out the dialogue keeping the characters’ distinctive accents (very “foreign” or very “American” or “British”), as directed in the play. This works on
students’ awareness of different aspects of pronunciation, i.e. individual sounds and sentence rhythm.

- Students can act out a part of the scene from a drama in groups.
- Resembling a radio program, students can record the scene individually. The teacher will listen to the different recordings in the class. Ask the students to comment on each other’s recordings.
- Applying their productive skill, students can write stage directions, including how to deliver lines (e.g., angrily, breathlessly, etc.) next to each character’s line of dialogue. Then they read it out loud.
- Students can re-write the scene. They can either modernize it (for example, setting Shakespeare’s drama in the context of 2020 AD), or they can set it in a completely different location (for example, Shakespearean characters can be set in the desert of Arabia). Then they read aloud the new version.

Source: “Teaching materials: using literature in the EFL/ ESL classroom” By Lindsay Clandfield

1.4 Neuroplasticity
The term “Neuroplasticity” is used by neuroscientists, which refer to the brain’s ability to change anytime during the aging process — negatively or positively (Pallier et al., 2003). In the article “How Experience Changes Brain Plasticity,” it is shown that under the right conditions, brain’s plasticity can assist minds in flourishing cognitively with remarkable progression (Cherry, 2018), and the right circumstance can be created by the application of literature-based CL activities in an EFL classroom. Often some students prefer learning to speak English than learning grammatical rules. However, they often ignore the fact that with literary content based CLT method, we can view EFL as a holistic approach instead of learning the skills separately. The following sample plan is based on an excerpt or a poem or a short story, which is a combination of the language approach and the personal growth approach. Doing these activities can enhance students’ brain plasticity as reading exercise is accompanied by listening, writing, and speaking activities; which is somewhat a holistic approach:

Stage one
As warmer, after the students are given the title of the literary piece, they can do a short discussion by guessing or brainstorming the vocabulary around that topic.

Stage two
- Pre-teaching complicated words.
- Providing students a number of words from the extract to predict the upcoming situation. For a play, a couple of lines of dialogue can help them to predict about the play.
- Testing comprehension. Ask the students to close the text, and the teacher can read the first bit of the extract at an average speed. At first, students can compare what they have understood in pairs, and after that, they will report back to the teacher. Then they can open the book and read it for themselves.
Using poems
- Students can read each other the poem aloud, checking for each other’s pronunciation and rhythm.
- Students can write the probable story behind the poem, for example, who was the poem for? What might be the background story of this poem?
- Discussion can be held about how the issues raised in the poem can relate to the students’ lives.

Using extracts from stories or short stories
- After the students read an excerpt from the story, ask them to guess and write what will happen next, or what happened just before.
- Students can personalize the text by talking about if anything similar has happened to them.
- Students can do role-play in pairs choosing two characters in the book.

Source: “Teaching materials: using literature in the EFL/ ESL classroom” (Clandfield & Duncan, 2004).

1.5 Grounded cognition and Reading Literary texts
The rigorous perceptual exercise, which includes reading acquisition, enhances primary visual capabilities and phonological processing abilities. This finding proves that the effect of literacy on the visual system is more extensive than initially thought (Szwed, Ventura, Querido, Cohen, & Dehaene, 2012). Neurobiological research using fMRI has begun to identify heightened connectivity in the left temporal cortex and the central sulcus, the primary sensory-motor region. This area of the brain is associated with the receptivity for language.

Figure 4: Central Sulcus
Source: https://www.neuroscientificallychallenged.com/glossary/central-sulcus

Figure 3: Left-temporal Cortex
Source: https://open.buffer.com/reading-fiction/left-temporal-cortex/.
The primary function of the left-temporal cortex is to control sight and sound processing and language usage. It also helps us to make sense of the words that we read and hear. When we read with profound attention, neurons here make representations of sensation in Central sulcus to create reflex form the body – this phenomenon is identified as grounded cognition (Barsalou, 2008). It resembles the phenomenon, for instance, just thinking about running, can activate the neurons associated with the physical act of running. Generally, several people can recall reading at least one cherished story that they say changed their life (Clark, 2013). Researchers at Emory University have detected the biological traces reflecting such reading experiences. Their finding is: reading a novel may cause changes in resting-state connectivity of the brain that persist. Neuroscientist Gregory Berns says, “Stories shape our lives and in some cases help define a person. We want to understand how stories get into your brain, and what they do to it” (Berns, Blaine, Prietula, & Pye, 2013). The study concluded that:

“becoming engrossed in a novel enhances the brain’s resting-state connectivity and overall function. Specifically, reading fiction improves the reader’s ability to put themselves in another’s shoes and flex imagination in a way similar to the visualization of a muscle memory in sports.” (p. 590)

1.6 Increasing the capacity of the working memory
Reading, a neurobiologically challenging activity, is the best kind of neural workout for our brain as it improves memory. Several brain functions like visual and auditory processes, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension get involved while reading. According to a recent research at Haskins Laboratories for the Science of the Spoken and Written Word, reading gives the brain more time to stop, think, process, and imagine the narrative. It thereby helps keep our memory toned much in the way lifting weights keeps our muscles healthy. Reading literature and processing what is written, from the letters to the words to the sentences to the stories themselves, boosts brain activity. Also, we cannot ignore the importance of acquiring communicative abilities through EFL classrooms as this is one of the main goals of such classes. So “an emphasis on communicative competence as the goal of language learning as well as a focus on meaning and context seem to be the common denominators of most syllabi in language courses” (Passey, Rubio, & Campbell, 2004, p. 158). The above-mentioned goal can be achieved through literature-based tasks, which can stimulate brain function.

Scientists at the University of California, Berkeley combined functional MRI with eye-tracking. While being in an MRI scanner, volunteers read text on a screen, and the eye-tracking device detects which word they are paying attention to at that time. They call this new method fixation-related, or "FIRE" fMRI. This technology was applied to test ideas about how words are represented in the brain. From the experimentation, they hold the view that “words are represented by connections to the real world: What does it look like, how do I handle it, how does it make me feel, reflected in brain areas for vision, touch, emotion and so on” (Fell & Nikos, 2016). Reading literary texts can create mental pictures in a better way than reading non-fictional texts because traditionally, fictional texts can offer a context that involves the reader wholeheartedly, evoking readers’ imagination, which makes the brain more active.
Another group of scientists at the University of California, Berkeley, found that not being in the habit of reading can lower the levels of beta-amyloid, a brain protein, which keeps the mind cognitively stimulated. Reading improves overall mental flexibility, an essential component to developing and retaining memory (Yang, 2015). To stimulate this brain activity, we can do the following literature classroom activity:

- A short story / a section from a novel / a poem can be read aloud to the students with proper intonation so that they can get emotionally involved with the text. If the piece of literature or poetry is remarkably evocative, it will be able to attract the students’ attention. Then the learners can read it to themselves. As one of the goals of exploiting literature in an EFL classroom is to create interest with pleasure towards learning the language, it is crucial to let the students approach a piece of literature without providing them any specified task. At this stage, they can simply read it. A task at every stage of a lesson can kill students’ pleasure.
- After the first reading, the learners can be asked to explain specific keywords of the text. Then, in a group, students can discuss what they have understood. Teacher can ask more subjective questions (e.g., Why do you think the main character said this?).

Source: “Teaching materials: using literature in the EFL/ESL classroom” (Clandfield & Duncan, 2004)

1.7 Reader’s attention span increase
Reading narrative stories not only improves memory but also enhances attention spans. As most of the books follow a sequential narrative style — a beginning, middle, and end — reading them stimulates the brain to think following the same sequence, and thus, the readers invest more time in forming a story rather than focusing on every detail.

According to neuroscientist Susan Greenfield, when we read a novel, we read in a linear motion and slow pace that enables us to think about the information that lies ahead (Greenfield, 2015). Brain’s capacity for retaining longer attention spans can be enhanced through the process of taking time to process the novel’s story, pondering over the intricate layers of the story, and putting together different parts of the story. Tim Bowen and Jonathan Marks, in their book Inside Teaching, recommend the following ideas for EFL classrooms:

- Brief group discussions in the classroom can be held on what learners are reading.
- Learners can describe their favorite book in a persuasive manner to encourage other students to read it.
- A short novel or a selection from a novel can be selected, which has been recently used for a film or TV series adaptation with which the students are acquainted. The learners can be asked to describe the differences with minute details that they notice between the original novel and visual art form. This activity aims to give the learners an intensive exercise to hold their attention for a longer time (Bowen & Marks, 1994).
1.8 Vocabulary Expansion

There is a relationship between word-reading skill and vocabulary building. Academic or social opportunities of an individual can be affected by individual abilities in vocabulary development. The study proposed that “individual differences in word reading could affect the rate of vocabulary growth, mediated by the amount of reading experience, a process referred to as a Matthew effect” (Stanovich, 2009, p. 36). A scientific study proves the importance of reading to the process of vocabulary acquisition in children and adolescents (Duff, Tomblin, & Catts, 2015). From the above studies, the researchers could conclude: new words for the students get easier to retain when these words are put in context, and the effect of “context” can be enhanced when it is presented as literary texts as they offer stories involving emotions. The following TBLT classroom activities can stimulate multiple brain functions to facilitate the learning of different aspects of EFL, including new vocabulary:

Two Pieces of Literature: *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* by William Wordsworth. The first and last stanzas are chosen for this task and *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost.

- **Pre-task:** In pairs, read the selections that describe a particular season. Find words or sentences where the author uses the senses.
- **Main Task:** (Use the selected poems) First, think about that season using all of your senses. Write descriptive words in the chart. Second, think about any peculiar characteristics of this season that are different from other seasons. Write them down.

![A Five Senses Chart by](image)

The following activities can enhance EFL students’ understanding the language by enriching their knowledge of English vocabulary:

- The EFL instructor can focus on critical words in the text. Students’ understanding of the unfamiliar words from context can be checked. Clues can be given to help.
- The instructor can attract students’ attention to the author’s some aspects of style, which includes non-standard forms of language. This activity can be an effective way to understand the standard form as a contrast will be created between the non-standard and standard forms of language.
- The instructor can attract students’ attention towards the chunks of words that the author used in the literary text. Usually, literary texts are rich in collocative use of words.
- Students can be asked to find out the connotation of the author’s word selection. For example, if the text says, “Bob is bullheaded sometimes, but he always gets the job done.,” what does that say about the author’s impression of the man? Would there be any difference if it was written as, “Bob is resilient and always gets the job done.”?

Source: “Teaching materials: using literature in the EFL/ ESL classroom” (Clandfield & Duncan, 2004)

Conclusion
Human being’s ability to learn languages is innate. However, when it comes to learning EFL, this learning can be facilitated by being aware of how our brain functions and applying these function friendly applications in the FEL classrooms. In this paper, we have claimed that many of our present teaching strategies and methods such as CL, CLT, or TBLT, in many aspects, are brain-compatible, and this effect can be maximized while they are adjusted with literature-based materials. We have also discussed why cooperative learning activities based on literature are brain-compatible. As brains are social organisms, they need social stimuli, and thus, literature-based CLT, CL, or TBLT course plan can enhance EFL learning and teaching experience to a great extent. Though research on brain functionality in the context of EFL is still in its rudimentary level, a growing number of researchers are taking an interest in it and will continue to do so, affecting the role of the educators.

Also, while using literature in an EFL classroom, educators must be aware of the age-group, cultural, and contextual compatibility of the literature selection used. Any major glitch in it may cause the entire plan to collapse.

Further research

Further research is highly recommended to fully discover the potential and power of literature when used as EFL classroom material. It is highly recommended that interested researchers might carry out empirical research on:
“A measurement of the efficacy of literature-based TBL classroom materials in an EFL classroom in King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia.”
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