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From the Editor

Dear Colleague

We would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2012. We have the pleasure of introducing the latest issue (December 2011) of our Arab World English Journal (AWEJ). Since the first issue AWEJ has achieved good international academic recognition and acclaim as a journal devoted to the teaching and learning of English linked to the Arab World. AWEJ has been indexed, abstracted or downloaded in many world famous databases: UsHoTSEARCHES, Bibliothekssystem Universität Hamburg, eBook, TU Clausthal, Linguistlist, MaxPerutzLibrary, Edu-DOC, Docslibrary, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek, DOC-TXT, freechebooks, and many others. The list will keep increasing as continue to work on upcoming issues. In addition, we have received a number of invitations to attend or collaborate with international conferences. Would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to the organizers of these conferences.
Finally we would like also to extend our especial thanks to our team for their continuing hard working and patience.

Best Regards,

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Teacher Development: Recognising Skill as a Basis for Ongoing Change

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Abstract
This paper reviews key themes in language teacher development over recent decades, and outlines a way forward. First and second generation approaches to teacher learning and developments are described, and a third generation, based on recognising what teachers do well is set out. This is based on data from a teacher development initiative carried out with teachers in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme in the UK. Key features of this approach focussed on in this paper are the skills of teachers in managing interaction and learning opportunities, the complex cognitive activity which underpins
effective classroom practice, and the need to conceptualise teaching as constantly changing. These features are related to the ongoing challenge to develop programmes for teacher development which are effective in terms of teacher experience, and of wider policy goals of curriculum improvement.

Keywords: Teacher learning in TESOL, language teacher development, continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers and classroom episode analysis
1. Introduction

This paper outlines the development of approaches to teacher development over recent decades. It illustrates the shift from transmissive approaches, which were grounded in emerging theories in the fields of applied linguistics, psychology and education to collaborative and transformative approaches which draw on sociocultural theory and the role of interaction in learning more widely. The focus and orientation of these approaches constitute innovative teaching methodologies which emphasised task-based, collaborative learning rather than direct instruction. These teaching methods have proved difficult to implement in many contexts, leaving teachers with conflicting perceptions of what is possible and what is desirable in their classroom contexts. More recently a range of more situated approaches have been elaborated. These include action research, and reflective practice based approaches to teacher development. These have the potential to address the problems created by methods and techniques which teachers feel do not work in their classrooms. However, they are demanding in three ways: first, they require a lot of time, and thus may be difficult to combine with the established role of the teacher. Second, they require specialist skills and procedures which teachers are often insufficiently familiar with. And third, they may seem to conflict with the culture of the classroom environment: a conflict of role and identity which may have a de-motivating impact on initially enthusiastic teachers.

In this paper, I describe an innovative approach to teacher development which seeks address these issues: to engage, scaffold and use teachers’ capacity for analysis of what goes on in their classrooms. This teacher development programme and research were carried out in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme in a College of Further Education in the UK. The research was informed by the ‘craft’ perspective of Richard Sennett, a sociologist of work who identifies individual constructions of the task, skills related to that construction, commitment and ongoing learning to develop these skills
as the basis of excellence. The teacher in this sense of craftsman is proud of their teacher identity, engaged in the processes and interactions in the classroom and school, and both creative and persevering in achieving higher standards of performance and outcome. This perspective has important messages for language teachers in all contexts. In particular it shows that there is a need to move away from a deficit perspective in teacher development, recognise teachers’ capacity for analysis of classroom interaction which has the seeds of further change, and link institutional and teachers’ personal agendas of programme development and professional learning. These strands in the findings of this study outline the key themes of third generation teacher development.

2. First generation language teacher development

Early teacher development initiatives and programmes were based on emerging theories in education and applied linguistics. In education in the 1960s and 1970s theories of active, discovery-based and collaborative learning were promoted. The work of Douglas Barnes (1976) reflects very clearly this approach: engaged students working in groups discover principles and knowledge in a way superior to listening to direct instruction by the teacher. Within Applied Linguistics and language education, the focus on language learning through language use, in may ways parallel to the ways we learn our L1 were set out. The work of Stephen Krashen, for example Krashen and Terrell (1983), is particularly well-known and influential. This work within the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) was complemented by theoretical work in linguistics on the nature of communication and functional perspectives in understanding language. The work of Grice (1975), Wilkins (1976), and Munby (1978) are particularly important here: they provided a more social and functional account of language structure which supported the learning activities developed by Krashen and other SLA theorists. The theories based on these new understandings of language learning and language form came together in the work of language education
experts such as Widdowson (1978) and Brumfit (1984) as the communicative approach to language teaching (CLT). These innovative ideas were seen as the basis for teacher development – they established a framework of curriculum principles, teaching skills and classroom activities which had the potential to transform learning processes and outcomes. The key factor which determined success was the skill of the teacher in realising this new interactive pedagogy.

In many contexts where such curriculum changes, and then teacher development programmes were implemented, there was a Communicative versus Traditional conflict, for example, Tomlinson (1988; 1990), Markee (1993); Holliday (1994); and Waters and Vilches (2001). Teachers and curriculum leaders reported difficulties in moving away from lockstep teacher-led instructional approaches. A key element of the problem here was the assumed agency of the teacher, the idea that the teacher could manage the classroom in any way she chose. And if the right techniques were chosen, then success in learning would follow. A more realistic view would see the individual teacher as much less autonomous in this way: she is located in a classroom, institution and wider society whose norms and expectations she always has to work with. In educational terms she is limited in the kind of teaching she does by schemes of work, course books, and test and examination formats. Second generation teacher development approaches recognised this, and placed the teacher and her social and cultural context at the centre of teacher learning and curriculum change and enhancement.

3. Second generation language teacher development

Second generation language teacher development has at its core the involvement of the teacher as an active and agentive player in her own learning. There are many formats for
constructing this active role: action research (for example Wallace 1998, O’Brien and Beaumont 2000 and Burns 2005), reflective practice (Wallace 1991, Richard and Lockhart 1994, Richards and Farrell 2005), exploratory practice (Allwright 2003; Allwright and Hanks 2008), and programme evaluation by teachers Rea-Dickins and Germaine 1992, Kiely 2001; Kiely and Rea-Dickins 2005). These curriculum development strategies place the engagement of the teacher in systematic enquiry, sense-making and change at the heart of the process. However, there is no guarantee of success. Teachers often struggle to find the time to undertake research (Borg 2007). They may lack the skills to design a study which makes a convincing case for policy or institutional change (Lazaraton 2006; Kiely 2008). If they have the skills they may isolate them in the teaching context, leading to what Crookes described as a form of action research which does not have the potential to lead to change:

[Action research] must start with the ideas and concepts of teachers, but it must be recognised that these are quite likely to embody the unexamined assumptions of the school culture which play a role in causing many of the problems which teachers face (‘false consciousness’). Consequently, these must be developed through reflection and enquiry.

(Crookes 1993:134)

While many teachers may feel ready to initiate action research within their own practice, few feel it is appropriate to question policy (which may be tacit, and embedded in educational cultures, or set out in government or institutional policy documents in the form of syllabuses, schemes of work and guidelines for teachers) and examine assumptions that are part of the institutional or wider culture. Reflective practice (RP) presents another challenge: it has been formulated as a means of collaborative sense-making, whether within
institutions, or in the framework of formal learning such as a masters or other higher degree. Thus, unless it is framed or documented in this way, it is not possible to know the extent to which it is happening. Exploratory practice (EP) appears to be constructed in the same way: its process is evidenced through products such as journal papers (the journal Language Teaching Research publishes an exploratory practice paper each volume) and conference presentations. So, for both RP and EP, we have no conceptualisation of how the practice they engender is different from ordinary teaching, and occurs with impact on the curriculum where there is no product for the public domain. The key notion in both approaches is practice, but it is novel, imagined practice constructed in an account which represents selectively the actuality and complexity of the classroom.

Both RP and EP have the merit of close alignment with teacher concerns. RP captures a creditable understanding of how we all learn from experience, and EP as characterised in a range of publications over two decades by Dick Allwright reflects important insights into the classroom issues as teachers deal with them. Three insights (Allwright 2003; Allwright and Hanks 2008) are particularly important for this paper: first, there is a need to focus on quality of life in classrooms illustrates the social nature of classroom learning and teaching, and the need over time to sustain and develop its social character. Second there is a need to involve all participants, a principle which clarifies what social means in terms of classrooms. Third, there is a need to understand and only after that, consider planned innovation and change. These principles are picked up again in the discussion section of this paper: they illustrate the ways in which reflection and teacher learning actually take place, and the value of locating these in teachers’ accounts of their practice, and the rationales they provide for this.

Classroom evaluation as developed in recent decades through the work of Stenhouse (1975), Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1992) and Kiely and Rea-Dickins (2005), has sought to make the processes and tools of formal evaluations relevant and available to teachers
who want to improve their own classrooms. This approach has merged in many contexts with institutional approaches to stakeholder evaluation (Weiss 1986; Crabbe 2003), and in some ways, is perhaps a victim of its own success: the growth of concerns for quality and accountability in language programmes in all sectors of public and private education has meant that programme evaluation has become an institutionally owned process. This means it is led by institutional policy and procedures rather than the teacher, and seeks to understand the experience of students without inclusion of the teacher in the process. Thus it often marginalises the teacher, and reduces her autonomy (Kiely 2006; 2009) as it seeks to evidence compliance with established teaching norms and institutional policies.

Over the last two decades alongside these enquiry-based initiatives to support teacher development there has been a parallel programme of research and growing literature on language teacher cognitions (for example Woods, 1996; Borg 2006) and related areas such as teachers’ practical knowledge (Breen et al 2001; Tsui 2003) and teacher identity and expertise (Varghese et al 2005; Block 2009). The findings of these approaches to research reflect the complexity and individuality of teaching, and the need for engagement with identity and performance as part of any process of teacher development. The InSITE project sought to draw together the strengths of these traditions of teacher research, the teacher development orientations they suggest, and the various concerns that had become apparent in designing and implementing and researching a teacher development programme.

4. The InSITE project

The InSITE project involved combining a situated approach to teacher learning – in site – with one which prioritized a teacher-led analysis of classroom episodes – insights. The
institutional context of the project was on the surface a positive one. It was a public sector college with a concern to improve the quality of its programmes through, among other strategies, the ongoing development of its teachers. As part of this strategy teachers had an annual performance appraisal, and learning opportunities within and outside the college were available to teachers as a result of this. Teachers felt, however, that the focus was on techniques based on current trends which teachers were expected to comply with in their classrooms. This focus was determined by issues external to the classrooms of the teachers, rather than based on them. This model of professional development has become particularly popular in institutions as a result of a positively evaluated programme with primary school teachers in the 1990s (Harland and Kinder 1997). Organised professional development opportunities also focused on policy initiatives such as use of technology and strategies for assessment without any real engagement with the actual current practice and expertise of teachers. The experience therefore was one where there was a focus on teacher deficits, even where teachers were highly qualified and experienced, and felt they were professional, creative, and effective in engaging their students. The comments of participating teachers in interview illustrate these perceptions. One teacher commenting on the impact of observations she had had:

I haven’t really received any sort of practical pointers. The observers weren’t really able to tell me anything I didn’t already know.

Teacher 2008

Another teacher felt the InSITE project had succeeded in moving away from a deficit model:
We have confidently broken away from a deficit model of CPD; in the same way, we can see our learners as true participants, not simply as people who need to improve in some way.

Teacher 2009

The college as part of its commitment to innovative practice in all its processes agreed to fund the innovative approach to teacher development\(^1\). The overall structure and approach to teacher learning of InSITE draws together the key themes in recent decades outlined above. It shares:

- a focus on actual classroom data with action research and programme evaluation;
- a focus on reflection and collaboration with reflective practice;
- a focus on effectiveness of learning with classroom evaluation; and
- a concern with social and interpersonal aspects of classroom life with exploratory practice.

The graphic below reflects the processes of teacher learning:

\(^1\) I am grateful to Matt Davis, Graham Carter, Carolyn Nye and Eunice Wheeler, my colleagues working in the research site, City of Bristol College of Further Education, for their commitment, support and creativity over the two years of InSITE.
The aims of the project, shared with the teachers and reviewed at the end of the programme, were:

i) to implement reflective practice through an analysis of episodes from teachers’ own practice;
ii) to develop the research skills, particularly skills of interaction analysis, of the participant teachers;
iii) to connect teaching practice and professional development with a variety of classroom research perspectives from the literature.

The CPD activities ran over twelve weeks and were carried out both in workshops and in the teachers’ own time, and included reading, structured discussions between teachers and
professional leaders, peer discussions, and written reflections, all focused on analysis and sense-making of the episodes of classroom interactions.

A key element in the operationalisation of InSITE was analysis of an episode, a segment of classroom interaction. This use of episodes followed use in other contexts of classroom research, such as Kowal and Swain (1994); Storch (1998; 2001); Ellis (2001); Ellis (2006); Ellis et al (2001); and Richards (2006). Such episodes were short enough for micro-analysis which reflected the often intuitive management of interaction of the teacher. Teachers through reflection and discussion could explore aspects of the interaction which were not planned or even part of conscious action in the classroom. This form of analysis also had the potential to link the teachers’ activity with mainstream research. Thus the professional development experience had the potential to initiate them into the activity of data analysis, but not as a novice: rather as an expert in terms of the key issues relevant to the analysis.

In this study, an episode is a segment of interaction in the classroom in which the following three characteristics can be identified:

- **Boundaries:** it has a start and a finish which are clear to the teachers and/or an observer.
- **Theme:** it has a single, unifying centre of gravity. This could be a word, a question, response or phenomenon which has attracted attention in the classroom and contributes to the discourse.
- **Significance:** it is important for learning. This could be the resolution of a problem or new understanding developing – learning in terms of classroom subject matter – or activities which contribute to the social or affective factors which support or
inhibit learning in the classroom – learning in terms of relationship and interaction management.

We worked with two types of episodes: excerpts of video-recorded classroom interaction where the video and transcript data are available for later analysis and discussion, and those identified by teachers and constructed after the lesson. The former are particularly rich in details which the teacher may not be aware of at the time, but which become clear in the analysis (Woods 1996; Borg 1998). The latter embody a strong teacher voice and perspective, and thus integrate teacher cognitions and principles as well as actual classroom behaviour (Tsui 2003).

Each episode involves a particular conjunction of elements; it is non-recurring data shaped by and fitted to the moment. The episodes were not classified and counted. Each one was regarded as unique with the potential to promote reflection, exploration and learning, such that teachers can gain novel insights into their own professional practice, and draw on these to enrich their learning and the development of their teaching. There is no analytical resolution which determines the meaning of an episode once and for all. This open characterization of episode was an early challenge in the project: teachers wanted a more specific definition, as the questions below which arose in a recorded workshop illustrate.

- So is an episode a teacher’s question?

- Or a question from a student?

- Perhaps it’s a light bulb moment for a student?
I suppose it could be any thought-provoking incident?

Is it just teaching naturally?

This discussion was valuable in communicating to teachers that what the focus of the project was capture and analysis of what ‘normally’ happens in their classrooms. Such normal practices reveal the complexity of teacher decision-making and their skills in interaction management. Analysis reveals the flexibility and diversity of teachers’ practices: they can do different kinds of teaching, as they respond to the range of factors which shape classroom and programme practice.

5. Discussion

This was a wide-ranging complex programme and research study, and different aspects of it have been reported in other papers (Davis et al 2009; Kiely & Davis 2010; Kiely et al 2010). In this paper I want to focus the discussion on three particular issues which are likely to be relevant to the development of professional development programmes in other contexts. These are i) the need to recognise the expertise and skills of teachers, and build on these in proposed learning; ii) the complexity of teacher analysis in interaction; and iii) the importance of a commitment to ongoing change in the development of teaching skills and curriculum effectiveness.

5.1 Recognising the teachers’ skills
As set out above, a key feature of professional development for teachers in the past has been a deficit focus: desired practices were not happening because teachers did not know, and did not have the skills to implement them. We decided to work with the axiom: *Teacher knows best*. That means we started with actual practice, and if there was a context for changing the teacher’s practice, it came from the teacher’s analysis. Within this approach we found practice was complex, reasoned, and shaped by a number of factors. In many discussions teachers drew on the knowledge of the students, or recent occurrences in the classroom. In the episode below, the former was a key factor.

<table>
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<th>Turn No.</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>S (to another student)</td>
<td>… I ask a friend if it’s worth to see …</td>
<td>Student use an incorrect verb form (worth to see) which the teacher judges appropriate to correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>… worth seeing</td>
<td>Teacher provides correct form, assuming the student will recognise the focus of the correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>S (to T)</td>
<td>If it’s worth seeing</td>
<td>Student uses correct form, showing she has understood the teacher’s intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Teacher confirms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5        | S       | [slight hesitation] not ‘worth to see’? | Student checks again on the acceptability of earlier form, illustrating that she is working with the particular distinction that is the
The episode took place as the teacher was circulating while the students did a pairwork writing task. Embedded in this eight second interaction are three different decisions by the teacher. First, he intervenes to correct, largely because he judges such a correction as useful for that student. Second, he decides not to explain or justify the correction, judging that this was unnecessary for that particular student. Third, when the student asked for confirmation that what she thought was acceptable - ‘worth to see’ – was not, he simply confirmed this analysis.

There are different methodological positions a teacher might take here: he could share the wealth (Bailey 1996) and make this particular language point available to others by developing a wider discussion – either with the whole class or with the pair working on
this. Such a response would also be supported by student autonomy considerations: a learning opportunity raised by a student might well be considered one to extend and develop. An alternative response is one with a Focus on Form (FonF) framework: here the teacher corrects, but with such focus and succinctness that the communicative flow of the activity is not interrupted (Ellis 2001; 2006). The resolution here – a choice between two credible responses in terms of classroom interaction theory – is therefore down to the teacher’s judgement. In this case the teacher took the course of action he did because he wanted to correct this particular usage, and to avoid disrupting the students’ discussion. He was aware that the confirmation check by the student clarified for him that she realized what she had thought was correct was in fact incorrect, and that she understood fully how the structure worked. What we see here is a teacher’s knowledge in different domains coming together to inform practice: he understood i) the language structure issues – two verb form options (*to see* and *seeing*) determined by the particular lexical item which was the head word of the phrase (*worth*); ii) the particular students involved and their learning needs and classroom strategies; and ii) the ways pairwork activities such as this are managed. This knowledge is situated, in the sense that it is not visible or evident other than in an actual classroom context. Making it visible, as in this professional development context benefits the teacher and teacher learning, by recognizing the teacher’s contribution to classroom interaction and learning, by linking the practices evidenced here with classroom strategies in the research literature, and by sharing this analysis of the episode in the social context of the CPD programme.

5.2 Teacher analysis in teaching and of teaching

A second focus of the discussion in this paper is the capacity of experienced teachers to undertake complex analysis as part of their teaching, and the value of exploring further what is involved in this analysis. Many of the episodes had such analysis embedded in
them. This became apparent in the video-recorded episodes through the discussion between the teacher and CPD leader and in workshops, and in the teacher constructed episodes, through the rationale the teacher provided for selecting this episode. Like for like is one such episode, reported by a teacher as an episode which occurred in a lesson which she wanted to explore.

Slightly later on during the same vocabulary activity while we were all checking as a class one of the students wanted to return to a word, which we’d checked 2 answers before. The word was ‘assessment’. This student had a thesaurus on her desk, which she had borrowed from the library and I had noticed earlier she had copied down the title and ISBN number, I presume because she intended to buy a copy for herself. She was unsure of the meaning of ‘assessment’ and asked if it meant ‘determination’ – I had to think for a bit and then replied that no it didn’t in the noun form but as a verb yes it could mean the same. (I remembered that the week before we had been reading a survey report and the model sentence introducing the purpose of the report used the verb ‘assess’ - the purpose of the survey was to assess the levels of student satisfaction). She wasn’t happy with this explanation and called me over to her desk and showed me the entry in the thesaurus, which indeed had ‘determination’ as a noun under the entry of synonyms for ‘assessment’. I then tried to explain that although it was listed as a synonym, use of synonyms all depended on context and you couldn’t just substitute one word for another. What I actually said was that you cannot use the words ‘like for like’ using my hands to demonstrate this expression. The student sitting next to this girl, just the week before, had asked what expression he could use in a particular situation. The expression that I offered him was ‘like for like’, so as I used the expression in my explanation of the use of synonyms I turned to him as I was speaking to check he remembered the phrase – he smiled and acknowledged that yes he had remembered.
Episode: Like for like

This episode was reported by the teacher as a written narrative a few hours after it occurred. Initially it was analysed by the teacher and one of the CPD leaders by email, and later in a workshop with other teacher participants.

The teacher identified two focal points in this episode: the two students and how she related constructively to them. The particular issue with the student with the Thesaurus had two elements. First, the teacher had to deal with her questions which were not going with the direction and pace of the lesson: the particular questions raised by the student (about the word *assessment*) were not helpful either for the student asking them, or for the class as a whole. Second, the point of reference for this student was the Thesaurus – a word listing reference book useful to native speakers as an aide-memoire when selecting words in a writing context. The teacher felt that this reference book and its lists of synonyms was not useful to language learners, but was hesitant to make this part of her response to the student. This response was socially conditioned: the teacher wanted to support any student initiative, even though the direction of the initiative in this instance was not judged useful. She thus did not want to discourage the student, and attempted to provide a fair answer to her question about the word *assessment*. The second focal point of the episode is the second student for whom the focus of a query in an earlier lesson was recycled. The particular type of recycling – same word and meaning but in a new context reflects the kind of vocabulary teaching strategy considered particularly helpful for learning (Schmitt 2008). In the social frame, the teacher works to keep both students engaged, to show them that she is mindful of their learning situation. In a more pedagogical frame, another set of skills can be observed here: the teacher is sustaining a high level of cognitive activity:
- Analysing tendencies in the behaviour of specific students;
- Making judgements on the abstract aspects of semantic meaning;
- Counseling a student on learning strategies;
- Obscuring her negative feelings about a student’s questions in order to maintain an appropriate social perspective; and
- Remembering specific instances from previous lessons, and linking them to the current discussion.

The cognitive, analytic activity here reflects a key teacher contribution to the curriculum: the co-construction with students of an essentially social space, where opportunities for learning opportunities are fostered and actively led by the teacher.

The analysis of these two episodes illustrates the commendable qualities of the practice of experienced teachers. These are brief episodes, representing miniscule proportions of classroom time within these programmes as a whole. What, one might ask, is the significance of these glimpses of good, even excellent practice, captured within the context of a CPD programme for teachers? The answer to this question of significance is complex – and is the focus of the next section.

5.3 Ongoing change

As stated in the opening section of this paper the conventional approach to teacher learning within organised programmes for teacher development, has been to identify deficits in terms of teacher knowledge and skills, and provide input and activities to address these. This has led to transmissive and investigation-based programmes and initiatives in what I
describe as first and second generation teacher development approaches. These have been defined by two features which in many ways extend the deficit theme: limited confidence on the part of teachers in such programmes – they find such programme deficient in terms of addressing needs, and second, limited effectiveness in terms of achieving the planned curricular changes which motivated such programmes in the first place – deficits in terms of achieving wider policy goals.

In addition to the deficit hypothesis here, there is also an assumption that teachers do not change their practice without external prompting, that is, initiatives like CPD programmes. There are two themes in the literature which shed light on this issue. First, a range of accounts of the socio-historical roots of classroom practice suggest that teaching involves a set of practices which are developed in a given context and which have evolved to fit the philosophical and social construction of curriculum there (Fullan 1991, Markee 1993; Holliday 1996; Rampton 1999). Thus groups of teachers form communities of practice (Wenger 1998) and participate in established routines, valid in terms of stakeholder consensus and the collective investment to sustain them. Capacity for change in a particular direction, or to incorporate new resources may seem limited, and contexts characterised by resistance and inertia. This view reflects teacher practice as fixed and unchanging. However, within such established cultures and communicate of practice, change is not only possible: it is an inevitable and constant characteristic of learning at the level of individual teachers and the micro routines which make up their teaching. This second theme is one of teachers changing over time, such that experienced teachers work differently from novice teachers (Freeman & Johnson 1998; Farrell 2005), and teachers respond to new situations by developing their repertoire of activities, skills and resources (Woods 1996). Leung (2009) identifies such individual change as a facet of teacher professionalism: teachers who are effective, change their practice not only to incorporate new resources and institutional policies, but also to accommodate the social and ethical requirements which arise in classrooms.
The two episodes and the analysis of them in a professional development context illustrate how these apparently conflicting themes of stable practice and constant change can come together. The stability comes from the teachers’ knowledge of language and learning processes established through experience, and through a community-based consensus on how classrooms operate. The teacher in *Worth seeing* identifies a particularly appropriate context for correction as he monitors a pairwork activity, and manages an intervention with minimal disruption, which connects to that particular learner’s readiness to learn. The teacher in *Like for like* similarly displays understanding of the thinking of two different students. The response to the query based on the thesaurus list is engaged, respectful and polite, despite the teacher’s reservation about the use of this particular strategy. It is combined with advice on the nature of vocabulary items and the strategies for learning them. This results in a serendipitous link to a classroom conversation in a previous lesson with another student, the recognition of which was marked by a smile. For both teachers, these classroom routines reflect both stable practice and ongoing learning from such practice. As they have become more skilled in the classroom, their pedagogy has changed in numerous small ways, all designed for more effective, engaged classrooms, all anchored in sound pedagogic principles and current theoretical rationales, and all evidenced through specific instances of classroom practice rather than abstract methodological principles.

The recognition of this constant changing of personal professional practice can make a key contribution to ongoing learning and development. The focus is not primarily on change, but on gaining insights to routine practice. Those insights, led by the teachers themselves, but scaffolded by the organised professional development process, constitute a further rationale for change. This rationale is not based on an analysis of deficits, and not based on recommendations from an external source to do things differently in some policy-led way. Rather, it focuses on continuing in the same direction with personal goals of reflecting,
understanding, and personally engaging with the analysis afforded by these processes. Third generation teacher development initiatives need to conceptualise change in this way, and support it not by a focus on deficits, by a recognition of the complexity and skill in what teachers already do. The voices of the teachers who participated in InSITE illustrate the ways such a celebratory approach can be effective in achieving the goals of teacher development initiatives. Recognition of good practice may sow the seeds of even better practice:

I believe this project has raised the possibility of a more valid approach to professional development, because while I admit it is necessary to gain some primary data (in this case in the form of the CLE) so that we can reflect and learn from our common experiences, I believe the really useful part of this project came from the recognition that teaching is not just about lesson plans and schemes of work, but is more about the way students and teachers interact and the skills teachers develop to make this relationship work.

Teacher 2009

I’ve been brought back towards why I’m doing what I do and also perhaps change it to be to be a bit more effective, to be sort of more observant about what I actually do rather than just doing it automatically.

Teacher 2008

6. Pedagogical Implications

The principles of third generation teacher development approaches, as developed from the findings of the InSITE study, have implications for the focus and organisation of activities to support the professional development of experienced teachers. First, as discussed in
Section 5.3, teachers’ practice should be viewed as complex, situated and constantly changing. Activities involving teachers should explore what these features look like in classrooms, that is, how teacher deal with different factors in lessons, and how their responses vary from classroom to classroom, from lesson to lesson. Recognition that teachers work in this way can establish an open, engaging learning environment. Second, it is important to focus on actual practice, whether a recorded and transcribed segment of classroom interaction, or an episode constructed by the teacher. This constitutes a focus on evidence, on what happens rather than on what should happen. Third, the role of the teachers in this process, should be active analysts, rather than passive learners, or recipients of knowledge from outside the context. Their task should be to explain why episodes unfold in the way they do, consider how they constitute opportunities for learning, and explore the validity of alternative courses of action.

There is a role for theory within this approach. The knowledge and techniques in the ELT literature developed over recent decades are an important resource for all teacher development programmes. They are not, however, to be transmitted for application to solve existing problems in the manner which characterised first generation teacher development approaches. Or as frameworks for teachers to investigate and transform their own practice as implicit in second generation approaches. Rather, the accumulated wisdom of the ELT sector is a resource to be drawn on by teachers to assist explanation of practices and phenomena within episodes. This strategy has a specific mediation role for leaders of teacher development initiatives: they can link the analyses of teachers to findings and explanations in the literature. This can be achieved through readings, selected and possibly summarised and adapted as set out in Kiely et al (2010).

7. Conclusion
There is no shortage of analyses and principles of teaching and teacher learning which align with the perspectives set out in this paper. From the writings of Dewey, Schon, Kemmis and McTaggart, Allwright and Kumaravadivelu over many decades, we have accounts of how professional activities such as teaching work and can be developed. The key principles are engagement, creativity and autonomy. These are the values of teachers who are curious about, committed to, and proud of the myriad decisions and actions which characterise their classrooms. What we have fewer of is documented accounts of how these principles translate into programmes for teacher development, and the ways they are successful in getting teachers to identify what they do well, and continue on the track of change which got them to that stage. Such programmes are the way to a third generation of professional development initiatives for teachers, where they are the analysts and architects of their own learning, and the development of their programmes and curricula.
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University Press.


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Early Reading Habits and their Impact on the Reading Literacy of Qatari Undergraduate Students

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Abstract
This article discusses a study on the roles of family involvement and school influence in the formation of reading habits of Qatari secondary education students. Information for the study was gathered from surveys of Qatari high school graduates entering North American colleges in Doha, Qatar. The data showed links between reading extensively and confidence in reading, between being read to and forming the habit of free voluntary reading, and between parental recreational reading and that of their children. Based on their findings, the authors propose practical solutions for educators and education policy makers that would improve the reading literacy of Qataris and contribute to building a knowledge-based economy in their country.

*Keywords: Literacy, reading habits, fluent reading*
Introduction

Literacy is fundamental for the construction of a knowledge-based society that strives for economic development and social harmony. The practice of reading and writing enables students to learn about themselves, their local community, and the world; as stated by Koda (2005), reading is also the principal method of acquiring knowledge and expanding one’s academic context. At the same time, reading is a complex process and reading habits take time to develop. Literature confirms a lack of reading culture or habitual reading in the Gulf Arab society due to oral traditions (Shannon, 2003; Synovate Market Research Agency, 2007). Even though literacy rates have increased dramatically, a survey conducted by Synovate Market Research Agency in 2007 reports that the typical ages at which Arabs stop reading or read less is 19-25 years. Researchers frequently cite diglossia and late exposure to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as some of the reasons why Arab children find it difficult to develop reading competence (Ayari, 1996; Fender, 2008); in addition, lack of critical reading skills and little support for extensive reading at home and at school seem to play an equally important role.

The first important obstacle to developing strong reading comprehension skills in Arab students is linguistic in nature. According to Yorkey (1974), Classical Arabic can be divided into three dialectal forms. The first one is the language of classical Arabic, which Arab children grow up learning in schools or mosques. This form of Arabic, the language of classical Arabic literature, has remained unchanged for more than 1,500 years since the time of the prophet Muhammad and is considered the sacred language of the Holy Koran. Known for its exceptional richness of vocabulary and complex syntactic structure, it is used only on very formal occasions such as public speeches and formal addresses. As Yorkey (1974) put it, “An Arab learning this language is roughly in the same position as an American learning to speak, read, and write Chaucer’s Middle English, or at least the Early Modern English of the King James Bible” (p. 3). The second form of Arabic is Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). It represents a modified form of Classical Arabic, has a less grammatically complex structure, and is different from the
colloquial regional varieties of Classical Arabic and their country-specific dialectal variations. Because MSA is the language found in publications such as books and newspapers and used in media programs, Arab children require instruction in reading and writing it. The third form is the regional dialect of Arabic, which is the common language of everyday use. It is mainly spoken but never taught, written or read. Thus, while Arab children grow up speaking their local or national dialect of Arabic, any L1 text they encounter is written either in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or Classical Arabic. Consequently, when Arab children are read to in Arabic and when they themselves start learning to read in school, their experience is not different from that of anyone trying to read in a second language (Ayari, 1996; Fender, 2008).

Secondly, coming from an oral culture, Arab children do not read enough to develop strong literacy skills. As emphasized by experts in the field, the keys to building reading comprehension are exposure, practice, frequency of repetitions, and automaticity; while explicit instruction is helpful, text structure knowledge, indispensable for reading fluency, is an outgrowth of extensive reading experience (Grabe, 2009; Koda, 2005). Acknowledging a strong link between extensive reading and college readiness, the present study aims to explore the role of parental involvement and school instruction in building confident, strategic and fluent Qatari readers who can become successful students.

Literature Review

There is extensive research on the positive role that the home environment plays in forming long-lasting reading habits and positive attitudes towards reading. According to Bus, van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini (1995), the home environment, defined as the frequency of joint book reading, had a .59 positive effect on child literacy and language skills, indicating a high medium effect size. In addition, studies found that all children, regardless of socio-economic status, developed academic competencies thanks to the
The acquisition of language and literacy abilities during experiences of parent-child book reading in an emotionally stable family environment (Griffin & Morrison, 1997; McMullen & Darling, 1996).

The effects of parental reading socialization and early school engagement on the academic achievement of children were confirmed by Beals & De Temple (1993), Bennett et al. (2002) as well as more recently by Kloosterman et al. (2011) and Kamhieh et al. (2011). Kamhieh’s (2011) *Becoming readers: Our stories* is of interest in this context since it reports the results of a qualitative study of six female Emirati university students’ leisure reading habits. The study participants wrote their stories of how they became readers, chronicling their earliest memories of books and reading. Among the most significant factors that emerged from their reports was parental encouragement (especially of fathers) at an early age, followed by the influence of teachers who promoted reading.

An extensive search for sources on the reading habits and attitudes of college bound Qatari students yielded very few results. According to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (2006), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) data examined early literacy experiences and revealed interesting facts about students in Qatari elementary schools. The first question the study asked was if parents or anyone else in the home engaged in reading-related activities with the children before they started elementary school. The definition of reading related activities included reading books, telling stories, singing songs, playing with alphabet toys, playing word games, and reading aloud signs and labels. On the three-level (high, medium, and low) index of Early Home Literacy Activities (EHLA) that assessed 45 countries and regions, Qatari students averaged 36 % with a 372 average reading achievement in the high EHLA, 45 % with a 357 average reading achievement in the medium EHLA, and 18 % with a 340 average reading achievement in the low EHLA. The international average was 55 % and 515 for high EHLA, 33 % and 494 for medium EHLA, and 13 % and 475 for low EHLA.
The second question that PIRLS asked was what literacy resources students had in their homes. To quote, “PIRLS developed an index of Home Educational Resources (HER) based on parents’ and students’ reports of the number of books, the number of children’s books, and the presence of four educational aids (computer, study desk for own use, books of their own, and access to a daily newspaper) in the home and on parents’ education” (p.110). A high level was defined as more than 100 books in the home, more than 25 children’s books, at least three of four educational aids, and at least one parent who graduated from university. On the other hand, a low level indicated 25 or fewer books in the home, 25 or fewer children’s books, no more than two educational aids, and parents that did not complete secondary education. Medium level included all other combinations of responses.

The average across countries yielded 11 % of students and 563 average reading achievement at the high level of the index, 80 % and 503 average achievement at the medium level, and 9 % along with 426 achievement at the low level. Qatari students were at 7 % and 402 average reading achievement at high HER, 85 % and 363 achievement at medium HER, and 8 % with 321 average reading achievement at low HER. It is important to note that the Qatar data were available for 50-69% of the students.

According to PIRLS, countries with relatively high proportions of students from well-resourced homes scored 20% or more at the high level of the index. Therefore, at 7% Qatar had an average achievement below the international scale average and significantly below the high-scoring countries like Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Scotland, and the Netherlands. Furthermore, the PIRLS results indicated that more than 25% of students in Qatar were from homes with no more than 10 children’s books.

Finally, another PIRLS important question relevant to the present study measured trends in the amount of time parents reported reading for themselves at home. Self-reading included books, magazines, newspapers, and work materials. PIRLS used an index of Parents’ Attitudes Toward Reading that yielded a score of 21% of Qatari
students whose parents read more than five hours a week with an average reading achievement of 376 compared to an international average of 37% and 516 achievement. The index also resulted in 43% Qatari students whose parents reported reading one to five hours a week with a 364 average achievement compared to 43% and 502 internationally. The last category on the index showed the lowest levels of parental reading in Qatar, where 36% of students had parents reading for less than one hour per week with a 338 average achievement, compared to an international average of 20% and 477 average achievement.

Objectives

To expand on the information gleaned from the PIRLS 2006 study and provide a more recent picture of the development of literacy in Qatar, the present study aimed at gathering and analyzing information about the early reading habits of Qatari undergraduate students and their attitudes toward reading. Members of this group represent the segment of the population that is perhaps best prepared academically and invested in achieving high professional goals. Consequently, it was felt important to investigate their attitudes to reading and the extent to which they were influenced by the home and school environments.

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What was the role of family interaction and involvement in building students’ reading habits and forming their perceptions of the value of extensive reading?
- To what extent were strategic and extensive reading encouraged in pre-college education?

Methodology
A total of 72 Qatari university-level students (30 male, 42 female) participated in the study. They ranged in age from 18 to 24 and attended tertiary level schools in Qatar such as Weill Cornell Medical College, Virginia Commonwealth University, College of the North Atlantic, and Qatar Foundation’s Academic Bridge Program. The participants were enrolled in a variety of degree programs such as medicine, health sciences, information technology, business studies, engineering technology, design studies, and pre-university academic preparation courses (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weill Cornell Medical College</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia Commonwealth University</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of the North Atlantic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Bridge Program</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>72</strong></td>
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Table 1 Main study participants (N = 72)

A questionnaire was developed to collect information on participants’ reading habits and attitudes during childhood, the role of parents and schools in encouraging reading, students’ current reading habits, development of reading strategies before and after secondary school, and biographical data. Questions were rated on a five-point scale ranging from ‘never’, ‘rarely’, ‘sometimes’, to ‘often’ and ‘always’.
Data was collected in the spring and fall semesters of 2011. After obtaining the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the researchers asked faculty in the participating institutions to distribute the survey. Students had the option to complete a paper or online questionnaire; a consent form was provided to assure them of confidentiality and their right not to participate. A protocol of instrument was designed to ensure procedures were standard among the four institutions in data collection.

Results

In answer to the survey question, “When you were a child, did anyone tell you stories?”, 29% chose the answer “Always”, 25% chose the answer “Often” and only 3% chose the answer “Never.” However, in answer to the question, “When you were a child, did anyone read you stories?”, 17% of respondents chose the answer “Always”, 21% “Often” and 24% chose “Never.” Table 2 shows the difference in responses to the two questions.
Table 2  Comparison between telling and reading stories to Qatari students

The choice of texts by parents was not surprising, with 82% of the respondents being read children’s books and 13% being exposed to religious books. Furthermore, 57% of the respondents reported they often or always enjoyed the activity of reading. As to the language in which the reading took place, 50% of the respondents reported being read to in Arabic, 7% in English, 18% in English and Arabic, and 4% in other languages (Urdu, Farsi, and Pashtu); 20% of respondents did not answer this question.

Asked if they saw their parents engage in voluntary reading, 52% of the respondents reported that they had never, rarely or only sometimes seen their parents read for pleasure (see Table 3).
Did you see your parents read for pleasure?

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<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<td>Always</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14%</td>
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Table 3  Participants’ responses to the question of parental free voluntary reading

With regard to the second research question, it was established that the respondents received more encouragement to read extensively from their families than from their schools. Only 41% reported that reading for pleasure was often or always encouraged at school versus 59% who stated it was never, rarely, or sometimes encouraged. At the same time, 54% of the participants said that reading for pleasure was often or always encouraged at home, and only 45% reported that their parents never or rarely encouraged it (see Table 4).
Table 4  Comparison of home and school in encouraging free voluntary reading

In response to the question whether they read narrative texts as homework, 72% of the study participants stated they never, rarely, or sometimes were asked to do so. Only 28% responded they were often or always assigned to read such texts (see Table 5).
Did you have to read fiction as homework assignment?

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<tr>
<td><strong>Never</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rarely</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sometimes</strong></td>
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<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Often</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Always</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
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Table 5  Reading fiction as homework assignment

With reference to reading strategies, fewer respondents than expected were taught how to read actively and analytically. In response to the survey question whether they were taught reading strategies before enrolling in their first year of college, 43% of respondents chose the answer “Yes”, 47% said “No”, and 10% did not know what reading strategies meant. Asked if they were learning reading strategies in college, 53% said “Yes” and 22% said “No”. When the participants in the study were also asked how often they read books of their choice for pleasure, 46% reported reading often or always,
but 54% responded that they never, rarely, or sometimes engaged in free voluntary reading.

Not surprisingly, the respondents considered themselves more confident readers in Arabic than in English. In answer to the survey question “Do you consider yourself a confident reader in English?”, 68% answered in the affirmative and 32% chose the answer “No”. For Arabic, the percentages were 79% and 21% respectively.

It is encouraging that as many as 93% of respondents considered pleasure reading important and saw its benefits in increasing knowledge about the world beyond academic fields, developing vocabulary, exercising their brains and imagination, and escaping from everyday stress. A closer look at the data revealed a clear link between being read to, home encouragement to read and becoming a confident reader. As shown in Table 6, the respondents whose parents promoted reading became more confident readers; at the same time, the number of respondents evaluating their reading skills as strong dropped dramatically among those who were never or rarely asked to read or read to.
Table 6 Being read to, home encouragement to read, and becoming a confident reader

Similarly, there was also a noticeable link between being read to and forming the habit of reading for pleasure, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Being read to and the formation of reading habits

Discussion

The study aimed to explore the role of parental involvement in building Qatari students’ reading habits and to establish if strategic and extensive reading were encouraged in their pre-college education. The findings confirmed the researchers’ initial
hypothesis as well as exposed unexpected patterns related to the respondents’ educational experience.

Based on the literature review and anecdotal evidence, it was hypothesized that Qatari children would be told rather than read stories. The survey confirmed parental preference for oral narrative; however, it also indicated that the number of respondents who were frequently told stories was relatively low. Furthermore, the percentage of children being read to was even lower. Since exposure to narrative, both oral and written, is very important in developing literacy skills, these findings point to a need for an awareness raising campaign among parents.

As expected, the study corroborated that Qatari parents reading extensively became role models for their children. At the same time, the levels of parental reading reported by the respondents were overall quite low. This observation, not unexpected in view of other studies, especially PIRLS, again emphasizes the importance of improving parental reading socialization in Qatar.

What came as a surprise to the researchers was the discovery that in the case of the respondents, reading extensively was encouraged more at home than at school. The results of the study suggest that many primary and secondary students do not read narrative texts, are not taught reading strategies, and are not supported in developing reading habits.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this pilot study is the fact that it surveyed only a small sample of the population and one that cannot be seen as representative of the Qatari community. The participants are college students accepted by prestigious colleges in Education City, Qatar; in order to form any conclusions about reading habits in the state of Qatar one would need to reach out to more families and more institutions. There are
many types of primary and secondary schools in Doha, and differences between their curricula and methods of teaching are enormous; since these differences were not fully accounted for in the study, it would be premature to try to generalize the findings or reach any definitive conclusions. Moreover, the focus on narrative, whether in print or on-line, excluded other types of reading that can contribute to reading fluency. Nevertheless, despite its limitations, the study not only reveals an interesting pattern, but also signals the need for immediate action in several areas.

Implications

Like everywhere else, children in Qatar need a print rich home environment and parental encouragement to develop literacy skills. As emphasized by Baker, Kanan and Al-Misnad (2008), the number of culturally enriching items found in the home and parental involvement in the school influence student motivation to achieve academically. According to the researchers, some Qatari parents are not sufficiently involved in their children’s education; this indirectly demotivates the children and impacts their academic achievement. One can see a similar type of correlation when it comes forming reading habits. Parents who create a print rich environment and who read extensively establish and foster their children’s appreciation for literacy. Thus, what seems to be needed is a two-prong approach: government sponsored programs for parents reinforcing the message that reading is important and needs to be supported as early as possible, and teacher training in the areas of strategic reading skills and building reading fluency.

It is also noteworthy that the participants in the study expressed desire for more interesting books to read. A public library system in Qatar, more bookstores, and events promoting children’s literature or “Read to me “ campaigns would help raise public awareness and facilitate book circulation. Creating reading incentive programs such as
mass distribution of e-readers for children and book clubs for parents would also encourage free voluntary reading. In schools the choice of reading materials should be guided by criteria such as relevance to students’ experience and ability to engage them intellectually and affectively.

Reading fluency is the foundation for learning in all subjects related to student success. As the PIRLS report and other studies show, Qatari students’ reading literacy levels are too low for the country’s ambitious vision for building a knowledge-based economy, hence the urgency of finding practical solutions.
References


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An Investigation of an Approach to Teaching Critical Reading to Native Arabic-Speaking Students

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to determine whether the approach to critical reading utilized by the researcher in classroom practice has a positive affective influence in the development of higher order reading skills displayed by students in class. The Higher Order Reading Skills (HORS) approach involves explicit discussion of the nature of critical reading and range of skills involved. Taxonomies such as individual skills are used to familiarize students with these skills and in order that reading is placed in the context of application of derived knowledge for a clear, identifiable purpose. That is, students identify a need to read. The methodology involved two groups: a test group that was exposed to the HORS approach, and a control group that was not. Reading
effectiveness was then compared based on performance results taken from two reading texts. Data analyzed indicates that this approach seems to be a significant positive affective factor in their reading, resulting in a higher level of successful measured comprehension performance by the test group over the control group. The confidence of building upon already established skills provides scaffolding upon which further development of critical reading skills can take place. The sample population is foreign language users at the freshman (year 1) level enrolled in a university engineering school in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This study examines their progress in the second-level of a communications course where the research was conducted. This English-medium course aims to produce well-rounded, autonomous life-long learners, along with specific language outcomes, who are able to use higher-order thinking and communication skills required by engineering professionals. Reading in general and the development of what are commonly called Higher Order Reading Skills (HORS) continues to be a concern in the context of secondary and tertiary education (Alverman, 1987). Arabic-speaking students reading in a foreign language face a yet more complex set of difficulties (Shaw, 2006). The study is significant as this population need to be effective critical readers as they are involved in lengthy and complex primary research projects. Further, the institutional reading load is generally high. In this context, effective approaches to teaching critical reading are of obvious importance to the learners’ academic success.

**Keywords:** reading, approach, HORS reading strategies, critical thinking skills, EFL, engineering, Arabic

**Background**

The Petroleum Institute (P.I.) in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), is an English-medium university for engineering, applied science and research for students at the undergraduate level, with Emirati males and females each based on their own campus.

The fact that English is the medium of instruction as well as the operating language of the
oil and gas industry in this region implies a range of issues for them. For example, demands on their language skills and proficiency are not limited strictly to academic criteria, but require them to function as sophisticated foreign language users in a business environment.

The students in this study are involved in a two-level Communications programme. In the second level of the two-level programme in which the study is carried out, students develop communication skills through a semester-long, two–stage team primary research project culminating in an extensive written report and a forty-five minute multimedia presentation.

The first stage of the project is a written recommendation report. In the early stages, the students conduct a literature review on the related content to broaden their understanding of the topic area and frame their research. The reading skills involved in this process exceed a level of basic comprehension and require the reader to have reasonable confidence in, and mastery of, a range of critical reading skills. The kind of texts used in this study would be compatible with an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Level Seven (IELTS, 2011).

This students population by and large, do not come from a culture of reading either in the home or at the high school level and while this is an increasing problem in many places (AIR, 2006) it takes on particular significance in the GCC (Gulf Countries Cooperation Council) region where emphasis has traditionally been placed on a culture of oral communication (Shannon, 2003).

Literature Review
Many assumptions are made about students entering tertiary education, one being that they are ready to participate in an academic environment and academic discourse. Agreement as to what constitutes this discourse is sometimes not easily found. Certain practices however, do help to frame what academic discourse does mean. Flower (1989) suggests two ideas that have a direct bearing on the current study: (1) integrating information from sources with one’s own knowledge and (2) interpreting one’s reading for a purpose. In order to do this, readers must be able to read critically which at least involves knowing what a text says, what a text does, what a text means and what it can be applied to/utilized for. In turn, this involves (among other things) being able to distinguish between fact and opinion, recognize assumptions, inferences and implications resulting in enhanced clarity and comprehension and an ability in a research context to evaluate the usefulness of the text for an explicit reader purpose. Undoubtedly, many students enter college without such skills. (Baldi and Finney, 2006) This situation is particularly relevant in the UAE where the author has observed that students entering tertiary institutes from secondary education remain ineffectively prepared.

Further, while many studies have focused specifically on native English speaker students, reading in a foreign language presents a yet more complex set of difficulties (Bensoussan, 1990; Taguchi and Gorsuch, 2002). Boz, (2005) describes the difficulties faced by students when they enter their chosen disciplines after leaving the sheltered environment of their English for Academic Purposes classes and points out that strategies which were effective in that background may not be so in a more rigorous academic environment. While it is not the purpose of the current study to focus on the myriad issues of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading strategies, the added difficulties must at least inform the overall context of the study. This question is partly addressed in the discussion section of the paper.

One further factor in the lack of development of critical reading skills may be related to the issue that these skills are not widely taught and in some environments simply not effectively taught (Yao 2006; Orndorff, 1987). There is, however, an increasing body of
research describing approaches to developing these skills. Wilson et al, (2004) describe an approach used in a Bachelor in Education programme at the University of Canberra, commenting on favourable student responses to various elements of support. As that research demonstrates, the area of critical reading and issues of student performance generate concern and investigative interest for academic interest and English Language Teaching (ELT) study. What is not so widely researched is the effectiveness of different teaching approaches, apart from studies such as Nasr and Pritchard (2004) which looked at a set of different skills from those in the current study.

The focus of this work is to determine whether the HORS approach to critical reading developed and utilized by the researcher in classroom practice is a positive affective factor in the development of higher order reading skills displayed by students in the class, by looking at their ability to identify and comment on particular functional/conceptual elements of text; specifically fact and opinion and implication (Luke, 2000). As stated, the students involved in this study need to be effective critical readers as they are involved in lengthy and complex primary research projects. They therefore have clear instrumental objectives (Linderholm and van der Broek, 2002). As readers they need to make judgments about the relevance and usefulness of source material for their research and therefore require reasonable development of the types of skills mentioned above. Specifically, differentiating between fact and opinion, stating the implications of text-derived information are frequently required and high priority skills in this context and were therefore chosen as the ‘performance’ focus for this study.

Many influences impact on a reader’s ability to extract meaning from a text, and a teacher’s approach to the development of reading and to the use of the 8 stages of the HORS approach could be an obviously significant affective factor. This study utilizes a top-down and bottom-up processing of the kind identified as being of particular value to Arabic speakers (O’Sullivan, 2004; Marsden, 2002). This process is present throughout, and explicit in, stages 1, 4 and 6. Pritchard and Nasr (2004) emphasize the particular
importance of vocabulary in the context of nominal compounds for Arab students. In the HORS approach the noun and its representation at phrase and clause level is given particular focus as a driver of text meaning (Berwick, 2001) which also results in relevant vocabulary development (see F student comments, p. 20).

The HORS approach begins with accessing prior knowledge of reading, and a discussion of learners’ reading experience (which for most of the P.I. students had been rather negative and largely based on memorization). In this process learners establish the myriad reasons why reading is important. This is particularly significant in the GCC context where some research (Shaw, 2006) indicates major issues with pre-tertiary education, language and reading and a particular concern about the limited amount of time spent reading generally in the Arab context (New Page Foundation, 2007; Abdelwahid, 2009). Given the circumstances, it was hoped that a HORS approach would stimulate an interest in reading. This proved to be the case (see student comments, p. 20-21)

The current study is an evaluation of the HORS approach and student perceptions as to whether, and in what ways, they felt it had impacted on the development of their reading skills (HORS). The focus of the study is therefore on the cognitive domain while agreeing with Yamashita, (2002) that the affective domain continues to receive less attention despite a growing body of research as to its importance. Affective factors would therefore be a suitable area for further study.

Teaching matrices and taxonomies

The teaching approach investigated in the study employs a series of matrices and taxonomies which capture some of the central concept-defining lexis which students need to be able to understand and apply in order to develop critical reading skills. One such example of concept-defining lexis is the difference between looking within a text and beyond it. In this way, in-text meaning is focused on, as well as higher order skills such
as evaluation and application of the content. The matrix and taxonomy are used in teaching reading strategies since these concepts familiar to students from their studies in science and engineering. Wherever possible, constructivist engagement in learning strategies is used to allow the learner to employ and build on existing schema and thus begin from a basis of some familiarity (Piaget and Garcia, 1991).

Frameworks such as process and system which are known to students from other areas of their studies, permit cognitive cross-referencing and bridge building, and reinforce the integrated nature of learning and transfer of skills. The eight stages outlined below are preparatory, front-loaded (and referred to throughout the course), and demonstrate a process in which students are encouraged to internalize and activate during other reading. As such, the stages may cover a number of learning periods as student assimilation of the knowledge influences the pace.

Class sessions are fifty minutes per day and the course is seventeen weeks long. Explicit reference is made to the HORS approach during further reading periods and learners are provided with a glossary that can be used in classroom discussion to focus on critical reading and thinking. The concepts captured by the lexis in the glossary are also encountered in generalized academic contexts and specific areas of science content. The purpose is to have students recognize that the set of reading skills they are developing is a useful and applicable in a range of contexts/subjects.

The HORS Approach.

The HORS approach mainly attempts to sensitize students to elements of critical reading related to reading purpose and make these explicit. It is therefore worked in tandem with reading students need to do for their research. The tests are given to see if the approach positively influences student performance.
Over the first six weeks of the course, the tutor works through the following stages with the learners. At this time they are gathering background material for their research report and at this point the reading load is at its highest and most intense. After three weeks, the first reading test is administered and the second is given after six weeks.

*Stage 1*

Discussion begins with exposing what students understand reading to be and its uses and applications. Areas of difficulty in understanding and factors which impede comprehension are identified by both the learners and the tutor. Prior reading experience is described and discussed, as is the importance of reading. Group work and feedback are the focus of this session.

*Stage 2*

At this stage, brainstorming on what different kinds of readers do, and how reading purpose can influence the approach to any given text, is the intended focus. This stage begins to address the question: “What is a critical reader?” The tutor focuses learners on reflection of previous reading needs and issues encountered while reading.

*Stage 3*

1. The necessary skills for critical reading are addressed here through group discussion and report feedback to peers. A personal reading skills and strategies skills audit with exemplification is generated to answer the question: “Am I a critical reader?” Current reading needs are specified in the context of the research report literature review that students conduct for their research reports.

*Stage 4*
These skills are then compared with the critical skills taxonomy. The tutor leads a vocabulary focus on unknown terms and concepts. Students are encouraged to see these as universal concepts which might appear in any academic context/subject through discussions on the meaning and usefulness of reading skills. For example, P.I. students often encounter problems selecting information relevant to their purpose and distinguishing between, essential and incidental evidence. (Appendix 1: Complete Skills Matrix).

Stage 5

At this stage, the application of taxonomy to knowledge matrix is demonstrated to encourage an understanding of ‘within text’ and ‘beyond text’ thinking. Students relate this convergence of taxonomy to matrices to their literature search. Learners look at what it is within a text that may encourage them to use it for a purpose beyond the text.

Stage 6

At Stage 6, students apply their understanding of Stage 5 to a reading text focusing on differences between ‘fact’ and ‘opinion’. Students self-select the difficulty of text according to the Stage 3 audit. This freedom of choice allows students to select a text within their range of abilities as texts have different levels of ‘scaffolding’. Students work through the text and report back to the group and tutor. This stage has a guided focus in which students are encouraged to explicitly apply their growing knowledge to the texts they are reading as research background (See Stage 5). Questions are also asked by the tutor to determine if the level of difficulty chosen reflects the respective student’s level of reading competence. Students in the course identify this choice as this is an ongoing problem when students select materials for research, particularly from databases.

Stage 7
In Stage Seven, there is a connection of the above concepts to current needs and context within the student research project, such as the literature review and discussion section of the report. This focus provides a purpose to the development of the skills they are using.

Stage 8

A substantial review of the previous stages is begun in Stage Eight. Further discussion focuses on and the ways in which students apply the skills approach, and deals with problems they encountered, modifications they made and their reflection the process. This review takes place in groups with facilitators and note-takers in each group. A report is given back to the class by the note-taker and leads students into discussion on the review.

The concepts captured by the lexis in the glossary are also encountered in generalized academic contexts and with specific application in a scientific context. Figure 1, Appendix 1, illustrates the matrix of these skills. Figure 1, below shows the knowledge matrix.

These matrices provide the basis for exemplification and in-class discussion.
Figure 1 Knowledge Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within text</th>
<th>Beyond text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize</td>
<td>Connect,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evaluate,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be influenced by,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Select</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prioritize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Specify use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>Contextualize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>use/purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Describe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>Exemplify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This knowledge matrix approach is worked with over a period of weeks, but always as a part of a range of reading activities directly related to the students’ research, in order to give it purpose and context (Van der Broek et al, 2001). The focus of the knowledge matrix (knowledge is not being used here as a synonym for content, but rather relates to concepts and language) is to stimulate discussion that understanding within a text leads to application beyond, it thereby reinforcing the idea of reading purpose. This focus can then be explicitly related to the content and purpose of the research report the students will later produce. For example, the concepts of selection and evaluation are linked (albeit not exclusively) to selection of sources (literature review); the notion of implication can be located within the context of the discussion section; description related to results and so on, since students also need to be able to read their own texts critically. The application of the learned skills to a clear academic purpose and task which the students need to complete, adds value to using the strategies in this approach as a pedagogical tool. These themes are returned to periodically during the preparation period and worked with explicitly by the tutor.

Participant/Student Profile

The sample is made up of thirty-seven Emirati males from government and private high schools currently in the freshman year at the PI. All achieved a 500+ score in the international TOEFL exam and successfully completed the first part of the two-part communication programme. The average age is 19. The two classes, test class and control class, have a similar GPA profile and the grade range from the previous semester fell within a similar curve.
The students are in two different classes on the same programme following the same syllabus.

Table 1 - grade breakdown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Grade A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While homogeneity between classes is unusual, these two groups display very similar academic and language proficiency.

Methodology and procedure

The researcher’s class was the test group and the control group was taught by another tutor. The test group was exposed to the approach described; the control group was not. As this is a causal comparative study and the groups are not less than fifteen, the sample size can be considered reasonable (Cohen et al, 2000). Further, involving more classes would have required training colleagues in delivery of the approach being used in the study. A longitudinal study would be able to do this.

A pre-test survey was given to the test group. This survey elicits evaluation of prior reading teaching and students score previous reading teaching effectiveness on a 5-point Likert scale. Respondents were further asked to define and state the purpose of critical reading. They were then asked to rate their understanding of key elements of critical
reading such as distinguishing between fact and opinion, recognizing what may be implied by the text, identifying points of view and recognizing assumptions. This was done in order to compare their self evaluation with respect to these elements, in a post-test survey.

The test group uses the HORS approach over a period of three weeks. Explicit reference is made to the purpose, concept and skills of critical reading. In the third week, the first test text is issued to both groups again in a normal 50-minute class session. Results from the classes were then compared. Further reading took place using the approach for the following three weeks and then the second test text was issued. Results were analyzed and collated.

A post-test survey was given to the test group. It was the same as the pre-test apart from asking respondents to evaluate the teaching of reading in the class (using the same Likert scale) and requesting qualitative data on if/how they feel their reading may have improved. Pre and post survey data were then compared. Ad hoc individual sessions were conducted with 10 of the test group (i.e., 10 out of the 18 participants) in which they related their experiences of reading after going through the eight stages. Specifically, the researcher wanted to determine if the students noticed any differences in their levels of confidence and understanding, and then determine if there was a correlation with the survey results. As a gate-keeping (control) procedure, a selection of responses from both classes was sent to the original five text reviewers and they were asked to comment on whether these were reasonable implications.

Materials for testing

Two test readings were given to assess if development of reading skills had taken place. These test readings were selected according to the following criteria.

- Length: text length (420 and 435 words respectively)
• Interest: Test texts were selected according to area of interest (Linderholm et al, 2002). One of the texts focused on literacy and reading both of which are relevant topics for these learners in this course. The second text focused on nuclear power, an energy source currently of great interest here.

• Level of difficulty: Level of difficulty can relate both to subject matter and vocabulary (Day and Bamford, 2002). Paul Nation has speculated (2001) that for academic texts a reader needs to understand about 98% of the running vocabulary for full comprehension. For purposes of clarity, while in class, students were permitted to ask questions about vocabulary as they would in any class. However, no such questions were asked during the test period, as the text selection had a high known vocabulary level.

Text preparation

Five teachers from a language/communications background were given two expository texts to read and identify text opportunities related to concept recognition. These two texts were to be used to focus test questions. Ten examples of distinguishing between fact and opinion were agreed upon, and five text opportunities lending themselves to implication. The researcher then reviewed these and selected the areas of commonality to provide the test focus. That is, these selected examples would be the text content students would be expected to identify and to understand.

Texts were introduced according to the researchers’ view of those examples which best met their learning needs and approached the identified cognitive levels. The fact and opinion text was given first as for this reason (i.e., the concept of implication extends beyond recognition into explanation and interpretation). It is important to note that for the concept of implication, it is difficult to be totally prescriptive since a range of implications may be possible derived from text content/evidence. For each implication, some notion of what is realistic had to be agreed upon, based on text evidence. Five
opportunities for implication to be derived were agreed by the text reviewers and which provided the focus for testing.

For example, in one of the texts, reference is made to oil being a limited-supply, non-renewable energy source.

Results

Triangulation combined information from quantitative and qualitative data gathering. Cross-group results were compared initially with a simple frequency count of successful answers. For the implications text, qualitative analysis of answers was applied with a focus on how realistic the implications were based on text evidence. Subjectivity here was minimized by giving a random selection of answers to a group of language and communications teachers and comparing their comments on the qualitative nature of the student responses. Responses from the surveys and interviews were then built into the overall analysis.

Reading tests

The results from the fact and opinion text displayed in Figure 1 are of immediate interest. The results for the test group show that seven of the respondents had 100% correct whereas none of the control group did. Results for nine correct answers were four and three respectively. Significant differences can be observed for scores of five and under where seven of the control group scored four or less while none of the test group fell into this bracket. The mean of six-ten correct answers in the test and control group was 3.6 and 1.6 respectively.

Fig 2 Test group: Control group:
Successful task-performance in the test group can immediately observed to be better, particularly when one looks at the groupings in the 4 and under range and the 10 bracket.

Figure 3 shows the numerical range of the number of text opportunities for implication as seen by the respondents. No respondents indicated that there were less than four opportunities.

None of the test group identified more than seven text opportunities, while seven of the control group did.
This included areas of text where no implication was suggested given the completeness of information in the text. The range of error here is therefore substantially less for the test group.

Next, the numbers in each group who selected all or some of the same five pre-selected opportunities within their range as selected by the teaching team were examined. The results are displayed in Fig 3.

**Fig 4 Agreement with teacher-selected text opportunities**
The same five text opportunities for implication were identified by three of the test group while none of the control group was able to do so. The same result is evident for four same-opportunity choices. The lower-end results are also interesting with seven of the control group having only one correct choice and two with zero, while the test group had two with one correct choice and no respondents with zero. The mean of three to five correct answers in the test and control group was 3.3 and 1.0 respectively.

However, in going beyond the simple numerical count, issues of accuracy need to be considered. Of the two respondents in the control group who identified five text opportunities (Figure 2) one identified two of the pre-selected opportunities and one identified none. Accuracy is also a factor in the quality of the implications derived from the text and this also needs to be compared. There were clear qualitative differences in many of the responses and this will be further addressed in the discussion section.

### Survey results

Comparison of pre and post-surveys conclusively show a more developed ability in the test group to define critical reading and state purposes for which it is used (these were the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test group</th>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>4</td>
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### Survey results

Comparison of pre and post-surveys conclusively show a more developed ability in the test group to define critical reading and state purposes for which it is used (these were the
only two questions). Descriptions were on the whole more detailed and thoughtful showing less superficiality than in the pre-survey. A thorough reading of the responses shows a clear (and sometimes impressive) qualitative improvement in terms of thinking and understanding.

Below is an anecdotal example of a typical learner response. The full data set of responses is represented in Appendix 1.

Student 1.

Pre –survey: The ability to read quickly and fully, understanding the content and analyzing it.

To read articles for research and study.

Post survey: The ability to read beyond the text to compare your own opinion with the writer’s opinion. To identify critical areas and important information in the text that you will use. To not just agree with what the writer says.

To produce more effective writing in the context of research and study.

All respondents indicated that their reading had improved. While this response is also high in the post-course survey given each semester; here it was unequivocal and unanimous. Students were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach to reading on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not effective and 5 being very effective. The results are displayed in figure five below.
Interview results

The focus here was on the idea of improvement, both from the perspective of the learner and the tutor. One question was asked as to whether the students felt their reading had improved or not, and if so, in what ways. Overall perception of improvement was specifically stated. Below are a typical set of responses.

**Student A** I improved at recognizing overgeneralizations and differentiating between facts and opinions. I also came to recognize implications in the texts which I didn’t know about before.

**Student B** Well my reading before was just reading the words of the text and trying to know the surface meaning, but now I know there is much more than meets the eye in the text, where a text is a way of communicating what the writer uses to deliver information that may not always be right and may be exaggerated and maybe not credible.

**Student C** I can identify things like facts and opinions, implications, relevance and overgeneralization.

**Student D** This semester more than ever I got to read a lot of interesting and fairly complex texts. This developed my reading in a way that I can read with more focus and understand what the writer is trying to convey and I can identify the writer’s opinion about the topic.
Student E I thought the training to read critically was very effective and it’s an important skill not only for the course, but also for life.

Student F I can read better now...in a way I can understand what the writer is really trying to say. I can differentiate between facts and opinions better than before and my vocabulary has increased from determining what new words mean to me…

Discussion

In summary, the results on text one are notable for the high-end and low-end grouping of effective responses. As indicated in the results section, the test group had a much higher level of success with the task. The fact that only three students in the control group fell into the 9/10 range on this text, while 11 of the test group did, is significant. This positive result is further reinforced through the individual interviews in which the test-group students indicated they did not have difficulty with the task. In discussion with the colleague teaching the control group, it was clear that completion time on average was also faster than in the control group. No data is available to the researcher on exact completion times, but the teacher stated that a number of the group had difficulty completing the task within the allocated time. This was not the case in the test group where all students finished comfortably within the fifty minutes given.

Analysis of results from test two shows that the number of choices at the 5 and 4 level and at the 1 to 0 level again indicate a significant difference in successful performance. Further, there are differences evident in the content and quality of implications. For example, in the control group there was a noticeable tendency to paraphrase, summarize and repeat information given in the text which seemed to indicate a lack of surety on behalf of the students as to the nature of implication. Such tendencies were not nearly so noticeable in the test group. These kinds of qualitative differences were evident throughout the responses, with the nature of the implications expressed by the test group
being rather more focused and going beyond the paraphrasing nature of a high number of responses from the control group.

There was an element of randomness in the approach to the task taken in the control group. Four respondents did not number the text as directed, five had no numerical order and two repeated more than the same number twice. Some respondents identified 8 and only wrote about three. One respondent who identified 8 wrote about 7. Two respondents identified 7 but only wrote about 2. One identified 7 and wrote about five. The respondent who identified 4 only wrote about two. One respondent wrote about six but with no reference to text location. This problem did not occur in the test group.

Given that the two groups had such a similar profile in the same programme, with the same syllabus, it is reasonable to assume that a major contributory factor to the success of the test group was that they had been exposed to an approach explicitly focusing on teaching critical reading. This was the only notable element of difference in classroom practice in the context of reading.

The post-test surveys indicated an observably enhanced understanding of critical reading evidenced by generally more sophisticated, comprehensive and detailed definitions, as well as a wider range of responses as to what these skills can be used for. A higher level of confidence and contentment is also indicated. It is reasonable to conclude that the approach used was an affective factor in the development of this understanding.

The student discussion indicated a similar development in thinking and understanding in which students can clearly describe what they are able to do as readers and make reference to past performance as readers to demonstrate qualitative difference. Use of time adverbials such as ‘now’, ‘before’, this semester’ are common in the responses. More importantly, the approach is described as ‘helpful’, ‘very effective’ and ‘especially effective’ and specific reference and exemplification is given to qualify these statements.
Conclusion

The choices educators make to reach learning objectives are based on choosing the most appropriate means taken from experience and knowledge. This autonomy of practice is one of the great freedoms of teaching and the notion of prescription is often (and perhaps rightly) seen as anathema. However, there is clearly value in looking at the effectiveness of different approaches used by others to inform our own behaviours and benefit learners.

One significant aspect of this approach of developing HORS through eight stages, given the oral traditions of the local culture, is the importance of speaking in the context of reading tasks and post-task discussions, and the ways in which reading is integrated with other language and communication skills. Moreover, since many of the students have a largely negative view of reading, they benefit from clear instrumental reasons for reading. In other words, reading leads to something real. The students come to understand that they cannot complete later professional tasks effectively if they cannot read effectively, and make a connection that reading is an antecedent. Since they are required to manage a research project, they are also able to see and value the task-dependent nature of reading in this context. Thus, the HORS approach places reading clearly in a dependency relationship with other skills and tasks. The students have a high level of interest in their research topics since they choose them and there is a strong personal engagement. They also understand that the need to read is important and will be a strong affective factor in their success.

Implication for further study

This short study has sought to give some basic analysis and data that go beyond the subjective in order to show that a particular approach to teaching the skills identified, has measurable value for the learner and can be demonstrated to be effective. Such studies
clearly have a role to play in stimulating discussion of pedagogy and methodology in a variety of contexts. The researcher intends to repeat the study longitudinally and with a larger number of reading tests administered. The second study would include more control and test groups and involve other colleagues working with the approach in the new test groups. Results across more sections could then be compared and a higher degree of reliability generated from the data.

This would enable other researchers to use the procedure followed here to look at other HORS (higher order reading skills) not specifically focused on as part of this study.

References


An Investigation of an Approach to Teaching


About the author

David F Dalton is a senior lecturer in Communications at the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi. He has eighteen years experience of teaching language and communications at universities in the UK, Spain, Mexico and the UAE. He also has extensive experience of curriculum design and educational management. His current work has two strands. One is teaching a range of practical, synthesized communications, project management and research skills to undergraduate students. The other is team-teaching on an engineering problem solving programme. All students will later work in the oil and gas industry as engineers, managers and administrators.

Appendix 1

Skills matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills matrix</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determining advantages and disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining the accuracy of presented information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

Student 2

Pre–survey: Critical reading is a way to read and understand.

Prepare for test and quizzes.

Post–survey: Critical reading is a skill that is applied to get answers to specific questions when you read.

Understand all the concepts the writer uses.

Developing research and getting points of view.

Student 3

Pre survey: Don’t know.
No information on purpose

*Post survey:* A way of reading to analyze the facts, writer’s point of view and hidden meaning of the topic.

Reading for research and report writing. To take information from sources effectively.

**Student 4**

*Pre survey:* It is to read something and understand it carefully.

It is used for understanding texts and to say what it is talking about.

*Post survey:* Critical reading is to understand every bit of the text and its meaning and also to understand the text from different perspectives.

I use it to understand any text I am going to use for a purpose.

**Student 5**

*Pre survey:* Critical reading is reading that gives a clear image about the ideas of the text….

To identify the quality of a text.

*Post survey:* The ability to analyze the words and concepts of a text in order to identify things like advantage and disadvantage, facts and opinions, reliable information and the quality of the text in general.

To communicate with the text in order to judge reliability, key ideas etc.

**Student 6**

*Pre survey:* To read an article and understand it.

To study, to understand the texts

*Post-survey:* Understanding what, how and why the text says what it say, to understand the purpose
To review sources, for study purpose.
Abstract

The article discusses the effects of consciousness raising on errors of Omani students in L2 question formation. A child effortlessly acquires the rules of the mother tongue (L1) with the help of an internal mechanism but foreign language learners fall back on their mother tongue when learning a new language (L2). EFL learners commit mistakes as the features of L2 are different from that of L1. Ellis (1994) and Schmidt (1990) believe that if EFL learners are taught grammar by raising their consciousness regarding the features of L2, it may facilitate learning. Consciousness raising is an attempt at directing the learner’s attention towards particular features of the language. By raising the consciousness of the students, they are able to perceive the targeted features of the language and form internal representatives of them. Next time when they
perceive the same features, it becomes the input and on subsequent noticing the features are internalized and acquired. This helps in minimizing errors. 25 students of Salalah College of Technology participated in this study. A pre test was administered to them to test their knowledge of L2 question formation. It was followed by a consciousness raising task. A week later an interpretation task was administered to test if students had noticed features they had been made conscious about. A post test was given a week later to find out the developments that had taken place. It was found that consciousness raising had a positive effect on reducing errors in L2 question formation, though marginally. It helped significantly in reducing the errors committed due to lack of ignorance of the rules of L2 question formation. No effect was seen when students were at the intralingual stage. They were not ready to learn the structures of the new language.

**Keywords**: Consciousness raising and language acquisition, Errors in L2 question formation, Question formation in English, Question formation in Arabic, Description of errors, Explicit Grammar instructions

Introduction

Each and every language has its own set of rules. A child is predisposed to acquire these rules with the help of an internal mechanism, which Chomsky proposed as an innate blue print for language or Universal Grammar (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2007:17). It is this innate component of the human language faculty that enables a child to construct the grammar of that particular language (if it is his mother tongue, L1) from the limited data available to him (Corder, 1967: 162). This is not the case with second language (L2) learners, learning a new language other than their mother tongue. They have to put in extra efforts especially when they are adults. Sometimes the rules of the first language are
applied, as the structure of the second language is not known. This may benefit if the rules are similar or create problems if the rules of L2 are different from their mother tongue. Hence, L1 can be a starting point in the acquisition of L2. Corder (1967:165) is of the opinion that some of the strategies adopted by second language learners are the same as those by which a first language is acquired. The sequence or the course may be different. In the earlier stages it is not expected of a child to produce correct utterances. His incorrect utterances are not termed as errors but it is the evidence that he is in a process of acquiring language. On the other hand the incorrect sentences produced by the second language learner are termed as errors, though they too provide evidence of the system of the language they are using, at that moment. This system may not be the same as the adult language. Errors are the device that the learner uses in order to learn. It is also the way of testing his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is trying to learn. It is a process or a strategy employed by children, acquiring their mother tongue or by the second language learners. The second language learner has his mother tongue to fall back on, hence he is always testing whether the language he is trying to acquire is the same or different from that of his mother tongue. His errors can be related to the systems of the mother tongue, but according to Corder (1967: 168) they should not be regarded as persistence of old habits. They are the signs of the learner investigating the systems of the new language.

A child is not taught a language formally but mostly a second language learner learns the language with formal instructions in the classroom. He learns the rules of the language. Krashan (1982) advocated communicative pedagogy as he felt that it led to the acquisition of competence in the second language. Learning of rules or grammar teaching had no place in teaching L2, as it did not guarantee its appropriate use in speech or communication. But modern researchers like Ellis (1994) and Schmidt (1990) stress the importance of teaching grammar not in the formal manner but by raising the awareness of the learners regarding the features of the L2, which they are trying to acquire. If the students are aware of the target they have to acquire, it may facilitate
learning. It is in this context, that the errors committed by Omani students while forming questions (Yes/no and Wh questions) are investigated and their consciousness (awareness) is raised about the structure of question forms in the target language. The issues related with this study e.g. errors, structure of questions in English and Arabic, types of knowledge, consciousness raising and the acquisition process are described in detail below.

Theoretical Perspectives

The following headings discuss the theoretical aspects necessary to comprehend the issues discussed in the paper.

*Errors*

Human learning involves the making of mistakes. It is like learning any other skill e.g. swimming, cycling, typing etc. It is through mistakes that learners learn. Like children, second language learners too, carefully process feedback from others to produce the target language. It is necessary to make a distinction between error and a mistake in order to analyze the learner’s language. Ellis (1994: 57) defines an error as a deviation from the norms of the target language. It is committed because of lack of knowledge, while a mistake is made when learners fail to perform their competence (Corder, 1967:167). It is a failure to utilize the known system correctly. When attention is drawn towards an error it can be self-corrected (Brown, 2000: 217). In order to analyze errors it is necessary to identify and describe them.
Identification and Description of Errors

Corder (1971: 151) provided a model for identifying errors. He suggested comparison of the students’ utterances with the reconstruction of those utterances in the target language to identify errors. In case the error could not be identified in this manner, the utterances could be translated into L1 to get plausible interpretation in context and then translate it back into the target language to provide the reconstructed sentence. Once the errors are identified they can be classified according to the linguistic categories like clauses, auxiliary system, passives, tag questions etc. or by attending to the ways in which surface structures are altered e.g. omissions, additions etc. (Dulay, Burt, and Krashan, 1982: 150 as cited in Ellis, 1994:56) as shown below in table 1.

Table 1 Surface Strategy Taxonomy of Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omissions</td>
<td>The absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance.</td>
<td>*She sleeping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additions</td>
<td>The presence of an item that must not appear in well-formed utterances.</td>
<td>*We didn’t went there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misinformation</td>
<td>The use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure</td>
<td>*The dog ated the chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misordering</td>
<td>The incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance.</td>
<td>*What daddy is doing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources of Errors

The various sources of errors help us to understand how the learner’s cognitive and affective processes relate to the linguistic system. They also help to establish the process responsible for L2 acquisition. The sources can be psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, epistemic etc. Abbott (1980:124) has described the psycholinguistic sources of errors and mistakes as shown in figure...
1. The errors students make can be broadly traced to three sources—transfer, intralingual and unique.

![Psycholinguistic sources of errors](image)

**Figure 1 Psycholinguistic sources of errors**

**Transfer**

The incorporation of the features of L1 into the knowledge system of L2 is defined as transfer (Ellis, 1994: 28). If the features of L1 are similar to that of the target language it results in a **positive transfer**, facilitating the acquisition of L2. But if the target language differs from L1 it results in **negative transfer** or **Interference**, which according to behaviorist could impede learning. From the point of view of the cognitivists ‘transfer’ is a learner’s attempt to establish hypotheses about L2 rules and items. Faerch and Kasper (1987: 112) describe transfer as a psycholinguistic procedure by means of
which L2 learners activate their L1 knowledge in developing their Inter language. For example, * Are she read books?

*Intralingual*

Intralingual errors are committed when learners begin to acquire parts of the new language system. It is because of the ignorance of L2 rules. As learners progress in their second language more and more Intralingual errors are manifested as their previous experience begins to include structures of the target language and learners actively construct the grammar of L2 as they progress. Richards (1971:209) categorizes Intralingual errors as overgeneralizations, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and hypothesizing false concepts. For example, * Does Fatima visited Bahrain?

*Unique*

The errors, which do not fall under transfer or intralingual categories, have been classified as unique (Dulay and Burt, 1974 in Ellis 1994: 61). Learners sometimes internalize faulty rules derived from instruction that affect their competence; hence unique errors can also be induced for example, * Where do you do?

Question Formation in English and Arabic

There are three types of question forms in English depending on the reply sought -- Yes/no questions, Wh questions and Alternative questions (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990). Arabic also has similar types of questions as in English. In Arabic a sentence begins with
a verb and there is no need to change the place of the verb with the subject to form questions as in English.

**Methods of Forming Question in English**

Question formation in Yes/no type and Wh type is described below. Alternate questions have not been taken for this study hence they have not been dealt with here.

**Yes/no Question Type**

In English, yes-no questions are formed by placing the operator (first or the only auxiliary) before the subject and this reversing of the order is termed as inversion (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990), e.g.

She **will** be in the office later today. **Will** she be in the office later today?

He **can** get married. **Can** he get married?

Yes/no question type can be described further under the following two categories.

**A. Be and Have as Operators**

Collins (1990) points out that if ‘be’ and ‘have’ are the main verbs in the sentence they function as operators and are placed before the verbs to form questions, e.g.

**You are** ready. **Are** you ready?
B. Do-Support

Leech and Svartvik (1994: 327) state that if a verb group has no auxiliary verb then it lacks an operator and a dummy operator ‘do’ is introduced called do-support or do periphrasis. ‘Do’, ‘does’, or ‘did’ is used at the beginning of the sentence, before the subject but after the subject, the base form of the verb is used, e.g.

The British take sport seriously.  
Do the British take sport seriously?

It sounds like someone you know.  
Does it sound like someone you know?

They do the work themselves.  
Do they do the work themselves?

Wh Question Type

Wh question begins with a Wh word (Leech and Svartvik, 1994). What, where, who, whose, when, which, whom (used in formal English), why and how are called Wh words. These words are used to form questions in the following manner.

A. Wh word as the subject of a question

He has no idea what it’s like.  
Has he any idea what it’s like?
If the element containing wh word is the subject, the verb phrase remains the same as in the corresponding statement, and no inversion or do-construction is necessary. The Wh-word itself takes the first position, e.g.

Jane said she might be late. Who said that?

Jack is calling. Who’s calling?

B. Wh-word as the object of a question

When Wh-word is the object, the operator is placed after the Wh element. If the statements have no operator, do-construction is used, e.g.

They bought a Volvo. Which car did they buy?

John asked a question. What question did John ask?

Methods of Forming Questions in Arabic

The Yes/no and the Wh type are described below.

Yes/no Question formation in Arabic

Faynan (1999, 71-72) has indicated that two interrogative particles, ‘hal’ and ‘ah’ are used to form interrogative sentences to confirm or deny. They are placed at the beginning before the nouns. There is no inversion or ‘do support’ as in English, e.g.
Hal huwa gadimun?  (Is he coming?)
Hal anta sayyida?  (Are you happy?)
Hal anna mutakkhur?  (Am I late?)
Ah hadarat imshi?  (Did you come yesterday?)
Hal tadrusu?  (Do you study?)

Wh Question formation in Arabic

Standard Arabic has the property of fronting Wh words. The Interrogatives are placed at the beginning of the sentence (Comrie, 1987: 683), e.g.

Ayna darasa Imuallimu?  (*Where studied the teacher?)
(Where did the teacher study?)

Keif halak?  (*How condition?)
(How are you?)

The following question words are used in interrogative sentences (Faynan, 1999: 71)
Maan (Who), Ayain (Where), Kayf (How), Maazah (What), Limaazah (Why), Maatah (When) and Ayyu (Which)
They make questions in the following manner.

Man haada?  (*Who this?)
(Who is this?)

Mal aamal?  (*What we do?)
(What shall we do?)

Ai kitabin aandak?  (*Which books have?)
(Which books do you have?)

The sentences formed by using Wh words indicate that there are no primary auxiliaries like ‘be’, ‘have’ and ‘do’ in Arabic (Smith 1987, in Swan and Smith1987: 148) and hence forms like ‘am’, ‘is’, ‘are’, ‘do’, ‘did’ are omitted in sentences by the Arab learners.
There are no modal verbs in Arabic and hence no subject-auxiliary inversion is found while forming questions (Smith1987, in Swan and Smith1987:150).

Explicit Grammar Instruction

Cognitivists have acknowledged the existence of two categories of human knowledge -- explicit and implicit (Schmidt, 1990, Bialystok, 1981). **Explicit knowledge** is factual or declarative and is available to the learner as a conscious representation, e.g. the knowledge regarding grammatical rules. This type of knowledge is developed through formal instruction. **Implicit knowledge** is about how to do something or procedural knowledge, e.g. how to communicate in L2. Implicit knowledge is enhanced through communication or natural language use. (Anderson, 1985 in Fotos, 1993)

Krashan (1982:74) believes language learning is essentially unconscious and advocates purely communicative pedagogy. He is against presenting and practicing grammatical features and even error correction, which is termed as a ‘serious mistake’. Krashan (1982) felt that it inhibited students from using difficult constructions for the fear of making mistakes. He suggested natural language use. A number of researchers (Sharwood Smith, 1981; Bialystok, 1981) have challenged this and argued that explicit knowledge -- formal grammar instructions can convert into implicit knowledge that is needed for use in communication, through practice. Seliger (1979) is of the view that grammar instruction may not cause acquisition to take place, but may facilitate it by providing the learner with a conscious understanding of grammatical constructs that can be acquired later when the learner is ready to acquire these features -- the Delayed Effect Hypothesis. It has been demonstrated that learners who receive instruction outperform those who do not (Ellis, 1994). This proves that teaching grammar contributes to their linguistic development.
Grammar teaching nowadays is associated with feature focused options i.e. involving implicit and explicit instruction. Implicit learning takes place without intention and awareness and is catered instructionally by means of unfocussed tasks. Explicit grammar instruction is about teaching grammar so that learners construct conscious, cognitive representation, which they could articulate. Ellis (1997: 84) refers to such grammar teaching as consciousness-raising.

Consciousness Raising and the Acquisition Process

Consciousness raising is one way of directing learners' attention and increasing their awareness of particular features of the language (Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, 1985). It deals with making changes at the input stage rather than making corrections after production. Sometimes students can’t produce features because developmentally they are not ready for it but consciousness-raising is directed at explicit knowledge which is not against the ‘teachability hypotheses’. Teachers can teach even when learners are not ‘ready’ to learn an explicit rule (Ellis, 1994: 643). Schmidt is of the opinion that consciousness is necessary for language learning. Conscious learning means establishment of principles based on insight. He distinguishes three senses of consciousness -- **Consciousness as awareness**, **consciousness as intention** and **consciousness as knowledge**. Consciousness is commonly equated with awareness, which according to its degree, further categorized into **perception, noticing and understanding**. Perception implies the ability to create internal representations of external events. They are not necessarily conscious, e.g. a background noise. Noticing (focal awareness) is the information that people are aware of, e.g. people notice the contents of what they are reading. It is operationally defined as availability for verbal report. Having noticed the things, they are analyzed and compared. Objects of consciousness are reflected upon to experience insight and understanding. Consciousness as intention is to do something intentionally or make deliberate efforts to increase exposure to the language outside the class. Consciousness as knowledge is a native
speaker’s intuition. To know something is to be conscious of it. Schmidt (1990) makes a distinction between perceived information or input, and information that is noticed by the learner or intake. He proposes that noticing or intake is necessary to subsequent processing of the forms leading to acquisition. In his own acquisition of Brazilian Portuguese, Schmidt found that it was only after he noticed the target form in communicative input that it showed up in his own production. He feels that when features are noticed in subsequent communicative input then acquisition of that feature may occur. Ellis (1994) suggests that formal instructions are a type of consciousness raising activity and if the consciousness of a particular feature is raised through formal instruction then the learners keep on noticing it in subsequent input, leading to the eventual acquisition of the language.

Teaching grammar formally through direct instructions is an age-old practice but increasing consciousness of grammatical structures by various treatments is a recent development (empirical studies by Van Patten 1990). Van Patten (1994) believes that by attending to comprehensible meaning bearing input learners “get grammar”; they don’t build a linguistic system as a matter of oral practice. In this perspective the issue of consciousness moves from product based to process based. When the learner is aware and the features are noticed in subsequent input he goes through four general processing steps (Sharwood Smith, 1981)

1. A feature in the input is noticed either consciously or unconsciously;
2. An unconscious comparison is made between existing linguistic knowledge, also called interlanguage and the new input;
3. New linguistic hypotheses are constructed on the basis of the differences between the new information and the current interlanguage; and
4. The new hypotheses are tested through attending to input and also through learner output using the new form.
This reveals that language learning is a cognitive process where explicit and implicit knowledge form a continuum as shown in figure 2. Consciousness can barely draw a differentiating line. Consciousness-raising performs a facilitative function in the development of explicit knowledge of a feature through formal instruction and the eventual acquisition of that feature through the development of implicit knowledge.

![Figure 2 L2 Acquisition Process](image)

**Figure 2 L2 Acquisition Process**

Literature Review

A lot of research has been done in the field of input enhancement, explicit and implicit knowledge but not so in the field of consciousness-raising. Schmidt and Frota (1986 as cited in Schmidt 1990) examined Schmidt’s diary to find out which features in the input he had noticed. His output was also examined to see to what extent the noticed forms figured in communicative speech. It was seen that the forms he paid attention to when people spoke with him were the ones produced. Forms that were present in comprehensible input did not show up until they had been noticed. The study conducted by Fotos and Ellis (1991) on Japanese college students showed that students could form accurate representations of the rules for grammatical constructions like adverb placement, relative clauses etc. as a result of consciousness raising tasks that required them to construct explicit rules from the input data. Fotos (1993) asked Japanese university learners to complete number of consciousness raising tasks directed at three grammatical structures. After a week the students were given listening and dictation exercises with examples of the target structures in them. Next, they were asked to underline any special
use of English, which they had noticed. The result showed that the learners, who had undergone consciousness-raising, reported noticing in all three structures in the input to a greater extent than learners in a control group. These gains were also maintained in the post-test given after two weeks. Nagata and Swisher (1995) believed that the computer was instrumental in raising the consciousness of the students by pointing out and correcting errors of the students and giving them feedback. They studied the effectiveness of traditional computer feedback which indicated missing or unexpected words in the learner’s response and the intelligent computer feedback which provided feedback regarding the nature of errors by providing grammatical rules. It was found that the intelligent computer feedback was more effective. Tanaka (2000) asserted that consciousness raising approach could correct fossilization. He supported the fact that consciousness raising proved useful with individual learners than with groups. Takimoto (2006) studied the effect of consciousness raising instructions and consciousness raising instructions with feedback on 45 Japanese learners. Students were divided into a control group and two treatment groups. It was found that two treatment groups did well than the control group and the feedback was not always indispensable. Sa–ngiamwibool (2007) studied the effect of consciousness raising on Thai students’ writing achievements and found that consciousness raising instructions do have significant results.

It is in line with these researches that this study discusses the effect of consciousness-raising on the errors of Omani students in L2 question formation. It does not take into consideration mistakes committed by students. The research questions of this investigation are:

1. Does consciousness-raising have any effect on the errors produced by learners?

2. Which types of errors are reduced?

Method

The subjects, material and procedure used for this study are described below.
Subjects

25 subjects participated in this study. They are students of Salalah College of Technology between the ages of 17 to 20, studying at the Intermediate level. Their mother tongue is Arabic. They have studied Arabic as their first language and are now studying English for academic purposes. Their permission was taken for this study and subsequent publication of the findings.

Material and procedure

The material and procedure is given below:

a. Pre test: A pre-test (See Appendix 1) was made and administered to 25 students of Intermediate level to test their knowledge regarding L2 question formation. The test consisted of -- Yes/no questions with be, do and have auxiliaries and Wh questions with *wh element* in the *subject / object* position. Alternative questions were dropped from this study to avoid repetition of the structure as this category contains both Yes/no and Wh type of questions.

b. Consciousness-raising task: After two days a consciousness-raising task (See Appendix 2) was given to the students to raise their awareness about question formation in English. It was a direct task type modeled on Mohammed (2004)
c. **Interpretation task:** An interpretation task (See Appendix 3) was designed on the guidelines given by Ellis (1997: 152). It was administered to the students one week after they had completed the consciousness-raising task. It was given to test if students noticed the features they had been made conscious about. It consisted of correct and incorrect question types. The students were asked to tick them as correct or incorrect and give reasons for incorrect answers. The students were instructed orally that they could draw arrows if they found it difficult to explain the reasons in words. The results were then tallied with the explanations given which indicated whether the students had noticed the structure in subsequent input and which would now become their intake.

d. **Post-test:** Finally, after a week a post-test was given to the students. This was the same as the pre-test to find out the developments that had taken place and to compare the results.

Analysis of the Data

The data was analyzed under the following categories.

*Category of Errors (Pre-test)*

The data collected from the pre-test was analyzed for category of errors and is presented in table 2. The categories mentioned by Dulay, Burt and Krashan in Ellis (1982:150) have
been followed. There was not even a single error for misordering hence it was excluded. Moreover many errors in substitution of Wh-words and auxiliary verbs as well as change of form from Yes/no question to Wh question were found and they have been added.

Table 2: Category of Errors for Pre-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Omission</th>
<th>Addition</th>
<th>Misinformation (Wh word)</th>
<th>Substitution (Aux. verb)</th>
<th>Change form</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes/No questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wh-questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh (Sub)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh(Obj)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources of Errors (Pre-test)

The same data of the pre-test was also classified to find the sources of errors, stated by Abbott (180:124) that has been given in table 3.
Table 3: Sources of Errors for Pre-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes/No questions</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Transfer</th>
<th>Intra-lingual</th>
<th>Unique</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh-question</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh(Sub)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh(Obj)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Interpretation Task**

After administering the consciousness-raising task, an interpretation task was given to find out if students could notice the correct structures. Some of them did, some did not and some just avoided. The structures that were not noticed, or avoided have been counted as errors. These errors have been tabulated in table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Noticed</th>
<th>Avoided</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh (Sub)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh (Obj)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Category of Errors (Post-test)

After consciousness raising and interpretation task a post-test was given. The errors are categorized in table 5.

Table 5: Category of Errors for Post-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Omission</th>
<th>Addition</th>
<th>Misinformation (Wh word)</th>
<th>(Aux. verb)</th>
<th>Change form</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh (Sub)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh (Obj)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources of Errors (Post-test)
The same data of the post-test was also classified to find the sources of errors, which have been given in table 6.

Table 6: Sources of Errors for Post-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Transfer</th>
<th>Intra</th>
<th>Unique</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh (Sub)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh(Obj)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion of Results
The results are discussed under the following heads.

**Total Number of Errors**

Total number of errors tabulated according to different categories in table 2 is 179 but the errors tabulated according to sources in table 3 are 158. This difference is because some errors could be placed in more than one category indicating that sources of errors can be many. The same is true for table 5 (133 errors) and table 6 (125 errors) for post-test.

**Effect of Consciousness on Errors**

Figure 3 compares the total number of errors committed in the pre-test (see table 3), interpretation task after consciousness-raising (see table 4), and the post-test (see table 6). This clearly shows that consciousness-raising has marginal effect on reducing the errors. Results of the Interpretation task (see table 4) indicate that the number of errors committed were significantly less. This is because students have noticed the features of question formation and can recognize and comprehend the difference between correct and incorrect sentences. This is in accordance with the observations of Schmidt (1996) who proposed that noticing is necessary for the processing of new structures. This explicit knowledge was stored in their short-term memory. Students’ errors have not decreased considerably in the post-test because maybe they were given only one interpretation task after consciousness raising to facilitate noticing. More instances of noticing may bring about the desired effect of making explicit knowledge implicit. Anderson (1980 in Fotos 1993) believes that implicit knowledge is enhanced through communication hence more exercises on the task would have been beneficial. It also
indicates that students have not reached the developmental stage where these features could be acquired. Ellis (1994) believes that if students are at the intralingual stage, they are just experimenting with the new features and will take some time to acquire them. The students have still not reached the level of maturity required for this task and are comfortable with the traditional way of receiving formal instructions from the teacher. It may work fine with higher classes and matured students.

Sources of Errors

The sources of errors have been discussed under the following three heads

Transfer Errors
The examples below clearly depict that ‘hal’ in Arabic is replaced by auxiliary verbs like ‘be’ in English. ‘Hal’ and ‘ah’ are used to form interrogative sentences in Arabic (Faynan, 1991). Students are using the mother tongue equivalents in English while forming interrogative sentences which supports the definition of transfer provided by Ellis (1994: 28).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions in Arabic</th>
<th>Questions in English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hal Muna Mudarissun?</td>
<td>Is Muna a teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hal kullumin Mohammed and Ahmed sadikain?</td>
<td>Are Mohammed and Ahmed friends?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also very difficult to differentiate between the various sources of errors in the case of following sentences as it seems students are trying to activate their L1 knowledge in developing their Interlanguage. This supports the description of Faerch and Kasper (1987: 112).

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hal attulab dahabu ila manzialhim?</td>
<td>Did students go home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Is she read books?</td>
<td>(Does she read books?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is difficult to say whether the error is transfer or intralingual because as seen in the first example where students have used ‘did’ at the beginning of the question but ‘did’ is not used in Arabic while forming questions. In the second example ‘is’ has been substituted for ‘does’. It may mean that students are testing hypotheses and it’s an intralingual error. It is because of this reason that number of transfer errors have decreased in the post-test. Consciousness-raising had a marginal effect on transfer errors as shown in figure 4 maybe because most of the students were still at the developmental stage.
Figure 4 – Comparison of Transfer Errors in Pre and Post-test

*Intralingual Errors*

Figure 5 clearly indicates a marginal reduction in intralingual errors. Students acquire the grammatical structures only when they are ready and not while they are experimenting with their own hypotheses. It supports Seliger’s (1979) view that grammar instruction may facilitate acquisition by developing the learner’s conscious understanding of the structures that could be acquired later when they are ready for it. When students are testing their hypotheses and have reached the required developmental level, consciousness-raising has a positive effect.

Figure 5– Comparison of Intralingual Errors in Pre and Post-test

*Unique Errors*
Figure 6 compares the scores of table 3 and table 6. It indicates that unique errors have reduced nearly by half after consciousness-raising. These errors were committed as a result of ignorance of L2 rules e.g. How Fatima visit to Bahrain? (Has Fatima visited Bahrain?). It supports the observations of Smith (1981) and Bialystok (1981) who argue that explicit knowledge can convert to implicit knowledge through practice. Consciousness-raising has good effect on eradicating errors caused by ignorance. Consciousness-raising has increased errors due to change of form: Yes/no question form into Wh question form and vice-versa, e.g. * What she do? (Does she read books?). This problem can be tackled if one type of form is taken at a time.

Figure 6– Comparison of Unique Errors in Pre and Post-test

Errors in Yes/No Questions
These errors are compared for Pre test, Interpretation tasks and Post test shown in figure 7 derived from tables 3, 4 and 6.

The least number of errors are associated with ‘be’ verb. Questions like ‘what is your name?’ are commonly used by students in conversations and have some previous implicit knowledge which gets triggered by consciousness-raising into further noticing, translating into automatic response. These observations are in accordance with Schmidt (1990) and Sharwood Smith (1981). The errors for the verb ‘do’ have increased maybe because most of the students have used ‘do’ in forming hypotheses and testing them. Students’ benefitted in the case of structures with ‘have’ because of raised awareness.

Errors in Wh Questions
Figure 8 shows the errors in Wh Question forms derived from tables 3, 4 and 6.

Figure 8 – Comparison of Errors in Wh questions

In questions where Wh-word is the subject of a sentence, inversion is not required and main verbs are used. It was observed that students had difficulty understanding the main verb hence, errors were committed but when the main verbs were familiar to the students less errors were committed as the order resembled that of Arabic (Verb + Subject +Object). This is in accordance with Ellis’s (1994) positive transfer. When Wh-word is the subject of a sentence there is subject auxiliary inversion and same type of errors are noticed as in Yes/no questions.

Substitution errors
Figure 9 compares results from table 2 and table 5 for different categories of errors for Pre and Post-test. Substitution mistakes were the highest mistakes committed by the students, which decreased after consciousness-raising in case of Wh-word substitution. On the other hand it increased in the substitution of auxiliary verbs, because there are no auxiliary verbs like ‘be’, ‘have’, and ‘do’ in Arabic. Yes/No questions in Arabic begin with “hal”, which is commonly substituted by ‘is’ and ‘are’ as they are unavailable in Arabic. This is in accordance with Ellis’s (1994) negative transfer. Students generally use ‘do’ forms to test their hypothesis in question formation. In Arabic students pronounce ‘how’ as ‘who’ as there is no ‘/au/’ diphthong. ‘How’ is mostly substituted for ‘who’ while forming questions, this is a mistake in pronunciation which gets translated into writing. It has been seen that consciousness-raising managed to reduce this type of mistake.

Students change the form of question from Yes/no to Wh and vice-versa, as they are not aware of the types of question forms in English. It also depends on which forms they are familiar with at that particular point. When they are made conscious about them through consciousness raising the mistakes are reduced. This is also true for Omissions and Additions.
Limitations and Implications

This study has used only one Interpretation task as a follow up to the consciousness raising task. Maybe results would have been favourable if more exercises of varied patterns would have been used. The subsequent noticing of the target forms would have resulted in intake and successive acquisition of the target forms.

EFL learners make mistakes as they relate the new learning to what they already know about their own language. Sometimes the features of L1 are totally different from that of their mother tongue but if their consciousness is raised by presenting the real nature of the target language, the mistakes would be less. Hence it is necessary for the teachers to raise the consciousness of the learners about the new features of the language that they want students to acquire.
It is just not enough to raise the consciousness of the particular features but it must be followed by regular exercises at judicious levels where students notice the features of the target language till they acquire them.

Teachers can expose students to the authentic language by playing cassettes in the class. If they listen to conversations in various situations, consciousness raising can have better effect.

Conclusion

Consciousness-raising had a positive effect in reducing errors in L2 question formation, though the effect was quite marginal. It helped significantly, the errors committed, due to lack of ignorance of the rules of L2 question formation. No effect was seen when students were at the intralingual stage. They were just testing their hypotheses and were not ready to learn that particular structure. It is too early to map the results of consciousness-raising by using a production test as only one noticing exercise was administered at one point of time. It can be due to the implicit knowledge, which the students already possessed. If students observe the same structures in subsequent communicative input, their intake will be triggered through noticing and maybe that would lead to implicit learning after which they may appear in production. More research is needed in this field. It was seen that errors containing structures that frequently appeared in conversations showed improvement with consciousness-raising. It even helped to reduce errors caused due to ignorance by helping the learners to ‘notice the gap’. If teachers expose students to conversational dialogues containing the structures to be targeted before consciousness raising then it may have better effect. Consciousness-raising is a pedagogic device, which can be applied to other areas of language teaching. It may not yield satisfactory results when applied to students whose understanding is not fully developed and who are used to depending on their teacher’s
instruction. Future research should investigate consciousness-raising whenever there is a
distinction between explicit and implicit learning and the ability of the students to use the
language in real operating conditions.
References


About the author

Dr. Jaishree Umale is presently serving at Dhofar University in Salalah, Oman. She bears a Ph D in English Literature and has also completed MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL from Leicester University, U.K. She is interested in Second Language Acquisition, Pragmatics and Educational Technology.
Appendix I

Pre Test

You have been given incomplete answers in the form of hints. Make complete questions for them.

1. ____________________________________________
   (Name - Muna)

2. ____________________________________________
   (Ahmed and Mohammed Friends- Yes)

3. ____________________________________________
   (I play - club)

4. ____________________________________________
   (Fatima visited – Bahrain- No)

5. ____________________________________________
   (She reads books - No)
6. (Red bus – go Salalah )

7. (You – play football – No)

8. (Muna teacher – Yes)

9. (Students gone home – Yes)

10. (Frances – teach reading)
Appendix 2

Direct task for Forming Questions

Read the information about forming questions in English. Then make sentences of your own. The nouns are underlined. The verbs are in bold. The Wh elements are underlined and Wh words are in italics.

Usually questions are made by changing the word order in a sentence i.e. placing the verbs before the subject. Generally, BE, HAVE and DO (auxiliary verbs) are used if the answer of the question is yes/no.

A. If a sentence has an auxiliary BE verb (am, is, are, was, were), shift the verb (BE) to the beginning of the sentence to convert it into a question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary verb</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Question from the same sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>She is a good girl</td>
<td>Is she a good girl? (Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They were playing football.</td>
<td>Were they playing football? (Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed is</td>
<td>Ahmed is eating an ice-cream.</td>
<td>Is Ahmed eating an ice-cream? (Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am</td>
<td>I am a boy.</td>
<td>Am I a boy? (Correct)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now write one sentence of your own using this rule.

B. If the sentence has, HAVE (has, had) as the auxiliary verb; shift the verb (Have) to the beginning of the sentence to convert a sentence into a question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary verb</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Question from the same sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td>She has lived in Oman.</td>
<td>Has she lived in Oman? (Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They have fought in the war.</td>
<td>Have they fought in the war? (Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ahmed has finished his meal.</td>
<td>Are Ahmed finished his meal? (Incorrect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raina has completed the work.</td>
<td>Has Raina completed the work? (Correct)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now write one sentence of your own using this rule.

____________________________________________________________________
C. If there are no BE and HAVE verbs in a sentence, DO (do, does, did) auxiliary verb is used at the beginning of the sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary verb</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Question from the same sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>She watches T.V. everyday.</td>
<td>Does she watch T.V. everyday? (Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They swam in the sea.</td>
<td>Did they swim in the sea? (Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ahmed sings everyday.</td>
<td>Is Ahmed sing everyday? (Incorrect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The child cries at night.</td>
<td>Does the child cry at night? (Correct)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now write one sentence of your own using this rule.

__________________________________________________________________________

D. What, where, who, whose, when, which, whom, why and how are used to form Wh questions.

These words are known as Wh words.

If a Wh word (who, what, which) is the subject of a sentence the position of the verb does not change. Do not shift the verb at the beginning of the sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wh word as the subject of a sentence</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Question from the same sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed got a prize.</td>
<td>Who got a prize? (Correct)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The snake bit Huda.</td>
<td>Bit what Huda? (Incorrect)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The redline bus goes to Ibri.</td>
<td>Which bus goes to Ibri? (Correct)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The table hit Said.</td>
<td>What hit Said? (Correct)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now write one sentence of your own using this rule.

__________________________________________________________________________
E. When Wh word is the object of a sentence, the verb is placed before the subject. If BE and HAVE auxiliary verbs are not in the sentence DO is used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wh word as the object of a sentence</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Question from the same sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wh word</td>
<td>She <strong>bought</strong> a car.</td>
<td><strong>What did she buy?</strong> (Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My teacher is <strong>Ahmed</strong>.</td>
<td><strong>Who is your teacher?</strong> (Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I live in <strong>Salalah</strong>.</td>
<td><strong>Where do you live?</strong> (Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My name is <strong>Mohammed</strong>.</td>
<td><strong>What your name?</strong> (Incorrect)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now write one sentence of your own using this rule.
Appendix 3

Grammar Task III

A. Read the following questions and underline the verbs.
B. If the questions are correct tick (●) in column A but if they are incorrect tick (♦) in column B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>A (Correct)</th>
<th>B (Incorrect)</th>
<th>Reasons if incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Is he a good boy?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do create children great noise in the classroom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ali a sportsman is?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Have you finished your lunch?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>What he purchase did?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Had Mustafa slept late at night?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Does Humaid play football every day?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Where Salalah is?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Does eats Zavid sweets everyday?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>What Hilal confused?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Who ate his food?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A magic show there was?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 4

**Sample of Students’ Responses**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Which English teacher late comes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Has gone to UK he?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Who is your best friend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Did you travel from Salalah to Muscat by ship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>How many brothers do you have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>What killed Ishaq?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Was she married to a doctor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The students their homework have done?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Give reasons as to why you feel the sentences are incorrect.

### A. Sources of Errors

The errors are listed under the following sources.

#### Transfer

1. Are Fatima visited Bahrain?
2. Are students gone home?
3. Are she read books?
4. Are you play football?
The Effect of Consciousness Raising on Errors

Intralingual

1. Does Ahmed and Mohammed friends?
2. Does Fatima visited Bahrain?
3. Do she read books?
4. Which bus go Salalah?

Unique

1. Which bus to go to Salalah?
2. Where do you do?
3. How Fatima visit to Bahrain?
4. Where the students went?

B. Categories of Errors
The errors are listed under the following categories.

Omission

1. Ahmed and Mohammed friends?
2. You play football?
3. What your name?
4. What you play?

Addition

1. What do you use play?
2. Has Fatima visited to Bahrain?
3. Are you students gone home?
4. Are Ahmed and Mohammed are friends?

Misinformation

1. Are Muna a teacher?
2. Have Ahmed and Mohammed Friends?
3. Did students gone home?
4. What is she do?

### Substitution Wh word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Correct use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do you play?</td>
<td>(Where do you play?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What teach reading?</td>
<td>(Who teaches reading)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What bus goes to Salalah</td>
<td>(Which bus goes to Salalah?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How teach reading?</td>
<td>(Who teaches reading?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Substitution verb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Correct use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does Fatima visite Bahrain?</td>
<td>(Has Fatima visited Bahrain?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is students gone home?</td>
<td>(Have students gone home?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is she read books?</td>
<td>(Is she read books?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Where are you play?</td>
<td>(Where do you play?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Change form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Correct use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Where is Fatima visited?</td>
<td>(Has Fatima visited Bahrain?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Where the students went?</td>
<td>(Have students gone home?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is she do?</td>
<td>(Does she read books?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you play in club?</td>
<td>(Where do you play?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attitudes Towards Collaborative Writing Among English Majors in Hebron University

Dr. Mohammed Abdel Hakim Farrah

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Hebron University, Palestine

Abstract

This study investigates students’ attitudes towards enhancing the writing skills of Palestinian English Majors by using collaborative learning. The study was conducted at the English Department at Hebron University in the second and the summer semesters of the academic year 2010-2011. The study participants were taking Writing and the Integrated Language Skills courses. The population comprised 95 students. A 32-item questionnaire was used to assess the attitudes of the students toward collaborative learning. Moreover, the researcher investigated whether there was a significant difference in the attitudes of the students pertaining to gender, proficiency (GPA) and year of study or academic level and one aspect of their learning styles (introverts vs. extroverts). The results indicate that the students had positive attitudes towards collaborative learning. Moreover, the results showed that female students favored collaborative activities more than male students. Statistically significant differences were also revealed...
regarding level of the students and their proficiency showing that low achievers and less advanced learners favored the collaborative activities. Similarly, statistically significant evidence showed that extrovert students favored collaborative activities. The researcher concluded by offering some practical recommendations on using collaborative activities to enhance English language skills of English major at Hebron University, Palestine.

Keywords: collaborative learning, learning preferences, gender, proficiency, academic level

Collaborative learning refers to a number of processes where students are divided into groups and interact together to achieve a certain objective or find a solution to a specific learning problem. It is distinguished from traditional teaching approaches because learners are encouraged to work together and share ideas rather than to work alone and compete with each other individually. Research shows that group work and pair work activities are motivating and enlightening to students and teachers. Learners discover points of weakness and receive instant response from group members and their teachers. Astin, (1993) asserts that collaborative learning provides a social context for learning where interaction among learners is increased and therefore leads to successful learning experiences.

This is in contrast to the traditional method where students work individually or competitively. According to Kagan (1994), learners’ capabilities should be channeled into positive and more meaningful directions. Kagan (1994) points out that cooperative learning would encourage learners to have higher achievement than competitive or individualistic learning. He adds that cooperative learning offers learners opportunities that enable them to increase their self-esteem and to become more intrinsically motivated. Johns (1997) indicates that one of the important criticisms of traditional theories is that “individual readers and writers, their meanings, their motivations, and their voices have been ignored” (p. 8). According to her, there is a need to shift the concentration on grammar to the motivations of individual readers and writers. This shift paves the way for the learner-centered approach where learners choose topics that are relevant to them and their lives and work together on topics of their own choice. Moreover, they lend a hand to one another so that all can reach mutual success.

Theoretical Framework

Collaborative learning is deeply rooted in a number of learning theories such as those of cognitivism, constructivism, and those concerning motivation. Dewey (1938) emphasizes the social nature of learning where learners both work in groups and have individual responsibility for their work. He believes that group learning experiences have the potential to promote
meaningful learning and learning is most effective when learners are actively engaged with the content thus increasing their motivation. This is in line with the motivational and cognitive theorists (Swortzel, 1997; Slavin, 1987) who deem that the inherent organization of collaborative learning forms an atmosphere which is conducive to learning and motivating. The learners become ready to discuss and negotiate the meaning and thus become collaborative. In this approach to language learning, learners are viewed as problem solvers where cognitive skills are stressed. This type of learning is advocated by Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bruner (Bigge & Shermis, 1999) where learners study together and negotiate meaning to develop a shared knowledge of the world. Collaborative work enables them to think at higher intellectual levels than when they work individually. The students’ different background in terms of level, language proficiency and learning style and experience contributes positively to the learning process and improves their problem-solving strategies as they are confronted with various interpretations for a problem-solving activity (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1985).

Collaborative learning is also based on psycholinguistic-cognitive views (Johns, 1997). In psycholinguistic-cognitive classrooms, learners plan, organize, revise, rethink, and edit. Johns (1997) contends that literacy “is acquired as students seek meaning and process texts that are relevant to them” (p. 8). She advocates cooperation among learners in the classroom by “workshopping in groups and peer editing of student drafts” (p.12). Throne (2000) believes that second language learning is a process involving the co-presence of intra- and inter-psychological activity, environments with histories, and an ongoing negotiation of social identity. He explains that the activity of foreign and second language learning occurs within material and social conditions that researchers need to take into consideration.

This is also in agreement with the socio-literate views about language which are based on the work of Halliday (1978), Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), and Swales (1990). They indicate that for knowledge to be internalised and a framework established, social communication must first take place. According to Halliday, language is important to a social context. According to Johns (1997), from a socio-literate perspective, reading and writing and all types of literacy “are, in fact, social, intertextual and historical” (p.16). She explains that “successful text processing and production involve understanding the terms of this contract, terms that include text content, form, register, quality of paper, context and many other factors” (p.17). Learning is viewed as experiencing and it is essentially social in nature. Accordingly, learning to write is basically a social activity, particularly when learners write in groups. Teachers create a context where learners are encouraged to learn, interact, discover, explore and expand their learning and shape their knowledge. According to Kolb (1984), “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). As pointed out by Griffiths (2007), when sharing experiences, learning will be a pleasant activity.
To sum up, collaborative learning can present opportunities that enable learners to improve their learning and allow them to be involved in a meaningful dialogue.

Literature Review

This section provides a brief definition of what is meant by collaborative learning, its advantages, limitations and challenges and a literature review of some of the studies that used it.

What Is Collaborative Learning?

Collaborative Learning is used to describe a situation when learners are organized in groups to discuss issues and work on problem-solving activities. This term is used interchangeably with cooperative learning with slight differences but cooperative learning is usually more structurally defined than collaborative learning (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). Smith and MacGregor (1992) define Collaborative learning as:

… an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. Usually, students are working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product. Collaborative learning activities vary widely, but most center on students’ exploration or application of the course material, not simply the teacher’s presentation or explication of it. (p.1)

In this study, the researcher is going to use “collaborative learning” to refer to any activity that is done in groups.

Advantages of Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is an efficient learning process as it helps students to learn by discovery. It encourages them to take a more dynamic role in their own learning, develop their interpersonal skills and collaborate with other learners to accomplish certain tasks. This type of learning enables students to be engaged in new learning styles as it provides them with a myriad of opportunities to interact while sharing their views, values and interests. Furthermore, collaborative learning has the potential to increase comprehension, promote critical thinking,
maximize motivation, foster the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences, and create an interactive and relaxed atmosphere where students have an additional responsibility for their own learning (Astin, 1993; Gokhale, 1995; Slavin, 1987; Ellison & Boykin, 1994; Elola & Oskoz, 2010). According to Barkley et al. (2005), collaborative learning became very popular because it can help in solving a number of problems related to teaching and learning. They clarify that learners are encouraged to actively involve themselves in the learning process and consequently improve their learning. Learners are encouraged to listen carefully and think critically and they work to address problems. Similarly, Kolodner and Guzdial (1996) assert that in collaborative activities, learners learn from each other, form groups, communicate effectively, and understand and observe perspectives of other group members, thus expanding each one’s own perspective. When learners think, reflect, and are involved in a reasoning process and a problem-solving activity, this leads to the growth of their higher-order thinking skills (Gokhale, 1995, Bonk and Reynolds, 1997, Millis, B. J., & Cottell, P. G., 1998, Barkley et al., 2005; Nor & Abd. Samad, 2003).

Proponents of collaborative learning anticipate a number of benefits for this type of learning. Collaborative learning can help learners with writing compositions. Several studies pointed to a number of academic benefits for collaborative learning. For example, it gives opportunities for learners to explain and to learn from each other as more competent learners give extra information and the less competent learners receive help without feeling embarrassed (Dunne and Bennet, 1990). Besides, it can lead to better learning, revitalised teaching methods and improved interpersonal skills (Johnson, Johnson & Stanne, 2000; Johnson & Johnson, 1998). Budd (2004) reported that in an active and collaborative learning exercise, a deeper analysis of the topic is strengthened among learners in small groups. He added that “varying the nature of instructional materials for a single individual over time has biological, cognitive, and motivational underpinnings” (p.8). Similarly, White and Caminero (1995) contend that collaborative learning offer learners “valuable opportunities to learn from each other” (p.323).

Limitations and Challenges of Collaborative Learning

Despite its perceived benefits, not all learners like to work in groups. The reluctance to work in groups may be due to egocenteredness among some students who will not acknowledge other learners’ ideas as they believe that they are much more competent. Oakley, Felder, Brent and Elhajj (2004) warn against some limitations of this type of learning:

Cooperative learning has been repeatedly shown to have strong positive effects on almost every conceivable learning outcome. Simply putting students in groups to work on assignments is not a
sufficient condition for achieving these benefits, however. Unless the instructor takes steps to assure that the groups develop the attributes associated with high-performance teams, the group learning experience is likely to be ineffective and may be disastrous. (p. 21)

According to Nor and Abd. Samad (2003), working in groups requires participants to have pleasant and friendly interactions. Unfortunately, “most group writing fails because students do not know how to maintain effective social skills” (p.1). According to Smith and MacGregor (1992), “a collaborative classroom can be a wonderfully rewarding opportunity but it is also full of challenges and dilemmas” (p.8). According to them, we need changes in the teachers’ role and the syllabus. They believe that it is difficult for some instructors to move from the teacher-centered to a learner-centered classroom where they find that “engaging students in group activity is a hard work” (p.8). An additional problem is the syllabus. They deem that “group work requires a demanding yet important rethinking of our syllabus, in terms of course content and time allocation” (p.9). They conclude that in collaborative learning “designing and guiding group work takes time to learn and practice” (p.9).

Practical studies that are related to collaborative learning

Several studies have investigated the use of collaborative learning as a tool to increase comprehension, motivation and maximize interaction. In a quantitative study by Brown (2008), she investigated the effects of collaborative learning on first year ESL students at the University of Botswana. The aim was to provide a deep and detailed analysis of students’ perceptions of collaborative learning. She wanted to examine the benefits and see what areas should be modified or changed. Her respondents reported gaining “academic benefits such as better comprehension and improved performance, and acquired generic skills – enhanced communication and problem-solving skills” (p.1). Moreover, her respondents indicated that they expanded their own social skills and found collaborative learning enjoyable as it enabled them to have new friends. The majority of the students indicated that collaborative activities should be encouraged and continued. Brown concluded that students’ perception of collaborative learning is in line with what is stated in the literature. She recommended paying attention to the academic benefits of collaborative learning as well as its social aspects.

Wong et al. (2009) examined the effect of collaborative learning in a process oriented writing class on developing linguistic-related micro-skills for the writing of EFL Chinese students in Singapore. The learners were asked to work collaboratively and carry out “word/phrase pooling”, “sentence making”, “paragraph writing” and “outlining” on wiki. Then, they were asked to write their essays individually. The aim, according to the researchers, was:
… to fill up the gap between the current-traditional product-oriented approach and the more cognitively demanding process-oriented approach; that is, juvenile L2 learners’ limited linguistic and cognitive skills that would hinder them from writing proper essays, not to mention carrying out process writing. (p.1)

The study revealed an “improvement in pupils’ micro-skills for writing and motivation in essay writing” (p.5). The researchers opined that, through collaborative activities, “the perceived challenge of pupils’ individual differences in linguistic proficiency could be turned into an advantage for motivating pupils’ collaboration in learning” (p.1).

Elola and Oskoz (2010) examined the effect of social tools and collaborative writing on enhancing learners’ writing abilities. They analyzed learners’ individual and collaborative writing to explore their approaches to the writing task. Moreover, they examined “learners’ collaborative synchronous interactions when discussing content, structure and other aspects related to the elaboration of the writing task” (p.1). The study did not reveal statistically significant differences in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity. However, the authors noted some new trends that show differences among learners’ interaction with the text when they work individually or collaboratively.

Finally, Zariski (1997) investigated the impact of collaborative learning. His respondents reported “positive impacts of learning in groups although some students’ attitudes seem to have been negatively affected”. He observes that there is a need to examine why group based learning has a negative impact on some students which should not be ignored.

The following section reviews some studies that addressed some factors that may affect the learners’ attitudes toward collaborative learning.

Collaborative learning and gender, year of study, proficiency and learning style

Research revealed contradicting findings regarding collaborative learning and gender, GPA (high achievers vs. low achievers), level of study (freshman, sophomore), and learning style (introvert vs. extrovert). Duxbury and Tsai (2010) found that there were no significant differences between males versus females, true versus false-beginners, and extroverts in relation to cooperative learning attitudes. Mulalic et al. (2009) investigated the learning styles of the students, and the differences in learning styles of the students according to their gender. Results revealed that the students’ preferred learning style was kinesthetic. They expressed minor preference for visual, auditory and group learning. This means that some students do not prefer collaborative learning activities. Awad and Naqeeb (2011) found that there were no significant differences in the
learning styles of the Arab American University students studying English as a foreign language due to gender. This means that gender is not the only factor that governs learners’ preference to certain collaborative activities.

Rodger et al. (2007) investigated the differences in achievement for 80 female and 80 male university students who were assigned competitive and cooperative tasks that required them to complete “a mini-assignment either individually in the competitive condition or with a same-sex partner in the cooperative condition” (p.157). They also completed individually a multiple-choice test to assess achievement. They did not find differences on the multiple-choice test. However, on the mini-assignment females scored significantly higher in the cooperative than in the competitive learning environment, whereas males performed about equally in both conditions. Blum (1999) explains that “female students place emphasis on relationships, are empathetic in nature, and prefer to learn in an environment where cooperation is stressed rather than competition” (p. 51). Shwalb et al. (1995) examined the attitudes of Japanese students toward cooperative and competitive school activities. Their participants rated 24 competitive and cooperative items in terms of personal importance during three consecutive academic years. Factor analyses of the ratings revealed that females had higher scores than males on the Cooperation Composite Index. This means that the female students scored higher in the cooperative activities.

Graves and Graves reported their participants’ attitudes toward cooperation and competition. They found that males express more liking for competition than do females, whereas females express more liking for cooperation than do males. They added that preferences for competitive learning increase with age for both genders (as cited in Shwalb, 1995, p. 3).

Gunasagaran (2006) reported that there was a significant difference between male and female students on cooperative learning. Female learners tend to use more social learning strategies (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). Ehrman and Oxford (1989, p. 8) highlighted the “female superiority in verbal aptitude and social orientation, as well as possible sex differences in integrative (socially-based) motivation” and in psychological type. Ehrman and Oxford (1989) found that female learners used more of the following four types of strategies: (a) general study strategies, (b) functional practice strategies, (c) searching for and communicating meaning strategies, and (d) self-management strategies.

Rodger et al. (2007) postulate that if women have more positive attitudes than men toward cooperation, then it follows those learning methods that allow for the development of trusting and interdependent relationships among students and between students and teachers should be more effective for women than for men” (p. 4). They concluded that most effective learning environments for women would not be possible through competitive teaching methods.

They cited research by Inglehart, Brown, and Vida (1994) to support this belief as they found that the more competitive the environment for females, the less well they achieved, and the more
competitive was the environment for males, the better they performed (Inglehart, Brown, and Vida, 1994 as cited in Rodger et al., 2007, p. 4). Similarly, Ellison and Boykin (1994) reported that female students achieved better following cooperative learning than individualistic learning. They explained that more time assigned to the tasks and the positive attitudes toward the learning experiences made cooperative learning more preferable.

Abu Radwan (2011) investigated the relationship between language proficiency and use of language learning strategies. “The students were grouped into two groups: proficient students averaging B and above, which is relatively speaking close to 80%, less proficient students, averaging C and below” (p.1). The findings revealed statistically significant differences between proficient students and less proficient students in the overall use of strategies. He also investigated whether duration of study at the English Department had any effect on use of language learning strategies. The findings revealed that the freshmen group consistently used more strategies than any other group. However, data analysis revealed a significant difference among the four groups only in the use of affective strategies. The test showed that the freshmen group used significantly more affective strategies than both the sophomore and senior groups. Awad and Naqeeb (2011) found that there were significant differences in the styles of learning used by the students due to academic level. The researchers pointed out that each academic level has its own properties and learning preferences which the lecturer should consider while teaching.

Statement of the problem

When it comes to the skill of writing, most university student who are learning English as a foreign language face a lot of problems. This is partly because of the lack of audience, or purpose and partly because of the lack of motivation. Some traditional approaches to writing gave focus to accuracy and ignored process giving the wrong impression that the process of writing is straightforward and linear. Such problems can be solved if writing is taught in a collaborative environment. Group writing discussions help student writers to write with a purpose in mind and to an audience. Students can identify their readers’ identity and develop their interpersonal skills. Moreover, the steps of writing in the process approach are emphasized as students compose, plan, organize, revise, and edit. Hence, there is a need to investigate the impact of collaborative activities during a writing exercise. This is principally applicable in the group work that students do in their classes and which is a requirement of any up-to-date curriculum for English that emphasizes the communicative approach. In addition, it is the requirement of the process writing that emphasizes the importance of collaborative activities as one of the most important components in writing. Thus, this study aims to examine the students’ attitude during group writing, specifically, whether group writing can support them in writing while working with
others. Consequently, there is a need to examine if collaborative writing can improve both students’ writing and their attitude.

Objectives of the study

This paper aims at examining the attitudes of Hebron University students towards collaborative writing activities. It also aims at exploring whether it enhances their communication and critical thinking skills. It further aims to explore if there are differences in students’ attitudes due to gender, level of proficiency, and learning styles.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are:

1. Are there significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents based on their gender, level, and GPA towards collaborative learning?

2. Are there significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents towards collaborative learning and their learning styles?

3. What is the general attitude of the respondents towards collaborative learning?

Methodology

The present section discusses the population, research instrument, procedure, developing the questionnaire and its reliability.

Population

The sample for the study consisted of 95 male and female students (72 females and 23 males) from four sections of undergraduate Writing and Integrated Language Skills courses taught by the same instructor and the data was collected during the second semester and the summer semester of the academic year 2010-2011.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire (See Appendix A) was developed based on the literature review conducted by the researcher. Some of the items were adopted from Brown’s study (2008) and adapted to suit
the current study. The researcher developed an appropriate questionnaire that is suitable for examining attitudes towards collaborative learning. The questionnaire consisted of 32 statements with a 5 point Likert scale, (strongly agree, tend to agree, neutral, tend to disagree and strongly disagree).

The 32-item questionnaire was distributed at the end of the spring semester and summer semesters of the academic year 2010/2011. The questionnaire was used to elicit the respondents’ views about their collaborative learning experiences. Quantitative data was analyzed statistically by using the SPSS program.

Procedure

The students were divided into groups consisting of five to six students per group and were asked to write essays throughout the spring semester and the summer semester of the academic year 2010/2011. The students were given guidelines for the assignment and a checklist of the major points to be covered in their essay. In some classes, the students were asked to start writing the essays individually to brainstorm ideas, and then to work in groups and compare their writing with that of the other students in the group. In other classes, the students were asked to brainstorm, organize ideas, draft, revise and edit together. They were given several topics to write about such as A place I like to visit, An event that taught me a lesson and Qualities that I look for in a friend.

The aim was to encourage the students to engage in a dialogue that allows them to generate ideas and get extra feedback from the group members. During this process, the students were asked to discuss problems in writing such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and subject-verb agreement or irrelevant sentences. Moreover, they were asked to comment on the content and organization of the essays. In order to make sure that the students work effectively on such collaborative activities, guidelines for collaborative learning taken from Texas University Writing Centre were taken into consideration (see appendix B). Thus, the instructor explained to his students what is meant by collaborative writing. Moreover, the students were encouraged to select tasks that could be done in groups. The students were given the choice to choose their own group. It was made clear to the students that they need to work individually first, then in groups. They themselves chose a leader for each group. The group leader’s job was to manage the collaborative activities and to encourage the group members to submit drafts on time for further discussion. They were encouraged to use emails to make comments on each other’s drafts. Finally, it was made clear to the students that a grade was to be given to them based on their group work and another one was to be given to them based on their final individual submission.

This happened once a week during the classroom and outside the classroom. Following the final completion of the writing tasks, the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire about
the assignment and the collaborative writing sessions to see whether or not the process improved their writing and their attitudes towards the collaborative activities.

Reliability of the Questionnaire

The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was tabulated. The result showed that the overall Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the questionnaire is high ($r = 0.93$) indicating a very high degree of internal consistency, and therefore presenting a considerably reliable instrument.

Results and Discussion

The following section presents results of the questionnaire. It aims to answer the research questions of the current study.

1. Are there significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents based on their gender, level, and GPA towards collaborative learning?

In order to examine whether there is a significant difference between the male and female students and collaborative learning, a t-test was carried out and Table 1 shows that there is a significant difference at 0.025.

**Table 1. t-test for Equality of Means**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.6582</td>
<td>-2.285</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.82871</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means that female students have better perception of collaborative writing activities. This is in line with the literature that shows the females preferences to social activities over males. As explained by Blum (1999) “female students place emphasis on relationships, are empathetic in nature, and prefer to learn in an environment where cooperation is stressed rather than competition” (p. 51). Similarly, this is also in line with the findings of Shwalb and associates (1995) who found that females had higher scores than males in the collaborative activities and Graves and Graves (1984) who found that females express more preference to cooperation than
do males. Finally, Ehrman and Oxford (1989) found that female learners used more communicating meaning strategies.

In order to examine whether there is a significant difference between the high-achieving students and low-achieving students and collaborative learning, a t-test was carried out and Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference at 0.044.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means that low achievers have better attitudes towards collaborative writing activities. This is in line with Abu Radwan (2011) who found statistically significant differences between proficient students and less proficient ones in the overall use of certain learning strategies. Likewise, Awad and Naqeeb (2011) found that there were significant differences in the styles of learning used by the students based on their academic level. It should be noted that high-achieving students could benefit from the collaborative activities as they learn while explaining ideas to others. It is known that sometimes certain issues cannot be understood until they are discussed among learners and that some learners learn better while teaching and they develop their listening skills in group discussions.

In order to examine whether there is a significant difference between second year students and third year students and collaborative learning, a t-test was carried out and Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference at 0.000.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means that sophomore students have better attitudes of collaborative writing activities. This is in line with Abu Radwan (2011) whose findings revealed that the freshmen group consistently used more learning strategies than any other group. Finally, it is in line with Awad and Naqeeb
2. Are there significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents towards collaborative learning and their learning styles?

In order to examine whether there is a significant difference between students attitudes towards collaborative learning and learning better as they study alone, a t-test was carried out and Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference at 0.002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I study alone, I understand better and learn better</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.74068</td>
<td>-3.225</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to examine whether there is a significant difference between students attitudes towards collaborative learning and preference to writing alone, a t-test was carried out and Table 5 shows that there is a significant difference at 0.000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to write alone rather than in a group</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>.77681</td>
<td>-4.244</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous two tables show that the students who prefer to work in groups and understand better and learn better while working in groups have better perception for collaborative writing activities. This is in line with Ellison and Boykin (1994) who found that learners achieved better
following cooperative learning than in individualistic learning experiences. However, it is in contrast with Duxbury and Tsai (2010) found that there were no significant differences between introverts and extroverts in relation to cooperative learning attitudes.

3. What is the general attitude of the respondents towards collaborative learning?

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated covering all questionnaire items to examine the views towards collaborative learning as perceived by Hebron University students. As mentioned above, the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire showed that the overall Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the questionnaire is high ($r = 0.93$) indicating a very high degree of internal consistency, and therefore presenting a considerably reliable instrument (See Table 6 for the calculated means of items and their standard deviation for each statement).

Table 6:

Means and standard for all items in the questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N o.</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Working in groups enhanced our communication skills</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Working in groups stimulated my critical thinking skills</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I had the chance to express my ideas in the group</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>While working in groups, we spent more time generating ideas than I do when I write alone</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Working in groups helped me to have a greater responsibility - for myself and the group</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Working in groups is a waste of time as we keep explaining things to others (Recoded)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>1.526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Overall, this was a worthwhile experience</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>1.315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>While working in groups, we spent more time planning than I do when I write alone</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Working in groups fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experience</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Working in groups improved our performance</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Despite disagreement, the group was able to reach consensus</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Having completed group projects, I feel I am more cooperative in my writing</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>1.046</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Working in groups should be encouraged/continued</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.244</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Having completed group projects, I feel I am more confident to work with other students</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.986</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>We sometimes disagreed about what to say or how to express our ideas</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.967</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Working in groups made problem-solving easier</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.098</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I learned new ways to support my points of view</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Working in groups helped me to receive useful feedback</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.081</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>The group produced a better description and a story as compared to individual writing</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.237</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>While working in groups, we spent more time checking spelling, punctuation and grammar than I do when I write alone</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Working in groups enabled us to help weaker learners in the group</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.401</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I enjoy writing more than I did before due to collaborative writing</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Working in groups helped us to participate actively in the teaching/learning process</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.058</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Working in groups enabled us to use skills which individual assessments do not</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.184</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>I get more work done when I work with others</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>1.406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Working in groups helped me to focus on collective efforts rather than individual effort</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>While working in groups, we spent more time revising than I do when I write alone</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I learned new ways to plan my paragraph from the group</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.137</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Working in groups increased my comprehension</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.198</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Working in groups makes it difficult getting members to actively participate in tasks</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.651</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>While working in groups, all group members contributed equally to the project</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.396</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Working in groups helped me to work in a more relaxed atmosphere</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 6 reveals, most of the items got high to moderate ratings with items number 10 and number 4 getting the highest rating (mean=4.13, 4.02) respectively. This indicates that collaborative learning indeed enhances communication skills among students and stimulates their critical thinking skills. This is in line with a number of studies (Millis, B. J., & Cottell, P. G., 1998, Barkley et al., 2005, Gokhale, 1995; Wong et al., 2009, Nor & Abd. Samad, 2003). For example, Gokhale (1995) reported that students who participated in collaborative learning performed significantly better on the critical thinking test than students who studied individually. Nor and Abd. Samad (2003) found that during collaborative writing interaction, “students could participate at a higher cognitive level, have the chance to interact and incorporate cognitive strategies while interacting” (p.6). The results are also in agreement with Brown (2008) who found that more than 75% of her participants reported that the collaborative learning enhanced their communication skills. Wong et al. (2009) concluded that collaborative activities improved the pupils’ linguistic proficiency.

Similarly, items 23 and 25 got a very high rating (mean=3.95). Both items address issues like expressing ideas and spending more time on generating ideas while working in groups. To some extent, item 22, got a moderate rating (m=3.44). It addresses the issue of learning new ways to plan their paragraphs from their group members. This is in line with Elola and Oskoz (2010) whose respondents regarded the process as highly beneficial for the exchange of ideas and structuring of the essay. Moreover, they “generated ideas and shared them with the intention of creating a more complete text” (p.60).

Item 8 (Working in groups helped me to have a greater responsibility - for myself and the group) got a very high rating (m=3.91). This indicates that collaborative learning helps learners take on responsibility for their own language learning. Likewise, the students agreed with item 9 that working in groups enabled them to help weaker learners in the group (m=3.61) and to focus on collective efforts rather than individual effort as indicated in their ratings for item 7 (m=3.48). This is in agreement with Brown (2008) who reported that over three-quarter (76.5% and 76.2% respectively) agree that CL focused on collective efforts and gave learners greater responsibility for their learning. This is in agreement with Nor and Abd. Samad (2003) as they reported that their students “assisted each other, regardless whether they were proficient writers or the less proficient writers.” In addition to that, it is in line with Wong et al. (2009) whose participants found the activities to be useful and enjoyable as they supported each other. This is also in line with Zariski (1997) where 69% of his participants agreed that “group work helped them be more responsible for [their] own learning” (p.780).

Items 13, 32, 24, 2 and 11 got a high rating (m=3.89, 3.87, 3.86, 3.8 and 3.78) respectively. This means that student did not perceive collaborative learning as a waste of time though they spent a lot of time discussing in groups. It should be noticed that the data for this item has been recoded as it is negatively structured. Responses to negatively stated item (n = 13) were reversed so that
the highest response score was indicative of a positive rating for the statement. This is in agreement with Brown (2008) who interestingly found that 71.2% believe collaborative learning was not a waste of time explaining things to others. This belief is supported by their perception of the whole process and considered it to be a worthwhile experience (m=3.87) revealing a very high degree of agreement among the participants. The learners perceived it a worthwhile experience and not as a waste of time as it helped them to plan and exchange ideas as indicated in items 24 and 2. This means that in collaborative learning students spent more time planning than they do when they write alone (m=3.86) and the process fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experience (m=3.8). All of this contributed to better performance as indicated by the students in the response to item number 11 (m=3.78) (Working in groups improved our performance). This is in agreement with Brown (2008) who reported that CL helped understanding (77.7%) and fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experience (77%). This is also in line with Zariski (1997) where 60% of his participants agreed that group work helped them to learn more than they would on an individual project.

Therefore, the students gave a high rating to item 15 (Working in groups should be encouraged/continued) and recommended the continuation of the collaborative learning experience (m=3.76). Moreover, they felt more cooperative and more confident working with others as indicated in item 16 and 17 (m=3.77, 3.76) respectively. This is in agreement with Brown (2008) who reported 77% of her participants suggested that collaborative learning should be encouraged and continued and Wong et al. (2009) where 83.3% agreed or strongly agreed that they wish they “could participate in more rounds of the group composition activities” (p.7).

Items 20 and 21 address issues that may emerge in collaborative learning; agreement and disagreement. As indicated in item 20 the learners sometimes disagreed about what to say or how to express our ideas (m=3.75). Nevertheless, they were able to reach consensus (=3.78). This is in agreement with Nor and Abd. Samad (2003) as they reported that their participants “disagreed with suggested ideas, gave feedback, planned about text structures and elaborated on these ideas” (p.6).

Items 3, 28, 6, and 31 indicate that the students benefited from the collaborative learning process as the process made problem-solving easier and the students learned new ways to support their points of view (m=3.72). Moreover, they received useful feedback from each other and produced a better description and a story as compared to individual writing (m=3.71). This is in line with several studies that reported that collaborative learning encourages learners to participate constructively and work productively to solve common problems and to be involved in a reasoning process and a problem-solving activity as they are exposed to different interpretations (Bonk and Reynolds, 1997; Millis and Cottell, 1998; Barkley et al., 2005; Bruner, 1985).
Items 26 and 27 got a moderate rating (3.65, 3.48) respectively. This indicates that the students spent more time checking spelling, punctuation and grammar and revising their work than they do when they write alone. Moreover, this is an indication that writing is a recursive process and not a linear process.

Similarly, items 29, 12, 18, and 30, got a moderate rating. The ratings for these items indicate that they enjoyed writing more due to the collaborative writing activities (m=3.58) and to participate actively in the teaching/learning process (m=3.57). This is because they got more work done when they work with others (m=3.49) and because working in groups allows them to use skills which individual assessments do not (m=3.57). This is in line with Wong et al. (2009) where 94.4% of their participants agreed or strongly agreed that they “enjoyed the group composition activities” (p.7).

Likewise, Brown (2008) found in her research that just over half of the respondents found collaborative learning enjoyable. According to her, this implies that almost half of the students found the class boring. This can be explained in the current study by the findings of the first and second questions where students differed in their perception towards collaborative learning depending on the gender, level, proficiency, and learning styles.

The items that got the least agreement are items 14, 19, and 5. The least rating for item number 14 (working in groups made it difficult getting members to actively participate in tasks) can be read positively (mean=3.22) as it means that some students did not find the process very difficult to get group members to participate in the assigned tasks and others found it to be a difficult task. This is to some extent in line with Brown (2008) who found that (61.5%) of her participants agree that it is difficult getting members to actively participate in tasks.

However, most of them strongly disagreed with that all group members contributed equally to the project as indicated in their rating to item (19) (m=3.2). Consequently, they gave the least rating (m=3.19) to item number 5 which is addressing the issue of working in a more relaxed atmosphere. This is in sharp agreement with Brown (2008) who reported “the least percentages of respondents agree that the atmosphere was relaxed (52%)”. Moreover, her participants reported that one of the main negative aspects for collaborative learning is that “some students leave all the work for other group members to do” (p.12). As a solution, Brown (2008) contends that the teacher needs to counsel ‘problem’ students individually to ensure equal participation and to state clear rules “to make sure students know the consequences of not participating actively” (p.12). She concludes that it is “unfair to give group members uniform mark if it is clear that a group member defaulted” (p.12). This means that the collaborative writing process is a demanding one and if a number of factors (time, training, and equal contribution) are not taken into consideration, some students will find it to be a disappointing and frustrating process.
In their evaluation of the collaborative activities, one group summarized the pros and cons of working in groups as follows:

Work group has advantages and disadvantages at the same time. On the one hand, work group is useful in several ways. First, it makes students share their information about the topics they write about. This is a great benefit since many students lack enough background of the surrounding world. Second, it strengthens the bonds among students and makes them know each other more and more, so they get rid of shyness and hesitation of asking their colleagues for help in writing. Third, it enriches the students' vocabulary and understanding of grammar. As a result, students' level of writing will be improved in a very good way. On the other hand, work group has bad consequences. One is that students find it difficult to arrange a suitable time for their meetings, and that gets harder when they do not know each other. Another is that most of students depend on their partners in the same group in doing the whole work. They simply ignore what is supposed to be done by them, so the burden will be heavy on one student, and that is not fair at all. Furthermore, if they are writing an essay, it will be a mixture of different styles, and it will not be well-organized. Things will get worse when all the group members have bad writings; their work will be messy. Finally, sometimes members' debate becomes negative and makes them leave the group, produce a bad essay, or hate the course. Anyway, it is up to the teacher to choose the suitable ways for his students in writing or other activities.

(See Appendix C for more student evaluations of writing activities)

This means that collaborative activities have positive and negative outcomes and students may undergo different experiences. In order to enhance the positive experiences, instructors need to prepare their students well in implementing collaborative writing. In order for the instructors and their students not to have negative experiences, they need to know how to implement collaborative learning from picking the task until the final assessment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

While we are incorporating the notion of change in education, as instructors, we should cater for all our students and we need to use a variety of teaching methods that respect our students and make them active learners to improve and develop life-skill learning, including problem solving and critical thinking. Learners are viewed as constructors of meaning and knowledge. In collaborative learning, learners work collaboratively in groups to discuss interesting and challenging questions and solve real-life problems. Activities are interactive and learner-centred and the load of the instructors is reduced and learners are actively engaged (Astin, 1993; Gokhale, 1995; Slavin, Ellison & Boykin, 1994; Elola & Oskoz, 2010). As a result of implementing the collaborative activities, the current study revealed statistically significant differences between students based on their gender, level of study, proficiency, and learning style showing that females, sophomores, low achievers, and extroverts favored collaborative learning experiences.
Moreover, the general attitudes of the students revealed that collaborative learning enhances communication skills, critical thinking skills and motivation. Furthermore, it makes students responsible for their own learning, thus it makes them autonomous learners. This is in line with a number of studies that were carried out in the field of collaborative learning and which emphasized that collaborative learning facilitates the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences, and creates an interactive and relaxed atmosphere (Astin, 1993; Gokhale, 1995; Slavin, 1987; Ellison & Boykin, 1994; Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Barkley et al. 2005). Such collaborative activities allow learners to exchange fantastic ideas. These wonderful ideas are successful especially when they are shared and further developed. When there is one learner he/she usually has a partial understanding but when there are two or more learners, they have a better understanding as they think, reflect, and are busy in a problem-solving activity that is of interest to them (Gokhale, 1995, Bonk and Reynolds, 1997, Millis, B. J., & Cottell, P. G., 1998, Barkley et al., 2005; Nor & Abd. Samad, 2003). Finally, collaborative learning makes writing enjoyable, meaningful, motivating, relevant, and reduces anxiety as students interact with each other in cooperative problem-solving activities.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends the following: collaborative learning should be an essential component in any university language skill course. Instructors are reflective practitioners who think systematically about their practices and learn from their experiences. As a result, they will be able to contribute effectively to a community of learners. They should offer their students opportunities for making learning stimulating and enjoyable. Instructors should provide their students with collaborative learning activities that are challenging and attractive to all of them and suit their gender and learning styles. The activities should be interesting, novel, and challenging. Finally, instructors should carefully assess both the advantages and limitations of collaborative learning in the writing process.
References


About the author

Mohammed Abdel Hakim Farrah, an assistant Professor of English Language Studies, graduated with a BA from Hebron University in 1990 in English Language and Literature, MA in TESOL from International Islamic University in Malaysia in 1999, Ph.D. in English Language Studies in 2006 from International Islamic University in Malaysia. There are a number of publications in the field of online learning and teaching reading and writing. Administrative positions included Chair of the English Department until the present time, Editorial Secretary of Hebron University Research Journal, and presented a number of papers in local and international conferences. He can be reached at mfarrah2006@yahoo.com or mfarrah@hebron.edu
Appendix A: Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure the students’ attitudes towards collaborative learning. Please read the statements carefully and answer PART I, PART II and PART III. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous.

PART I

**Please, tick (✓) the appropriate box.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A-Gender:</th>
<th>☐ Female</th>
<th>☐ Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B-Year of study:</td>
<td>☐ Second</td>
<td>☐ Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-Current GPA:</td>
<td>☐ Below 60</td>
<td>☐ 60 – 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D- Major</td>
<td>☐ English (Education)</td>
<td>☐ English (Literature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E- When I study alone, I understand better and learn better</td>
<td>1- Yes</td>
<td>2- No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F- I prefer to write alone rather than in a group</td>
<td>1. Yes</td>
<td>2- No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART II

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your views about collaborative learning by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box using the scale given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Working in groups increased my comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in groups fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Working in groups made problem-solving easier</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Working in groups stimulated my critical thinking skills</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Working in groups helped me to work in a more relaxed atmosphere</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Working in groups helped me to receive useful feedback</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Working in groups helped me to focus on collective efforts rather than individual effort</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Working in groups helped me to have a greater responsibility – for myself and the group</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Working in groups enabled us to help weaker learners in the group</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Working in groups enhanced our communication skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Working in groups improved our performance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Working in groups helped us to participate actively in the teaching/learning process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Working in groups is a waste of time as we keep explaining things to others</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Working in groups makes it difficult getting members to actively participate in tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Working in groups should be encouraged/continued</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Having completed group projects, I feel I am more cooperative in my writing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Having completed group projects, I feel I have more confident working with other students</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Working in groups enabled us to use skills which individual assessments do not</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
While working in groups, all group members contributed equally to the project.

We sometimes disagreed about what to say or how to express our ideas.

Despite disagreement, the group was able to reach consensus.

I learned new ways to plan my paragraph from the group.

I had the chance to express my ideas in the group.

While working in groups, we spent more time planning than I do when I write alone.

While working in groups, we spent more time generating ideas than I do when I write alone.

While working in groups, we spent more time checking spelling, punctuation and grammar than I do when I write alone.

While working in groups, we spent more time revising than I do when I write alone.

I learned new ways to support my points of view.

I enjoy writing more than I did before due to collaborative writing.

I get more work done when I work with others.

The group produced a better description and a story as compared to individual writing.

Overall, this was a worthwhile experience.

### Part III:

1. What are the advantages of collaborative writing in class?

2. What are the disadvantages of collaborative writing in class?
Appendix B: guidelines to collaborative learning taken from Texas University Writing Centre.

Collaborative Writing

http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/teaching-writing/instruction/collaborative-writing/

Collaborative writing assignments transform the usually solitary work of writing and editing college papers into a group endeavor. Instructors value such assignments because of their real-world relevance. After all, in most workplaces writing is typically produced by a team or goes through multiple hands for revising. Even in academia we often collaborate on research and co-author journal articles with colleagues. Giving students the opportunities to practice writing and editing with others is a prudent step in preparing them for the world after graduation.

Collaborative assignments can significantly enhance student learning in other ways as well; specifically, they:

• allow students to learn from each other
• expose students to points of view besides their own
• foster discussion and debate
• open students’ eyes to how their work compares to that of their peers, giving them a better sense of their own strengths and weaknesses as writers and thinkers
• encourage students to consider their audience, an important aspect of learning to write effectively and yet a component missing in many traditional assignments
• teach students to negotiate the issues inherent in any collaborative venture.

But collaborative work presents unique issues for an instructor. It can be difficult to assess each student’s contribution to the final product, making assigning grades problematic. While group projects also mean fewer papers to grade, planning the assignment and meeting with students to discuss their progress or settle problems can be time-consuming. Likewise incorporating interim deadlines into the project, such as requiring students to submit drafts or outlines, is essential to the students’ learning and crucial to warding off potential problems. Such additional steps, though, usually mean more work for instructors.

Instructors also need to be certain that students understand when collaborative work is appropriate and when “collaboration” constitutes academic dishonesty. (W course instructors should note that in a W course collaborative writing can account for no more than 50% of the portion of a student’s final grade based on writing quality.)
What is collaborative writing?

“Collaborative writing” describes a full-length writing assignment completed in pairs or small groups. Here are points to keep in mind when assigning collaborative writing:

Pick a Task

When choosing an assignment, teachers who encourage collaborative work suggest that it’s best for instructors to select a task that would be difficult for students to accomplish alone, thus making group work a natural choice. Examples of such projects include a marketing plan for a new business venture or an employee manual.

Choose Teams

Decide whether you’ll assign work groups, let students choose their own, or make the selection randomly. There are advantages and disadvantages to each option, something you might want to discuss with your class.

Spell Out Expectations

Make sure requirements for the assignment are put in writing; students will want to refer back to their assignment sheet periodically. Consider setting interim deadlines for drafts or parts of the project. Talk with students about the need to accommodate the schedules of all group members and remind them that delays in group work are almost inevitable and should be factored into their timeline.

Anticipate Trouble

Acknowledge that group work comes with its own set of hazards. Discuss with students how to handle problems. What will they do with a student who fails to complete tasks? What should they do if they can’t reach a consensus on a key point? What if one student dominates the process? How can students get help if their group seems to be marginalizing them because of race, gender,
or other factors? Setting up a process for handling grievances is a good lesson in how to help a group function effectively.

Consider Assessment

Students need to know how they’ll be graded. Will the entire group receive the same grade? Will group members have any input, such as letting the instructor know who they feel contributed the most or least to the final product? Many students fear that the poor performance of other team members will unfairly affect their grade.

Use Technology

Encourage students to look for ways to let technology simplify their work, such as communicating via e-mail rather than in face-to-face meetings or using software to help present their final product. Conversely, ask them to think about how technology might limit them. For instance, are online discussions as useful as those conducted in person?

A good tool for collaborative writing is available at writerly.com at no cost.
Appendix C: Sample of students’ evaluation for the collaborative writing activities

Group one:

(Advantages)

There are many advantages of collaborative work. First of all, we revise our papers together. If they have errors, we correct them. Another advantage is that the feeling of joy while working together. It is also a good way to be a good critical thinker. When you discuss, you think, therefore you enhance your ability of thinking in many sources of life.

(Disadvantages)

There are several disadvantages of working together. One of these drawbacks is that some students are sometimes so weak in writing, so we do not benefit from them at all. Another disadvantage is that the time we waste in order to discuss and revise a paper in a group. Sometimes we do not have enough time to and we need to meet a deadline. Consequently, we feel so frustrated and embarrassed.

Group Two:

The Advantages of Working in Groups

Working in groups could be the most effective way in solving problems and it has several advantages. First of all, it makes more productive than individuals working. For example, it allows each member to concentrate on the tasks and attempts to find the solutions. Because of the number of people involved each with different experience, knowledge, and points of view for solving a problem. Secondly, it makes the tasks easier than working alone. For instance, when we distribute the duties and responsibilities between members, we will find that the works end quickly and also in a good shape. Finally, the exchange of ideas can act as a stimulus to the imagination, encouraging individuals to explore ideas they would not otherwise consider. In conclusion, it’s an interesting thing to work in a group and exchange our ideas with others.

The Disadvantages of Working in Groups

Although there are very clear advantages in working in groups, but there are also some disadvantages. Firstly, it leads to arguments between members. For example, if one of the groups’
members disagreed with others opinions, it will make him try to interrupt the ideas of those whom disagreed with him. Secondly, sometimes there are some members who work harder than others. We always see that there are one or two students who work a lot and others just see which is a very annoying thing. Finally, sometimes it’s hard to contact with all the members of the group may be because you isn’t know their phones number or because there’s no time to contact them. To conclude, working in groups doesn’t always a useful thing, it also has many disadvantages.

Group Three:

The advantages and the disadvantages of the group work

I think that group work has several advantages, such as, take advantage of the multiplicity of views, sharing our ideas with each others, benefiting of our mistakes to improve the work .By contrast, working in a group has some disadvantages, For example, different opinions create disagreement and sensitivity. Also, it needs time commitment, but not all of us have that. And some may work less than others. (Format)

Group Four:

The advantages of groupwork

The collective action has a lot of advantages for many reasons. First, it helps students to correct spelling and grammatical mistakes, choose the best vocabulary, and discuss their thought about the subject. Second, it encourages them to work and write effectively, and develops their sentence skills. The most important thing is to help some weak students by sharing useful thoughts.

The disadvantages of groupwork

The collective action has some disadvantages for two reasons. First, some students don't attend the group meeting. Second, some students can't think with other students, some students disagree with to their opinion, and some of them don't have good ideas.
Group five:

After we have experienced the collaborative learning process, we found that if we got advantages or disadvantages, that depended on the group members we worked with, because when they are responsible and competent, they are helpful and able to help you discover the mistakes in our essays, whether they were in grammar, spelling, unity, organization, or in any other characteristics of a good essay. Moreover, they gave us advice how to reduce and get rid of our problems. But when some are not committed, we got no advantages; we have just waste of our time.

Group Six:

The advantages:

Work group is very good because it develops the social communication between the students, and allows mutual learning by exchanging ideas, information and knowledge. Also, it develops the writing skills by giving new ideas for writing, and by attracting attention to the different mistakes that students may commit. In work group also, there is a chance to divide the responsibility on the students which makes writing an essay very easy. It creates the motivation for everyone to work and to stick to the required duty.

The disadvantages:

As we said the work group is very good in case there were responsible and hardworking students. But it turns to a disaster if there were indifferent students. The whole responsibility will be done by one student because no one helps or cares about what would happen. All students will depend on one student to do everything. They consider this work as something good because they will not do anything. One student suffers and the rest are so comfortable. Another problem is when the students have the same ideas, so all the ideas will be repeated. Some students are cooperative in other groups and some are indifferent that they don’t come to the work or they ignore their responsibility.

Group Seven:

Working in Group

Working in groups has many advantages. First, we share more ideas, which lead to good, effective discussion. I give my opinions, the others give theirs and we exchange them. New
information is introduced among us every time we do that; therefore, this exchange benefits us more. Moreover, working in group helps discovering the errors one does because sometimes one doesn’t notice his or her mistakes. In addition, this kind of working advances our performance by thinking together. Also, it is good for the revision process because simply as we said, it helps discovering mistakes. We can advance that by peer feedback among the members of the group.

However, working in group has disadvantages. For example, some students don’t attend the group and this procrastinates our work. Sometimes the absence of one member disrupts the whole work, especially when it is connected directly with this member. Also, working in group leads to carelessness. In other words, the responsibility is not personal as in individual work. Therefore, some students rely on others in performing such work. Another disadvantage of group working is fanaticism. When everyone insists on is or her own ideas, what does group working have to do with that? It is hard sometimes to convince the others with our thoughts. This becomes a problem when we have such people in the group; so the exchange turns into a dispute. Another important drawback of working in group, or rather the most important one is that it doesn’t reveal the actual performance for students or for one student, especially when one dominates the work. We can’t know who really participated and who didn’t.
Raising Pragmatic Awareness of Students through Classroom Activities

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Abstract

English Language curricula pay adequate attention to teaching and testing linguistic competence but often fail to give equal emphasis to pragmatic competence. Students with a high level of proficiency in English do not necessarily have the required level of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Wiemann & Backlund, 1980; Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1998). They are often unaware of the significance of politeness in verbal communication and the manner in which the choice of words, phrases and structure of sentences conveys politeness. Children acquiring their first language usually learn to communicate politely by observing their parents or caretakers using the language. Speakers of English as a second language, however, may not have adequate opportunities to learn about politeness norms in the language. It would be useful, therefore, to draw students’ attention to polite ways of communicating in English. The paper describes some activities that were used in an English course, at a tertiary-level institute in India, to make students aware of the manner in which language can convey politeness or the lack of it, in communication.
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Key words: politeness, pragmatic competence, face, requests, mitigating strategies

Introduction

The fact that there are various ways of conveying a message suggests that a message contains more than the propositional content. Halliday (1967, in Misra, 2009) described the various functions of language such as the textual, ideational and interpersonal functions. As far back as the 1920s, the importance of language in social interaction was recognized by Malinowski (cited in Coupland et.al, 1992), who coined the term ‘phatic communion’ to describe the role of language in establishing bonds between the interlocutors.

McCarthy (2001, p.48), describing the manner in which attitudes towards language have influenced pedagogy, states that there is a ‘cline of beliefs’ about language. At one end of the cline is the view that language is an abstract system, while at the other end is the view that language is a social phenomenon.

As social interaction is one of the important functions of a language, speakers need to be polite to their listeners, unless they deliberately want to be impolite. Effective communication also requires that speakers and listeners have a common code of symbols, which depends on the amount of shared knowledge between them. Linguistic and cultural differences between interlocutors are likely to affect the manner in which a message is encoded or decoded.

Although most students are able to communicate politely in their first language or L1, conveying politeness through verbal communication in the second language often poses a challenge to them. Several studies have highlighted the fact that a speaker’s proficiency in English is no indicator of his/her pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1998; Taguchi, 2007). A lack of awareness of politeness norms and strategies in the second language may lead to miscommunication between members of different linguistic groups. Kasper (1990, p.193) observes that speakers who are not very competent in a language, such as non-native speakers, “suffer the perennial risk of inadvertently violating politeness norms, thereby forfeiting their claims to being treated as social equals.”
Commenting on the disparity in pragmatic competence between learners/non-native speakers (NNS) and native speakers (NS), Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998, p. 234) state that the difference may be due to the limited input available to learners and the lack of a sufficient range and emphasis on relevant examples. Kasper (1996, p.148, cited in Bardovi–Harlig and Dörnyei, 1998, p.235) emphasizes the importance of three conditions for the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge: “There must be pertinent input, the input has to be noticed, and learners need ample opportunity to develop a high level of control.” Teachers of English as a second language, therefore, need to provide the necessary inputs to students to help them notice and understand the importance of pragmatic competence for effective communication. This paper describes the activities used in the classroom to create pragmatic awareness. The activities include role plays, rewriting the dialogues of a literary text, and letter writing. The paper does not attempt a quantitative analysis of students’ pragmatic competence.

The context described in the paper is a national institute of technology, a tertiary-level co-educational institute. Students from various linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds study in the institute, which is largely residential. As a result of the linguistic diversity on the campus, English is the language of communication among students and between students and faculty. Discussions with students of the English course revealed that some of them faced problems while communicating with faculty. In fact, some of them admitted that they were afraid to ask for clarifications in the class, after a lecture, for the fear of offending the faculty. Further reflection revealed that the problem lay in phrasing questions and answers. While students felt at ease when communicating in the mother tongue, which they often did with their peers in informal contexts, they felt less comfortable while using English. Students on the campus are known to use English with a liberal mixture of slang and words from the regional languages. As this variety of language is used for in-group communication, there are fewer chances of miscommunication that may result from the lack of explicit politeness markers in the language. However, when students need to communicate in formal contexts and with people outside their peer group such as elders and faculty, they tend to face problems. Therefore, attempts were made to help students improve their pragmatic competence, in the English course.

The paper examines the notion of communicative competence, politeness in communication, and the implications of cultural differences. The paper describes a few activities that were used in the classroom to focus on politeness norms in English, used in the context of requests. The English course titled Communication skills in English was a semester-length course, offered to students in the second year of their undergraduate programme. The age of the students ranged between 18 and 20.
Pragmatic competence – an integral aspect of communicative competence

The importance of communication skills for success in the world has been widely recognized. Studies have also highlighted the fact that a high level of proficiency in a language does not imply that students are equipped with the necessary communication skills. Based on a study of university students in Singapore, Fatt (1991, p.43) observes that students who are ‘structurally competent’ may be communicatively incompetent, and highlights the need to help students acquire communicative competence.

Describing the educational process in the United States in their paper on theory and research in communicative competence, Wiemann and Backlund (1980, p.185) state that educators should identify speech communication competencies necessary for effectiveness in the classroom (as well as in other social environments) and develop curricula for teaching the social skills at all levels.

The term ‘communicative competence’ has been defined differently at different times. Chomsky (1965) distinguished between competence and performance, competence referring to the ideal native speaker-listener’s knowledge of the language and performance referring to the use of the language. The meaning of competence was restricted to ‘linguistic competence.’ Hymes (1971), on the other hand, offered a broader definition of communicative competence that incorporated knowledge of linguistic rules as well as social rules, which enable speakers to achieve their communicative goals.

Wiemann (1977, in Wiemann and Backlund, 1980, p.188) defines communicative competence as “a repertoire of skills appropriate to a variety of relationships and contexts.” His definition includes a speaker’s need to pay attention to the face needs (Goffman, 1967) of the hearer/s. Wiemann states that competent speakers are those who can use their communicative skills to successfully accomplish their interpersonal goals while maintaining the face of their fellow interactants.

The notion of competence was further modified by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). According to their model (Juan and Flor, 2008), communicative competence comprises grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and discourse
competence. The term sociolinguistic competence also included pragmatic competence, which implies knowledge of the socio-cultural rules of a language.

Language competence, according to Bachman (1990, in Kasper, 2010) comprises two components – ‘organizational competence’ and ‘pragmatic competence.’ The competences include the ability to organize linguistic units in meaningful ways at the levels of sentence and discourse, as well as the ability to use a language to achieve one’s communicative goals.

Pragmatic competence has been widely regarded as an important aspect of communicative competence. According to Kim and Hall (2002, p.332), pragmatic knowledge and skills that are essential for effective communication include “knowledge of contextually situated vocabulary words, routinized language patterns, and extra linguistic behaviour,” that enables speakers to use a language for various communicative functions such as initiating a conversation, making a request, seeking a clarification, greeting people, making critical remarks, expressing gratitude and emotions and offering apologies. Proficient speakers make linguistic choices that are appropriate to the context, such as a formal or an informal context, the addressee, and the communicative function.

Politeness in language

The recognition of the importance of social rules, in addition to the linguistic rules of a language, for communication contributed to a surge of interest in pragmatics. This, according to Levinson (1983, pp.35-36), “developed in part as a reaction or antidote to Chomsky’s treatment of language as an abstract device, or mental ability, dissociable from the uses, users and functions of language…”

One of the key concerns of pragmatics is the study of politeness rules/behaviour in languages. In his paper on the structure and use of politeness formulas, Ferguson (1976, p.137) states that the use of interpersonal verbal routines such as ‘greetings’ and ‘thanks’ is a universal phenomenon of human languages and is similar to the ‘greeting’ behaviour of animals.

Ferguson conducted an informal experiment in which he did not reply verbally to his secretary’s good morning, but smiled at her. He did this for two days and witnessed the tension that his
behaviour generated in his office. He states: “The importance of our trivial, muttered, more-or-less automatic polite phrases becomes clear when they are omitted or not acknowledged.” (Ferguson, 1976, pp.140 -141).

In any kind of social interaction, a speaker (S) usually tries to cooperate with a listener/hearer (H), and one of the ways of doing this is by being polite. Describing linguistic politeness as a communicative activity, Axia and Baroni (1985, p.918), discuss the two general rules of pragmatic competence identified by Lakoff (1973). They state that the first rule is “Be clear,” which corresponds with Grice’s (1975) maxims. The second rule, according to Axia and Baroni (1985, p.918), is “Be polite.” The rule implies that a speaker should be friendly and not impose on a listener. A speaker should give options to the listener and make him/her feel good. The rules are believed to be necessary, because the main aim of communication is not only exchanging information and ideas but also maintaining good interaction.

In Brown and Levinson’s view (1978), politeness is shown by paying attention to the hearer’s face (Goffman, 1955, in Allan, 1986, pp.10-11), which refers to the public self-image of an individual. A hearer or a person is said to ‘lose face’ when certain words or actions lead to his or her embarrassment. On the other hand, when there is no threat to the person’s image, the hearer is able to ‘maintain face.’

The concept of face is particularly important in the context of making requests, as orders and requests are viewed as speech acts that usually threaten the addressee’s face. An utterance that has the potential to threaten a person’s face is called a face threatening act (FTA). Any request that requires a hearer to spend effort to oblige the speaker is said to be an imposition. The level of imposition depends on the nature of the task. Requests, therefore, need to be formulated very politely. Axia and Baroni (1985, p.918) state that “a ‘redressive’ action may take the form of linguistic politeness intended to assure the addressee that the speaker recognizes the addressee’s need for non-interference by others.” Thus, the utterances that are exchanged in our daily social interaction can have varying effects on the interactants. Every utterance has the potential to “maintain, enhance or threaten H’s face in just the way he intends to affect it, while at the same time maintaining or enhancing his own face” (Allan, 1986, p.10).

In any communicative situation, the degree of politeness that utterances reflect depends on several factors such as the relationship between the speaker/s and hearer/s or the interactants, their relative social status and the action that an utterance is intended to achieve. Allan (1986)
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describes these factors as D rating, P rating and R rating. D rating refers to the social distance between a speaker and a hearer which, in turn, depends on their age, gender and socio-cultural background. P rating refers to the power relations between the speaker and the hearer. If a speaker has more power in a particular context, he/she has a superior rating. R rating is based on the goal that an utterance is intended to achieve. If the speaker was asking the hearer for a small favour, the rating would be low. On the other hand, if S was asking for a big favour, or if the imposition was higher, the R rating would be high as well. Thus, in order to be cooperative, a speaker increases the amount of politeness in proportion to the increase in the ratings, or uses less face threatening ways of communication with the hearer. Using mitigating strategies is one way of reducing the threat to face.

Most native speakers of a language are able to use the language that is appropriate to a situation and the addressee. According to Allan (1986, p.11), knowing how to use a language correctly involves the ability of a speaker to understand the values of various factors such as social status, power and degree of imposition and “correlate them with certain language expressions, ways of speaking, tone of voice etc. in order to produce an utterance that has the intended face affect.” If the score is high and the speaker does not use effective politeness strategies, the hearer may be insulted. If, on the other hand, the score is low and the speaker is polite, the speaker is flattered. When a speaker is uncertain about the strategies to use, it is safer to flatter the hearer unless the speaker wants to insult him/her. Allan notes that non-native speakers often fail to achieve this ability and therefore unintentionally cause offence.

Cultural differences and pragmatic failure

Problems in communication usually arise because of the difference in the pragmatics of different cultures. While speakers may be familiar with the politeness norms in their first language, they may be unfamiliar with the norms in the second language.

In English, for example, the terms of address sir and your honour are used to indicate respect to the addressee, but English does not encode the social ranks of the participants. In Chinese, on the other hand, “every use of terms of address can be regarded as confirmation of the addressee’s status” (Hong, 1985, p.204). In Japanese, the relative social ranks of the participants and referents are grammaticalized (Levinson, 1983). Although Japanese have their own norms of politeness, they have problems when communicating with Americans. According to Kitao (1988, p.1), “The biggest problem Japanese have in communication with Americans is their lack of proficiency in
English and the misunderstandings that can result. One area of communicative competence in which Japanese people have problems is politeness.”

In most of the languages spoken in India, one of the ways of indicating politeness is using the plural forms of pronouns, or the honorific forms, to address and refer to individuals. In Hindi, for example, the second person pronoun ‘you’ has three variants: tu, tum (singular) and aap (plural/honorific). Tu and tum are used among status equals, whereas aap, the honorific form, is used when there is greater social distance between the speaker and hearer (Misra, 1977). The verbs are accordingly inflected to agree with the pronouns. Often, the use of honorific forms serves as a mitigating strategy in requests. Other politeness strategies in Indian languages include addressing a person by titles or their names/titles along with honorific forms. Most languages in India also have distinct words and phrases that are categorized as exaltation forms, humble forms and neutral forms, which convey different degrees of politeness. A speaker may exalt the hearer or humble himself/herself through the selection of appropriate words and phrases, and speaking in a low pitch. Sometimes, the speaker may not speak at all (Jain, 1969; Srivastava and Pandit, 1987). Politeness also varies according to the construction of sentences (Pandharipande, 1979). In request situations for instance, interrogatives are usually considered to be more polite than imperatives. However, when direct requests are used, the use of honorific forms and diminutives such as ‘a bit/a little’ serve as mitigating strategies.

Languages differ on yet another dimension in relation to polite behaviour. While some languages frequently employ formulaic expressions, some languages are less dependent on such expressions. Politeness is expressed situationally (Hong, 1985). Ferguson (1976) observes that the structure and use of politeness formulas are culture specific. For example, ‘good morning’ is a common greeting in English, and the response is an echo of the same greeting, ‘good morning.’ This formulaic greeting, however, is not a universal feature.

Politeness rules are usually acquired along with one’s first language. Describing the acquisition of politeness rules in Hindi, an Indian language, Jain (1969, pp.85-86) states that children learn the rules of respect by observing the use of linguistic forms in various domains. Children are also explicitly taught to show respect to others in speech and otherwise. When children aged between 4-5 years use rules of respect, they are rewarded with verbal praise, and wrong use is corrected. After the age of about 8-10, children are reprimanded for incorrect use of the language. Jain states that “the verbalization of respect, particularly in this way, becomes a measure of social acceptability” (Jain, 1969, p.86).
A study conducted by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990, in Kasper, 2010) highlighted the differences in the pragmatic competence of native and non-native speakers of English. As a consequence of their lack of ability to use mitigating strategies and offer suggestions or reject the advice of the course advisers, non-native speakers were less successful in obtaining the consent of their teachers for the course they preferred.

Rules of politeness vary not only across languages, but also across speech communities speaking the same language. Fatt (1991, p.43) comments on the culture specific nature of communicative competence, based on his study among university students in Singapore. He states: “We cannot insist, for example, that Singaporeans behave with English in a way culturally appropriate in the West. Singapore English as an official language has its own right to local communicative competence…”

As a second language is not acquired like the first language, conscious efforts need to be made to teach speakers to communicate politely. Teachers need to provide sufficient input in the target language, create pragmatic awareness, and provide opportunities to test their pragmatic competence.

Teaching pragmatic competence

Reading is observed to help students improve their communicative competence, including pragmatic competence. A study in Korea (Kim and Hall, 2002) found that children’s participation in an interactive book reading program helped them improve their pragmatic competence. The children’s use of language during role play sessions was observed over a 4-month period. There were significant changes in the mean number of words, utterances and talk management features.

Vygotsky (1978, in Kim & Hall, 2002) highlighted the usefulness of role plays for language development in children. Role plays provide opportunities for participants to act in accordance with the norms associated with the characters they are playing. Kim and Hall (2002, p.336) observe that “these opportunities not only allow the children to explore through language, trying out different voices, and rehearsing different constructions. They also provide compelling evidence of the children’s understandings of their sociocultural worlds.”
Wiemann and Backlund (1980, pp.195-196) described some of the common strategies that are used to study communicative competence, and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the methods. They classified the methods into three broad categories: third person observation, vicarious participation and actual participation, including self-reporting.

The present study used role plays, the vicarious participation method, by using an extract of a literary text, and letter writing, to raise the pragmatic awareness of students.

Raising pragmatic awareness in the classroom

In order to emphasize the significance of politeness in communication, a few activities were used in the classroom.

*Role plays*

Students at the Institute come from various linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. Some students have studied through the English medium, whereas some students have studied through the vernacular medium. Although students have different levels of proficiency in English, they are compelled to use English when speaking to faculty and to students whose first language is different from their own. Problems in communication arise sometimes because students are not aware of the linguistic politeness strategies in English.

For the role plays, three request situations that are a normal part of students’ lives on the campus were selected. The situations were arranged according to the degree of imposition on the hearer, from the least to the most imposing. Two groups of students were selected for each task. The students were asked to perform the role plays in the specified order, with the least imposing request being performed first. The students were not aware of the purpose of the activity. The students who were to perform the role plays were asked to remain in a separate room till they were called to the classroom, and join the class after their role play. The role plays were recorded so that the linguistic as well as the prosodic features such as the intonation could be discussed.

The rest of the class was told about the purpose of the activity. They were asked to note the language used by each group for each of the three situations. Given below are the instructions for the role plays:
a. You need a ride up to the main gate of the campus. Request your friend to give you a ride on his/her bicycle.

b. You are writing an exam and your pen has run out of ink. The only person from whom you can borrow a pen, without disturbing the rest of the class, is your teacher who is invigilating the exam. Request your teacher to lend you a pen.

c. You are short of the required percentage of attendance in order to appear for your examination. If you do not complete the course, you will not be awarded your degree. Request your teacher, who is known to be very strict, to condone the shortage in attendance.

After all the groups had performed the role plays, the language that was used was analyzed. The recordings were played in class and the significance of linguistic features as well as the intonation was discussed. The students were asked to make judgements about which group was more polite in each situation.

For the first situation, students performed the role plays without any hesitation. The ‘head acts’ (Blum-Kulka et. al, 1989) or the actual requests, which do not include the other aspects of the speech act used in the situation, were as follows:

Situation a, Group 1: “Can you just drop me at the gate?”

Situation a, Group 2: “I want a ride up to the gate.”

Commenting on the role play, most of the students said that the indirect request “Can you just drop me at the gate?” was more polite than the direct request, “Drop me at the gate.” The occurrence of the word ‘just’ before the verb, is quite frequent in Indian English, and serves to mitigate the imposition of a request. This is probably due to the fact that in Indian languages diminutives such as /zǝra/ (Hindi) and /konjem/ (Tamil), which mean ‘a little’, and denote quantity or intensity, are used as mitigators in requests. The students who felt that direct requests were polite argued that students were not very formal when they spoke to their friends. In real situations, they would even signal to indicate that they wanted a lift rather than make an explicit request, especially if they were familiar with the hearer. Students, however, agreed that the use of ameliorators such as ‘please’ and modals such as ‘can’ and ‘could’ would sound more polite than an imperative sentence such as “I want a ride.”

For the second situation in which a student had to request the teacher to lend him/her a pen, one group made the request bald on record saying, “I want to borrow a pen.” The second group, however, used hints such as “My pen has run out of ink”, and “I don’t have an extra pen.” The
class was unanimous in their opinion that the second group was more polite. In the discussion that followed, some students pointed out that the utterance “I am losing time” (appendix 1) did not sound very polite and indicated the student’s impatience. Moreover, the sentence reflected a concern for the speaker rather than the hearer. The students’ attention was drawn to the face threat involved in the utterance.

The third situation for the role play proved to be challenging for the students. Shortage of attendance is viewed as an offence in the institute. Students often try to persuade the faculty to condone the shortage in attendance, but rarely succeed. The students realized that the first role play situation demanded only a few words/sentences, whereas the other role plays required more negotiation and tact. Whereas the first group used the bald-on-request strategy, the second group began with an apology (self-humbling) and impersonalizing the request by using a passive sentence: “We were requested to get your permission.” Both the role plays contained hedges. In the discussion that followed, students felt that bald-on-request strategies were not polite in the given context.

The use of role plays helped illustrate the fact that the amount of politeness depends on the degree of imposition of a request. The importance of the context of communication and the role relationships between interlocutors and the manner in which these factors influence linguistic choices was discussed. Students were made aware of the politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1978) used in requests, in English.

After a week after the role plays were performed, the students had to write an examination and one of the students actually had to borrow a pen because her pen had run out of ink. The student apologized profusely for having to borrow a pen and conveyed the request indirectly, in contrast to the direct request used in the role play (appendix 1). A comparison of the texts of the role play (text A) and the real-life conversation (text B) shows that the text of the role play is much longer than that of the real-life conversation. Text B is shorter because of the urgency of the situation and the spontaneity of the speech. The language employed, however, is polite. The incident provides anecdotal evidence of the usefulness of teaching pragmatic competence in the classroom.

*Dialogue writing*
A scene from a play (Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*), which had three characters, was chosen for the experiment (appendix 2). Copies of the extract were handed to students. The class was divided into groups, with two groups working on the dialogues of each character. Thus, there were six groups.

The scene is one in which the characters, a mother and her two children (a boy and a girl), are out in the cold weather. The son has been sent to fetch a cab for the three of them to return home. It is raining, and the characters are desperate to reach home. They are impatient, as the son has not brought a cab although he has been away for a while.

The students were asked to judge which of the three characters was polite or rude, based on their speech, and rewrite the dialogues, making the characters appear the opposite of what they thought they were. The mother, for example, is very gentle with her son and does not use language that is face threatening, whereas the daughter speaks rudely. Students were asked to rewrite the dialogues of the daughter to make her sound more polite. As there are various ways of indicating politeness through language, two groups of students were assigned the same tasks. The dialogues written by each group were compared and discussed in class.

The students were told about the strategies that could be used to attend to the positive and negative face of the hearer (Goffman, 1967). For example, in order to attend to the positive face of a hearer, S may complement H, empathize with H, avoid disagreeing with H, or humble himself/herself (Allan, 1986, p.15). In order to attend to the negative face of a hearer, a speaker may impersonalize the imposition, avoid explicit reference to H, suggest that he/she would share in carrying out the act (an expression of solidarity with H), use hedging (use words such as *perhaps* etc.), ameliorators such as *please*, and tag questions (that appear to seek H’s consent).

The class was able to successfully rewrite the dialogues. Given below are the original dialogues by one of the characters, and the dialogues written by both the groups of students.

*Original lines in the play* *The Daughter*: And what about us? Are we to stay here all night in this draught, with next to nothing on? You selfish pig-

*Rewritten dialogues by Group 1*: Could you please think about us? It would be difficult to stay here all night in this draught, wouldn’t it?
Rewritten dialogues by Group 2: Oh Freddy! Please try again to get a cab. I know we are being selfish and unreasonable, but please understand we are extremely tired.

The dialogues written by the first group of students show that they have used an ameliorator, please, and a question tag, which make the request sound more polite than the original dialogue of the play. Some of the words and phrases used in the original dialogues such as ‘with next to nothing on’ and ‘you selfish pig’ have also been removed to reduce the intensity of the face threat.

In the dialogues written by the second group, the character is addressed by his name, appealing to his positive face. The group has not only used the word please twice, but has also used self-humbling strategies by saying “I know we are being selfish and unreasonable.” Certain words from the original dialogues such as ‘selfish pig’ have been dropped and the sentences have been rephrased by removing the face threatening content.

At the end of the classroom exercise, the role relationships between the characters were discussed in order to account for the variation in the degree of politeness in the speech of the mother and daughter, when addressing the boy. Students were able to understand that a lack of politeness markers is also due to the intimacy between the interlocutors. The exercise helped illustrate the manner in which linguistic choices influence meaning. Students not only enjoyed the activity but also became aware of the politeness strategies used in English. In most of the Indian languages, for example, the use of honorific forms of address helps to mitigate the degree of imposition. The use of address forms, however, depends on the role relationships. Politeness markers are used when the addressor and addressee are status unequals rather than when they are status equals. (Srivastava and Pandit, 1987).

Letter writing

Letter writing is one of the tasks that most English language courses in India include. Yet, many students, in spite of their linguistic competence, and their knowledge of the discourse genre, appear to lack pragmatic competence. In letter writing, for example, students use the honorific terms of address such as sir or madam and even the self-humbling strategies such ‘yours faithfully’, in a formulaic fashion. Often, however, they do not use the necessary politeness
strategies in the body of the letter. They tend to convey a request or a complaint in a blunt or ‘bald-on-record’ manner (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

As writing letters and emails is an important part of business communication, students in the English course were tested on their letter writing skills in the summative examination. A letter of complaint was given, and students were asked to rewrite the letter, making the necessary changes in the format and content of the letter (Appendix 3). For example, the date, subject line and the complimentary close were missing in the letter that was given to them. The letter was also not written in the three-part structure, with an introduction and the interactional elements, the body of the letter, and a request for action, that is usually recommended in business communication textbooks. The letter also contained a few grammatical errors that students needed to correct. The aim of the task was to test their linguistic, sociolinguistic (including pragmatic competence) and discourse competence (Canale and Swain, 1980).

Most of the students were able to write the letter quite effectively. There was a significant change in their letter writing skills when compared to the first time they wrote letters. Students were able to write the letter in the correct format, correct the grammatical errors and also use politeness strategies. Some of the letters (see sample in appendix 3) reflected an improvement in their pragmatic competence.

Conclusion

The activities used in the classroom helped sensitize students to the importance of not only linguistic rules but also the socio-cultural rules of a language, for effective communication. The activities enabled students to understand the significance of politeness in verbal communication, and more importantly, the function of language in social interaction. It was possible to demonstrate the manner in which language varies, depending on various factors such as the context, the status and role relationships of the interlocutors and the functions of language. The language of requests, for example, necessitates a careful choice of linguistic elements.

Role plays provided opportunities to students to test their communication skills, and to teachers to assess the students’ perceptions of the language used by different people in different situations. Extracts from literary texts provided students the necessary language input and vicarious
experience of social interaction. Dialogue writing as well as letter writing activities helped students test their writing skills that included their knowledge of linguistic and social rules.

In order to be good communicators, students need to know what constitutes communicative competence and how to use language appropriately. Students should have a theoretical knowledge of pragmatic competence, as this is an often neglected aspect of second language curricula. Further, students should be given opportunities to test their abilities in the classroom. As Wieman and Backlund (1980, p.190) state, “students must not only know about communication, but know how to communicate effectively.”

References:


A note on the author

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Appendix 1

**Text A: Role play of a student asking for a pen in an examination hall**

Student: Ma’am! My pen has run out of ink. Ma’am, can I? ... (pause)

Student: I don’t have an extra pen.

Teacher: You have come to an exam; you’re supposed to carry all these things. Aren’t you?

Student: I know. I know ma’am, but. I thought I got an extra pen. Can you please lend me your pen?

Teacher: I just have a red pen and your professor will not evaluate your paper, if you write with this.
Student: Ma’am, it is ok ma’am. I am losing time. I have to write my exam. Otherwise I don’t know.

Text B: Anecdote in an examination hall that shows a student asking for a pen.

Student: Excuse me ma’am!

Teacher: Yes

Student: I’m sorry. I’m sorry, I shouldn’t be doing this. … (pause) My pen isn’t writing.

Teacher: (I give my pen).

Student: Thank you ma’am.

Student returns the pen after the exam, smiles and says:

Student: Thank you for the pen ma’am. I’m very sorry… (voice trails).

Appendix - 2

A scene from Act I of Pygmalion (1916) by Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

London at 11.15 p.m. Torrents of heavy summer rain. Cab whistles blowing frantically in all directions. Pedestrians running for shelter into the portico of St. Paul’s church (not Wren’s cathedral but Inigo Jones’s church in Covent Garden vegetable market), among them a lady and her daughter in evening dress. All are peering out gloomily at the rain, except one man with his back turned to the rest, wholly preoccupied with a notebook in which he is writing.

The church clock strikes the first quarter.

A1. The Daughter: [in the space between the central pillars, close to the one on her left] I’m getting chilled to the bone. What can Freddy be doing all this time? He’s been gone twenty minutes.

B1. The Mother: [on her daughter’s right] Not so long. But he ought to have got us a cab by this.
A Bystander: [on the lady’s right] He won’t get no cab not until half-past eleven, missus, when they come back after dropping their theatre fares.

B2. The Mother: But we must have a cab. We can’t stand here until half-past eleven. It’s too bad.

The Bystander: Well, it aint my fault, missus.

A2. The Daughter: If Freddy had a bit of gumption, he would have got one at the theatre door.

B3. The Mother: What could he have done, poor boy?

A3. The Daughter: Other people got cabs. Why couldn’t he?

Freddy rushes in out of the rain from the Southampton Street Side, and comes between them closing a dripping umbrella. He is a young man of twenty, in evening dress, very wet round the ankles.

A4. The Daughter: Well, haven’t you got a cab?

C1. Freddy: There’s not one to be had for love or money.

B4. The Mother: Oh, Freddy, there must be one. You can’t have tried.

A5. The Daughter: It’s too tiresome. Do you expect us to go and get one ourselves?

C2. Freddy: I tell you they’re all engaged. The rain was so sudden: nobody was prepared; and everybody had to take a cab. I’ve been to Charing Cross one way and nearly to Ludgate Circus the other; and they were all engaged.

B5. The Mother: Did you try Trafalgar Square?

C3. Freddy: There wasn’t one at Trafalgar Square.

A6. The Daughter: Did you try?

C4. Freddy: I tried as far as Charing Cross Station. Did you expect me to walk to Hammersmith?

A7. The Daughter: You haven’t tried at all.

B6. The Mother: You really are very helpless, Freddy. Go again; and don’t come back until you have found a cab.

C5. Freddy: I shall simply get soaked for nothing.

A8. The Daughter: And what about us? Are we to stay here all night in this draught, with next to nothing on? You selfish pig-
Appendix 3 (Letter writing)

Text A

Task: Given below is a letter of complaint. Rewrite the letter, adding any missing information and making the necessary changes in the format, content and tone of the letter. Grammatical errors, if any, should be corrected.

Omega Furniture
76, Mount Road,
Chennai

Ref: AB/932

The Manager
Comfort Mattresses
Chennai

Dear Sir

I have received the mattresses for which I have placed an order through the order number AB/932. I want to inform you that 65 of the mattresses that were sent are soiled or damaged. I am very unhappy. I was placed an order with your company because one of my friend had recommended it. How can you do this to me?

Nitin Agarwal
Text B - A letter written by one of the students in response to the task (refer to text A)

Dear Sir,

Sub: Replacement of damaged mattresses.

Thank you for delivering the 200 mattresses that I had ordered through order number AB/932. I wish to inform you that 65 of the mattresses that were sent to us are either soiled or damaged.

Your company has a good reputation in the field. In fact, one of my friends had recommended your company. However, we are disappointed with the quality of the products. I am sure, it is a mistake. We need the mattresses in a week’s time as we have received several orders from hotels and hostels.

I hope you understand the urgency of the situation and replace the damaged mattresses. I would be grateful to you if you could send the products within a week.

Yours faithfully,

Nitin Agarwal

[General Manager]
Composition Teachers from Different Cultures: Where is Pedagogy?i

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Abstract
This paper combines pedagogical reflection and composition theory research to offer new knowledge and advance the discussion of a significant multidisciplinary issue related to international teaching assistants (ITAs). It highlights the challenging experience of teaching composition in the United States upon these teachers’ new entry to the country and its culture. It argues that there are teaching experiences that merit more attention as fresh, international teachers are increasingly joining US institutions and making it to the composition classroom, without having already been engaged in a pedagogical dialogue that facilitates their task. By sharing his personal experience and surveying other teachers, the author opens a forum to listen to these teachers as they express anxiety, embarrassment, and pressure due to facing cultural differences without having enough exposure to their students’ prior knowledge. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to call attention to similar (global) situations and to receive scholarly evaluation and solutions from experts in the field. The proposed solution is to start a pedagogical dialogue that
responds to these cultural issues by providing creative support to make differences a source of empowerment to teachers and students alike.

**Keywords:** International Teaching Assistants, Cultural Literacy, Composition Theory, Pedagogy

**Introduction**

The focus on students in the field of teaching composition seems normal and expected. Yet, neglecting the teacher should not go unnoticed. Race, gender, and class have repeatedly occupied the academic discussions in composition conventions and publications. The racial and class backgrounds of the students always need examination, but an exchange of ideas concerning teachers from different races or different cultures should not be less important. When the teacher of composition comes from cultural backgrounds different than those of his colleagues and students, there seems to be a pressing need for pedagogical discussions concerning such a situation. As a composition teacher, coming from Syria and teaching in the United States, I belong to the category of international composition teachers, those who work as teaching assistants while perusing their graduate degrees in US universities. I call for incorporating these teachers in the mainstream pedagogy of composition, by admitting and postulating that they are the struggling force of composition teachers, even if their discomfiting struggle is unseen or unrecognized. I take cultural literacy as an example of the challenge that international teachers face in composition classrooms, where they are supposed to involve their students in the basic types of literacy. When it comes to cultural literacy, the international teacher is left alone without any theoretical guidelines. I attempt to raise a question: can a composition teacher take the task of teaching cultural literacy when he or she is from a different culture? The absence of theorizing voices that address the problems of international teachers makes it hard to answer such a question. Thus, I attempt to demonstrate this issue based on my former experience as an international teaching assistant (ITA) during my first years of graduate study in the United States. I have studied composition theory which, as I will show, could not rescue teachers like me.
First-Hand Experience and Cultural Encounters.

One year after the events of 9/11, I left my work in Kuwait and came to the United States to complete my graduate education in a small rural university in the Midwest. After one semester, I found myself required as a graduate teaching assistant to teach two first-year composition courses at a rural state university in the Midwest. My students would be Americans by culture and education, mainly from white, rural, and middle class backgrounds. I start attending the composition teaching workshops during the two weeks before the academic year started. I noticed that the workshops provided essential pedagogical instructions for the American teachers whose students have the same race, class, and cultural background. The exception was a few Eastern European and three Syrian teaching assistants.

By requiring all new international students to take an introductory course, the University’s Office of International Education was the only place in charge of providing some cultural literacy to ITAs. The course was designed for all new international students, freshman, transferring, and graduate students. It did not address the fact that some of those students would be teaching composition, but neither of the composition workshops addressed such an issue. In dealing with texts, ideas, and experiences, a writing course is not like other courses, such as math or chemistry, where differences between the teacher’s culture and his/her students’ do not have an impact on the learning process. Surprisingly, there was no material in the composition workshops or in the major of the literature produced in the field, that address the special need of cultural orientation that would help ITAs to know the expectations of their students. Instead, my situation was similar to that described by an Arabic poetic proverb: “Thrown tied in the sea but yet told: Watch out for water!” I found myself in the teaching classroom tied by my cultural differences, which caused some limitations related to my interaction with my students, some of whom saw me more as a stranger than a teacher.

However, just like my fellow non-American teaching assistants (TAs), I headed to the classroom without sufficient amount of cultural literacy or the background of proverbial knowledge that could enable me share with my students all the funds of information that they gained by everyday learning and practice. Thus, upon recognizing that I was a newcomer to their
cultural zone, the students were always ready to investigate mine. Their immediate curiosity was about how it looked like “there” and what shocked me culturally here in the States. As I speculated later, some of them stretched their curiosity to question why they were taught English (as they call the class) by someone who was not like their high school teachers.

When I went to teach in the composition classroom, I did not find a match between my educational background in English and my non-English cultural capital, to use Pierre Bourdieu’s terms. My familiarity with American society was gathered from literature texts, movies, CNN, Time, and other global (Western) media outlets. Nevertheless, I thought that I was ready to integrate myself into the social structure of the American society. What I mean by integration is the readiness to “fit” in the society without leaving my culture out. This integration is the same as John W. Berry (1980) describes as he discusses acculturation and adaptation, the maintenance “of cultural integrity…to become an integral part of a larger societal framework. Therefore, in the case of integration, the option is to retain cultural identity and move to join the dominant society” (p.13). Indeed, from the beginning, I knew that integration was not a simple task, considering the fact that American history is known to the world mainly in terms of colonization followed by independence, slavery followed by freedom, and racism and discrimination followed by equal rights movements. These historical shifts create mixed expectations for my own integration into American society, for though it seems a simple democratic one, this society has historical and social factors shaping its melting pot. The complexity of the modern American society intensifies when one encounters the fact that many American intellectuals are disappointed by the structure of the society. Suffice it to mention David Shipler’s (1997) A Country of Strangers, which argues that this society is determinately shaped by class and power. This structure of American society affects any attempt by an “outsider” to integrate himself or herself into the society. These were only concerns that my integration would not be easy and, therefore, teaching was a challenge.

I thought that the fragmentary information about the American society, its formation, icons, or even the people one might have met outside the borders of the United States, would provide me with common grounds with my students. Nevertheless, the true test for me was when I walked into that classroom that had about twenty five students staring at me and making me, later, realize how culturally and socially I was alienated. Even my so-called authority as a teacher could be easily questioned by students who might have thought that it was given to the “wrong”
person, someone who is not American or part of the political system. I realized that students could take advantage of their majority. From the first day, I realized that students could have taken advantage of my language performance in some awkward moments of expression or pronunciation. Yet, they did not, perhaps because they were convinced of the theoretical knowledge of their non-native composition teacher, as well as his credentials. My students could find an area where they had the upper hand over their teacher. This area was culture, where I admittedly felt uncomfortable and ill-prepared.

I started to wonder: how could I be the typical composition teacher whose goal of developing critical thinking comes as a result, and part of, engaging students with cultural literacy. In fact, I found Paulo Freire’s (2004) theory about the pedagogically oppressed applied reversely in my case. “If on the one hand I cannot adapt or become ‘converted’ to the innocent knowing of oppressed groups, on the other, I must not, if truly progressive, arrogantly impose my knowing upon them as the only true knowing” (p. 64). I did not have the position of a referential authority. On the contrary, the students themselves became my cultural referential. I could not be the only “true knowing” type of teacher, simply because my students were the true knowing of the culture to which I was (and still am) new. Contrary to the situation that Freire wants pedagogues to avoid, teachers whose students become their cultural referential authority cannot expect their students to be their “oppressed” groups.

Expectations are misleading here. I started the profession as a teacher of English in countries (Syria and Kuwait) where English is taught as a foreign language. Teaching composition was a foreign area for me and, as if that were not enough, I was entering the composition classroom as a foreign person. The teaching practicum, as well as the composition and rhetoric courses I was taking at the time, made me more familiar with the discipline as a subject matter. However, such courses could not create familiarity between me and the people I was teaching. I felt alone in the world of teaching: the theories I read about teaching composition, the English department which provided me with the position and the administration, and the American fellow TAs, all assumed that my problems as a teacher were just like those of anyone else. Only my students were ready to show me that I was totally different from any teacher who shared their culture. I did not have a cultural shock in the non-academic American society, but all
my cultural shocks, with the pressure and pain associated with them, occurred in the American academic classroom where I was teaching.

I still remember the day when I was going over the topics that my freshman students chose for their research paper. I was responding to their topics by giving them some suggestions or some questions to consider. Everything was going fine until one of my students told me that she was going to write about Dr. Seuss. I asked her who Dr. Seuss was, and the student, as well as the rest of the class, thought I was joking. But I was serious! Neither during my childhood nor during my first year had I heard about what I later realized to be the most famous author for children. When I look back now at that incident I realize that both my students and I had a mutual cultural shock; they could not believe that I did not know Dr. Seuss. Hardly could they believe that the only person who did not know anything about a certain cultural topic (or icon) was the teacher. One can imagine how hard it was to be that teacher!

I call it Dr. Seuss’s incident, and every time I reflect on this incident I realize that it was one of the turning points in my teaching career. Dr. Seuss’s incident showed me that a teacher can be reduced to a humble learner by the same people he teaches. Dr. Seuss’s incident exposed the huge gaps between students and their teachers who are from a different culture. These gaps cannot be measured or filled in a methodical or organized way as long as we keep silent about them. Dr. Seuss’s incident gave me the insight that I was new to my students’ culture, and they were obviously new to mine. Their knowledge of my culture was mere stereotypes and images of “otherness.” When I look back at Dr. Seuss’s incident, I realize that I might have given some students the justification to be like those bell hooks (1994) once had: “Certainly many white male students have brought to my classroom an insistence on the authority of experience, one that enables them to feel that anything they have to say is worth hearing, that indeed their ideas and experience should be the central focus of classroom discussion” (p. 81). Maybe I felt from that moment on, these students, more than ever before, could not only challenge my authority, but could also assume that I had none. At a certain point, I speculated that I unwittingly revealed my ignorance of what seemed to be an essential part of their culture. I also thought that I would be digging my own grave if I continued showing more of this ignorance, which was more shocking to them, it seemed, than theirs to me when they would reveal to me later that they did not “have a clue” about what the United Nations was.
International Teachers Speak Out

When surveying some international composition instructors who are teaching or taught in different academic settings across the United States and are from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds, I received personal testimonials and results that express the same concerns. As Ph.D. candidate in English at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Agnieszka Tuszynska, is an international teacher from Poland who has a similar experience to share. She narrates that she once chose for her composition class a film demonstrating that masculinity is a social construct, and that American culture’s production of violent masculinity implies that it is the social norm. According to Tuszynska (2011) she showed the film in 2005 but “warned the students that the film was from 1999, and that some popular culture examples it uses may seem a bit dated, but were still relevant” (personal communication, October 12, 2011). When the narrator of the film listed some male cultural icons as examples of “healthy” images of masculinity, Mark McGwire, a baseball star, was one of them. When the narration started to glorify McGwire as a noble hero, her students erupted in laughter. As she explains, it turned out that “the player had just been asked to testify in a big steroid use case and refused to testify under oath. And there went the movie’s legitimacy in my students’ eyes! I, of course, was blissfully unaware of the scandal having ever taken place” (Agnieszka Tuszynska, personal communication, October 12, 2011).

When asked if she felt that the pedagogical preparation provided to her by the university where she taught was sufficient to address the cultural differences between her and her students, Tuszynska pointed out that her own situation may have been unique due to the amount of exposure to American culture prior to her moving to the US. Even though she argued that there was not any “shortcut” to overcoming cultural difference and assumed that “real-life experience and trial-and-error” to be the only way, she also recognized that most ITAs may experience that the training they receive is deficient in bridging cultural differences (Agnieszka Tuszynska, personal communication, October 12, 2011). In her opinion, her home department, English, was efficient in training the new graduate instructors “as teachers during a week-long orientation. However, given the time limitations and the huge number of international students spanning a variety of cultures, little can be accomplished in the way of “filling someone in” on American culture” (Agnieszka Tuszynska, personal communication, October 12, 2011). If pressed to point
out one thing that she thinks ITA training sessions could do better, Tuszynska has the following advice:

I’d say they should prepare us better for the likelihood of encountering culture gaps, and advising about the strategies to deal with those gaps. I think it may be surprising to some ITAs how heavily and how often interactions with American college students rely on cultural, and especially pop culture references. I think being ready for that may somewhat ease the embarrassment and anxiety such misunderstandings may cause. The expectation of such situations would allow ITAs to think of ways they may react—for example, react with humor—before a situation occurs. (Agnieszka Tuszynska, personal communication, October 12, 2011)

She acknowledges that she is aware of most cultural references, with a notable exception: Anything related to American sports. But she also conveys that she has learned that “joking about my lack of knowledge of those sports, or teasing the students about “soccer” being “the real football” usually works well to end the conversation on a positive note!” (Agnieszka Tuszynska, personal communication, October 12, 2011)

Xuan Zheng is a Chinese Ph.D. candidate in the English Department of the University of Washington in Seattle. She responded by stating that even though the teacher training program was good, none of the strategies that were used specially applies to ITAs. Even though the composition TAs specialize in cultural studies and literature, she personally still finds herself with very little knowledge of American politics and cultures. Besides, she is not aware of the literacy education American undergraduates went through in college, and she has never taken any class on writing in the United States where she teaches. Even though Zheng (2011) points out that she got along with American students of composition, she notes that she initially felt that the English composition class was a place where an American/English speaking culture should be centered while she had no expertise or authority on it.

When asked what was missing in the pedagogical preparation, Zheng suggests that an earlier exposure of students' writings before teaching composition is helpful. She states that reading an article on students' backgrounds and their writing problems was helpful. However, she did not feel that there were enough reading materials directly related to ITAs’ culture, so that the ITAs can develop better teaching materials, instead of feeling isolated by an American-
experience-centered curriculum. As for the gaps between her culture and that of her students, she noted some areas such as slangs, sports, popular stars, politics, and religion. Moreover, her students often times tell her about their hobbies and interests but she did not have any idea what those were and barely knew what words they were using. Some of the strategies she used to overcome these moments included either to act as if she understood what they say or to ask them to explain their cultural reference. Therefore, because of this cultural gap she never felt she was “connected with American students, compared with international students that I am easily getting along. I think in a way the teacher needs better preparation in this; but students also need to be advised in communicating and empathizing their ITAs. After all, the intercultural experience is good for both sides” (Xuan Zheng, personal communication, October 12, 2011).

As I found out that Zheng is in fact working on this issue, she kindly shared with me her study of four international teaching assistants of English composition in an urban university in the northwestern United States. Her findings indicate that they all encountered challenges due to different cultural and educational backgrounds. Three major issues are pointed by Zheng’s (2012) study. First, these ITAs were anxious to go into the classroom, mainly because they didn’t know what their students’ English writings looked like. Some of the ITAs were afraid that their native speaker students may already write very well, and thus felt more difficult to establish their authority. Second, the ITAs’ choice of materials was challenging because they did not know what mattered the most to their American undergraduate students, and that is why they avoided readings or topics related to cultural or political issues in the U.S. due to lack of familiarity with these subjects. Third, it was difficult for the ITAs to establish a close relationship with their students, because they could not use some social tools, such as jokes, which they were not funny to American students. Zheng concludes:

Although the ITAs in the study were all able to strategically negotiate their foreign-ness: some used science as their writing topics; some asked students to be cultural informants in class; and some avoided culturally-loaded topics etc., it may still be helpful if the training programs could provide the ITAs with a general knowledge of who their students are, what kind of literacy education they have received before college, the political culture in the U.S., the strategies they could use to draw on their intercultural experiences as advantages. Such training would greatly reduce the anxiety the ITAs face in starting teaching composition in the United States. (para.1)
Apparently, these personal accounts from ITAs indicate that while having some common ground with students facilities teaching in such a classroom dominated by cultural issues as English composition, the lack there of creates nervousness and challenges the teacher more than the students. The experience of teaching within a discipline that presumes that the teacher is from the same culture in which he or she teaches is indeed stressful. When one feels that he or she is culturally alienated, the outcome is not only a bitter experience of displacement, but also a pressure to keep pretending that they have a place as teachers. This place is supposed to be the classroom. However, this classroom becomes an utter foreign country once these teachers see how different they are from their students. This completely true, I think, when students realize how different, or maybe privileged, they are from that teacher who does not know about their culture as much. This teacher would seek to find some guidance from theorists, but he or she can hardly find the guidance that addresses this cultural and pedagogical issue.

I found it ironic that my encounter with issues of otherness and difference in the United States occurred at the same year Peter Pericles Trifonas (2003) published Pedagogy of Difference, a book with a collection of essays concerned with the concept of difference as context for teaching and curriculum making. The book offers insightful discussions that help educators to recognize differences. In Pedagogy of Difference, the authors of “Toward a Decolonizing Pedagogy: Social Justice Reconsidered” argue that the United States has established, since the seventeenth century, an “internal neocolonialism” which is based on colonial and capitalist systems that have created oppressed and dominated groups and put them within an unjust social context. These groups, the authors maintain, are “both normalized and officially sanctioned by dominant strategies and institutional arrangements in American society” (Tejeda, Espinoza, and Gutierrez, 2003, p.11). In order to establish a ground for resisting such colonialism and capitalism, the authors articulate a call for a “decolonizing pedagogy” (Tejeda et al., p.13). I think this call for a decolonizing pedagogy should be supported as well as extended to include in its focus teachers from different cultures. The difference of culture among students is as worth investigating as the difference among teachers. However, though the former’s case is consistently addressed, the latter’s is almost neglected.

In fact, the attention paid to multiculturalism in American education brought with it the debate over whose culture should be taught (Boyle-Base, 1995, p. 265). That emerging debate
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concentrated on students and was far from including teachers. Unfortunately, these teachers are excluded in pedagogical works concerned with globalization-based education. That is why in “Globalizing Pedagogies: Power, Resentment, and the Re-Narration of Difference,” one cannot but agree with the call articulated by Greg Dimitrades and Cameron McCarthy (2000) for considering issues of multiculturalism inside and outside teaching and curriculum. In particular, they call for “the cultural reproduction of difference and the coordination of racial identities” (Dimitrades and McCarthy, 2000, p.189). Yet, one would have been more informed by these writers, or by any other contributors, if there had been more focus on the teacher as a subject of difference, not only the students.

Kathleen C Sadao’s (2003) “Living in Two Worlds: Success and the Bicultural Faculty of Color” is the other work that was published around the same time I started to witness how difficult it was to teach in a different culture. Focusing on deconstruction and postcolonialism, from the post-Enlightenment to present, Sadao tries to find solutions to overcome the difference-based difficulties wherever they arise. Sadao surveys some teachers who left their cultures and moved to the American mainstream culture for career settlements in the educational system. Collecting data based on accounts of nineteen “faculty of color” from a research university, Sadao’s qualitative study records the motivation (both internal and external) these faculty members had and how these motivations overcame the challenges of their careers. The theoretical framework Sadao uses gives a bicultural model for “future efforts to recruit and promote faculty of colors,” realizing, however, that “virtually no studies have examined a bicultural theory or model in higher education” (p. 399). This lack of academic interest or scholarship in bicultural teachers in academia does not seem to find any justification other than the fact, or rather the truism, that since these teachers reached the classroom, then they have to fit in the collective identity of being a mainstream teacher. In other words, these teachers’ cultural experiences are likely to be perceived as related to their personal backgrounds.

Though Sadao’s study helps to establish a better understanding of the cultural background these teachers have and how they can switch to the mainstream culture to meet the needs of their positions and institutions, she adopts acculturation as a methodical approach to analyze her findings about the success and failure of these teachers. I believe that this method is not fair, for it stems from the presupposition that these teachers, just like any newcomers to the
mainstream Western culture, should change their identity for the sake of adapting to the dominant culture. Acculturation, as Sadao rightly sees it, “relates to the introduction of and interaction with a new culture, the emphasis being on the potential for compromising one’s previously held beliefs and values to function in the new culture” (p. 399) [emphasis added]. Yet, the indirect suggestion for teachers of color or those from different cultures to compromise their beliefs creates an imposed imperialistic conformity. Acculturation, a concept used since 1880, emerged in the United States for “normalizing” the “Others” as people in need of better (cultural) traits taken from the dominant groups (Berry, 1980, p. 9). As Homer G. Barnett (1975) once illustrated, acculturation rose to the surface of American society with studies conducted by American anthropologists on American Indian reservations. Most of these studies “have focused on the replacement of Indian culture by White culture. These studies have intended to arrange individuals and social groups along an acculturation continuum that ranges for ‘more Indian’ to ‘more White’” (Barnett, 1975, p.12). I contend that any approach to helping these teachers recognize their difference by implying that they need to be acculturated is another way of rejecting their right of difference. It does not show how to empower them with and within their differences. Asking teachers from different cultures to accept acculturation as a solution to their cultural differences is in fact asking for privileging a dominant, mainstream culture over another. Simplistically and sarcastically speaking, if these teachers need to be acculturated as a solution for cultural differences, then the best solution for racism is to “ask” people to be of one color; similarly the solution for gender issues would be to adopt one gender. Is it always necessary to conform? If yes, why is it always the “other” who should conform?

Coming from diverse foreign language backgrounds, international composition teachers like myself often find themselves unintentionally given names that fit the English spelling and pronunciation, compromising their original names either partially, if they come from European languages, or completely, if they come from Eastern languages, such as my native Arabic. More often than not, I personally feel that I am “bell hooked” as I am called by a name that does not sound like my real one. There are two “tongue-twisting” consonants in my first name that do not exist in English, and making up for that in English creates not only a different sound but a constant situation where the act of calling my name sounds like calling another person who is meant to be me. I did not mind having my name assimilated, but this is an example of how identity-related issues arises when teaching in the United States. In composition theories and
discussions, the talk of the town is always about local not global issues, making one wonder if this is because of the assumption that these TAs, for example, do not exist or that they should not.

Ironically, even the 2007 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) seemed to ignore this issue and these teachers. In its call for papers on the theme “Representing Identities,” the focus was still on students. Though CCCC had adequately addressed pedagogical issues related to representations or under-representation of the teaching and learning communities, the 2007 Convention did not try to address such an issue by striking a balance between teachers and students. As timely and progressive as it was, the Convention had nonetheless clearly shown a preference to students, rather than to teachers, ignoring the latter and their issues.

Our teaching and research have shown us that our students are much more than any single descriptor, much more than what they write, speak, or sign, much more than listening, or silent ciphers, much more than even our richest interpretations of them. Whether they are identified by labels like basic, ESL, or advanced, by their race, ethnicity, sexuality, or … ability to present themselves as members of the academic discourse community, our students are much more complex than any single identity they shape and present to us or that we present for them in our teaching and research. (Glenn, 2007, p. 1)

As the composer of the CCCC program proposal, Cheryl Glenn (2007) rightly posited that communication and composition are connected collaterally. In her view, communication and composition were constructed, in form and content, by the participants who “are where they come from, and by the social, and cultural situations they enter. Although issues of identity—fluid, stable, hybrid, regional, inter/trans/national, linguistic, online, ignored, inscribed—are now familiar to us all, they require renewed inspection and innovative inquiry” (Glenn, 2007, p.1). Maybe renewed inspection of already familiar identities is still necessary. Maybe we have reached the point where we move from traditional inquiry to innovative quest. Perhaps the time has come when we should explore unfamiliar identities that are constructed, in shape and content, in an unfamiliar environment. When will international composition teachers have to be assured that we at least recognize their unfamiliarity, otherness, and cultural difference?
Speaking of difference, digression in my culture is not a flaw in one’s style of writing. The heritage of the Arabic language has many examples of this practice, which can be explained as the writer’s desire to add something important, even if this “addition” is not within the context of the subject matter. Many examples occur in the Arabian Nights as the narrator digresses from one narrative to another, creating a matrix of thrilling stories that generate more tales. When I began my education in English (and was later trained to teach it), digression became something to avoid. The Western concept of coherence is emphasized culturally and stylistically, as Kathleen McCormick (2005) explains:

Our culture’s belief in objectivity comes out in the most seemingly mundane social practices—when, for example, students are told to write a ‘coherent’ essay. Such instructions suggest to many students that incoherence, ambiguity or contradictions are the mark of a poorly written essay (p. 100).

The new culture I am teaching in is imbedded in coherence and expects me to lead my students to achieve coherence as a stylistic device and cultural product, which posits a challenge to me as well as to other teachers in my cultural position. Given the difference in what cultures believe and the simultaneous existence of coherence and incoherence, teachers from different cultures bear the burden of trying to find individual solutions. In “Cultural Conflicts in the Writing Center: Expectations and Assumptions of ESL Students,” an essay which calls for understanding different cultures in order to better help ESL writing students, Muriel Harris (2003) notes that: “while Americans value conciseness, directness, and clarity, work in contrastive rhetoric has shown us that these qualities are not necessarily valued in the discourse of other languages” (p. 199). For example, she shows that there is a contrast between the Asian preference for indirection and the American preference “for clear, overt announcement of a topic in an introductory paragraph” (Harris, 2003, p.199). These differences in styles of writing are reflections of specific cultures. I think that more research needs to be done to see how much these differences influence not only writing students but also their instructors.
Cultural Literacy: Is it the Solution?

Cultural literacy is perhaps the most problematic issue concerning the situation of teachers from different cultures. According to C.H. Knoblauch (1990):

Cultural literacy offers another common argument about the importance of reading and writing, one frequently mounted by traditionalist educators but sustained in populist versions as well, especially among people who feel insecure about their own standing and their future prospects when confronted by the volatile mix of ethnic heritages and socioeconomic interests that make up contemporary American life. (p. 77)

This characterization of cultural literacy stems from the attempt to preserve the culture by promoting its understanding and essentializing its products. As Knoblauch points out, in other discussions of cultural literacy, English is considered the only “truly American language,” which might be attributed to the instinct of preserving a culture. I contend that it could also be motivated by allowing one culture, the strong and mainstream one, to dominate others. If culture produces the language we speak and the way we interact with each other, and if the international teacher learned English outside the States, then this teacher is a “misfit” in the classroom. According to this notion of cultural literacy, being from a different culture will automatically qualify this teacher as alien. “The economic self-interest that pervades the functionalist perspective frequently gives way here to jingoistic protectionism; cultural literacy advocates presume that the salvation of some set of favored cultural norms or language practices lies necessarily in the marginalizing or even extinction of others” (Knoblauch, 1990, p.77). It is therefore necessary for both national and international compositionists to decide whether this hegemonic notion of cultural literacy accepts teachers from different cultures or not. If it does, then intellectual efforts should be exerted to show how international teachers can be involved in the process of (teaching) cultural literacy when they themselves are not from the same culture as their students.
The editors of *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Joseph F. Kett, and James Trefil (2006), agree that unlike expert knowledge, cultural literacy is “meant to be shared by everyone” (p. x). Maybe because they realize that “everyone” is defined as every American, they specify cultural literacy to be “that shifting body of information that our culture has found useful” (Hirsch, Kett, and Trefil, 2006, p. x). Hirsch and his colleagues set three ways to categorize certain information within the domain of cultural literacy or at least their dictionary criterion. First, information should not be too specialized or too general, so that neither the knowledge of, say, color names (general) or a computer language code (specialized) qualify as components of cultural literacy. Second, the information, whether about an event, person, concept, or other similar cultural reference, should be widely known. Third, the information should be of lasting significance, a criterion that rules out the knowledge of current events and signifies any other event that “has found a place in our collective memory or it has the promise of finding such a place. This is one of the things that contributes to the stability of cultural literacy in America” (Hirsch et al., 2006, p. xi). From the way these authors set the grounds for their work on cultural literacy, we notice that all three frames are meant in one way or another to include or exclude informational items according to their status in the public knowledge of the country. This status is meant to be the status quo, which hardly conforms with the critical thinking that the teacher might develop based on his experience with a different culture. Critical thinking, as Catharine Fox (2002) maintains, “is posited as one of the primary skills that enable students to become co-participants in the creation of knowledge through alternative pedagogies… [And] it enables us to transform structures of power, knowledge, and authority” (p. 199). But if we assume that cultural literacy and critical thinking go hand in hand, we still need to know where the international teacher stands in this issue. We need to know how he or she will be perceived as an agent of cultural literacy in a classroom culturally foreign to him or her.

Apart from the informative approach to cultural literary as manifested in *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* approaches cultural literacy by adopting the imperative that minority students should be acculturated. Hirsch (2006) believes that these students should accept the mainstream culture and show no resistance to its dominance. Hirsch implies that if the minority student rejects such acculturation, he or she will be involved in “an act of ignorance— cultural suicide—or a failure on the part of the student to identify what meaningful knowledge is actually about” (p. 13). Eugene F. Provenzo (2005), Jr.,
just like many other theorists, would argue that this approach to cultural literacy is a colonialist model of education. Moreover, in their approach to basic writing tutoring, Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski (2003) contend that if the university adopts mainstreaming writing and works on altering the students’ cultural discourses, then the result of this change in style and form leads to a (colonizing) change of thinking (p. 87), a result that acculturation tries, unrightfully, to achieve. According to Provenzo the colonialist models of education “not only apply to historically colonized societies but also to economic and racial groups in a culture such as the United States. The effects of such models, whether as part of a historically colonial system such as Victorian England, or as part of a system of racial or class domination like that of the United States throughout most of its history, are devastating” (Provenzo, 2005, p.33). Provenzo tries to raise awareness of how the conservative approach to cultural literacy (Hirsch’s) is meant to dominate minority students. However, the conservative position on acculturation as well as its liberal counterargument unintentionally agree on one issue: both sides omit the teachers of minorities in their discussions, as if these minorities do not have a place in academic institutions other than being students. We can assume that they see these minorities as mere students. Thus, we can also assume that they do not want to discuss how these teachers can be engaged in such discussions about cultural literacy, or how they can be active participants in the educational process in this country.

Bell hooks (1994) is probably now the most iconic educationalist and cultural critic from a minority background. Though she enlightens the field with theories and insights about how to deal with issues related to minorities, especially if these group minorities are based on gender or race, she hardly talks about the position of teachers from different cultures. Bell hooks believes in an emancipating pedagogy that encourages dialogue and empowers students. However, as a teacher herself, she had a unique experience that can enlighten pedagogues and cultural critics on both how it “feels” and how it works to teach within a dominant culture different than the teacher’s, instead of focusing only on students. Bell hooks believes that “education should be a place where the need for diverse teaching methods and styles would be valued, encouraged, seen as essential to learning” (p. 203). She has witnessed how empowering the classes are when they go beyond the conventional norms. Yet, as far as teachers from different cultures are concerned, I think that bell hooks would help their cause much better if she went beyond talking about “domestic” minority students and tried to engineer some theoretical guidelines for their teachers.
Though her main concern is making education change its direction to undo the suppression that both minority and majority students face in American institutions, bell hooks admits that this is not effortless.

Many professors remain unwilling to be involved with any pedagogical practices that emphasize mutual participation between teacher and student because more time and effort are required to do this work…. Talking about pedagogy, thinking about it critically, is not the intellectual work that most folks think is hip and cool… Most of us are not inclined to see discussion of pedagogy as central to our academic work and intellectual growth, or the practice of teaching as work that enhances and enriches scholarship. (p. 204-05)

Certainly, pedagogical theorization is not easy task. What I am calling for here is something similar to the “mutual participation between teacher and student.” I am calling theorists, especially those who highly value a legacy like bell hooks’, to be engaged in a pedagogically mutual participation between mainstream theory and teachers from different cultures.

In *The Culture of Reading and the Reading of English*, Kathleen McCormick (1994) notes that theorists like Gramsci, Althusser, and Bourdieu have realized that educational institutions, as ideological spaces, produce the means that distribute discourses or “cultural capital.” McCormick argues that teachers and students should respond to this fact by critically evaluating the knowledge these institutions provide. Whether delivered or received, knowledge is still part and parcel of the culture whose objects, as McCormick posits, are to be examined historically.

If readers and viewers are regarded as active producers of meaning, within specific cultural constraints, it follows that rather than positioning students as mere passive receivers of knowledge, schools should encourage them to engage actively in the production of knowledge and meaning: schooling should enable students to articulate their own readings of cultural objects and introduce them to discourse that can help them explore the ways in which cultural objects are historically and socially produced. (p. 52)

If the teachers who come from different cultures reach the level of awareness about the educational structures of their students’ culture, they still need to adjust their level of critique,
which is influenced by their former education and culture, a problem that also needs to be addressed among composition and pedagogy theorists. Ideology is relevant here, for McCormick notes that it is “expressed in the educational systems of any society” (p.83). These teachers are not part of the historically situated educational system that hosts them, and their ideologies are formed outside the society of their students. It is not known whether they are supposed to express such ideologies or hide them.

Henry Armand Giroux (2003) points out that critical theorists have recently called for “rethinking the political and pedagogical possibilities of multiculturalism within higher education” (p. 83). Giroux also shows the success that critical multiculturalism has achieved in pedagogy:

Signaling a new understanding of how the mechanisms of domination and exclusion work to reproduce and legitimate the entrenched nature of class, race, gender, and sexual hierarchies in higher education, critical multiculturalists often combine the study of symbolic and signifying practices with a reinvigorating and necessary study of the relations between culture and politics. For many critical multiculturalists the process of schooling is viewed as a terrain of struggle over the meaning and purpose of humanities, the value of disciplinarity, the regulatory function of culture, the relationship between knowledge and authority, and who has ownership over the conditions for the production of knowledge. (p. 83)

However excited about such advancement in multiculturalism, Giroux also narrates these victories without including any achievements for teachers who are from a spectrum of cultures and who find no place in which they can see their concerns, success, failures, or expectations. Indeed, today’s educational institutions offer students with a variety of “pedagogical options in which they can invest, act, and speak… for critical, social agency” (Giroux, 2003, p.84). Nevertheless, it would be more helpful if these institutions provide an equal amount of pedagogical choices for those teachers and to show them how to invest their differences to reach the same goals of agency-oriented pedagogy.
Conclusion

I am not arguing for a course that introduces these teachers to American culture. Many of them might consider such a course redundant, especially those who find themselves already familiar with the cultural information of the course. Such a course is not an immediate solution to this complicated issue. I agree with Michael W. Apple (2005) who believes that courses designed to provide informational items are not a good choice. As he puts it:

I think it is important to understand that a curriculum based on a lot of facts and concepts that everyone should learn is a flawed project. It fundamentally misconstrues what literacy is about, decontextualizes it, and ignores the history of discussions and debates both about what literacy is for and about the differential patterns of benefits that come from institutionalizing certain definitions and not others. (p. ix)

How can these teachers teach cultural literary without being acculturated in the first place? What are the tools, training, and scholarship available to facilities composition teachers coming from outside the United States? How can they teach academic literacy to college students when they do not have the same cultural literacy themselves? What I want to see in courses for preparing international teachers is more emphasis on how to deal with culturally charged moments like the Dr. Seuss’s incident or, more importantly, I want to see cultural studies critics to open the door for more well-informed investigations on how to prepare these teachers to be able to carry the message of cultural literacy without sounding ignorant or totally out of place. It’s time to hear theorists talk about how different cultures among teachers can be utilized pedagogically. I want to see and hear teachers from all cultures call and respond to the call for representing identity. In this regard, I totally agree with Danny K Weil (1998) as he commends that “teacher-training programs should afford teachers the opportunities to gain an insight into their own unexamined attitudes as well as societal attitudes toward cultural reality and the students they teach” (p.156). I also fully support his suggestion that “teachers [especially the cultural newcomers] need continual reactions and advice from communities and peers to help them see how they distribute education opportunities to their students” (Weil, 1998, p.157). As the teachers I surveyed point out, there
should be more work to be done so that the culture references and differences be acknowledged, assessed and addressed. With the world becoming more globalized and “‘English’ belongs to all those who use it,” as Barbara Seidlhofer (2009) puts it, educators need to recognize not only the inevitability of having World Englishes but also the necessity to allow world cultures to be a source of education not anxiety or embarrassment.

I call for the pedagogy of difference to be enhanced in order to encourage students to accept the concept of difference, not only among themselves but also in the way they perceive their teachers who might be “different” from them. If encouraged, this difference awareness will be helpful not only for international teachers but also for American teachers. These latter teachers might face a similar situation of being out of place when they are introduced to a new environment in which teaching their counterpart (student) citizens is faced with the inconvenience of being considered from a different culture. In a word, teachers from different cultures, those who come to the Untied States from different citizenship need more pedagogical attention. They come from different countries, but their batteries of ideas need to be charged with insightful pedagogy that address their concerns and issues, so that they go to the classroom not tied by their limitation but free from the stresses of cultural shocks.
References


Notes

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The Role of Pleasure Reading in Enhancing Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension:

A Case Study

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Abstract
Effective reading is mandatory for the students to keep abreast themselves of the vast knowledge around them. Venkateswaran (1995) defines reading as a psycholinguistic process by which the reader reconstructs a message, which has been encoded by a writer. He views reading as an interaction among three essential factors: background knowledge, conceptual abilities and learning strategies. Slow reading is a widely recognized problem, in the realm of ESL/EFL, which hinders effective learning (Hamp-Lyon, 1983; Cooper, 1984). And keeping in view the same scenario, this study investigated 74 Saudi medical undergraduates studying at College of Medicine and Medical Sciences (CMMS), Taif University to determine the positive overbearing of an extensive pleasure reading project.
on reading speed, reading comprehension and their attitude towards reading in their leisure time. The reading speed and reading comprehension of the participants were calculated by using graded readers in the beginning and at the end of this project. The data were scientifically analyzed and the results reported that the gains in the reading speed and reading comprehension of the experimental group were significantly higher than the control group. Furthermore, the questionnaire data revealed that the pleasure reading had a positive change in their behavior and majority of the samples declared that they would continue reading in their leisure time in the future as well.

*Key Words:* Pleasure reading, top-down, bottom-up, loud reading, and silent reading
Introduction

The role of efficient reading is well-established in overall language learning and it has become rather extremely important after the proliferation of information technology. Demands of “the brave world” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1997) are enormous and reading has become an important gateway to personal development, and to social, economic and civic life (Holden, 2004). Effective reading techniques have never been needed more in the annals of history than the present era. It has been noted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2003) that “people cannot be active or informed citizens unless they can read. Reading is “a prerequisite for almost all cultural and social activities” (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 3). An all-encompassing exposure of internet in the academic world has compelled the students to master reading skills to keep themselves abreast of the vast knowledge around them. According to the International Reading Association, “adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history” (Moore et al., 1999, p. 3). The students are faced with a huge challenge of exploring the vast depository of knowledge in the forms of books as well as internet-related material. This task demands that the students should have the potential to go through this storehouse of knowledge efficiently. This is not even possible to think of it without good reading speed and reading comprehension.

Literature Review

Reading has been defined as “a psycholinguistic process” by which the reader reconstructs a message that has been encoded by a writer. “Background knowledge”, “conceptual abilities” and “learning strategies” have been declared as three essential factors which are vital for this interaction (Venkateswaran, 1995). “Reading involves four processing mechanisms with feedback loops: phonological, orthographic, meaning and
context” (Seidenberg & McClelland, 1989, p. 8). Al-Khatayabeh & Al-Masri (2008) have reported that “reading is a language activity that includes a variety of skills” and it has been noticed that “some learners who are good at language are not good readers” (p. 370). This transpires that the reading deficiency is due to inappropriate strategies they use while reading.

Goodman’s (1976) “top-down model” declares reading “a psycholinguistic guessing game” which requires higher order sources of information: the reader’s knowledge of both the subject matter and the world. The above-mentioned model does not ascribe much importance to vocabulary. Whereas in Gough’s (1972) 'bottom-up model', vocabulary knowledge is considered extremely important. Eskey (1988) proposed an interactive model which includes top-down and bottom-up processing. His model offers useful insights into the flow of information coming from the text and also from the reader. In his interactive model, both the text and the reader contribute to the construction of meaning and vocabulary knowledge is also considered essential. It has been reported that efficient reading depends on the ability to:

… discover specific facts, recognize the writer's point of view, read at a reasonable rate, guess the meaning of unknown words from the context, read extended pieces of texts easily, understand how one part of a text relates to another, follow an argument, grasp the gist of what has been read, and note the importance of such logical expressions such as however, and so, finally… etc. (McGovern, 1983 cited in Al-Khatayabeh & Al-Masri, 2008, p. 359).

A widely recognized problem faced by learners throughout the ESL/EFL world is that of slow reading (Hamp-Lyons 1983; Cooper 1984). It is mentioned that along with reading speed, comprehension is also equally important and efforts of achieving reading speed without comprehension is worthless (Nuttall, 1982). Slow reading is often associated with poor reading that involves the processing of information at such a slow rate that does not allow the reader to hold enough detail in their short-term memory to permit
decoding of the overall message of the text (Bell, 2001). O’Sullivan (2003) stated that “improving students’ reading speeds to adequate levels in tandem with their comprehension helps them be better readers” (p. 6). It has been reported that this reading deficiency is rather a serious problem with Arab students and O’Sullivan (2003) has declared that the “problems of Arabic learners of English with reading comprehension are well documented” (p. 6). Aboshiha (2006) interviewed a sample of secondary school teachers who stated “that pupils were very often not motivated and did not enjoy reading in English or even reading in their first language”. He has also discussed the reasons for “their pupils’ apparent lack of interest in developing their reading skills in English” (P. 156). O’Sullivan (2003) stated that Federal National Council’s Committee for Education and Youth and Information and Cultural Affairs has released a report about higher education institutions that expressed anxiety over the “general deterioration” in the English standards of UAE students and particularly in the case of reading. An exploratory research study has investigated Higher College of Technology, UAE students’ performance in reading and reported it lower than the comparable groups of students elsewhere in the world (Marsden, 2001 cited in O’Sullivan, 2003). It has also been reported that HCT students are weaker readers even in their L1 (Arabic) as compared to the “world mean” (Marsden and Wallace, 2001 cited in O’Sullivan, 2003). Arab students’ lack of reading habits, both in L1 and the target language, has been mentioned by several other authors (Mustafa, 2001; Shannon, 2003; Wallace, 1996). Naidoo & Ismail (2008) conducted a survey regarding the reading habits of Arab students and quoted the following responses: "I almost never read for pleasure," Nakul Berry, a 17-year-old sophomore student at the American University in Dubai replied. Berry and Rizeq admitted that "unless we have a mandatory reading prescribed by the professor, we don't really go to the library". Kathy Ray, library director at the American University of Sharjah, said that "some come in to use the computers to check their e-mails or do research. Others come in to work on group projects". Al-Thibani’s (2007) report has also presented the same responses: “Students here do not read for pleasure but for study …… They are reading under obligation but not for pleasure” said Abdu al-Qadasi, the head of
the library of the college of arts in Sana’a University. Khaled al-A’waj, the manager of the central library in Sana’a University stated that students usually come to the university library for research work and rarely visit it for reading purposes. Several reasons have been identified for this poor reading efficiency. Al-Thibani (2007) interviewed Abdul-Salam al-Rubaidi, a master’s degree top student in the college of Arabic who declared that:

There is no reading culture in our society …….It is common that a Yemeni person has no one around him who reads—no one in his family who reads, no colleagues who read, no teachers who read. So he begins to feel that it is normal not to read.

There is a lack of a reading culture or reading habit in Arab societies because of the prized oral tradition in these societies (Shannon, 2003). Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ruzic (1983) suggested that in approximately all Arab countries, standard Arabic is actually students’ second language with colloquial Arabic as their ‘mother tongue’. This transpires that English is actually their third language and this fact makes it rather extremely difficult for them to achieve reading efficiency in English. Wurr (2003) recounted many case studies and declared that L1 and L2 reading involves two different “words and worlds”. A Korean student’s following statement highlights this compartmentalization who considers “reading in English as an extension of his school work, an academic task, whereas reading in his native language is more closely associated with personal pursuits and interests” (O’Sullivan, 2003 cited in Wurr, 2003, p. 2). Using simplified texts prior to university entrance (Fox, 1987) and “intensive use of bilingual dictionaries and dependence on teachers” have been identified as major factors that hinder students’ motivation to become efficient readers (Prichard & Nasr, 2004, p. 427).
'Loud reading' is another major factor that negatively affects students’ reading skills and bars them to be efficient readers (Mourtaga, 2006). Mustafa (2002) conducted a research about the teaching of readings skills in UAE schools and his interview data reported that “ninety per cent of the teachers perceive reading as a pronunciation exercise…” (p. 77); “…teachers teach only one reading strategy that enables students to obtain explicit information from a graded passage; a kind of literal comprehension.” (p. 78). His findings suggest that almost all teachers “correlate ‘reading’ with pronouncing and reading aloud” (p. 79). Research has identified that “the ESL reading comprehension difficulties exhibited by native speakers of Arabic may instead result from deficient letter and word identification” (Hayes & Schmauder, 1999 cited in O’Sullivan, 2003, p. 5). Using “the index finger” to refer to every word while reading aloud is another factor that contributes to make reading slow and hinders efficient reading “ because it tends to create tunnel vision, overloads short-term memory, and leaves the reader floundering in the ambiguity of language” (Smith, 1994, p. 153). Reading the Holy Quran is another usual practice when people opt for loud reading using their index finger. It is suggested that silent reading is much more effective than loud reading (George, 1975; Weaver, 1988; Smith, 1988) except when the aim is to improve oral reading abilities or to test pronunciation (Weeren & Theunissen, 1987).

Actually, research reveals that most of the work done on Arab students is about writing whereas reading has been a neglected (Mourtaga, 2006). In addition, when talking about reading problems of Arab EFL students, research has reported that majority of the researchers have attributed reading-related problems of Arab students to differences between L1 and L2 (Farquharson, 1988; Lebauer, 1985; Torry, 1971; Block, 1992; Panos & Ruzic, 1983; George, 1975). This attitude has diverted attention from other important factors like slow reading, literal translation, loud reading, insufficient comprehension, total dependence on the print to get the meaning, insufficient linguistic competence etc.

Pleasure reading is one of the measures that is suggested to be used to improve students’ reading speed and comprehension (Pilgreen & Krashen, 1993; Cushing-Weigle & Jenson,
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1996; Bell, 2000; Kusanagi, 2004; Krashen, 2004; Nishino, 2007; Oller & Tullius, 1973; Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Taguchi, 1997; Asraf & Ahmed, 2003; Taguchi et al., 2004; Flowers, 2003; Nishino, 2007). Pleasure reading is referred to “… reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading” (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 6). Nell (1988) has stated that reading for pleasure is a form of play that allows us to experience other worlds and roles in our imagination. Pleasure reading has been conceived as a “creative activity” (Holden, 2004). This term was coined by Palmer (1968) who defined it as the reading of materials in the target language in a rapid and casual way with a focus on quantity rather than quality. But reading for pleasure “…. is so much more than just a form of play or escapism- it is a way of connecting with text” (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 6).

This study will use the term “pleasure reading” as a synonym for “reading for pleasure” (Dungworth et al., 2004), “reading for enjoyment” (Allan et al., 2005) and “reading for entertainment” (Sonnenschein et al, 2000). It is also frequently referred to as “independent reading” (Cullinan, 2000), “self-selected reading” (Worthy et al., 1998), “voluntary reading” (Krashen, 2004), leisure reading (Greeney, 1980), “engaged reading” (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999), “free reading” (Cobb, 2007), “recreational reading”, “extensive reading” (Day & Bumford, 2002; Hitosugi & Day, 2004)), “lucid reading” (Nell, 1988) etc. It has been stated that “education and reading are circular – the more a person has of one, the better the development of the other (Chall, 1996 cited in Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 8). Krashen (1993) offered deep insights into the value of reading for pleasure and stated that when children read for pleasure, they get “hooked on books”, “they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called language skills …… they will become adequate readers…..” (p- 85). Thus pleasure reading helps them achieve a higher reading rate and better comprehension because of their increased vocabulary, positive attitude towards reading and greater self-confidence.
Gordon & Lu (2008) mentioned that Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) has conducted a research that explored the reading habits of fifteen year old students in 32 countries and reported that 72% students said that they read for pleasure on a daily basis. The study informed that girls read more for pleasure as compared to boys. Research has reported that high achievers in reading literacy were much more likely to read for pleasure as compared to low achievers (OECD, 2002). Anderson et al. (1998) conducted a study and mentioned that the “amount of independent out-of-school reading contributed a variance of 16% in the reading comprehension of fifth graders” (In Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997, p. 420). Krashen (1993) has suggested that comic book reading and other kinds of light reading prepares the readers for higher level academic texts. Bell (2001) and Kusanagi (2004) have also reported substantial gains in reading fluency. It has been suggested that extensive reading can lead to the development of good reading habits (Nash & Yuan, 1992) and larger and more highly automatized vocabulary (Nation, 2001). Bell (2001) conducted a study with elementary level Yemeni students and the findings demonstrated significant gains in reading comprehension test performance of the experimental group that underwent an extensive reading program using graded readers compared to the control group which focused only on intensive reading.

Flowers' (2003) study investigated the importance of reading for pleasure on students’ reading achievement. The population of this study was African American seniors and the findings of this study showed that the amount of time spent on reading outside of school positively impacted their reading achievement. The findings of several studies have suggested that if students are given the opportunity to select reading material of their choice to read during their leisure time then they may be more likely to achieve higher reading rate, enhanced comprehension (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Robb & Susser, 1989) and positive attitude toward reading (Cho & Krashen, 1994 cited in Flowers, 2003; Mason & Krashen, 1997). Lewis & Samuels (2005) reported that 45 of 49 studies suggested that increased volume of reading caused improvement in
reading. Krashen (1982) suggested that extensive reading promotes language learning if the learners are provided with interesting material, and a relaxed, tension-free learning atmosphere.

Several research studies offered useful insights into certain considerations while following free reading projects. Harley (1995) has reported a relationship of “reciprocal causation” between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension: prior vocabulary knowledge is required for effective reading comprehension. The reviewers on the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) have been unable to find a positive relationship between programs and instruction that encourage large amounts of independent reading and improvement in reading achievement, including fluency. Champeau de Lopez (1993) conducted her research in Venezuela and found that her samples achieved 50% increase in their reading speed after following a course comprised of timed and paced readings but she noted a drop of 11%, from 78% to 67%, in their comprehension. Zubaidi (2006) pointed out that this area needs more research. He contended that “the paucity too, of the data available on the contribution recreational reading makes to the acquisition of a second or foreign language, is because recreational reading is seldom indulged in a foreign language.” Cobb (2007) presented his data and argued that pleasure reading cannot provide the readers with sufficient opportunities of developing their vocabulary knowledge to the level that is required to comprehend English texts adequately. Research also identified several problematic areas in following extensive reading. Considerable cost, administrative efforts, skilled teachers to motivate students, appropriate selection of reading material, free time etc., are required for success (Davis, 1995; Urquhart & Weir, 1998).

Objectives of the Study
This project has the following research objectives:

a. To examine the effects of pleasure reading on the participants' reading speed (words per minute)

b. To find out how pleasure reading affects the participants' reading comprehension

c. To analyze the ways in which pleasure reading affects the participants' reading habits and attitudes towards reading

Hypotheses of the Study

If suitable and interesting reading material and appropriate atmosphere is provided to the participants:

1. the post intervention gain of the experimental group in their reading speed will be statistically significant (higher) as compared to the post intervention gain of the control group;

2. the post intervention gain of the experimental group in their reading comprehension will be statistically significant (higher) as compared to the post intervention gain of the control group;

Participants of the Study

Seventy four Saudi freshmen medical undergraduates enrolled at (CMMS) were constituted as the participants of the study.

A: the experimental group (n= 37)
B: the control group (n= 37)

Methodology of the Study

In this study, the researchers selected a type of survey to collect information from a sample that was drawn from a predetermined population. The questionnaire was designed on the semi-structured pattern in order to obtain useful and precise information on specified issues related to this study. Survey research is one of the most common forms of research engaged in by educational researchers. It involves researchers asking a large group of people questions about a particular topic or issue. This asking of questions, related to the issue of interest, is called a survey (Fraenkela & Wallen, 2000). Moreover, the survey helped the researchers to deal with a profile of a large population through representative sampling. The researchers considered all the prerequisites of the survey to produce transparent results of the study. Oppenheim (1992, p. 21) who clarifies the need of this design of research in the following words:

The analytic, relational survey is set up specifically to explore the associations between particular variables. Its design is in many ways similar to that of laboratory experiments. However, like experiments in the laboratory, it is usually set up to explore specific hypotheses. It is less orientated towards representativeness and more towards finding associations and explanations, less towards description and enumeration and more towards prediction, less likely to ask ‘how many’ or ‘how often’ than ‘why’ and ‘what goes with that’.
Data Analyses

a. The researchers used the descriptive statistics namely the means, medians, standard deviations and percentages of the students’ reading speed and reading comprehension.

b. Independent samples t-test was applied to test the differences in the reading speed and reading comprehension and the difference in the gains.

Implementation of the Speed Reading Project

Nearly 100 freshmen students are admitted every year at CMMS as medical undergraduates. For practical courses, these students are divided into 5 groups: nearly 20 students in each group. The researchers were assigned the practical hours for all the five groups that provided them with the ideal situation to experiment this reading project.

The students of all the 5 groups were briefed that they would need to read nearly 50 pages of any material of their interest in the target language. They were asked to volunteer for this project and two groups, group 3 and 5, were selected as the experimental group based on their willingness to do the additional work that would be assigned to them for this project. Two groups, group 1 and 4, were considered control group. Group 2 was not included in the study (neither as experiment nor control) so that both the groups; experimental & control, have same number of participants.
The reading project was started from the 2nd week of the academic term and the researchers told the samples that they needed to collect reading material of their own choice from different sources: internet, newspapers, magazines, journals, reports, printed short stories etc.

Then, they were asked to maintain a diary about their weekly progress (See appendix # 3) so that both the samples as well as the researchers knew the progress of their pleasure reading process. The researchers checked their diaries every week and discussed their individual problems in this regard. During the first 3 weeks, it was mandatory for all the samples to submit one hard copy of their material to the researchers. It was done to serve two purposes: to ensure that each of them was collecting material and to ensure the suitability of the selected material. All the material submitted to the researchers was handed over to the copier center of CMMS so that the samples might select suitable and interesting material for them if some of them could not find any during any week.

Results

The responses of the subjects are analyzed to determine the significance of reading skills by applying three methods. The value of mean, mode, and standard deviation is determined for all the variables. As Brown (1988, p. 154) defines: “the central tendency of groups is often described in terms of means and medians. Comparing the performance of groups will often involve looking at one or both of these basic characteristics.

Pre-intervention Questionnaire
The researchers distributed a self-developed structured semi open-ended questionnaire (See appendix # 1) to the experimental group. They were told to respond to the questions mentioned in the questionnaire. The following data were generated.

The questionnaire item 1 elicited samples’ responses about reading English material for pleasure and 28 participants answered into negative whereas only 9 of them responded in affirmative. “Do you enjoy pleasure reading?” was the next question and 30 participants declared that they did not enjoy pleasure reading whereas 7 stated that they did. But they were told to give their option even if they did not do it often. Responding to the third question 29 told that they sometimes read Arabic material during their free time whereas 8 stated that they sometimes read English texts for recreation. The questionnaire item 6 required the participants to mention number of pages they read during one week in the target language. A vast majority of 28 stated that they did not read English material for pleasure. Two participants each reported 3, 4 and 5 whereas the remaining 3 participants declared that they read 10 to 12 pages per week respectively. Reacting to the 7th question, only 5 samples stated that they read some English material during their holidays whereas the remaining 32 reported that they did not read anything during their holidays. The last question was subjective as well and elicited participants’ opinion about the possibility of improving their reading speed and comprehension if they read English texts for recreation in their free time. A vast majority of the respondents declared that it would not help them improve their reading skills and their answers were “no” and “I don’t know”. A few of them did mention that it would be helpful but nearly all of them stated that it would help them increase their vocabulary. All these responses were copied verbatim as the samples wrote them in the first column of table 2.

The last one was a subjective question that asked the participants to write down their favorite topics that they wanted to read in the target language. The total responses were
added that came out to 109 responses in total. Fourteen various topics were reported and all the topics were counted to determine their frequencies. The data detailed in table 1 identifies the topics that Saudi freshmen students of medicine wanted to read in their leisure time.

**Table 1: Participants favourite topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>topic</th>
<th>No of responses</th>
<th>percentage</th>
<th>topic</th>
<th>No of responses</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stories</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cars</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime reports</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Comics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the completion of their twelve-week speed reading project, a post-intervention self-developed structured semi open-ended questionnaire (See appendix # 2) was administered to the experimental group to identify the changes in their attitudes towards pleasure reading. The data were analyzed that generated the following statistics.

**Table 2: Comparison of participants' pre-intervention/post-intervention responses**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre Post</th>
<th>Questionnaire items (pre-intervention / post-intervention)</th>
<th>Participants, responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Do you read for pleasure in your free time?</td>
<td>No: 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Do you intend to read for pleasure in your free time in future?</em></td>
<td>Yes: 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Do you enjoy pleasure reading?</td>
<td>No: 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Do you enjoy pleasure reading?</em></td>
<td>Yes: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Do you read English or Arabic material?</td>
<td>Arabic: 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Do you intend to read English or Arabic material?</em></td>
<td>English: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>How many pages of English material do you read in a week?</td>
<td>Mean: 1.46 pages per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>How many pages of English material do you intend to read in a week?</em></td>
<td>Mean: 11.8 pages per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Do you read English material during holidays?</td>
<td>No: 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Do you intend to read English material during holidays?</em></td>
<td>Yes: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you think pleasure reading helps/may help you in your studies? Explain How? (Pre-Intervention)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Do you think pleasure reading helped/helps you in your studies? Explain How? (Post-intervention)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“No, I don’t. I read anything for waist the time.”

“No, I don’t because I think there is a difference between the textbook language and the entertainment language but they may help one in contact with doctors.”

“No I don’t because reading pleasure just help in conversation or discussion but studies depend on medical vocabulary.”

“No – Because it is not benefit me in the study.”

“Yes, I think that. When you read any material will get many word will help you.”

“Yes, it help me in reading and looke at diferent culture.”

“Yes, increase from fast reading and increase vocabulary.”

“Yes, more reading helped me in fast reading and push me to read anything.”

“Yes, I do. Before I was not reading very much but now I read a lot of pages from stories. My reading and understanding developed.”

“Yes, it helped me to increase my reading speed and the level of understanding.”

“Yes, it helped me in fast reading and also understanding and comprehension of a text.”

“Yes, it made me read faster then usual by that I can read more in lesser time.”

“It helped me for speed reading with understanding and speaking without shy.”

“Yes and it was very helpful. It provided me by vocabulary.”

“Yes, because I have known some new words and my reading speed increased. I can finish a lot of material in short time.”

“Pleasure reading helped me in reading faster and save much time in studies and also my spelling became better.”

“Yes, faster reading, more vocabulary.”

“Yes. Now it is very good. Before time to read one page 10 minutes but now different.”

“Yes, it kept me faster in reading and by this I can read my medicine materials quickly.”
“Yes, it helped in development of spellings & speed. It also helped in understanding of the material. You feel good after the hard work.”

“Yes, it did. Before this term I am read science books and think it was very hard but now that fear is gone.”

**Recording Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension**

Both the above-mentioned components were recorded in the beginning as well as at the end of the pleasure reading project to determine the gains in their reading speed and reading comprehension. The participants’ reading speed and comprehension were recorded on the first day of the second week of the 2nd academic term, 2009. The researchers briefed the participants about the whole process. They were told that they would be given a reading passage with ten comprehension questions and they were supposed to read it as quickly as possible but they needed to ensure that they understood the passage well enough to answer the following questions given on the other side of the paper. The participants were intimated that they would start reading the passage when the researchers asked them to start. A wall clock was hung on the front wall to calculate the time. It was made clear that after the green signal to start their reading they would start reading the passage and write down the time they took to finish the passage. After finishing the passage, they would turn the page and answer the ten comprehension questions about the passage. They were informed that they were not supposed to look at the reading passage after their first reading. Considering the fact that the participants might not be able to understand it fully well, a pilot procedure was executed. The participants were given a specimen reading passage with ten comprehension questions. The clock was set at 12:00 and they were asked to read it and note down the number of
minutes they took to complete the passage. The piloting of the procedure made the whole practice very clear to all the samples.

The same procedure was followed with the experimental and the control group. For all these groups, the clock was set at 11:58 and the participants were told to start their reading at 12:00. They were asked to note down the exact time after they finished their reading and then they should move to the next page to answer the comprehension questions. They were instructed to hand in their papers after writing their names and group numbers. The researchers marked all these papers to check the participants’ reading comprehension. The reading passage contained 404 words that were divided by the time taken by different participants to calculate their reading speed: words per minute. For the sake of calculation, the fractions were converted into round figures according to the following formula: one point was added for 0.50 to 0.99 whereas same reading was kept for 0.01 to 0.49. The data generated were analyzed using SPSS 10. The means, standard deviations, minimum values and maximum values were calculated. The following resulted were generated.

Table 3: Pre-intervention Independent Samples T-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading speed of the samples</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>55.38</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>-.232</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>control</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>56.14</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension of the samples</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47.83</td>
<td>13.57</td>
<td>-.605</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>control</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 details the results of pre-intervention Independent Samples t-test to identify any differences in the reading speed/comprehension of the experimental and control groups. Independent Samples t-test results did not report any significant differences: \( p > 0.05 \). The data analysis revealed a very important fact that the participants in both the groups did have extremely wide difference in their reading speed because the standard deviation was 16.02 for the experimental group and 15.2 for the control group. High SD was also witnessed in their reading comprehension (experimental, 13.57; control, 12.31) indicating that both the groups were extremely mixed-ability groups.

Table 4 records the gain in the reading speed and reading comprehension of the experimental and control groups by comparing their pre-intervention and post-intervention readings. The results report a significant increase in the reading speed and reading comprehension of the experimental group as compared to the control group.

Table 4: Pre & post-intervention descriptive analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pre-intervention</th>
<th>Post-intervention</th>
<th>Pre/post intervention gain</th>
<th>Pre/post intervention gain percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading speed</td>
<td>experimental</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>55.38</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>102.63</td>
<td>32.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to identify whether both the groups, the experimental and the control, had any statistically significant post-intervention difference as far as their reading speed and reading comprehension were concerned, Independent Samples t-test was applied to the reading speed and reading comprehension of both the groups at the end of the pleasure reading project. Table 5 details the data generated through the independent samples test.

### Table 5: Post-intervention Independent Samples T-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>control</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56.14</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>86.08</td>
<td>25.56</td>
<td>+ 29.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading speed of the samples</td>
<td>experimen t</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47.83</td>
<td>13.57</td>
<td>61.08</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>+ 13.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>control</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>49.47</td>
<td>12.31</td>
<td>55.96</td>
<td>12.08</td>
<td>+ 6.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension of the samples</td>
<td>experimen t</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>61.08</td>
<td>12.19</td>
<td>1.998</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>control</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55.96</td>
<td>12.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings and Recommendations

Comparison of participants' pre-intervention and post-intervention responses to the related questionnaire items, as mentioned in table 2, clearly report an extremely significant difference in the participants’ behavior towards reading in their leisure time. Approximately all pre-intervention responses indicated that the participants did not have any liking for pleasure reading in their free time but post-intervention responses showed a significant positive change in the participants' behaviour towards pleasure reading: majority of them stated that they would read in their leisure time. Furthermore, the analysis of the question "Do you think pleasure reading helped/helps you in your studies? Explain How?" generated participants' responses that offer valuable insights into the fact that they understood the significance and worth of leisure time reading. The results of the independent samples t-test statistics (p < 0.05) accepted both the hypotheses (Table 5). The comparative analyses given in table 4 report the gains in samples' reading speed (experimental, 84.5%; control, 53.3%) and reading comprehension (27.7%; 13.1%), thus, indicating an increase of 31.2% in the reading speed and 14.6% in the reading comprehension in favour of the experimental group.

The following recommendations are presented in the light of findings of the present study:

i. It must be ensured that a reading-rich atmosphere is provided to the students through certain measures in which they have ample opportunities to select reading materials of their own choice.

ii. It is extremely important that the students should be motivated to read as much as possible so that this extensive reading may develop their schemata of their favorite topics.

iii. It is recommended that the students should be encouraged to maintain regular diary in which they should record the title of the reading materials, number of
The Role of Pleasure Reading

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pages they read, time of reading, their feelings towards reading that material etc. These diaries should be examined by the teachers especially in the beginning of this process and later on they should be advised to share their diary entries with each other so that their achievements help maintain a healthy and competitive academic atmosphere.

iv. It should be emphasized that the students should not read aloud because that will hinder their speed as well as comprehension because by concentrating on individual words, they will not be able to grasp the overall gist of the passage. It should also be explained to them that they should try to avoid even vocalization and sub-vocalization.

v. The students should be encouraged to make groups of students who have same interest. All the members should be asked to exchange their materials after reading. Furthermore, it is advised they that should discuss their reading experiences with each other so that they feel motivated to read more and more. These mutual discussions will create a sense of achievement in them.

vi. It is also very important to ask them to record their reading speed after every week. This tracking of reading speed by them will inculcate a sense of improvement and they will feel motivated and encouraged to read more and more.

vii. The last but not the least is the factor that the teachers should believe strongly that pleasure reading improves reading speed as well as reading comprehension. Their positive attitude towards pleasure reading will make them exploit their optimum abilities to execute these projects effectively.

Delimitation of the study

This study is delimited to explore and analyze the effects of pleasure reading amongst the students of College of Medicine and Medical Sciences. This study is conducted with a
small number of experimental group (n=74). Also, the study is delimited to a small period of only twelve weeks.

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The Role of Pleasure Reading


Marsden, N (2001) *How well do our students read in ENGLISH?* PowerPoint Presentation; Abu Dhabi: HCT


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Dr. Muhammad Al-Khairi is presently working as the Dean of University Development, Taif University and his area of specialization is Linguistics-acoustic phonetics. He is also serving as the supervisor computer and information technology center and member of the university council, Taif University. He completed his PhD from the University of Florida, USA. He published several research articles and participated and organized several international conferences on various aspects of ELT and higher education.

APPENDICES:

Appendix # 1

QUESTIONNAIRE (Pre intervention)

Name: _______________________________

Mobile (optional): _______________________

Email (optional): _______________________

1. Do you read for pleasure in your free time?

________________________________________________________________________

2. Do you enjoy pleasure reading?

________________________________________________________________________
3. Do you read English or Arabic material?  

________________________________________________________________________

4. How many pages of English material do you read in a week?  

________________________________________________________________________

5. Do you read English material during holidays?  

________________________________________________________________________

6. Do you think pleasure reading helps/may help you in your studies?  

Explain How?  

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

7. What are your favorite topics? Mention three in order of your preference.  

1. ____________________________  
2. ____________________________  
3. ____________________________
Appendix # 2

QUESTIONNAIRE (Post intervention)

Name: -------------------------------

Mobile (optional): -------------------------------

Email (optional): -------------------------------

1. Do you intend to read for pleasure in your free time in future?

2. Do you enjoy pleasure reading?

3. Do you intend to read English or Arabic material?
4. How many pages of English material do you intend to read in a week?

_______________________________________________________

5. Do you intend to read English material during holidays?

___________________________________________________________

6. Do you think pleasure reading helped/ helps you in your studies?

Explain How?

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Date: -------------------

Appendix # 3

Student Diary

Name: -----------------------------------------------

Group Number: ---------
| a. | week number/ dates: | ------------------------------- |
| b. | topic/s of the reading material: | --------------------------------- |
| c. | number of pages finished during each week: | ------------------------------- |
| d. | mention the time when the material was read: |
| i. | | ------------------------------- |
| ii. | | ------------------------------- |
| iii. | | ------------------------------- |
| iv. | | ------------------------------- |
| v. | | ------------------------------- |
| e. | comments |
| | ----------------------------------------------- |
| | ----------------------------------------------- |

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Motivational instruction in practice: Do EFL instructors at King Khalid University motivate their students to learn English as a foreign language?

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Abstract
This paper reports on the findings of an empirical investigation of how frequently instructors of English as a foreign language (EFL) at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia motivate their learners to learn English in their EFL classes. Using a structured questionnaire, a group of thirty EFL instructors at the department of English, King Khalid University (KKU) in south of Saudi Arabia were asked to rate their use of specific motivational techniques in the language classroom based on a 5 point Likert scale that ranges from hardly ever to very often. These techniques suggest a variety of methods that are usually used to promote different aspects of learners' motivation. Data collected from respondents was subjected to a variety of preliminary and main analyses. The findings derived from the analyses revealed that participating instructors usually pay attention to utilizing some motivational techniques in their EFL classes like demonstrating proper teacher behaviour and promoting learners' self-confidence. These findings have further indicated that those teachers, on the other hand, usually pay little or even no attention to using other techniques like enhancing learners' autonomy.

Key words: Motivation, Motivational techniques, EFL teachers, EFL learners, Teacher behavior
Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that motivation has a fundamental role in the attainment of a second/foreign language (L2). In spite of its undeniable significance in this regard, this key factor remains, however, one of the most rarely-researched in the Saudi EFL context. The nature of the very few existing studies on L2 motivation in Saudi Arabia (e.g. Al-Shamary, 1984; Al-Otaibi, 2004; AlMaiman, 2005; Alrabai, 2007) seem only to have been concerned with identifying the types of motivation that may be of most relevance to the Saudi cultural and educational setting as well as establishing the low levels of motivation in Saudi EFL learners without any attempt to investigate any implications that have direct relevance to the actual classroom applications (e.g. how actually learners’ motivation does matter to teachers in English language classes). For this reason, the major goal of this study is to explore whether or not EFL instructors at King Khalid University, as one of the leading Saudi universities, take into account the different aspects of learners’ motivation in their real teaching practice; and if they do, to identify to what degree they are doing so. The current study appears of a particular value to the EFL learning/teaching environment in Saudi Arabia as it goes beyond the traditional way of researching motivation in that context. It goes further than identifying and analysing various motives in Saudi EFL learners to target a novel dimension of L2 motivation research: the teachers’ motivational practice in the real classroom. It is anticipated that this study will identify the aspects of learners’ motivation that teachers usually care for in their teaching practice, and, on the other side, the other motivational aspects that are usually ignored in such a practice. The study implications might contribute to better understanding of motivational instruction which could lead to improved teachers’ motivational practices and consequently result in turn in enhanced learners’ motivation and thus ultimately improve learning outcomes for an EFL group notorious for its lack of success.

At the university level, English is the medium of instruction in some scientific colleges in Saudi Arabia like the colleges of medicine and engineering of all Saudi universities (Al-Shammary, 1984). It is also a compulsory subject at most of the colleges of some of the leading Saudi universities, like King Fahad University for Petroleum and Minerals, King Khalid University, and King Saud University. Instruction in class at Saudi universities tends to be teacher-centered rather than student-centered (Al-Shehri, 2004) and English classes are typically overcrowded with over 40 students in each class (Al-Mohanna, 2010). As to avoid the high cost of the native speaker instructors (see Al-Kamookh, 1981; Al-Ahaydib, 1986), English is taught by non-native speakers of English like Saudis, Egyptians, Jordanians, Indians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, etc. at most of Saudi Arabian universities.
Researchers in the field of L2 learning have made various attempts to conceptualize the term motivation. Gardner (1985, p. 10) defines language learning motivation as “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning a new language.” In addition, Ellis (1994, p. 509) claims that “L2 motivation refers to the effort that learners put into learning the L2 as a result of their need or desire to learn it.”

The remarkable work of the two well-known Canadian social psychologists Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1959, 1972) has laid the foundation for the field of L2 motivation research and resulted in one of the most leading theories in the field: the Social-Psychological Theory. This theory is based on the assumption that students’ attitudes towards a specific language group are likely to influence their success in incorporating some aspects of that language (Gardner, 1985). Among the ways this theory influentially contributed to the field of L2 is the detailed analysis it provided about the nature of motivation, how the integrative motivation is made up (Dörnyei, 2000), and its integrative-instrumental motives dichotomy. Despite all these prominent contributions, there was a lot of critique presented by many scholars to the limited nature of this theory (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). Among such scholars is Dörnyei (1994) who claims that Gardner’s theory did not include an educational dimension; he argues that the main emphasis of this theory was on general motivational components grounded in the social milieu rather than in the foreign language learning environment.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a shift in the study of L2 motivation with researchers pushing towards reopening the research agenda in the field through developing new approaches and models for the construct. This shift has grounded for the cognitive-situated period of L2 motivation research. Ellis (2008) explains that the attention of L2 motivation research during this period has switched to a more education-oriented approach where the significance of situation-specific factors, such as the classroom learning situations was examined. The new approach promoted the cognitive aspects of L2 motivation, which resulted in the appearance of some new motivational constructs, especially those related to the learner self-concepts like self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-determination, and those of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, the need for achievement, and expectancy of success, etc.

Among the prominent models of L2 motivation in the 1990s is Dörnyei’s (1994) framework of L2 motivation which encompasses different motivational components categorised at three main levels: the language level (the integrative motivation and instrumental motivation); the learner level (language anxiety, perceived L2 competence, motivational attributions, and self-efficacy); and the learning-situation level (components concerning the L2 course, L2 teacher, and L2 group of learners).

In 1998, Dörnyei and Ottó developed a new model of L2 motivation as the corner stone for a new era of L2 motivation research called the process-oriented period. The discussion that will be presented below for this model is cited as in Dörnyei (2001a, p. 85) with slight
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This model organizes the motivational influences of L2 learning along a sequence of discrete actional events within the chain of initiating and enacting motivated behavior and contains two dimensions: action sequence and motivational influences. The first dimension represents the behavioural process whereby initial wishes and desires are first transformed into goals at the preactional phase; leading eventually to actions at the actional phase; after which the process is submitted to final evaluation at the postactional phase. The second dimension of the model includes all the energy sources and motivational influences that underlie and fuel the actional sequence.

Most of the studies that investigated various aspects of the issue of L2 motivation over the past 40-50 years paid very little attention to the important practical dimensions of the issue (e.g. classroom practices). They were more concerned about analysing various motives and validating motivational theories (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007) rather than finding pragmatic ways to motivate language learners using motivational techniques for that purpose.

Dörnyei (2001b, p. 28) asserts that “motivational strategies/ [techniques] refer to the motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect.” Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) indicate that motivational techniques could be conceptualised to refer to two concepts: (a) instructional interventions applied by the teacher to elicit and stimulate student motivation, and (b) self-regulating techniques used purposefully by individual students to manage the level of their own motivation.

Since the educational shift in L2 motivation research in early 1990s, literature abounds with sources proposing different motivational techniques to be used to promote language learning motivation in the classroom (e.g. Alison, 1993; Williams & Burden, 1997; Chambers, 1999; Brown, 2001; Dörnyei, 2001b; and Alison & Halliwell, 2002). In 2001, Dörnyei highlighted the fact that there is a need to organise the variety of such techniques under a systematic theoretical framework in order to accommodate them. He therefore developed a systematic framework of L2 motivational techniques called Motivational Teaching Practice. This framework consists of four dimensions, and presents main macro techniques and different sub micro techniques. The first dimension deals with creating the motivational conditions in the classroom that are basic and necessary to initiate learners’ motivation. These conditions involve demonstrating proper behaviour by the teacher to learners, creating a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere where learners would feel comfortable to learn the language, and generating a cohesive group of L2 learners with appropriate group norms. The second dimension of techniques focuses on some conditions that generate initial student motivation such as making attempts to familiarize learners with the target language culture and values that would inspire them to learn that language, increasing learners’ expectancy of success when learning the language, supporting them to set attainable goals and realistic beliefs about learning the language, and making the teaching materials relevant to learners’ needs and goals. Findings ways to maintain and protect the generated learners’ motivation is the third dimension of techniques. This involves making
learning stimulating and enjoyable to learners, protecting learners’ self-esteem and promoting their self-confidence, enhancing cooperative learning in the classroom, and supporting learners’ autonomy. The fourth dimension aim at encouraging learners to hold positive motivational self-evaluation for themselves as language learners. Techniques in this dimension deal with helping learners’ to make positive motivational attributions about their past language learning experience, providing learners with motivational feedback about their performance, increasing learners’ satisfaction about learning the foreign language, and offering rewards to learners in a motivating manner.

It is noteworthy that this taxonomy is based on Dörnyei’s and Ottó (1998) process-oriented model, and the techniques in the taxonomy are organised according to the categories introduced in Dörnyei’s (1994) model of foreign language learning motivation.

The studies that have been conducted on motivational techniques nonetheless remain few, and regardless of how many motivational techniques are anticipated to be useful in the language classes, their real usefulness can only be established empirically (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). To the author best knowledge, only three studies have actually attempted to empirically examine the practical applications of motivational techniques to date. These studies are Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan, and Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) in South Korea. In the first two studies, fairly large groups of EFL teachers were asked to rank 50 odd motivational techniques according to how important they perceive such techniques to be used to promote learners’ motivation and also according to how frequently EFL teachers thought they actually used them in their language classes. The study of Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) in South Korea involved 27 EFL teachers and over 1300 EFL learners and used a range of instruments such as a self-report questionnaire, a classroom observation instrument, and a post-lesson teacher evaluation scale. This study is to the author best knowledge the only one so far that has attempted to assess empirically the effects of teacher’s motivational behaviours on learners’ motivation in language classes. Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) came up with the finding that there was a positive correlation between teachers’ motivational teaching practices and their learners’ language learning motivation in the actual classroom. It is necessary to recognize, however, that the study was concerned with the teachers’ general motivational practice and did not target the implementation of specific motivational techniques in the language classes.

Methodology

Objectives of the study

The chief goal of this study is to evaluate the motivational teaching practice of EFL instructors at King Khalid University to identify whether or not they motivate their students in language classes. The study aims also at figuring out some implications by which some motivational techniques can be effectively utilized in the Saudi EFL classes.
Participants

A sample of thirty EFL teachers took part in this study. Participants were volunteer male and female EFL instructors at the department of English, King Khalid University. They represented wide differences of age, qualifications, teaching experiences, regional background, and teach students studying at different levels with different FL proficiency ranging from beginners to advance. Participating teachers were aged between 20 and 50 years. They were holders of several qualifications and had a range of teaching experience from as little as 5 years to over 15 years. Social demographic information about participating teachers is reported in Table 1.

Table 1.

Social demographic information for participating EFL teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Highest qualification</th>
<th>EFL teaching experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>FQ</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>FQ</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. FQ = frequency

Instrument

The study developed a questionnaire survey by which participants were asked to rate a number of 55 motivational techniques in terms of how frequently they actually use these techniques in motivating learners in the language classroom. This instrument adopted some of the techniques that were used in the studies of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), Dörnyei (2001a), Dörnyei (2001b), Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), and Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008).

The 55 micro techniques that came out in the initial version of this instrument were selected based on the assumption that these techniques seem to be of considerable positive effect on learners’ motivation if implemented appropriately in the language classrooms. In addition, they appear to be transferable across diverse cultural and ethno-linguistic contexts and they are therefore highly likely to fit the Saudi EFL context. These techniques were clustered under different scales/macro techniques as follows:

- Items/techniques 1-7 measured “teacher behaviour”.
- Items/techniques 8-10 measured “pleasant classroom atmosphere”.
Items/techniques 11-15 measured “group cohesiveness and norms”.

Items/techniques 16-20 measured “L2 culture and related values”.

Items/techniques 21-25 measured “learners’ expectancy of success”.

Items/techniques 26-29 measured “learners’ goals and beliefs”.

Items/techniques 30 & 31 measured “relevance of learning to learners’ needs and interests”.

Items/techniques 32-35 measured “stimulating learning”.

Items/techniques 36 & 37 measured “motivating learning”.

Items / techniques 38-45 & 55 measured “diminishing learners’ anxiety and promoting their self-confidence”.

Items/techniques 46-50 measured “promoting learners’ autonomy”.

Items/techniques 51-54 measured “recognising learners’ efforts and achievement”.

The whole set of techniques is listed in the questionnaire in the appendix.

The participating teachers were asked to rate, based on their teaching experience, each questionnaire item/technique on a five-point Likert scale ranging from hardly ever to very often in terms of how often they make use of each technique for the purpose of enhancing their students’ motivation to learn English as a foreign language. The options that were given to participants to rate techniques on were assigned numerical values ranging from (0) to (4) as follows:

Hardly ever = 0

Rarely = 1

Sometimes = 2

Quite often = 3

Very often = 4

Procedures

Piloting
The questionnaire was initially piloted to a group of 10 EFL teachers from three institutions in Saudi Arabia. Those participants were the holders of a variety of qualifications: 3 BA holders, 4 MA holder, and 3 PhD holders. Their age ranged from 30 to above 50 years. Informants in the pilot study regarded some items as inapplicable to the Saudi educational setting such as item # 7, which relates to keeping students’ parents informed about their progress; and item # 46 ‘Adopt the role of a facilitator,’ and recommended omitting them. A good number of participants recommended translating the questionnaire into Arabic, the mother tongue of most of English teachers in Saudi Arabia, due to the fact that the majority of those teachers are non-native speakers of English and not totally fluent in English. Despite the fact that the questionnaire was to be administrated only to teachers of English believed to have a solid competence in English, we went in line of this recommendation and translated the questionnaire into Arabic to eliminate even the slightest risk that foreign language competence would be a barrier for some participants. Other participants recommended rewording some items (e.g. item 13) and some of these items were reworded accordingly in the final version of the questionnaire.

Prior to recruiting participants for the main study, a formal invitation has been extended to the dean of the Faculty of Languages and Translation at King Khalid University requesting him to grant permission to teachers from the institution to participate in this study. The anticipated participating teachers were also extended formal invitations together with information statements about the objectives of the study and the ways in which it would be conducted. Only those teachers who had been granted the dean’s approval to take part in the study and at the same time gave their own consent to participate were included.

Main study

The main study commenced in late January 2011. On the day of the questionnaire administration, participants were again provided with information about the study as well as instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were requested to fill out some demographic information about each participant like gender, age, teaching experience, etc. They were then given both the two versions of the questionnaire (the English version and the translated Arabic version) and were asked to respond to either of the two. It took participants from 30-45 minutes to finish responding to the whole questionnaire.

Data analysis

Preliminary data analyses

The first step conducted in preliminary analyses was to check for and fix the out-of-range and missing values. The 53 micro techniques in the final survey were initially grouped under 12 macro techniques/clusters based on their content similarities. This initial grouping followed Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), Dörnyei (2001b), and Cheng and Dörnyei (2007).
The internal consistency of the 12 scales was tested by means of a reliability analysis (alpha). For reliability test, we went in line with what has been suggested in literature (e.g. Dörnyei, 2001a) that indices with alphas of .60 and greater are considered reliable. We therefore used .60 as a cut-off value and regarded indices with such value as reliable and they were used in the main analyses. Conversely, indices with alphas of less than .60 were considered unreliable and they were excluded from subsequent analyses. Scale # 2 “create a pleasant classroom atmosphere” had alpha lower than .6 (α = .41), suggesting that it could not be a reliable indicator of teacher’s perceptions and consequently was excluded from all subsequent analyses.

Item analysis test was conducted then revealing the need to discard items 13 ‘encourage extracurricular activities and outings that increase the cohesiveness of students in English class,’ 14 ‘explain, at the beginning of each term, the class rules to students and the consequences of violating these rules,’ and 34 ‘make the learning tasks challenging’ because they were found to decrease the alpha coefficients of their scales, if included.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted next to identify the items underlying dimensions and to explore the possibility that there could be an alternative grouping for the items in the scales. Indeed, the results from factor analysis suggested that some regrouping was necessary. For example, techniques 30 ‘find out your students’ needs, goals and interests and build them into the teaching curriculum’ and 31 ‘relate the subject content and the learning tasks to the everyday experiences and backgrounds of the students,’ which were designed to measure the “relevance of learning to the learners’ needs” were loading with techniques 32 ‘break the routine of the classroom by varying the learning tasks and the presentation format,’ 33 ‘make the learning tasks more attractive by adding new and humorous elements to them,’ and 35 ‘select tasks that require involvement from each student’ under “making learning stimulating and enjoyable” scale. These two techniques were significantly correlating with the micro techniques in this scale (rs > 0.3) and thus increasing its alpha value (α=.73). Similarly, techniques 36 ‘give clear instructions to students’ and 37 ‘raise the students’ expectations of the task outcomes,’ which were drawn initially to measure “motivating learning” loaded successfully under the “increase learners’ expectancy of success” scale. They substantially increased the alpha score of this scale (α=.78) and significantly correlated with its micro techniques 21, 22, 23, and 24 (rs > 0.3). These findings are not in contradiction with what theoretically these techniques are supposed to be doing. In other words, making learning relevant to the learners’ needs is an important motivational method for stimulating students’ curiosity and sustaining their enjoyment in learning (see Keller, 1983; Burden, 2000; Dörnyei, 2001b), and likewise giving clear instructions to students and raising their expectations of the learning outcomes are influential ways to promote learners’ expectancy of success (e.g. Wlodkowski, 1999; Burden, 2000; Brophy, 2004). These micro techniques were then grouped under the macro techniques/scales they had newly loaded on and we ran a test-rest reliability so as to establish the sub-scales’ reliability and to compute aggregate indices. Table 2 contains the ‘factor loadings’ as they load on the newly
extracted factors as well as the alpha values and other statistics of the new indices. As these indices/scales were reliable, they were used in the subsequent analyses.

Table 2.

*Pattern Matrix (Oblimin Rotation) of the items underlying the newly extracted factors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Make learning stimulating and enjoyable</td>
<td>Increase learners’ expectancy of success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(\alpha = .73; M = 2.80; SD = .75)</td>
<td>(\alpha = .78; M = 2.96; SD = .67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Find out your students’ needs, goals, and interests and build them into the teaching curriculum.</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Relate the subject content and the learning tasks to the everyday experiences and backgrounds of the students.</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Break the routine of the classroom by varying the learning tasks and the presentation format.</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Make the learning tasks more attractive by adding new and humorous elements to them.</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Select tasks that require involvement from each student.</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>-.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motivational instruction in practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Prepare students sufficiently before taking a learning task.</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Explain the goal of each learning task.</td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Guide and assist students to succeed in performing learning tasks.</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Make the criteria of success public and clear to students.</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Give clear instructions to students.</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Raise the students’ expectations of the task outcomes.</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\alpha =$ Cronbach alpha coefficient, $M=$ Mean, SD= Standard deviation.

Main analyses

The collected data was subjected to some descriptive analyses like mean and standard deviation analyses that were computed to obtain the final rank order of the clusters/macro techniques and the rank order of the set of micro techniques under each cluster. The final nine clusters as well as their forty seven single techniques were rank-ordered based on the participating teachers’ responses in descending order of the mean.

Findings & discussion

The mean value of the macro techniques/scales ranged between 2.20 (out of 4) as a minimum value to 3.34 as the maximum value. The overall mean value of the whole scale was 2.84. Motivational techniques/scales distinctly categorised into three groups based on the degree of frequency of use they were assigned by participants: the most often used macro techniques with overall mean scores of 3.00 and above, the frequently used techniques that obtained mean scores ranging from 2.50 up to 3.00, and the least often used techniques with overall mean scores under 2.50. Table 3 shows the final rank order and the descriptive statistics of the macro techniques/scales and the constituent micro techniques of each. Scales with discarded items are marked with ^.
Table 3.
Final rank order and descriptive statistics of the macro techniques/scales and their constituent single/micro techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro technique / Micro techniques</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Demonstrate proper teacher behaviour.</td>
<td>M= 3.34, SD = .53, α = .73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Show students that you accept and care about them.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Show students that you care about their progress.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Be mentally and physically available to respond to your students’ academic needs in the classroom.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Show students your interest and dedication in English language and share that with them.</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Pay attention to your students’ personal needs and listen carefully to each one of them.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Show students that you value learning English language as a meaningful experience that enriches your life.</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Diminish learners’ anxiety and build their self-confidence.</td>
<td>M= 3.13, SD = .53, α= .68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Help students to accept the fact that making errors is a part of any learning environment and that making errors leads to success.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Design tasks that are within the limits of the students’ ability.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Always provide your students with positive feedback and appraisal about their performance.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Consistently encourage students by drawing their attention to the fact that you believe in their effort to learn and their capabilities to succeed.</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>55.</strong> Encourage students to attribute their failure experience when learning English to the lack of sufficient effort or bad luck rather than to their low ability.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>42.</strong> Promote cooperation between students instead of competition.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>45.</strong> Avoid students face threatening acts such as humiliating criticism or putting them in the spotlight unexpectedly.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>44.</strong> Teach students learning techniques and let them decide on selected techniques by which they will learn better.</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>41.</strong> Avoid making social comparisons between students such as comparing the performance of two students or the public announcement of grades.</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Increase learners’ satisfaction.

\[ M=3.07, SD = .71, \alpha =.68 \]

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>51.</strong> Recognise students’ effort and achievement.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>54.</strong> Make sure that grades reflect the real effort and improvement of students.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>52.</strong> Monitor students’ progress and celebrate their success.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>53.</strong> Offer rewards for involving students in complex activities that require long engagement and creativity on the students’ part.</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Increase learners’ expectancy of success.

\[ M= 2.96, SD = .67, \alpha =.78 \]

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>36.</strong> Give clear instructions to students.</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>23.</strong> Guide and assist students to succeed in performing learning tasks.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>24.</strong> Make the criteria of success public and clear to students.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21.</strong> Prepare students sufficiently before taking a learning task.</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>22.</strong> Explain the goal of each learning task.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.05</td>
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</table>
## Motivational instruction in practice

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. Show students examples of success through real past successful students or video tapes.</td>
<td>1.73 1.46</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. Make learning stimulating and enjoyable.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6. Familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2 related values.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>7. Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms.</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Table of Motivational Instruction Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37. Raise the students’ expectations of the task outcomes.</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Show students examples of success through real past successful students or video tapes.</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Make learning stimulating and enjoyable.</td>
<td><strong>M=2.80, SD = .75, α =.73</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Relate the subject content and the learning tasks to the everyday experiences and backgrounds of the students.</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Break the routine of the classroom by varying the learning tasks and the presentation format.</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Select tasks that require involvement from each student.</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Make the learning tasks more attractive by adding new and humorous elements to them.</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Find out your students’ needs, goals, and interests and build them into the curriculum.</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2 related values.</td>
<td><strong>M= 2.70, SD = .68, α=.80</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Remind students of the importance of English as a global language and the usefulness of mastering the skills of this language.</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Increase the amount of English you use in the language classroom.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Encourage students to use English outside the classroom.</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Encourage students to discover interesting information about the foreign language and the foreign community via the internet.</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Bring various L2 cultural products like magazines and video recordings to the classroom to familiarise students with the cultural background of the target language.</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Motivational instruction in practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M= 2.31, SD = .84, α=.64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Encourage students to interact and share personal experiences and thoughts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Encourage cooperative learning by dividing students into small groups and let them work towards the same goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Allow students to suggest other class rules and discuss the suggested rules with them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**8. Promote learners’ positive goals and realistic beliefs.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M= 2.24, SD =1.09, α=.86</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29. Help students develop realistic beliefs about English learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Encourage students to set clear, short-term, and realistic learning goals for themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Negotiate with your students their learning goals and outline with them a specific class goal for learning English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Display the class goal on a wall chart and review it regularly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**9. Promote learners’ autonomy.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M= 2.20, SD = .69, α=.65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48. Give students the chance to assess themselves sometimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Encourage students to adopt, develop, and apply self-motivating techniques for learning English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Encourage students’ contribution and peer teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. Involve students in designing and running English course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, α = Cronbach alpha coefficient, ^ items were discarded from this scale due to low (<.30) item-total correlations.

Three macro techniques qualified in the top group and they were the top three macro techniques in this study.
“Demonstrate proper teacher behaviour” \((M=3.34, SD=.53)\) came as the top most often used technique with a mean score higher than all the other macro techniques in the whole survey. This ranking reveals that EFL teachers are aware of their role as the main players in the game of motivating their learners. It is also consistent with the findings of most of previous studies like that of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, Chambers (1999) in Britain, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan, and Dörnyei’s (2001b, p. 120) who confirms that “[a]lmost everything a teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on students, which makes teacher behaviour the most powerful motivational tool.”

Participating teachers assumed that they most frequently demonstrate three dimensions of the motivational teacher behaviour in their EFL teaching practice: the teacher’s commitment towards his/her students’ academic progress (techniques 3 and 4), his/her development of a positive relationship with students (techniques 5 and 6), and the teacher’s passion and enthusiasm for teaching English (techniques 1 and 2).

“Diminish learners’ anxiety and build their self-confidence” \((M= 3.13, SD=.53)\) was perceived by participating teachers as the second most often used technique in their EFL classes. It is not surprising to see teachers recognizing the importance of this technique and consequently integrating it in their teaching practice. This is because it is well-established in literature that the way students believe about themselves and their perceptions of their own abilities has a vital effect on the amount of effort they devote in performing learning tasks (see e.g., Clément et al., 1994; Dörnyei, 1994; Good & Brophy, 1994). This macro technique was represented by a big number of individual techniques (9 techniques). The nine micro techniques symbolized four aspects of learner’s self-confidence that are very essential motives not only in the field of foreign language learning but in many other fields of knowledge more generally. These aspects are diminishing learners’ anxiety (techniques 39, 41, 42, 43, and 45), promoting their self-efficacy (techniques 40 and 44), encouraging motivational attributions (technique 55), and providing learners with positive motivational feedback (technique 38).

“Increase learners’ satisfaction” \((M=3.07, SD= .71)\) was ranked as the third most often used macro technique by respondents. Teachers seem attentive of the general assumption that the feeling of satisfaction is a major component of learners’ motivation (see e.g., Keller, 1983; 2000; Burden, 2000; Dörnyei, 2001a). In their responses to the survey, participants acknowledged that they utilize techniques that promote both intrinsically and extrinsically satisfaction outcomes. For intrinsically motivating outcomes, they admitted the importance of recognising students’ effort and achievement (technique 51) as well as monitoring students’ progress and celebrating their success (technique 52). Participants also recognized that they frequently make the most of technique 54 ‘make sure that grades reflect the real effort and improvement of students,’ and technique 53 ‘offer rewards for involving students in complex activities that require long engagement and creativity on the students’ part’ as two important extrinsically motivating consequences that support students’ satisfaction with learning.
Scales 4-6 represented the second group of techniques. Participants perceived that they frequently utilize these techniques in their classes but not as most often as techniques 1-3 nor as least often as techniques 7-9.

“Increase the learners’ expectancy of success” \((M=2.96, SD=.67)\) was ranked by teachers as the fourth used macro technique in their classes. Participants reported on their use of some techniques that reinforce the expectancy of success of learners through the learning process like giving clear instructions and explanations to students in a manner that enables them to understand and easily follow the teacher to perform learning tasks successfully (technique 36), offering assistance to students to succeed in performing tasks (technique 23), explaining the goals and objectives of tasks to students (technique 22), exposing students to sufficient preparation before involving them in learning as to generate their expectancy of successful performance of the learning tasks (technique 21), making the criteria of success public and clear to students (technique 24), raising students’ expectations in the outcomes of any learning task (technique 37), and showing students some real examples of other students who succeeded in the past by inviting those students to come to talk in class about their experience or through video tapes (technique 25).

The fifth rank-ordered macro technique in this study was “Make learning stimulating and enjoyable” \((M=2.80, SD=.75)\). The significance of this macro technique is well emphasised in many different fields like psychology and education (see Raffini, 1993; 1996; Dörnyei, 2001b). Participants in the current study acknowledged that they usually make use of different individual techniques to present stimulating and enjoyable learning to their students. These techniques include varying learning tasks and the presentation format (technique 32), making the content of the learning tasks attractive by including novel and humourous elements to them (technique 33), exploring students’ interests, needs, goals, experiences, and backgrounds and making the content of learning relevant to them (techniques 30 and 31), and selecting certain tasks that allow students to be actively involved in learning activities (technique 35).

“Familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2 related values” \((M=2.70, SD=.68)\) was ranked as the sixth frequently used technique by respondents. While this quite low ranking might reveal that participants have reflected the true fact that issues concerning L2 culture and values are typically avoided by EFL teachers, previous research has demonstrated that familiarising learners with L2 culture and related values does have a positive motivating effect on learners (see e.g. Eccles & Wigfield, 1995; Dörnyei, 2001a; Dörnyei, 2001b; among others). It is interesting to notice that informants reported on their use of techniques that target three different sorts of L2 values: intrinsic values (technique 16), instrumental values (techniques 20 and 17), and integrative values (techniques 19 and 18).

Scales 7-9 came at the bottom of the ranking list as the least often used techniques in EFL classes in KKU with overall mean scores under 2.50.
“Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms” \((M = 2.31, SD = .84)\) was ranked seventh as one of the least often used by the participating EFL teachers. The low mean score of this scale is an indication that participants in this study usually pay little attention to factors of group dynamics such as group cohesion (techniques 11 and 12) and group norms (technique 15) in their classes. The nature of the EFL teaching/learning practice in Saudi Arabia is in reality a major barrier for creating a cohesive group of EFL learners for a variety of reasons. Among such reasons is the density of the EFL curriculum that generates teachers’ fear of not being able to cover the whole syllabus on time and thus makes them switch to use the Grammar-Translation Method (Al-Maini, 2006) which in turns decreases the chances for creating cooperative learning in EFL classes. This provides students with very little opportunities to interact and share knowledge and ideas. The phenomenon of overcrowded EFL classes in Saudi Arabia is another obstacle that faces the proper utilisation of different motivational techniques, including presenting cooperative learning.

The very low mean of technique 15 ‘allow students to suggest other class rules and discuss the suggested rules with them,’ \((M = 1.87, SD = 1.11)\) has caused a big drop in the mean score of the whole scale. Teachers appear to be using this technique very rarely due to the fact that in such a controlling environment as the Saudi EFL setting, teachers are seen, may be at all times, as the ultimate controllers of their classes who decide what students can and cannot do. Such behaviours as well as the other norms imposed by education institutions for running classes can be seen as barriers that would make it impossible for this technique to be effectively utilized in the Saudi EFL classes.

“Promote learners’ positive goals and realistic beliefs” \((M = 2.24, SD = 1.09)\) was ranked as the second least utilized technique by participating teachers. It is clearly obvious that those teachers are not familiar with ways that would guide learners to set positive and attainable goals for learning English (techniques 26, 27, and 28) or to develop practical beliefs about learning this language (technique 29). For this reason, teachers do not appear to be frequently integrating techniques concerning these two concepts in their EFL teaching practice which might interpret their low mean values.

Despite the importance of promoting learners’ autonomy to their motivation (see Deci & Ryan, 2000; Brophy, 2004), “Promote learners’ autonomy” \((M = 2.20, SD = .69)\) was ranked as the least often used technique to enhance learners’ motivation in EFL classes in KKU. Respondents acknowledged that they do not frequently put into practice techniques that concern learners’ autonomy such as those relating to encouraging students’ contributions and peer teaching (technique 47), encouraging students to adopt, develop, and apply self-motivating techniques for learning English (technique 49), giving students some opportunities for self-assessment (technique 48), and involving them in designing and running English course (technique 50).
Teachers’ rare utilization of this technique is in line with the assumption of Good and Brophy (1994) and Benson (2000) that schools are not the best place to support learners’ autonomy due to the few opportunities education provides learners with to exercise autonomy in the practice of learning. Moreover, Warden and Lin (2000) have argued that in countries with a history of obedience to authority, a teacher is not seen as a facilitator but as a presenter of knowledge. This is, in fact, the exact case in Saudi Arabia where the common belief is that the teacher is an authoritarian figure who is seen as the main source of knowledge and the ultimate controller of the class. In that context, the teacher seems to be rather an autocratic more than a democratic leader (see Ehrman & Dörnyei (1998, pp. 159-162) for explanations about these two leadership styles). A consequence of the EFL teacher’s authoritarianism in the Saudi context is a continued blocking of student’s autonomy. Learners in that context are most often regarded as passive and merely observers in classrooms. They are rarely asked to bring in their own ideas in the target language and teachers rarely use students’ ideas extensively (see Arishi’s (1984) conclusions about the teacher-students interaction in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia). Furthermore, learners have no choices about the content they study as it is prescribed by a rigid curriculum (Al-Otaibi, 2004). Under the current beliefs in the Saudi EFL context, it is probably hard for techniques concerning learner’s autonomy to be implemented properly in that context and it was no surprise then that under such conditions, choices about learning will not be provided to learners and the autonomy aspect of learners will not be worth much into teachers’ account.

Technique 50 ‘involve students in designing and running English course,’ (M = 1.07, SD = 1.05) has scored the lowest mean in the whole survey reflecting the fact that EFL teachers have regarded this technique as inapplicable to implement in the Saudi EFL context. This could be attributed to the fact that teachers themselves have no choice about EFL curriculum content because it is usually designed by curriculum designers who design it based on their personal subjective anticipations rather than on students’ actual needs and goals (Al-Subahi, 1991). Furthermore, being under continuous pressure to cover the content of the ready-made curriculum on time would create very little opportunities for teachers to involve learners in running language classes.

While the ranking obtained in the current study appears to be quite different from that of the study of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, our study’s findings is in congruence with the study of Cheng and Dörnyei’s (2007) in Taiwan with regard to the ranking of “demonstrating proper teacher behaviour” as the most often utilized technique as well as “promoting learners’ autonomy” as the least utilized technique in both contexts. These similar findings could be attributed to some cultural similarities between the two contexts given that Saudi Arabia and Taiwan are both classified as collectivist societies.

Conclusions, limitations, & implications
Participating EFL teachers in this study confirmed that they distinctly utilize motivational techniques in their English language classes. They assumed that they most frequently demonstrate proper teacher behaviour to their students and as well employ a variety of techniques to enhance learners’ self-confidence and increase their satisfaction about learning English. Respondents indicated that they sometimes make use of some techniques to promote learners’ expectancy of success, find ways to make learning stimulating and enjoyable to students, and attempt to familiarize them with the foreign language culture and values. Respondents have, on the other hand, showed that they rarely utilize motivational techniques that support learners’ group cohesiveness, enhance their positive EFL learning goals and beliefs, and promote learners’ autonomy in language classes.

A limitation for the current study is the lack of triangulation as the only instrument used to collect data was a self-report questionnaire. Using a classroom observation seems necessary to validate teachers’ claim that they do use specific motivational techniques in their classes.

Another significant limitation is that the findings of this study remain unrevealing with regard to how students would respond to the utilization of motivational techniques in their EFL classes. It therefore falls on future research to empirically examine how the implementation of motivational techniques in English classes would affect learners’ language learning motivation as well as their EFL achievement.

Despite that some of the suggestions for practice provided here are based on related literature rather than on the findings of this study, the study suggests a number of implications and recommendations for EFL instructors, EFL learners, and EFL policy makers in KKU; and for future researchers in the field of L2 motivation.

This study recommends that EFL instructors should take their students’ motivation into account and behave as models when demonstrating both their personal and teaching behaviours in the classrooms. Teachers have to give students more control over their learning and involve them in decision-making. They should be supporting their students rather than being controlling or demanding. Moreover, teachers should go beyond the fixed curriculum and the traditional methods of EFL teaching and involve as many motivational techniques as possible in their teaching. Teachers have to stay up to date with developments in motivational techniques and to display as much as they could of such developments in their classes.

This study advises that EFL instructors at KKU are to design the EFL curriculum in ways that allow for the utilisation of motivational techniques to take place in language classes. EFL curriculum content should be built on what students see as important not on what teachers/designers think important. In this regard, there should be clear and effective ways to connect the content of learning tasks to students’ interests, needs, goals, experiences, daily life activities, and real-world situations. In addition, learning tasks should contain novel, attractive, and humorous elements that arouse students’ curiosity to learn. The designed tasks should be
within students’ limits of ability in order to reduce their anxiety of failure and instead boost their confidence in successful completion of these tasks. There should be tasks into the curriculum that encourage cooperative learning where students work collaboratively and exchange personal experiences and knowledge. The quality rather than the quantity of the curriculum content should be cared for when designing the curriculum. Teachers/designers should try to reduce the density of the EFL curriculum content in a way that diminishes fears that teachers will not be able to cover the whole content on time and provide them with sufficient chances to make use of motivational techniques in their classes.

This study proposes that Saudi EFL learners should try to respond properly to and get benefit of the motivational techniques EFL teachers implement in their classes. To do so, these learners should firstly be aware of the fact that learning English is possible if they abandon the false belief that such a task is overly difficult or even impossible.

There are also some implications for Saudi academic institutions. These institutions have to remove the obstacles to implementing motivational techniques in EFL classes. A significant recommendation in relation to this is to decrease the strict institutional norms they usually impose. They can instead grant both teachers and students a kind of freedom to run classes using their own ways. Institutions have also to find practical solutions for the phenomenon of overcrowded EFL classes, which is a real barrier to the proper utilisation of motivational techniques in these classes. In addition, this study recommends that the teachers’ development programs, provided by both universities and schools, should involve teachers in pre-service and in-service training in which they should be exposed to extensive instruction on how to use motivational techniques in the language classes.
References


About the author

**Dr. Fakieh Alrabai** is an assistant professor at the department of English, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. Alrabai is the author of two published books that deal with the applications of motivation in foreign language teaching/learning. Research areas: Applied Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, Psycholinguistics, L2 Motivation.
Appendix

Teachers’ questionnaire

Based on your personal experience as a teacher of English, please rate the following techniques in terms of how frequently you actually make use of each technique in your EFL classrooms to enhance students’ language learning motivation. Use the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hardly ever</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Quite often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1- Show students your interest and dedication in English language and share that with them.

2- Show students that you value learning English language as a meaningful experience that enriches your life.

3- Show students that you care about their progress.

4- Be mentally and physically available to respond to your students’ academic needs in the classroom.

5- Show students that you accept and care about them.

6- Pay attention to your students’ personal needs and listen carefully to each one of them.

7- Keep your students’ parents regularly informed about their children’s progress and ask for their assistance in performing certain supportive tasks at home.

8- Support students to feel comfortable taking risks and don’t criticize them when they make mistakes.

9- Bring and encourage humour in the language classroom.

10- Encourage learners to personalise the classroom environment according to their taste.

11 – Encourage students to interact and share personal experiences and thoughts.

12- Encourage cooperative learning by dividing students into small groups and let them work towards the same goal.

13- Encourage extracurricular activities and outings that increase the cohesiveness of students in English class.
14- Explain, at the beginning of each term, the class rules to students and the consequences of violating these rules.

15- Allow students to suggest other class rules and discuss the suggested rules with them.

16- Increase the amount of English you use in the classroom.

17- Encourage students to use English outside the classroom.

18- Bring various L2 cultural products like magazines and video recordings to the classroom to familiarise students with the cultural background of the target language.

19- Encourage students to discover interesting information about the foreign language and the foreign community via the internet.

20- Remind students of the importance of English as a global language and the usefulness of mastering the skills of this language.

21- Prepare students sufficiently before taking a learning task.

22- Explain the goal of each learning tasks.

23- Guide and assist students to succeed in performing the learning task.

24- Make the criteria of success public and clear to students.

25- Show students examples of success through real past successful students or video tapes.

26- Encourage students to set clear, short-term, and realistic learning goals for themselves.

27- Negotiate with your students their learning goals and outline with them a specific class goal for learning English.

28- Display the class goal in a wall chart and review it regularly.

29- Help students develop realistic beliefs about English learning.

30- Find out your students’ needs, goals, and interests and build them into the teaching curriculum.

31- Relate the subject content and the learning tasks to the everyday experiences and backgrounds of the students.

32- Break the routine of the classroom by varying the learning tasks and the presentation format.
33- Make the learning tasks more attractive by adding new and humorous elements to them.

34- Make the learning tasks challenging.

35- Select tasks that require involvement from each student.

36- Give clear instructions to students.

37- Raise the students’ expectations of the task outcomes.

38- Always provide your students with positive feedback and appraisal about their performance.

39- Design tasks that are within the limits of the students’ ability.

40- Consistently encourage students by drawing their attention to the fact that you believe in their effort to learn and their capabilities to succeed.

41- Avoid making social comparisons between students such as comparing the performance of two students or the public announcement of grades.

42- Promote cooperation between students instead of competition.

43- Help students to accept the fact that making errors is a part of any learning environment and that making errors leads to success.

44- Teach students learning techniques and let them decide on selected techniques by which they will learn better.

45- Avoid students face threatening acts such as humiliating criticism or putting them in the spotlight unexpectedly.

46- Adopt the role of "facilitator".

47- Encourage students’ contribution and peer teaching.

48- Give students the chance to assess themselves sometimes.

49- Encourage students to adopt, develop, and apply self-motivating techniques.

50- Involve students in designing and running the English course.

51- Recognise students’ effort and achievement.

52- Monitor students’ progress and celebrate their success.
53- Offer rewards for involving students in complex activities that require long engagement and creativity on the students’ part.

54- Make sure that grades reflect the real effort and improvement of students.

55- Encourage students to attribute their failure experience to the lack of sufficient effort or bad luck rather than to their low ability.
Pragmatics and Grammar: A Contextual Analysis of the Auxiliary Verb “Be” with the Present Participle and the Past Participle

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UPT - Language Centre
University of Jember

Abstract

In both English Grammar Course books and TOEFL Preparation Course books, it is frequently explained that the auxiliary verb *be* can be followed by either the *present participle* or the *past participle*. Though it is grammatically possible to put these two forms of participle after *be*, in a sentence only one of them is appropriate or accepted. This possibility of having the two participles (present and past) after the verb ‘be’ can of course make the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, especially the beginners, feel confused. It would be difficult for them to make appropriate choices when they are completing some exercises from English grammar books
or doing grammar and structure section of TOEFL examination. As a result, they could make a mistake. Hence, it is not enough for the EFL learners to have only grammatical knowledge, but it is also necessary for them to know **pragmatics**. To emphasize the importance of pragmatics for EFL learners, this paper analyzes the grammatical construction of the verb *be* followed by either the **present participle** or the **past participle**. Such analysis provides a solid understanding of how pragmatics is important for the EFL learners in the context of using the participles appropriately. The paper explores the grammatical construction of the verb forms after the verb *be*. It also analyzes the relationship between pragmatics and grammar.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, context, present participle, past participle, EFL learner

**Introduction**

For a number of years, many studies have focused on the pragmatic development of the foreign language learners. Rintell (1979) and Walters (1979) addressed their discussion to pragmatic awareness of directive speech acts such as requests and suggestions and Scarcella (1979) was concerned with the development of pragmatic and discourse competence in cross-section of using English politeness strategies. Moreover, Olshtain (1983) and Scarcella (1983) explored pragmatic transfer. In term of pragmatic knowledge acquisition, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) proposed two factors that could attribute to the difference of pragmatic competence between the foreign language learners and the native speakers. These studies addressing the learners’ development of pragmatics can of course lead to further studies on pragmatics.

Although many studies have focused on the pragmatic development of foreign language learners, this study is certainly different from the previous studies. Most of the previous studies were concerned with the pragmatic competence or awareness of the language used in conversation. They usually analysed the implied meaning of what the speakers mean in their
utterances. Unlike the previous studies, this study explores the need of pragmatics for the EFL learners when they encounter the possibility offered by English grammatical construction, e.g. the possibility of verb forms after the auxiliary verb *be*.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) frequently provides some possibilities that can make the learners confused. In term of word meaning, Supardi (2009) explains a word of English has more than one meaning. From this sense, it is possible for EFL learners to choose one of the meanings of a word. To clarify his explanation, he then describes the word *sentence* which has two functions with possible meanings. As a noun, it has two meanings. In Indonesian language it means *kalimat* (a set of words expressing a statement, a question or an order, usually containing a subject and a verb) and *hukuman* (the punishment given by a court). In addition, as a verb, it means *menghukum* (to say officially in court that a person convicted of crime is to receive a particular punishment).

Because of the possibility of different meanings offered by the word *sentence* above, it will certainly be difficult for the learners of English as a Foreign Language, especially law students of Jember University, to get the appropriate meaning of the word *sentence* when they use their English for speaking, reading, writing, and listening. For this fact, it is not enough for EFL learners to have only the knowledge of semantics (meaning), but they also need the knowledge of pragmatics. With the knowledge of pragmatics, they can certainly choose one of the meanings of the word *sentence* appropriately.

In addition, pragmatics does not only connect to word meaning but also to grammar. Concerning the relationship between these two language components, Depermann (2011) proposes such questions as “which pragmatic factors have an impact on grammar?”, which role do
pragmatic factors play in defining grammatical structures?, which role do pragmatic uses and contexts play in the acquisition of knowledge about grammar?, etc”. This relationship of the two language components is also discussed by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) on their study of ESL and EFL learners’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness.

This quite recent study attempts to explore the grammatical construction of the auxiliary verb *be* which provides two possible verb forms that can follow it. For this study, a contextual analysis is undertaken on the grammatical construction of the verb *be* followed by either the *present participle* or the *past participle*. Such analysis provides a solid understanding of how pragmatics becomes important for the EFL learners in order to use one of the participle forms appropriately. This study explores the grammatical construction of the verb forms after the verb *be*, definition of pragmatics and the relationship between pragmatics and grammar.

Grammatical Construction of Verb Forms after Be

In both English Grammar Course books and TOEFL Preparation Course books, it is frequently noted that the auxiliary verb *be* can be followed by two forms of the verbs such as *present participle* and *past participle* (Frank, 1972, p. 94 and Phillips, 1996, p. 109). In this form of grammatical construction, both Frank and Phillips explain that the *present participle* constitutes the verbs in the *ing*-form. After the auxiliary verb *be*, this form of the verb is used in the progressive or continuous forms of the tenses. In this tense form, the sentence is in the active form of the tenses. On the other hand, the *past participle* constitutes the third form of the verb. After the auxiliary verb *be*, it is used in the passive forms of the tenses. The grammatical construction of *present participle* and *past participle* after the auxiliary verb *be* can be illustrated in the formula mentioned in the following table.
Table 1: Verb Forms after Verb Be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Forms of Be</th>
<th>Verb Forms after Be</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>am/is/are</td>
<td>was/were</td>
<td>- The ship is leaving to Mexico now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>will be Present Participle</td>
<td>- She was studying all the textbooks all night long.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ing-form)</td>
<td>- He will be playing football tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>have/has been</td>
<td>- I have been waiting for one hour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>am/is/are</td>
<td>was/were Past Participle</td>
<td>- Dinner is served from 6:00 to 8:00.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(third form)</td>
<td>- The pie was cut into six equal pieces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>will be</td>
<td>- You will be given a reading assignment in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>have/has been</td>
<td>- The bill has been paid by Jane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The formula of grammatical construction, mentioned in the table above, can of course provide the EFL learners with the possible choices --- to use either present participle or past participle. They usually find this form of grammatical construction when they are completing grammar exercises as mentioned in the following table.

Table 2: Example of Grammar Exercise on Present Participle or Past Participle after Be

Instruction: Put the verbs in the brackets of the following sentences into the correct form (present participle or past participle).
1. The sick children are (take) to see a doctor.
2. Your name will be (list) in the new directory.
3. Today the teacher is (allow) the students to leave class a few minutes early.
4. We may be (take) a vacation next week.
5. The office door is (lock) in the evening.
6. Ahmad is (bring) some drinks to the party.

This form of grammar exercise or test can certainly offer the EFL learners the formula that can be used after the verb *be* which is either a *present participle* or a *past participle*. In addition, the possibility of using the two participles can make the EFL learners feel confused and it would be difficult for them to choose one of them appropriately. As a consequence, they can make mistakes when they are completing the above exercises. For example, they may rewrite or complete the four sentences in the above table as shown below.

Table 3: Possible Answers for Grammar Exercise by EFL Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruction: Put the verbs in the brackets of the following sentences into the correct form (present participle or past participle).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The sick children <strong>are taking</strong> to see a doctor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Your name <strong>will be listing</strong> in the new directory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Today the teacher <strong>is allowed</strong> the students to leave class a few minutes early.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. We may <strong>be taken</strong> a vacation next week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The office door <strong>is locking</strong> in the evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ahmad <strong>is brought</strong> some drinks to the party.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the formula of the grammatical construction of the verb *be*, the six sentences, written by the EFL learners in table 3 above, are grammatically correct. However, their meanings
are not acceptable. The EFL learners have made mistake because of the formula guiding the usage of the *present participle* or the *past participle* after the verb *be*.

Based on the above fact, the EFL learners can possibly make mistakes in such situations. It is therefore necessary for the EFL teachers to introduce them to *pragmatics*. The following sections will discuss what pragmatics and context mean and how pragmatics affects grammatical construction.

**Defining Pragmatics and Context**

Pragmatics, a subfield of Linguistics, developed in the late 1970s and was initially introduced by Charles Morris in 1938. Morris (1938, pp. 6–7) introduced this term when he proposed his theory of signs, known as semiotics, consisting of syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics.

Since its introduction by Morris up to the present time, pragmatics has been defined in various ways by many scholars (Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Mey, 1993; Rose & Kasper; 2001; Stalnaker, 1972; and Yule, 2006). Though these scholars define pragmatics differently, they all address their attention to what the speakers or writers mean. For this reason, pragmatics can be defined as “the study of meaning” (Griffith, 2006, p. 1) or “the study of the use of context to make inferences about meaning” (Fasold 1990, p. 119).

Pragmatics offers various areas of study. In one of his chapters, on pragmatics, Yule (2006, pp 112-119) discusses such different areas as invisible meaning, context, deixis, reference, inference, anaphora, presupposition, speech acts, direct and indirect speech acts, politeness, and negative and positive face. Scholars like Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) have performed their studies on speech acts which introduce three acts, a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a
perlocutionary act. Following Austin and Searle, Billmeyer (1990), Cohen and Olshtain (1993), Bouton (1994), and Tateyama (2001) have investigated some specific pragmatic aspects focused on such speech acts as comprehension of implicature, complimenting, apologising, and requests. Different from those scholars who focus their studies on speech acts, Grice (1975) has explored why interlocutors can successfully converse with one another in a conversation. Brown & Levinson (1978) and Leech (1983) were concerned with politeness.

Context is one of the topics that pragmatics addresses (Yule, 2006). This fact indicates that context is an important element in pragmatics to get a meaning of what the speakers or writers mean. From this point of view, it is therefore important to understand what the context means. Like the term pragmatics, definition of context varies according to the type of study. In the study of communication, it is understood as “an extensive and multidimensional concept, which includes social, cognitive, cultural, linguistic, physical, and other non-linguistic context” (Mercer, 2000; Milosky, 1992; Prutting, 1982; and Sperber & Wilson, 1995). From this definition, it is clear enough that context in communication is not just linguistic information that surrounds an utterance. Though context includes much information, it does not mean that linguistic information that surrounds an utterance or a sentence is not important. Because linguistic information is one of the information that can determine the context, this information has to be taken into consideration. For this reason, context can be defined as “the surroundings, in the widest sense, that enable the participants in the communication process to interact, and that make the linguistic expressions of their interaction intelligible” (Mey, 1993, p. 38).

The Relationship between Pragmatics and Grammar
To discuss the relationship between pragmatics and grammar, it is necessary to consider the statement by Ariel (2008, p.2). She states that grammar and pragmatics always go together. You can’t have one without the other for effective communication. To understand this relationship between pragmatics and grammar, let us pay attention to the constraint faced by the EFL learners when they encounter the possibility to choose or use the present participle or the past participle after the auxiliary verb be. Because of the possibility offered by this grammatical construction, the EFL learners can find it difficult or feel confused to choose or use one of the two participles appropriately when they are completing the grammar exercise (see table 2).

Because it is possible for the EFL learners to use either the present participle or the past participle after the auxiliary verb be, based on the grammatical construction (see table 1), they may rewrite or complete the grammar exercise in table 2 into the sentences mentioned in table 3.

According to the grammatical construction of the verb be (see table 1), the four sentences written by the EFL learners in the table 3, are correct. Though they are grammatically correct, in practice they are in fact incorrect or not accepted (unacceptable). In other words, when the sentences are used in either speaking or writing, the hearers or readers cannot accept the meaning of the sentences or do not understand what those sentences mean. From this fact, pragmatic knowledge for the EFL learners has a vital role in defining whether the present participle or the past participle is put after the auxiliary verb be.

Pragmatics, as defined in the previous section, can provide knowledge for the EFL learners to identify how the four sentences in table 2 must be constructed into table 4 below. They can do this by paying their attention to the linguistic information reflected in the form of words or phrases that surround the sentences.
Let us take one of the sentences from table 3 for analysis. In the sentence “Your name will be listing in the new directory”, for example, the EFL learners write this sentence in this grammatical construction because they are influenced by the grammatical knowledge they have learned before that the auxiliary verb be can be followed by either present participle or past participle (see table 1). Though the sentence is grammatically correct, it is in fact incorrect or unacceptable. For this, they have to pay their better attention to the phrase your name which functions as the subject of the sentence. This phrase will certainly lead the EFL learners to determine to use one of the participles, present participle or past participle after the form of the verb be (will be). With this phrase, the sentence needs the past participle not the present participle because the phrase your name, as the subject, cannot perform the action of the verb are listing as the active form of the verb which comes after the auxiliary verb be. As a result, if this sentence is filled with the ing-verb, listing, it becomes unacceptable.

Finally, the six sentences in table 3 must be written into the acceptably correct forms as mentioned in the following table.

Table 4: Acceptably Correct Answers

Instruction: Put the verb in the brackets of the following sentences into the correct form (present participle or past participle).
1. The sick children are taken to see a doctor.

2. Your name will be listed in the new directory.

3. Today the teacher is allowing the students to leave class a few minutes early.

4. We may be taking a vacation next week.

5. The office door is locked in the evening.

6. Ahmad is bringing some drinks to the party.

Implication for Teaching Pragmatics

From the contextual analysis of the auxiliary verb be with the present participle and the past participle in the previous section, it is implied that it is not enough for the EFL learners to have only grammar knowledge, but it is also necessary for them to have pragmatics knowledge. As a consequence, it is certainly important for the EFL teachers to teach pragmatics implicitly to their students. For this reason, this paper proposes a way to develop the EFL learners’ pragmatic awareness of using the acceptably correct grammatical construction of the verb forms after the verb be.

To perform this way, for example, while the EFL teachers are explaining the use of the present participle and the past participle and defining them into the acceptably correct construction’ they may ask their EFL students to translate the unacceptable sentences using the present participle and the past participle into their L-1. With this way, the EFL students will be able to recognize the context of the sentences and lead them to identify that the sentences are not acceptable since they do not have meaning. Finally, the EFL students can use and put both the present participle and the past participle appropriately.
Conclusion

When learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the learners frequently encounter some possibilities that can confuse them or it can be difficult for them to choose one of those possibilities appropriately. In term of grammatical construction, for instance, they can find the grammatical construction indicating that the auxiliary verb be can be followed by either present participle or past participle. When completing the grammar exercise or examination with the instruction Put the verb in the bracket into the correct form of the sentence The sick children are (take) to see a doctor, the EFL learners, based on the grammatical construction above (verb be + present participle or past participle), they may rewrite this sentence into The sick children are taking to see a doctor. Although they think that the sentence is correct according to the grammatical construction of the auxiliary verb be above, the sentence is in fact incorrect or not accepted (unacceptable) because it does not have meaning. From this point, it is therefore not enough for the EFL learners to have and for the EFL teacher to teach only the knowledge of grammar, but it is also necessary for them to have and to teach the knowledge of pragmatics.

Reference


Learning Strategies Used and Observations made by EFL Arab Students while Working on Concordance-Based Grammar Activities

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Abstract

This paper reports on a study which investigated the learning strategies used and observations made by EFL Arab students while working on concordance-based grammar activities. The study was conducted at the Higher College of Technology, Oman, with twenty-five lower-intermediate students. It made use of a corpus which was compiled for the purpose of the research to suit the students’ needs. The texts included in the corpus were written by EFL Arab students doing a post-foundation English language course at the same college where the study was carried out. Data were collected by examining the interactions which took place among the participants while they were working on concordance-based grammar activities in groups. The results showed that making observations about the concordance data involved the use of combinations of learning strategies, which mostly included four learning strategies: association/elaboration, deductive reasoning, paying selective attention, and using linguistic clues. The results also showed that the strategy of monitoring was a major strategy used when revising the observations made against concordance data. This paper describes the observations made
Learning Strategies

by the participants, identifies the strategies used when making these observations, and discusses the implications for classroom practice.

Key words: Concordances, making hypotheses against concordance data, testing hypotheses against concordance data, and learning strategies

Learning Strategies Used and Observations made by EFL Arab Students while Working on Concordance-Based Grammar Activities

The present study relates to the use of corpora and concordances in language teaching. Corpora are collections “of pieces of language that are selected and ordered according to explicit linguistic criteria in order to be used as a sample of the language” (Sinclair 1996). Concordances are the outcome of analyzing corpora using software programs called concordancers (Hunston 2002). They typically take the form of lines that present a target item (morpheme, word, or phrase) in the middle, surrounded by the words that come on either side (Hunston 2002).

Hunston (2002) explains that the use of concordances in language teaching is associated with data-driven learning. This means providing students with concordances and inviting them to research the data and notice the language features in order to form and test hypotheses and draw conclusions about the language.

A lot has been written about the potential that corpora and concordances have in language teaching (see, for example, Gabrielatos (2005) and Hunston (2002)). The effectiveness of the use of corpora and concordances in language teaching has also been proven by research (see, for example, Weber (2001) and Koosh and Jafarpour (2006)). However, a number of investigations in which corpora and concordances were used in teaching reported that students found it difficult to work with concordances (see, for
example, Granath (1998) and Hadley (1996)). Therefore, it becomes important to find ways to facilitate students’ task of working on concordances.

One way that could help students overcome the above described difficulty is to give them training in the use of the learning strategies needed to make and test hypotheses against concordance data. Doing this, however, requires that these learning strategies be identified, and this is what the present study set out to investigate.

Learning strategies are specific actions and thoughts that can make learning easier, faster, more self-directed, and more effective (adapted from Oxford 1990, p. 8). They have been identified in the literature through a number of classifications, such as Rubin’s (1981 cited in O’Malley and Chamot 1990), O’Malley and Chamot’s (1990), and Oxford’s (1990) classifications of learning strategies.

Several investigations into the learning strategies used by students while working on corpora and concordances exist. Some of these, however, focus on the corpus consultation strategies used by students (see for example, Miceli and Kennedy 2002). Very few investigations look at the strategies used for analyzing concordances. Among these are the studies by Sun (2003) and Sripicharn (2004). Both of these studies, however, were done with a small number of EFL students (three Taiwanese students and six Thai students in Sun’s and Sripicharn’s studies respectively). Moreover, they were done during only one meeting between the researchers and the participants (50 to 70-minute meetings and 30-minute meetings in Sun’s and Sripicharn’s studies respectively). Furthermore, neither of the studies made any link between the data-driven learning strategies used by the participants and the strategies identified in the literature (for example by Oxford 1990). These limitations highlight the importance of the present study, especially when pointing out that the study is the first one ever that involved EFL Arab students.
Aim of the present study

This study aimed at examining the learning strategies used by EFL Arab college students while making and testing hypotheses against concordance data. It aimed at identifying these learning strategies in the light of the learning strategies identified in the literature (for example by Oxford (1990)).

To achieve this aim, two research questions were formulated for the study. These were phrased in such a way as to reflect the context of the research. The questions were:

Research question 1: What learning strategies, if any, do lower-intermediate EFL college students use to make hypotheses against concordance data when working on concordance-based grammar activities?

Research question 2: What learning strategies, if any, do lower-intermediate EFL college students use to test hypotheses against concordance data when working on concordance-based grammar activities?

In the present study, making hypotheses against concordance data meant forming new observations about the features of the concordance data. Testing hypotheses against concordance data, on the other hand, meant revising the hypotheses already made, looking for more concordance data that could validate or invalidate the hypotheses.

Methodology

The study was conducted at a college in Oman. It involved twenty-five lower-intermediate EFL Arab students, who were enrolled in an English language foundation program. It examined the learning strategies used by the students while they were working on concordance-based grammar activities. It started with a 50-minute training class to familiarize the participants with the way concordances were exploited for learning grammar, as they had not worked with concordances before. Then, six 50-minute teaching classes were conducted, one class per week. During these classes, the students were invited to actually use some concordances for grammar learning. Both the training and teaching classes were conducted by the author of this paper.
The grammar points focused on during the study were in the form of patterns relevant to the essay types the participants had to produce for an English Writing Course which they were doing. The patterns were selected on the basis of the participants’ needs (see Appendix 1 for a summary of the target patterns). This was done by asking the participants to write essays before each research class and identifying the most common mistakes in these essays in order to focus on the relevant grammatical patterns in the class.

The corpus used during the study was compiled for the purpose of the study to satisfy the participants’ needs. This was important to do because using concordances that are appropriate to students’ needs can facilitate their task of analyzing concordances (Aston 1997). The corpus contained 30,232 words in the form of essays of the same types as the ones the participants were required to produce for the writing course they were doing. The essays were written by post-foundation EFL Arab students studying at the same college where the study was conducted. They were edited by the author to correct the grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes before compiling the corpus. Table 1 below gives more details about the research corpus.

Table 1: Essay types and number of essays and words included in the research corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay type</th>
<th>Number of essays included</th>
<th>Number of words included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause/Effect</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison/Contrast</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem/Solution</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>30232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research corpus was accessed using the software program called the AntConc Concordancer (Anthony ND) to produce the required concordance lines. The lines were used to devise concordance-based grammar activities which were based on discovery teaching/learning. Each pattern was presented through a concordance-based grammar activity that consisted of four components. These are given in the table below, with examples taken from the activity which was used to present the pattern (The + word of rank order + step + is + (verb+ing), as in: *The next step is exercising*) (the complete activity is given in Appendix 2).

Table 2: Components of the concordance-based grammar activity which was used to present the pattern (The + word of rank order + step + is + (verb+ing), as in: *The next step is exercising*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of the concordance-based grammar activity</th>
<th>Relevant part of the activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| (1) Three concordance lines                       | 4 to make preparations for your day. The next step is improving your knowledge. First, most sou...
| (2) Information about the concordance data provided to students to activate their prior knowledge about the target pattern | Lines 4 to 6 are from the body parts of some process essays. |
| (3) Awareness-raising questions aimed at drawing students’ attention to function, meaning and form | Examples:
- What is the function of the pattern of the word ‘step’ in lines 4 to 6? (used to draw students’ attention to function)
- Look at the two-word chunks before ‘step’ in lines 4 to 6? What is the similarity in meaning between the second words in the chunks? (used to draw students’ attention to meaning)
- What is the word repeated after ‘step’ in lines 4 to 6? (used to draw students’ attention to form)
| (4) Rule-writing activity                          | In the box below, write a rule about how the word ‘step’ is used in lines 4 to 6. |
The students were asked to do the activities in six groups and were allowed to discuss them in Arabic. This was allowed because the students’ English language proficiency level was relatively low. It was based on Ellis’ (1997) view that awareness-raising activities, which aim at drawing students’ attention to the formal features of the language input, can be done in students’ L1. The students, however, were required to write down their answers in English.

In terms of data collection, this was done by audio-taping the interactions that took place among the students while they were working on the concordance-based activities in groups. The interactions were then transcribed and the content analysis technique, described by Cohen et al. (2007), was followed to detect learning strategy use evident in the transcriptions. To do this, a learning strategy framework was developed, against which the interactions were analyzed (see Appendix 3 for the framework). This drew mostly on Oxford’s (1990) classification of learning strategies, but it also incorporated information taken from Rubin’s (1981 cited in O’Malley and Chamot 1990) and O’Malley and Chamot’s (1990) classifications. The aim was to develop a framework that was comprehensive enough to help identify all the learning strategies evident in the interactions. Oxford’s classification was chosen as the main classification because it is probably the most comprehensive classification available in the literature (Ellis 1994).

The author then used the framework to establish codes to identify the learning strategies evident in the transcriptions of the students’ interactions. For example, if a student based an observation on particular words in the concordance lines, this was considered as an instance of using the strategy of using linguistic clues and the code <ulgcl> was created to reflect the use of this strategy, where u stood for using, lg for linguistic, and cl for clues. This way of establishing codes was done following O’Malley and Chamot (1990).

The codes were then validated by an expert in the field of using corpora and concordances in language teaching, who worked in a British university. The validation was done by examining the codes against samples of the transcriptions of the students’
interactions from which they were derived and also against the learning strategy framework developed for the study.

After that, the author started coding the transcriptions. This was done using the computer software text editor called NoteTab Pro-v5.61. Strategies which were imposed by the instructions of the activities were not coded. For example, while working on the pattern (The + word of rank order + step + is + (verb+ing), as in: The next step is exercising), the students focused on the word that followed the word ‘step’ because there was an activity which read ‘What is the word repeated after ‘step’ in lines 4 to 6?’ (the lines referred to in the question are given in Table 2 above). So, this was not considered an instance of using the strategy of paying selective attention. (For more explanation of the meaning of the strategy of paying selective attention, see Appendix 3)

Another point which should be mentioned about the way the coding was done is that turns which suggested the use of more than a single learning strategy were given more than one code. This was done following O’Malley and Chamot (1990). For example, in one of the research classes, the students were examining the relative pronouns in the pattern (There + are + many + plural noun + who/that/which +verb + object, as in: There are many websites that have useful information). So, one of the students said, ‘I feel it’s a subject since it is followed by a verb.’ This turn was given four codes: <slcatw>, <ulgcl>, <uprkn>, and <rsng>, which stood for the strategies of paying selective attention, using linguistic clues, association/elaboration, and deductive reasoning respectively. The turn was given these four codes because it suggested that the student selectively focused on the verbs in the relative clauses of the pattern (which represented the use of the strategy of paying selective attention) and used them as clues (which represented the use of the strategy of using linguistic clues). She used her prior knowledge of these clues (which represented the use of the strategy of association/elaboration) and thus decided that the relative pronouns were subjects (which represented the use of the strategy of deductive reasoning). (For more explanation of the meanings of the strategies named above, see Appendix 3).
Having done the coding, the author then recoded 10% of the transcriptions, selected randomly. This was done eight months after completing the first coding in order to measure intra-rater reliability. Intra-rater reliability was measured following Stemler (2001), and it showed that the agreement between the first coding and the second coding was 95.2%.

Results

The results are presented below in a way that describes the observations made by the students about the concordance data and identifies, in brackets, the learning strategies used to make these observations. The learning strategies identified are defined in Appendix 3. For confidentiality purposes, the students’ names are not given. Instead, student numbers are used. For example, S14 means student number 14.

**Results for research question 1: what learning strategies, if any, do lower-intermediate EFL college students use to make hypotheses against concordance data when working on concordance-based grammar activities?**

The results show that while making hypotheses against concordance data, the students used combinations of learning strategies. For example, in one of the classes the focus was on patterns of the word ‘*step*’ used in process essays. One of these patterns was presented to the students through the following concordance lines:

Figure 1: Concordance lines on a pattern of the word ‘*step*’

1. am in the morning is very good. The first *step* is that you ought to manage your time. When
2. nt step to organize your ideas. The second *step* is that students have to write the essay in de
3. to the subjects you are studying. The last *step* is that they have to sleep early and get up e

Here, S14 used a combination of two strategies, *association/elaboration* and *deductive reasoning*, to work out the function performed/meaning expressed by the pattern. She did this when she said, “Remember when we took the essay of shuwa? The teacher said that this was a type of essays of guide” (*shuwa* is an Omani dish). This quote suggests that she linked the meaning she inferred from the concordance lines with a meaning that she
had previously learnt to be associated with process essays (association/elaboration) and found that the meanings were similar. Accordingly, she suggested that the function of the pattern was the same one she had learnt, namely to ‘guide’ (deductive reasoning).

In some instances, the combination of strategies used by the students included three learning strategies. One of these instances, for example, occurred while the students were examining the following concordance lines:

Figure 2: Concordance lines on a pattern of the word ‘many’

4 a son is getting a better life. In our life, there are many people who don’t learn anything in thei
5 ey go to their schools, they get headaches. There are many people in the world who have headaches
6 the Internet to get the information because there are many websites that have a lot of information

Here, S09 noticed that the words ‘there are many’ co-occurred together in the lines. So, she recalled the rule that such words are called chunks (association/elaboration). Accordingly, she made the hypothesis that the words formed a chunk (recognizing fixed chunks) that represented one of the features of the concordance data (deductive reasoning).

In other instances, a combination of four strategies was used by the students. For example, one of the activities on the pattern illustrated in Figure 1 above invited the students to discover how the ‘that’ clauses in lines 1 and 2 were different from the ‘that’ clause in line 3. Here, S13 focused on the verb ‘sleep’ in the third concordance line (paying selective attention) and used his prior knowledge of this verb in terms of it being what he described as “a subject that does not need an object” (association/elaboration). He used this verb as a clue (using linguistic clues) and accordingly made the hypothesis that the ‘that’ clause in the third line differed from the ones in the two first lines in that it did not include an object (deductive reasoning).

The use of this combination of four strategies was also seen in a number of other instances where hypotheses were made against concordance data. For example, S12 used it, but in conjunction with the strategy of grouping, while doing an activity which required the students to work out the difference between the function of the ‘which’
adjective clauses without and with prepositions illustrated in the following two sets of concordance lines:

Figure 3: Two sets of concordance lines used to present the difference between ‘which’ adjective clauses without and with prepositions

4 use in college you will choose the subjects which you want to study. And you will also choose
5 The teacher laughed and said that the word which I used meant the sound of dogs. There
6 is when they advise tourists about the places which they should visit and the restaurants which
7 include news about their lives, the countries which they live in and the clubs which they belong
8 to countries which they live in and the clubs which they belong to. The last type of magazines
9 is which they should visit and the restaurants which they can eat in. The last type is pronuncia

Here, S12 said, referring to the second set of lines, “it’s places: countries, clubs, restaurants, live in, belong to.” This means that she focused on the nouns and prepositional verbs mentioned in the quote (paying selective attention) and used them as clues (using linguistic clues). She used her prior knowledge of these clues (association/elaboration), which made her realize that all of them could be put under the category of ‘places’ (grouping). This, in turn, led her to make the conclusion that the function of ‘which’ relative clauses that included prepositions was to describe places (deductive reasoning).

Results for research question 2: what learning strategies, if any, do lower-intermediate EFL college students use to test hypotheses against concordance data when working on concordance-based grammar activities?

The results show that the main strategy used when testing hypotheses against concordance data was the strategy of monitoring. For example, one instance when a hypothesis was tested against concordance data occurred while the students were doing an activity which aimed at drawing their attention to the difference between the verbs after the word ‘step’ in the following sets of concordance lines:
Here, S13 made the hypothesis that the only difference was about the use of ‘ing’ in the first set of lines, as opposed to the second set of lines. Then, he tested, or revised, this hypothesis against the concordance data. He noticed that the verbs in the second set of lines, as opposed to the first set of lines, were preceded by the word ‘to’. So, he corrected his initial hypothesis (monitoring), proposing that there were two differences between the verbs in the two sets of lines.

In most instances, however, hypotheses were tested using the strategy of monitoring in conjunction with the same above described four-strategy combination which was used to make hypothesis against concordance data. In one of these instances, for example, the students were examining the following concordance lines:

Here, S17 rejected an earlier made hypothesis that the word ‘many’ was in the beginning of the sentences in all the lines. He did this when he focused on the word ‘because’ (paying selective attention), which preceded the word ‘many’ in line 3, and used it as a clue (using linguistic clues). He used his prior knowledge of this clue (association/elaboration) and accordingly corrected the initial hypothesis by making a
new hypothesis (*monitoring*). This was that ‘*many*’ was in the beginning of only some of the sentences (*deductive reasoning*).

Discussion and implications

The findings highlight a number of points. One of these is that the task of making and testing hypotheses against concordance data was done using particular strategies that were used in combinations. Among these, there were four main strategies: *association/elaboration, deductive reasoning, using linguistic clues*, and the *paying selective attention*. This suggests that these four strategies are data-driven learning strategies and implies that students should be given training in how to use these strategies. The training can be provided by inviting students to do some concordance-based activities, and then asking them to describe the strategies they used while working on the activities. After that, the strategies which they should/could have used should be discussed and more activities should be used to provide students with opportunities to practice the discussed strategies. This type of strategy training is referred to by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) as direct, integrated training.

In addition to the above four strategies, the strategy of *monitoring* was also found to be a major data-driven learning strategy, as it was the basis of testing hypotheses against concordance data. This means that students should also be trained to use this strategy, stressing that it requires revising the observations made against concordance data.

Another point arising from the findings is that the participants managed to deal with concordance-based teaching/learning in spite of their low language proficiency level. One of the reasons behind this could be that they were allowed to use Arabic while discussing the activities. This might have helped them focus on the activities, rather than being distracted by thinking of how to express themselves in English.

Another reason could be that the concordances seemed to have been appropriate to their needs, as they were taken from a corpus that was compiled specially to satisfy their needs. In contrast, prior research which found that concordance-based teaching/learning was difficult for
students, such as the studies by Granath (1998) and Hadley (1996), made use of readily published corpora, which could have been inappropriate to the participants’ needs.

The implication of the two above discussed points, then, is to take students’ needs into consideration when using concordance-based teaching. Although this is a point which should be borne in mind in all teaching situations, it may be of particular importance in contexts where concordance-based teaching is used, as it depends mostly on discovery learning and could be new to many students.

It should be mentioned here that although the research corpus had the above discussed advantage, it also had a limitation. This is that some of the patterns it included, though were in line with the needs of the participants, are less likely to be used in academic writing. For example, the pattern of the word ‘step’ shown in Figure 1 has no hits at all in the British Academic Written English Corpus (BAWE), which is a 6,506,995-word corpus of good-standard student assignments (Alsop and Nesi 2009). This limitation of the research corpus can be attributed to the English language proficiency level of the students who wrote the texts for the corpus. It implies that it is important to make sure that the corpus used for teaching can help students expand their knowledge beyond the confines of their existing knowledge.

Conclusion

The present study identifies learning strategies required to make and test hypotheses against concordance data and proposes that these learning strategies be taught to students so as to facilitate their task of working on concordances. The study suggests that strategy training is only one way that could help students succeed in exploring concordances and confirms that another way is to devise the learning situation on the basis of students’ needs.

The study presents a major contribution to research into learning strategy use, as it links the strategies used when exploring the features of concordance data to the strategies identified in the classifications of learning strategies available in the literature (such as Oxford’s (1990) classification). This approach has yielded findings which could explain why the use of corpora and concordances in language teaching/learning has been found to be effective (for example by Weber (2001) and Koosha and Jafarpour (2006)). This could become clear when pointing out that the strategies revealed by the study to be used when making and testing hypotheses
against concordance data, for example *association/elaboration, deductive reasoning, monitoring, and paying selective attention*, are considered to be part of the second language learning process described by O’Malley and Chamot (1990).

The study, however, has the limitation of having a single coder of the collected data (the author herself). This limitation, however, is minimal as the intra-rater reliability of the coding proved to be very high, besides the fact that the codes created by the author were validated by another person before starting the coding process. In spite of this, replicating the study would be useful to confirm the results of the study. Research is also required to explore the learning strategies used by students when learning other aspects of the language, such as vocabulary, through concordances. This would give insights into the learning strategies which should be focused on when providing students with strategy training to help them deal with concordance-based teaching aimed at different language teaching objectives.
References


Appendix 1: Summary of the linguistic patterns presented in the research teaching classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Essay type practiced in the Writing Course</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Example sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>The + word of rank order + step + is + that + subject + modal verb + infinitive verb</td>
<td>The last step is that you should exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The + word of rank order + step + is + (verb+ing)</td>
<td>The first step is exercising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The + word of rank order + step + is + to+ infinitive verb</td>
<td>The second step is to exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>The + word of rank order + step + is + not + to + infinitive verb</td>
<td>The next step is not to smoke.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>noun + that + subject + verb</td>
<td>He should look up the words that he doesn't understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>noun + which + subject + verb</td>
<td>He should look up the words which he doesn’t understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>noun + which/that + subject + verb + preposition</td>
<td>I like the restaurants which they eat in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cause/effect</td>
<td>Subject + has/have + effects/an effect + on + object of preposition</td>
<td>Poverty has effects on people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subject + affects/affect + object</td>
<td>This affects the people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cause/effect</td>
<td>There + are + many + plural noun + who/that/which + verb + object</td>
<td>There are many websites that have useful information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Comparison/Contrast</td>
<td>Subject + present simple verb + object + and + subject + do/does+ too</td>
<td>I have black eyes, and my friend does too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subject +don’t/doesn’t+ present simple verb +object + and + subject + don’t/doesn’t + either</td>
<td>I don’t wear glasses, and she doesn’t either.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Example of a concordance-based grammar activity used in the study

Name: ___________________________________________ Date: ________________

4 to make preparations for your day. The next step is improving your knowledge. First, most sou 6 arn and clear up your doubts. The first step is making a good plan. Every student needs t 7 o make the water taste like tea. The final step is adding sugar. Of course, tea without suga

Lines 4 to 6 are from the body parts of some process essays.

a. What is the function of the pattern of the word ‘step’ in lines 4 to 6?

b. Look at the two-word chunks before ‘step’ in lines 4 to 6? What is the similarity in meaning between the second words in the chunks?

c. What is the word repeated after ‘step’ in lines 4 to 6?

d. Look at the verbs after ‘is’ in lines 4 to 6. How are they similar?

e. In the box below, write a rule about how the word ‘step’ is used in lines 4 to 6.
Appendix 3: The learning strategy framework adopted in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning strategy</th>
<th>Definition and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting or approximating the message</td>
<td>Altering the message by omitting some information, expressing it imprecisely, or saying another thing which means almost the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing contrastively</td>
<td>Comparing and contrasting elements (sounds, grammar, vocabulary) of the target language with elements of the first language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing expressions</td>
<td>Breaking down an expression and using the meanings of the parts to understand the meaning of the whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for clarification or verification</td>
<td>Asking the speaker to repeat, slow down, paraphrase, explain, or give example; asking if an utterance is correct; paraphrasing or repeating to get feedback on the correctness of something; asking for clarification or verification about the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for correction</td>
<td>Asking someone to correct spoken and/or written language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association/elaboration</td>
<td>Relating new information to prior knowledge or relating parts of information to each other to create meaningful associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding communication partially or totally</td>
<td>Avoiding communication partially or totally when difficulties are expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coining words</td>
<td>Making up new words to communicate the intended meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deductive reasoning</td>
<td>Applying rules in new situations to produce or comprehend language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaying speech production to focus on comprehension</td>
<td>Delaying speech production totally or partially to focus on comprehension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing your feelings with someone else</td>
<td>Talking with others to discover and express feelings about language learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems</td>
<td>Practicing sounds in a variety of ways (but not yet in naturalistic communicative practice) or practicing the writing system of the target language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting help</td>
<td>Asking a person, explicitly or through hesitation, to provide an expression in the target language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting the idea quickly</td>
<td>Skimming and/or scanning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouping</td>
<td>Classifying or reclassifying items (mentally or in writing) into meaningful units according to their attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlighting</td>
<td>Using different ways of emphasis techniques to focus on important points in a passage, e.g. underlining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying the purpose of a language task</td>
<td>Deciding the aim of a task, e.g. writing for persuasion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to your body</td>
<td>Paying attention to the signals given by the body whether negative signal, e.g. stress, or positive signals, e.g. happiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making positive statements</td>
<td>Encouraging oneself by saying or writing a positive statement to oneself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>Identifying errors in target language comprehension or production, determining the important ones, tracking their source, and trying to eliminate them;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Strategies</td>
<td>Definition and examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing</td>
<td>Understanding and arranging for optimal conditions of language learning, e.g. organizing a schedule, managing time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overviewing and linking with already known material</td>
<td>Overviewing a language task and associating it with what’s already known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying attention</td>
<td>Deciding to pay attention in general to the learning task ignoring the distractors before or while working on the task (direct attention) and/or deciding to focus on specific aspects of the language, situational details before or while working on the task (selective attention).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placing new words into a context</td>
<td>Placing word or phrase in a meaningful context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for a language task</td>
<td>Planning for the language elements and functions necessary for a task. This is done in four steps: describing the task or situation, determining its requirements, checking the linguistic resources available, and identifying the additional language elements and functions required for the task or situation; proposing strategies to handle an upcoming learning task; planning for the parts and sequence of a task; planning how to express the answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing naturalistically</td>
<td>Practicing the target language in naturalistic situations, e.g. participating in a conversation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning strategy Definition and examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem identification</th>
<th>Explicitly identifying the aspect of a task that needs resolution or hinders successful completion of the task.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing and using fixed chunks and semi-fixed chunks</td>
<td>Being aware of and/or using single, unanalyzed chunks, e.g. “Hello, how are you?” (Oxford 1990, p. 45), and semi-fixed chunks which have at least one slot to be filled, e.g. “It’s time to __________” (Oxford 1990, p. 45).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recombining</td>
<td>Combining new elements to produce a longer sequence, e.g. combining two phrases in a whole sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>Saying, doing, or listening to something over and over; rehearsing; imitating a native speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representing sounds in memory</td>
<td>Relating new information to concepts in memory on the basis of its sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewarding yourself</td>
<td>Giving oneself a reward for good performance in the new language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking practice opportunities</td>
<td>Seeking out or creating naturalistic language practice opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluating one’s own language progress; evaluating ability to perform task in hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic mapping</td>
<td>Using lines to link words that relate to the same concept, thus creating a map of words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td>Making mental, oral, or written summaries or abstracts of longer passages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switching to the mother tongue</td>
<td>Using the mother tongue for an expression without translating it, including adding word endings from the target language onto words from the mother tongue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking notes</td>
<td>Writing down main or specific points using different ways of note-taking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking risks wisely</td>
<td>Pushing oneself to take wise risks in a learning situation even if this results in making mistakes or looking foolish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferring</td>
<td>Applying knowledge of words, concepts, or structure from one language to another language as a means of target language comprehension or production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Converting the target language to the first language or vice versa as a basis for target language comprehension or production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Strategies</td>
<td>Al-Lawati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using a circumlocution or synonym</strong></td>
<td>Expressing the desired meaning by describing the concept “circumlocution” or using a word which has a similar meaning “synonym”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using imagery</strong></td>
<td>Relating new information to concepts in memory using meaningful mental or actual visuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using keywords</strong></td>
<td>Linking a new word to a word in the first language that has the same sound and then generating an image that relates the new word to a familiar one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using linguistic clues</strong></td>
<td>Using knowledge of the target language, first language or any other language to guess the meaning of what’s heard or read in the target language, usage of unfamiliar language items, answer, or predict outcomes, when lacking complete knowledge of elements of the target language, e.g. grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using mechanical techniques</strong></td>
<td>Using tangible techniques, e.g. movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using mime or gesture</strong></td>
<td>Using physical motions, e.g. mime or gesture, to express the meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using other clues</strong></td>
<td>Using nonlinguistic clues, e.g. knowledge of context or situation, to guess the meaning of what’s heard or read in the target language when lacking complete knowledge of elements of the target language, e.g. grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using physical response or sensation</strong></td>
<td>Acting an expression physically, e.g. going to the door, or relating an expression mentally to a physical feeling or sensation, e.g. warmth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, or self-talk</strong></td>
<td>Using techniques to relax the major body muscles, breathing deeply, or meditating by focusing on mental image or sound; using mental redirection of thinking to reduce anxiety or assure oneself of success in the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using resources for receiving and sending messages</strong></td>
<td>Using print or nonprint resources to understand or produce a message.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table devised by the researcher/author, based on Oxford (1990) and adapted from O’Malley and Chamot (1990, pp. 46, 119, 120, 126, 137, 138, and 139) and Rubin (1981 cited in O’Mally and Chamot 1990, pp. 4 and 5).

About the author

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Book Review

The Language, Society and Power Reader

Edited by Annabelle Mooney, Jean Stilwell Peccei, Suzanne LaBelle, Berit Engøy Henriksen, Eva Eppler, Anthea Irwin, Pia Pichler, Satori Soden

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Reviewed by Krishna Bista, Arkansas State University, USA

Language is a powerful social indicator of how we communicate in our personal and professional lives. The underlying layers of typical spoken and written language of a particular community depend on social norms, power dynamics, and political backgrounds. Altering the reality of our communicative world, we depend on the language we use and the future generation will use. In The Language, Society and Power Reader, the editors have critically examined the role of language in thought process, social and political discourse, gender, and ethnicity, and identity formation. The editors have valued this Reader as a reference book “for students studying introductory modules in language and society” but it is equally useful to the students, faculty, policy makers, and administrators no matter what backgrounds they come from.
In the context of language controversy, communication ambiguity in social and cultural discourse, and language death, the *Reader* presents a timely look at the trends and issues of language in light of societal moments and debates. To cover the in-depth language used in different walks of human life, the *Reader* is divided into ten thematic sections that explore the nature of language in the following areas: power, politics, media, gender, ethnicity, age, social class, identity, and Standard English.

Each section begins with an introductory chapter providing an overview of linguistic concepts, background information, and ties them with contemporary work of new writers and the classic foundational readings from well-known scholars. **Part one** provides background information on "language and power" to answer the questions, "what is language and why should we study it?" (p. 5) as basic foundations of linguistics, the study of language. Cameron considers language as a social public act. In another article, Norman Fairclough writes on global capitalism and critical awareness of language. His work is related to "a given and an accepted way of using language" (p. 24), i.e. the exercise of power through language in politics, economics, globalization, and education.

**Part two** examines the relationship between language and thought which is based on the work of Whorf and Sapir, two linguists who claimed that words in any language are related to the way people think and behave. Key concepts used in this part are—linguistic diversity and linguistic relativism. People speak different languages and each language has different functions. Mostly we use only "our language without thinking too much about what we are doing" (p. 31). This section includes Benjamin Lee Whorf’s classic paper on "the relation of habitual thought and behavior to language." In another paper, John Lucky examines why languages render the same reality so differently, and its consequences in the human thought process. Lucky believes that two distinct relationships that "each language embodies a particular interpretation of reality and the language interpretations can influence thought about that reality" (p. 53). For him, the intellectual and social development depends on how much we mediate to the role of language.

The choices made in language such as selection of words, buzz phrases, local/cultural terms are political. **Part three** "language and politics" includes three articles to analyze how audiences were pursued in the political language, especially professional political speeches. The first article, "media: label whores" by Geoffrey Nunberg, looks at political bias in the U.S. media—in labeling conservative politicians as 'conservatives' while liberal politicians are not described as 'liberals' (p. 66). In the second article, Boussofar-Omar offers the persuasive language of politicians, specially studying Tunisian presidential speeches, and analyzes how political speeches "promote, protect and legitimate the power and voice of authority" (p. 73). The final article of this section examines political speech from British, Flemish, and Swedish TV-debates studying how 'presupposition' is used in speeches.
**Part four** "language and the media" presents how the media informs events to the public and what dominant discourses about different groups of people in society are represented. With a case of media coverage of a young girl, the first article in this part illustrates representations of minority ethnic people in Scottish press media. This article is an example of how the language of media is working for "empowering, distancing, meta-reporting, and historicizing" (p.118) of the events themselves. In second article, Laura Miller explores Japanese Kogal girls, their slangs, and media assessments to tell how language becomes "a requisite force for changing Japan's gender ideology" (p. 128). The final reading distinguishes between 'expert talk' and the talk of 'ordinary' people in public participation programs such as radio phone-ins, and television programs.

In any formal writing and publication, the use of sexist language, a discriminatory language and ideology about women, is not welcomed anymore. In **part five** "language and gender", the first article explores women and men as language users and regulators in all walks of life. This article also presents feminist linguistic activism as "a genuine form of language reform, showing women in the new roles of critical linguistic commentators, norm-breakers, and norm-makers" (p. 160). The second article focuses on interruptions in the talk of women and men, mixed-sex conversations, and same sex-conversation. In final paper, Deborah Cameron studies young men's talk and performing gender identity. Studying stereotypically 'male topics' such as wine, women and sports, Cameron notes that although the young men engage with women while gossiping, they still "perform...the same old gendered script" (p. 190) in linguistic communities.

Racist discourses, a form of discriminatory social practice, exist in all parts of the world. Satori Soden, one of the editors of the Reader, says "Just as sex is something fixed, talk about race takes this as fixed" (p. 196). In **part six** "language and ethnicity", Teun van Dijk states that racist discourse exists in "text, talk, and communication" (p. 199) in which language and attitudes of dominant groups play a vital role. In another article, Diana Eades presents the case of Robyn Kina, an aboriginal Australian, to explain legal recognition of cultural differences in communication. Kina was prevented from telling her story to legal professionals and the court because of her Aboriginal English. Kina's case was one example of how professional interactions are structured and prevent common people from legal justice.

Language learning patterns vary on young and elders. In **part seven**, "language and age", Makoni and Gringer present the actual dialogue between staff and residents in caring institutions in South Africa and the United Kingdom. They conclude that "discrimination and mistreatment across racial lines in care giving relationship in institutional settings" (p.237) is based on social and cultural contact. **Part eight** "language and social class" highlights class-related linguistic socialization, its consequences in education, phasing out of regional dialects, imposition of standardized English, and relation of language and academic achievement. Penelope Eckert’s article "adolescent language" examines how an adolescent develops linguistic style in schools because they are institutionally forced to "mold it to suit our purposes—to emphasize, to elaborate, even to bring new things into being" (p. 238). Paul Kersweill questions, "What has
happened is that, over one or more generations, families have abandoned these dialects in favor of a type of English that is more like the urban speech of the local town or city” (p. 253).

The authors present linguistic variables to reflect individual identity of his or her history and history of social group in part nine "language and identity". Linguists have studied human development and identity formation from language variation. They presented ethnographic portraits to gain “insights into the structure of a culture by chronicling everyday life from insider and outsider perspectives” (p. 292). The relationship between language, style, and law can predict a power dynamic of any community in sociolinguistic tradition.

In the last section of the Reader, part ten, "standard Englishes" presents divergent views of English in the postmodern world. In the process of globalization and internationalization, there is not only one standard version of English. The Kachru interview offers a theoretical framework for thinking about different varieties of English, or "World Englishes". Evans explores English as the official state language in Ohio of the United States, and its debates in relations to economy and ideology. Jenkins offers a world view of English as lingua franca in which it is considered a second language or for some speakers as a foreign language. The authors in this section present a world view that how access to standard language "creates and perpetuates power inequalities as well as proves group identity" (p. 327).

Students, teachers, and practitioners in linguistics, language, education, sociology, and philosophy may appreciate the breadth of topics covered in the Reader. Editors have carefully selected articles that have succinctly captured the diverse geographical locations with everyday examples and data of human language. The Reader is highly user-friendly with clear and precise meaning and explanation of key readings in each ten parts of the book. It also provides detailed section introductions and background information, issues to consider (mainly questions for students and teachers), annotated further reading and suggestions for further viewing which are up to date. The Reader features a glossary with helpful definitions and information on how the readings link to different areas. The editor mentions, "While it [Reader] can be used as a stand-alone text, The Language, Society and Power Reader has also been fully cross-referenced with the new companion title, Language, Society and Power, third edition (Routledge, 2011)". The editors also believe that together these books provide the complete resource for students studying modules in language and society in English language and linguistics, media, communication, cultural studies, sociology and psychology.

Lastly, I would suggest that, in light of today’s educational challenges in regard to understanding and incorporating diverse language and linguistic debates, this book offers a wonderful opportunity to incorporate several themes related to language—power, politics, media, gender, ethnicity, age, social class, identity, and standardization of English, moving from theory to practice. The Reader contributes to our understanding of language as a critical element of
learning human language and its critical functions in the diverse linguistic communities in this world.

Reference

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