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Letter from the editor

Dear Colleagues

Greetings,

It is our pleasure to announce that we have released the new issue of our Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 3, Number 4 December issue 2012. AWEJ has continued to gain more national and international recognitions. It is indexed and listed in high ranked universities, research centers, databases and libraries. AWEJ is now also recognized, indexed and listed with the University of Saskatchewan – Canada, San José State University - California, 1-Shou University - Taiwan, Western Theological Seminary- Michigan, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, University of Notre Dame, University of Southern Australia, University of Rochester, University of Helsinki, Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP), Cornell University Library-New York, and many more. See this link http://www.awej.org/?section=8. Colleagues whose work is published in AWEJ are also exposed to more visibility and potential citations.

On the other hand, we would like to extend a very warm welcome to all new colleagues joining us and wish them all a successful and professional career with us. Finally on behalf of the AWEJ team we would like to express our heartily congratulation to our colleague Prof. Dr. Haifa Al-Buainain at Department of English Literature, and Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University, on her promotion to full professor and wish her all success and prosperity.

Best Regards,

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The Knowledge Base of Teaching English as an Additional Language: A Framework for Curriculum and Instruction

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Abstract

This paper presents a theoretical framework of the knowledge base of teaching English as an additional language. The paper is premised on the assumption that a knowledge base for teaching English as an additional language is essential despite significant variations in educational contexts and learners’ backgrounds. The proposed framework is grounded in the extant literature and consists of three dimensions relative to 1) knowledge of academic content, 2) knowledge of specialized pedagogy, and 3) knowledge of students, schools, and communities. Each of these three dimensions encompasses other types of knowledge concerning language, literature, culture, and the process of language acquisitions as well as methods of teaching and assessment and evaluation. Students’ characteristics, interaction dynamics, and motivations as well as how school and community factors may impact achievement are also discussed. The paper concludes with a suggested framework for the design and implementation of English teacher education programs in Lebanon and similar contexts in the Arab world where English is studied as an additional language for its vitality in the educational, commercial, and cultural domains.

Keywords: Knowledge base, English, Teacher education, Pedagogy, Culture
The Knowledge Base of Teaching English as an Additional Language: A Framework for Curriculum and Instruction

The question of what types of knowledge are brought into play in the context of teaching English as an additional language has intrigued researchers and practitioners for quite sometime now. According to Johnston and Irujo (2001), the knowledge base of language teaching “… has emerged as one of the central concerns of research in teacher education” in the 1990’s (p. 4). These researchers maintain that the impetus of research about a generic knowledge base in teacher education dates back to Shulman’s 1987 theoretical framework of teaching knowledge. Shulman (1987) formulated a theory of knowledge base of teaching that is comprised of various categories of knowledge including content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values (Johnston & Irujo, 2001).

The aforementioned types of knowledge provided a theoretical approach to the development of a teacher education knowledge base that was complemented by a policy and practice perspective. This perspective manifested itself in the form of professional standards, teaching procedures, and assessment techniques to ensure excellence in teaching (Fradd & Lee, 1998). Of particular relevance to the development of a teaching knowledge base from the policy and practice perspective were the initiatives of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) guidelines. The NBPTS (1996) standards maintain that teachers need to a) demonstrate commitment to students and their learning, b) know their subjects, c) manage and monitor learning, d) reflect on their practice, and e) be members of a learning community. Similarly, the NCATE (1996) requirements for accreditation stipulate that higher education institutions have a specialized knowledge base of their teacher education programs that correspond to their mission statement. Along similar lines, attempts to create national standards for curriculum, instruction, and assessment have also contributed to the enhancement of the processes of teacher preparation as well as classroom practices, thereby corroborated efforts to develop a teaching knowledge base.

The preceding efforts at building a generic knowledge base for teaching were somehow echoed in the field of teaching English as an additional language. The widespread of English as a global language learned for its vitality in the various domains of commerce, technology, and education has underscored the importance of developing a knowledge base specific to teaching English. Despite significant variations in the educational experiences of learners, their characteristics and motivations for learning the language, and irrespective of the degrees of exposure to the target language of English in their environments, a common knowledge base for teaching English remains relevant (Fradd & Lee, 1998). Furthermore, the availability of information and resources for teaching English worldwide may facilitate efforts to conceptualize the core components of a knowledge base for language teaching.

According to Johnston and Irujo (2001), “… it was not until the mid 1990’s – that serious thought began to be given to the question of what the knowledge base of language teaching might be” (p. 4). These researchers further maintained that language teaching was equated with the transmission of declarative knowledge of the language under study. Consequently,
professional preparation of language teachers simply entailed completion of an undergraduate major in the language under study and its literature. However, a more complex and contextualized view of the knowledge base of language teaching began to emerge as Freeman (1989) and Woods (1996) began to emphasize teachers’ beliefs, assumptions, and cognition as important components of the knowledge base of language teaching. Later on, Freeman and Johnson (1998) proposed a view of ESL/EFL teacher education that focuses on the teaching activity itself as it occurs in its socio-cultural context. More recently, Graves (2009) called for an interconnected system of knowledge bases which underscores the importance of understanding the socio-cultural and political contexts in which teachers work as well as becoming cognizant of and reflective on their own conceptions and beliefs about teaching. Similarly, Bartels (2009) emphasized the value of contextually-linked learning tasks rather than abstract and theoretical approaches to language teacher education. This is in order to enable teachers to develop some domain-specific and organized implicit knowledge about language that can be easily used in actual teaching situations. Along similar lines, Hedgecock (2009) argued that teachers need to know the oral and written discourse conventions of language teaching in order to fully participate in their learning communities.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the various components of a knowledge base for language teaching in order to conceptualize a framework for curriculum planning and instruction. A basic premise behind this exploration is that there is at present a need for curricular frameworks that aid curriculum planners, researchers, and practitioners in the processes of planning, implementing, and evaluating their endeavor of teaching English as an additional language. As such, the proposed framework is intended to serve as a working document consisting of a pool of general constructs for understanding the dimensions and domains of the knowledge base for English language teaching.

In developing the framework, we took into consideration the contextual variables that may impact teaching English in Lebanon and in other similar situations in the Arab world where English is increasingly spreading as an additional language due to its vitality in the various educational, commercial, and cultural domains. This spread of English has prompted the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education to introduce a new framework for education in 1994, followed by a new English language curriculum, textbooks, and comprehensive campaigns to train teachers in modern methods and techniques (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1997). These developments have underscored the need for a curricular framework and a teacher knowledge-base that will aid teacher education programs and training provider with a theoretical lens to view and plan there endeavor.

Consequently, we conducted analytical review of the extant literature in order to identify the threads that appear to run through theory, research, and practice with an eye to explore and conceptualize the types of knowledge need by teachers to implement a modern English curriculum that includes objectives and competencies in the cognitive and non-cognitive domains of schooling. The review was initially organized according to three main provisional categories that pertain to 1) knowledge of academic content, 2) knowledge of specialized pedagogy, and 3) knowledge of students, schools, and learning communities as suggested by Fradd and Lee (1998). Additional subcategories emerged within each main category as various bodies of knowledge were underscored in the literature as shown in the subsequent sections below.
A Framework of the English Language Knowledge Base

Figure 1 below presents the dimensions and components of the knowledge base for teaching English as an additional language that emerged from the literature review.

The knowledge base of teaching English as an additional language could be conceived as a three-dimensional construct consisting of 1) knowledge of academic content, 2) knowledge of specialized pedagogy, and 3) knowledge of schools, students, and communities. The academic knowledge component is comprised of bodies of knowledge relative to knowledge of the language, literature, culture, and the process of language acquisition. Meanwhile, specialized pedagogy entails knowledge of the methods of teaching a foreign language, cooperative learning, the curriculum, and the procedures of assessment and evaluation. Finally, knowledge of students, schools, and communities involves knowledge of students’ cultures, learning styles and needs, motivations, patterns of interaction and participation, school rules and policies, and the knowledge of the socio-cultural composition of learners’ communities more generally. The subsequent sections of the paper explicate the dimensions of the framework in more detail.
Knowledge of Academic Content in English Language Teaching Language

One of the most obvious and fundamental components of the requisite knowledge for teaching English is knowledge of the language itself and knowledge of the literature and culture associated with it. Specifically, teachers need to first comprehend and understand the English language, its literature, and the cultural postulates, values, and norms associated with it. Yet, the question of what does it mean to know a language has been controversial in applied linguistics. The customary conception of the knowledge of the language has in fact evolved over the past few decades from a narrow focus on linguistic knowledge to a more comprehensive view that includes sociolinguistic and pragmatic competencies. Back in 1957, Chomsky proposed his seminal theory of transformational generative grammar in which he distinguished between competence defined as one’s knowledge of the language and performance defined as one’s production and comprehension of language. According to Chomsky (1957), competence signified knowledge of the linguistic (grammatical) system of the language and encompassed bodies of knowledge relative to vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and phonemic-graphemic relations. Later on, Widdowson, (1978) acknowledged Chomsky’s distinction between competence and performance, but called for a much broader conceptualization of competence, which led to the notion of communicative competence as an alternative to linguistic (grammatical) competence. Canale and Swain (1980) operationalized the notion of communicative competence as a multifaceted construct that encompasses linguistic as well as sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. Specifically, linguistic competence was considered essential but not enough to enable one to communicate in a language other than his/her own. Rather, the appropriate use and understanding of language in various contexts (sociolinguistics), cohesion of form and coherence of thought (discourse), and communication strategies (strategic) competencies were also considered equally essential. Later on, Bachman (1990) proposed a model of language competence with two major types of abilities: organizational and textual competence. Organizational competence refers to controlling the formal structure of language and includes grammatical competence and textual competence to organize rhetoric and achieve coherence. Meanwhile, pragmatic competence encompassed illocutionary and sociolinguistic competences and referred to knowledge of the functions of language, sensitivity to the varieties of dialects, registers, naturalness of language as well as understanding of cultural referents and figures of speech.

Literature

Besides knowledge of the target language, teachers of English as an additional language need to know and understand the literature it embodies and the culture(s) associated with it. The widespread of English as a global language has resulted in the production of a significant body of world literature in English. While written in English, this body of literature often reflects certain stylistic and cultural peculiarities that are important and useful in teaching English as a global language to a culturally and linguistically diverse population of learners. Of particular relevance in this regard would be literary works produced in Africa, Asia, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, and other parts of the globe where English is used as an additional language (See http://www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/landow/post/misc/authors.html) for a list of seminal authors by country.
Culture

The question of teaching for cultural understanding assumes a pivotal role in the English as an additional language knowledge base. Due to the exacerbation of violence and the widespread of misunderstandings and critical incidents at the international, national and communal levels, there has been a growing need to develop the skills of inter-cultural and intra-cultural communication. During the 1970’s and the 1980’s, several theorists attempted to devise models and frameworks for incorporating culture into foreign language instruction (e.g., Brooks, 1968; Nostrand, 1989). Later one, Seelye (1993) proposed an operational model of culture teaching that included the following six goals summarized by Omaggio (2001) as follows: 1) “developing interest in another culture and empathy toward its people, 2) realizing that the way people speak and behave is affected by social variables related to who they are and the role they play in society, 3) understanding that people think, act, and react in response to culturally conditioned images, and that effective communication requires discovery of what those images are, 4) recognizing that behavior is shaped by situational variables and the conventions of culture, 5) realizing that people use the options provided by their society for taking care of their basic needs, and 6) developing the ability to explore the culture—– and evaluating generalizations” (Omaggio, 2001, p. 351).

In addition, several strategies were proposed in the literature to teach culture in the language classroom. These strategies include: cultural islands, culture clusters, culture capsules, culture mini-dramas, folktales, and literature. As such, knowing what is involved in teaching the culture of the target language and being able to identify and utilize various strategies to achieve cultural goals in the classroom constitute an important component of the teaching knowledge base of English as an additional language.

Language Acquisition

In addition to the knowledge of language and its literature and culture, Fradd and Lee (1998) maintain that teachers of English as an additional language require specialized knowledge “within the fields of language acquisition, anthropology, and sociology in order to teach students’ from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds” (p. 765). Specifically, these researchers maintain that teachers need to understand the process of language acquisition and the factors that may impact this process. As a matter of fact, the literature includes a number of conflicting theories that attempt to explicate how people acquire a language other than their own. Chief among these theories are the behaviorist, universal grammar, and the cognitive theories and the monitor hypothesis of language acquisition. The behaviorist theory is based on the tenets of the theories of Skinner (1957), Hilgard (1962), Chastain (1976), and Wardhaugh (1976). It maintains that human learning is similar to animal learning and the learner’s mind is a tabula rasa. Language learning is perceived as a matter of habit formation through strengthening the associations between stimulus and response through reinforcement. As such, human language is considered as a sophisticated response system that can be acquired through drilling and repetition. Conversely, the universal grammar theory espoused by (Chomsky 1957; Ellis, 1985; Mclaughlin, 1990; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991) views language as a human-specific and genetically determined capacity. Biological mechanisms determine language acquisition and the human mind is perceived as an active agent that creates new language and utterances rather than just a passive recipient of environmental input. In turn, (Krashen, 1982) draws a distinction.
between learning and acquisition as well as underscores the importance of the affective factors and developmentally-appropriate input as major determinants of language acquisition. Furthermore, this researcher maintains that there exists a natural order in the acquisition of grammatical structures and that acquisition initiates language utterances that are monitored by learning. Finally, it should be noted that the generic cognitive theory of Ausubel (1968) which emphasizes the importance of meaningful learning of the linguistic input that is relatable to existing knowledge structures as opposed to rote learning which is verbatim and arbitrary has influenced the field of teaching English as an additional language. For instance, other cognitive theorists (e.g., Tarone, 1982; Ellis, 1985) have maintained that learners’ production of language is subject to variability, depending upon the degree of attention they pay to the form of language when they communicate. Meanwhile, Schneider and Shiffrin (1977) emphasize that automaticity in language use will be achieved only after attention to the skills and tasks to be mastered. Finally, it should also be noted that teachers need to know that the acquisition process is impacted by a number of factors such as age, gender, motivation, socio-economic status, prior experiences, and learning contexts as suggested by Fradd and Lee (1998).

Knowledge of Specialized Pedagogy

Methods

The knowledge of specialized pedagogy entails an understanding of the theoretical principles and an ability to apply the techniques of a number of foreign language teaching methods that have been in practice in one context or another during the past century and at present. This type of knowledge is important because it enables teachers to devise and deliver effective instruction as well as to reason what instructional methods and activities are particularly well-suited for the types of knowledge they would like their learners to comprehend and understand. These methods include the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audio-lingual Method, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response, and the Communicative Approach (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Omaggio, 2001; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). In addition, cooperative learning (CL) has also been advocated as an effective approach in teaching language (Kagan, 1995; Kessler, 1992; McGroarty, 1989). According to Ghaith (2003) CL is a generic approach to instruction that emphasizes positive interdependence among group members and individual accountability, as well as cognitive and social skills. It encompasses the following methods: The Structural Approach (Kagan, 1989), Group Investigation (Sharan & Sharan, 1992), Student Team Learning (Slavin, 1995), and Learning Together (Johnson, Johnson, & Hulebec, 1993). Thus it is important for teachers to develop the requisite pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) to apply the dynamics and procedures of these CL methods in teaching various bodies of knowledge involved in teaching English as an additional language. In this regard Shaaban and Ghaith (2005) suggest that the Learning Together model is well suited for teaching reading, writing, speaking, and culture, Group Investigation for writing and culture, Jigsaw from the student team learning model for reading and literature, TGT and STAD, also from the student team learning model, for grammar, and cooperative structures for reading, writing, speaking, vocabulary, literature, and culture.
Curriculum

Teachers of English as an additional language need to understand the curricula of their schools as well as should develop the ability to create and adapt grade level curricula. Presently, there are several standards and frameworks intended to aid teachers in the planning and delivery of their instruction. Chief among these standards and frameworks are the proficiency guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL), the Foreign Language Standards, and the English as a second language (ESL) K-12 standards proposed by the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) organization.

The ACTFL proficiency guidelines (1986) “were the first attempt by the foreign language teaching profession to define and describe levels of functional competence for the academic content in a comprehensive fashion (Omaggio, 2001, p. 9). These guidelines define and measure learners’ abilities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing across four levels of proficiency, namely novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior. Furthermore, within the novice, intermediate, and advanced levels there are gradations of sub-levels that range from low to mid and high. Likewise, the guidelines include four interrelated criteria relative to global tasks/functions, context/content, accuracy, and text type. Specifically, the global task/functions criterion refers to real world tasks that language users perform in real life. Meanwhile, the context criterion refers to the settings and circumstances in which language is used. Finally, the content and accuracy dimensions refer to the topics of discourse used in assessment and the quality and precision of the message conveyed, respectively.

Along similar lines, the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996) stipulate that learners need to demonstrate evidence of engagement in communication, gaining knowledge and understanding of other cultures, comparing their own culture to the target culture, connecting with other disciplines in the target language and acquiring information, and participating in multilingual communities at home and around the world.

Finally, the ESL Standards (Short et al., 1996) proposed by (TESOL) aimed at determining the goals and standards needed to enable ESL learners to realize their personal, social, and career goals in an increasingly diverse and interdependent world. The standards were organized according to the three overarching goal areas of 1) using English to communicate in social setting, 2) using English to achieve in content areas and 3) using English in socially and culturally appropriate ways. Each goal encompassed three standards that specify students’ level of knowledge and ability, a set of descriptors of representative behaviors, sample progress indicators, and classroom vignettes to demonstrate the standards in action and describe typical student and teacher activities.

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment, defined as gathering evidence regarding how learners approach, process, and complete real life tasks in the target language, and evaluation defined as making decisions regarding learners’ admission, placement, promotion and graduation, constitute an important aspect of the knowledge base of teaching English as an additional language. Consequently, teachers need to develop their knowledge of the steps involved in the assessment process as well as the techniques and formats it employs. These steps include knowledge of the purpose, choosing appropriate techniques of data gathering, scoring, and reporting results. The techniques
of data gathering include 1) testing with its various types (fill in the blanks, matching, multiple choice, true/false, short answers, and essay writing), 2) observation with its various formats (checklists, journals, reading logs, portfolios, videos of role-plays, audio-tapes of discussions) and 3) inquiry (interviews, questionnaires). Knowledge of these techniques and formats assumes greater importance with the wider acceptance of authentic and performance assessments as continuous processes alternative to standardized testing and traditional testing that adhere to the traditional testing criteria of objectivity, machine scorability, standardization, or cost-effectiveness (Huerta-Macias 1995).

According to Ghaith (2002) alternative and performance assessments underscore the importance of knowing a “…wide variety of formats” because these “formats show what the students can actually do rather than what they are able to recall” (p. 26). Alternative assessment also reflects the curriculum being taught and provides information on the strengths and weaknesses of each student. Furthermore, it provides multiple ways of determining the progress of students and can be more culturally sensitive and free of the linguistic and cultural biases inherent in traditional testing (Huerta-Macias 1995). Because alternative assessment is more closely intertwined with classroom instruction, it does not require a separate block of time to be administered because it is based on day-to-day instructional activities. Furthermore, Ghaith (2002) maintains that teachers need to consider a number of multifaceted issues when doing alternative assessment. These issues range from knowledge of the purpose, focus, and setting to awareness of the stakes and shareholders of assessment. Along similar lines, Johnson and Johnson (1996) maintain that “the purposes of assessment can be diagnostic, formative, or summative, whereas the focus can be the process of learning, the process of instruction, or the outcomes of learning and instruction. Likewise, the setting can be artificial (classroom) or authentic (real world) and the stakes can be low or high, depending upon whether the purposes of assessment are to determine, for example, the students’ instructional needs (formative) or their admission to college (summative). Finally, the shareholders of assessment can be students and parents, the teaching staff, the administrators, colleges, and even potential employers.” (Cited in Ghaith, 2002, p. 27). The issues involved in assessment become even more diversified when we consider the question of what gets assessed and evaluated. For instance, Johnson and Johnson (1996) maintain that teachers need to measure students’ academic abilities, skills, and competencies as well as their attitudes and work habits. This suggests that in conducting alternative assessment, teachers need to know how to integrate assessment procedures into an ongoing instructional program, using various techniques and formats.

**Technology**

Computer assisted instruction (CAI) and computer management instruction (CMI) provide teachers with excellent opportunities to motivate their students and facilitate their learning and acquisition of English as an additional language. Specifically, Fradd and Lee (1998) maintain that the “applications of technology can provide valuable support for language learning through interactive feedback and visual cues linking real-world experience with academic content and discourse” (p. 768). Consequently, knowledge of the how and the why of the applications of technology in language teaching constitutes an important component of the knowledge base of language teaching. It should also be noted that teachers can benefit from the availability of many websites, data bases, and other internet resources that aid them in a very significant way in their endeavor to plan, deliver, and assess the outcomes of their instruction.
Knowledge of Students, Schools, and Communities

The third dimension of the teachers’ knowledge base of English as an additional language relates to knowledge of students, schools, and communities. This dimension assumes vital significance due to the fact that learners of English as an additional language come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The interface of culture and learning is a complex and especially relevant issue in the context of teaching English as an additional language. The cultural and linguistic backgrounds of English language learners are diverse and can be characterized on a variety of dimensions that may affect learning. For instance, according to Sharan (2008), learners from “weak uncertainty avoidance” cultures tend to have higher degrees of tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity than their counterparts from “strong uncertainty avoidance” cultures. Consequently, learners may differ in their levels of comfort with unstructured learning situations, vague objectives, and no stringent time tables. Specifically, while learners with weak uncertainty avoidance cultural backgrounds may value “intellectual disagreements and view them as facets of cognitive development” other learners from strong uncertainty avoidance cultural backgrounds “… prefer structured learning situations, precise objectives, detailed assignments, and strict time frames” (Sharan, 2008, p. 5). Furthermore, this researcher maintains that the patterns of classroom interaction vary across cultural boundaries. While learners from Euro-American backgrounds may feel comfortable to speak up in class spontaneously to express their personal opinions, learners from Latin and Southeast Asian backgrounds would expect the teacher to initiate communication and may only speak when called upon in order to avoid making mistakes. Along similar lines, Tharp and Gallimore (1991) maintain that learners from some Native American nations tend to wait patiently for their turns to speak and are not used to asking questions in class. It has also been observed for quite sometime now in the field of contrastive rhetoric that the writing styles of learners are also affected by culture in terms of many variables relative to the structure, organization, style and content of writing as maintained by Kaplan (1966), Bazerman and Prior (2004) and Connor (2004). Thus, it is important for teachers to know the cultural and the interaction patterns of their learners as well as the determinants and dynamics of their class participation with regard to reasoning, questioning, arguing, and critiquing as suggested by Cazden (1988) and Tikunoff (1987). It is also equally important to develop sensitivity to the effects of gender, learning styles, and learning disabilities, if present among learners. The effects of these variables on learning and achievement have been documented and recognized by educational researchers and practitioners alike and their importance can not be overlooked especially in the multilingual and multicultural classrooms. Finally, knowledge of the school rules and policies and an awareness of the psychosocial values of the community are also important given that teachers of English as an additional language may be expected to interpret learners’ behaviors and explain cultural differences. In fact, the interface between schools and their communities forms an important part of the informal knowledge base that forms the foundation of instruction as suggested by Fradd and Lee (1998).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to conceptualize and explicate the dimensions of a framework of the knowledge base of teaching in the context of teaching English as an additional language. Drawing on the results of an analytical review of the extant literature, the paper presented and explicated a three dimensional framework that describes the types of knowledge involved in language teaching. These types include knowledge of academic content, knowledge of
specialized pedagogy, and knowledge of students, schools and communities. Each type included additional sub-categories relative to various types of knowing a language, how to teach it, and how to interact with its learners in order to maximize their learning opportunities to become proficient in a language other than their own.

The proposed framework is intended to serve as a working document that program directors, curriculum planners, and teachers may use to plan and deliver their instruction. Likewise, higher education programs and teacher educators may consider the framework to plan and deliver instruction to prepare teachers of English as an additional language both in pre-service and in-service contexts, taking into consideration the learning needs of their learners as well as the various educational and socio-cultural factors that may influence their practice.

The implications of the framework hinge on the pivotal role of the intersection of content and pedagogy as the hallmark of the knowledge base of teaching as suggested by Shulman (1987). A basic premise in this regard is that teachers of English as an additional language need to develop their content knowledge of English, their knowledge of specialized pedagogy, and their knowledge of students, schools, and communities. These three types of knowledge are essential for the process of “pedagogical reasoning” that characterizes effective teaching and entails a transformation of the teachers’ personal comprehensions and understandings of subject matter into forms and representations of knowledge that are easy to understand by learners. These forms and representations of knowledge include the creation of new analogies, metaphors, examples, discussions, demonstrations, and simulations that are presented by drawing on a repertoire of teaching methods and strategies that are adapted and tailored to fit the culture, gender, motivations, and the general characteristics of learners.

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**Ghazi Ghaith** has a Ph.D. in Language Education (ESL/EFL) from Indiana University and is currently Professor and Chairman of the Education Department at the American University of Beirut. He teaches graduate and undergraduate courses and conducts regular in-service training in Lebanon and the Middle East. His research focuses on the applications of cooperative learning in language teaching and teacher education.
References


Leadership Perspectives and Influences: A Conversation with Five Leaders in TESOL

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Abstract

This article draws on some of the initial findings of a qualitative research project that seeks to describe and interpret the leadership perspectives, significant events, successes, challenges and relationships that impact the leadership practices of five internationally renowned leaders in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The methodology used in this study is narrative inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Using a convenience sample the study seeks to explore leadership perspectives and identity formation at the level of lived experiences situated in a complex, globalized TESOL context with rapidly changing characteristics. The specific findings include the leadership perspectives and practices of five TESOL leaders; the influences that have shaped their leadership development and how they became leaders in the profession. Data were drawn from electronic interviews and were analysed using an inductive process of identifying similarities and differences across the participants’ stories. Drawing on writing techniques of fiction used in narrative inquiry (Richardson, 1990; 1999), the findings are presented as a fictitious panel discussion and are interpreted in a concluding reflection.

Key words: leadership, TESOL, narrative inquiry
Leadership perspectives in TESOL

In recent years there has been an ever-increasing focus on the importance of leadership in TESOL. As evidence of this, consider the various professional development programs offered with an emphasis on leadership in the field since the launch of the TESOL Leadership Development Certificate Program. This paper draws on the initial scholarship in TESOL leadership (Anderson, 2009; 2012; Christison and Murray, 2008; Coombe, McCloskey, Stephenson and Anderson, 2008; Murray, 2005; Pennington and Hoekje, 2010; Stephenson, 2008) and also necessarily draws on leadership perspectives that are of value for the TESOL profession from the extensive leadership literature in other fields with a focus on situational, servant, shared and teacher leadership. In the next section the primary aim is not to define leadership or review previous studies on leadership, but to set up a framework of leadership perspectives used in the analysis of participants' responses and deemed significant for understanding leadership in TESOL.

Leadership in TESOL necessarily operates within a complex, rapidly changing global environment and it requires diverse, strong and innovative leadership skills. The tensions that leaders face on a daily basis in TESOL worldwide place unique pressures on leaders and make it increasingly important that leaders in the field learn from their leadership experiences and continually pay attention to context and the future (Pennington and Hoekje, 2010).

The professional context is also a critical component in shaping leadership identity in TESOL. Similar to Pennington and Hoekje (2010), Murray’s (2005) “ecology of leadership” evokes an image of leadership in TESOL that is context sensitive and one which addresses the intercultural nature of TESOL and the challenge of constant flux. A situational leadership approach suggests that there is no one best leadership style for all situations. Rather, TESOL leaders should remain flexible in order to meet the changing needs of context and situation (Hersey and Blanchard, 1993).

Another leadership approach which is clearly compatible with leadership in TESOL is Greenleaf’s (1970) servant leadership. In this humanistic view of leadership the leader is focused on service and the needs of others. Its characteristics which are listed by Keith (2010, para. 4) include “listening and understanding; acceptance and empathy; foresight; awareness and perception; persuasion; conceptualization; self-healing; and rebuilding community”. For Greenleaf (1970) servant-leaders are leaders who initiate action, are goal-oriented, dream great dreams, communicate well, withdraw and re-orient themselves, and are dependable, trusted, creative, intuitive, and situational (Keith, 2010).

The wider leadership literature distinguishes between leading as the quality of one person, the appointed leader, and leadership as a collective phenomenon where leadership is the responsibility of all (Harris, 2005). According to Nemerowicz and Rosi (1997), the characteristics of shared leadership include seeking a common good; actively participating interdependently in the process of leadership; working to enhance the process and to make it more fulfilling; communicating effectively with an emphasis on conversation; valuing democratic processes, honesty and shared ethics; recognizing that the quality of people’s interactions is the distinguishing factor rather than their position; and evaluating leadership by how people are working together. From this perspective successful leaders are those who share leadership, understand relationships, and recognize the importance of reciprocal learning that lead to shared goals and outcomes (Harris, 2005). These effective leadership practices are also evident in the TESOL profession. As Anderson (2009; 2012) comments shared leadership in TESOL is a social...
process which empowers individuals to learn together to make their work more meaningful and effective. He advocates five core skills for TESOL teachers to “lead from behind” in order to serve others and is similar to Greenleaf’s (1970) servant leadership. Such distributed approaches allow for increased opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles and as Stephenson, Dada and Harold (2012) discuss the distribution of leadership can result in team oriented cultures and the development of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). What is significant for TESOL is the realization that leadership is the work of everyone (Lambert, 2002) and that shared and collaborative approaches to solving challenges in TESOL are more effective (Stephenson, 2008).

Many of the characteristics of shared leadership are evident in the concept of teacher leadership also prevalent in the wider leadership literature and another critical component to understanding leadership in TESOL. Typically teacher leader roles have been at three levels – the classroom, the profession and the organization (York-Barr and Duke, 2004) and although not new, the term teacher leadership has been given little attention in the context of TESOL. Teacher leadership is anchored in the belief that all individuals have knowledge and skills that can be shared to enhance individual and collective learning in a school (Stephenson, Dada and Harold, 2012) and this concept of leaders as learners and the importance of valuing learning for all TESOL professionals is affirmed by scholars such as Anderson (2009), Murray (2005) and Stephenson (2008).

A further consideration which is crucial to understanding leadership in TESOL is the way its leaders actually become leaders. Too often, leaders in TESOL find themselves practicing leadership as they ‘learn on the job’ without formal training, coaching or mentoring (Shannon, 2003). Similarly, Lieberman and Miller (2004) report that many teachers learn to become leaders through trial and error. Bailey (2002) reports that her leadership learning occurred on the job as she practiced interpersonal skills, management and leadership skills, professional communication skills and time management. In fact she states quite emphatically “I don’t think I’ve ever learned so much in my life as I learned while serving as a volunteer leader of TESOL” (2002, p.32).

In this article, through narrative inquiry, it is my aim to share the leadership perspectives, learning, and processes of leadership identity formation from the perspective of five practicing leaders in TESOL. The specific research questions that were used in this paper are:
1. What are the leadership beliefs, perspectives and practices of the five TESOL leaders?
2. What influences have shaped the five TESOL leaders?
3. How did they become leaders in TESOL?

Methodology

Narrative research

Drawing on Wenger’s (1998) social theory of identity formation and narrative inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), the lived experiences of five TESOL leaders and the meaning that these leaders attached to what happened in their lives as leaders were explored. Narratives of experiences are an effective means to structure beliefs and practices of leadership into meaningful units and to make sense of the behavior of others (Bakhtin, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988). Through storytelling, leaders engage in narrative ‘theorizing’ which may result in further discovery and shaping of their professional identities resulting in new or different stories (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004). Because people live out their
lives in a storied way this study privileges positionality and subjectivity. Relativism rather than absolute truths is at the core of this qualitative approach. A social constructionist perspective is also taken where the changing meaning of events for these TESOL leaders is located in history and culture. The methodology used acknowledges that all personal stories are selective and open to editing and change (Polkinghorne, 1998). As such, in keeping with a narrative inquiry approach, the findings cannot be generalized and should be regarded as representations open to other interpretations and contested meanings.

In contrast to traditional research, narrative research enables the telling of stories of specific events and draws on engaging writing techniques of fiction using “imaginative renderings” such as exaggeration, dramatic recall, and unusual phrasings to meet literary criteria of coherence, verisimilitude and interest (Richardson, 1990; 1999), thus making the research more accessible. In this article I chose a fictitious panel discussion format to present the findings because such facilitated dialogues follow a previously agreed framework. The focus in the discussion is on moving individual practice and learning to new levels as individuals challenge their own and each other’s thinking, assumptions, values and beliefs. Whilst the findings are clearly not representative, through the use of the participants’ stories five TESOL leaders are given a voice, illuminating their lives and leadership experiences.

**Sampling**

Initially, a purposive sample of 30 male and female leaders, acknowledged for their highly visible international profiles and their broad and rich experiences of leadership in TESOL institutions such as schools, colleges, commercial providers, and professional organizations, was identified and invited to participate in the study. Their selection did not assume that leadership is a senior position or that holding a senior position reflects the achievement of leadership. However, possibly due to the timing of the request (over the summer vacation, 2010) and the length of the electronic interview, this ideal purposive sample of 30 became a convenience sample of five individuals.

Neil Anderson, Anne Burns, Susan Barduhn, Christine Coombe and Peter Grundy graciously accepted the invitation and responded to the leadership interview questions emailed to them. These TESOL leaders have worked across the globe from the USA through to the UK, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Australia. Each participant gave their permission for their name to be used.

**Data collection**

In the context of participants’ lives the participants were invited to share their opinions, perspectives and memories of their own lived leadership experience in TESOL in three stages:

- Stage one: Leadership Perspectives
- Stage two: Biographical data on critical events – successes, challenges and relationships
- Stage three: Confirmation or revision of lived experiences

Data were collected in the form of participant stories told through email and Skype over a six month period. This form of data collection acknowledges that memory is selective and shaped, and retold in the continuum of one’s experience (Muncey, 2005). In stage one and two, in keeping with the discrete story narrative tradition participants initially volunteered discrete stories in response to single open ended questions in an electronic interview. Their responses were typically brief and topically specific.
Participants’ responses were further expanded and reshaped as I probed for more information through email. Again the responses were often told as stories dependent on the individual’s past and present experiences, values and beliefs.

Data analysis

Each narrative was initially treated as an individual ‘case’ and these individual cases were then compared and inter-case themes identified in order to showcase some leadership perspectives in TESOL. Following Jones (1985) and Tsui (2007), I began with categories based on my general comprehension of the data and then proceeded to a fuller and more detailed categorization. Initially, the data were sorted chronologically from participants’ first leadership experiences to their more recent experiences. Then the data were sorted according to the successes and challenges participants’ experienced. For example, the challenges experienced as a TESOL teacher and leader were sorted and the relationships between these challenges were analyzed. I then identified broad categories and their interconnections (Jones, 1985) to identify similarities and differences across the participants’ stories.

The critical events that shaped participants’ leadership experiences and the key thematic elements that emerged were integrated and presented as a fictitious panel discussion in the sense that the five participants never actually had a conversation with each other. The discussion largely uses direct quotations from the participants in response to my original research questions, however at times I modified participants’ words for the purpose of creating a more realistic discussion. The discussion has panel participants exploring their personal leadership journeys and the lessons learned along the way through engaging the other participants and through questions from the panel chair (the author).

In the third stage of the process participants were then invited to read the panel discussion and confirm that it accurately represented their views. They were invited to make suggestions for change. Some minor changes were requested and included a request to introduce the participants alphabetically, using the preferred names of all participants, changing the original location of the conversation and adding some more exemplars to support some points. All of the participants verified that they were comfortable with how the discussion captured their leadership perspectives and gave their informed consent for their names, words and ideas to be included in my article.

In keeping with narrative research, the findings and concluding reflection draw on writing techniques of fiction (Richardson, 1990; 1999) and academic discourse and also on some of the conventions of panel discussion incorporating characteristics such as participant introductions. Citations necessarily found in academic literature are also provided to meet academic conventions.

Findings

This fictitious panel discussion was set in a breakout room at the TESOL Annual Convention as part of the Interest Section on Leadership in TESOL. I placed myself as the panel chair and use some of the research questions originally asked of participants to guide much of the discussion. The critical events that shaped their leadership experiences were shared and the key thematic elements that emerged were woven through the discussion. These include leadership perspectives, the influences on leadership development and practice; and the serendipitous nature of becoming a leader in the field. As the discussion unfolded, in the role of chair, I found myself analyzing, synthesizing and interpreting key
ideas that were emerging from the five leaders’ comments and noting the references to the literature. I have included these ideas in brackets as thoughts and connections among the discussion in the form of “Notes to self”.

**Panel discussion, 10am, Room C108, The Convention Center**

There was a buzz of anticipation and excitement as the remaining members of the audience took their seats. Lauren began by welcoming the panel participants and reiterated what an honor it was to have such internationally renowned TESOL leaders together in one room as a part of the Leadership Interest Section breakout. She began by introducing each person.

“Neil Anderson is a professor of Linguistics and English Language at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Professor Anderson served as President of TESOL, Inc. from 2001-2002. He also served on the board of trustees for the International Research Foundation for English Language Education from 2004-2008. He has held two Fulbright Scholarships in Costa Rica and Guatemala”, Lauren began.

“Our next participant is Professor Anne Burns. Dr Burns began her career in TESOL working as an English teacher. She set up her own primary and junior high school with another colleague in Mauritius and that school still continues today. Later Anne moved from the UK to Australia and began working in the Adult Migrant English Service, (AMES). In 1990 she joined the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University, and worked in the National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research (NCELTR). She held a variety of positions there and in 2000 she became dean of the Division of Linguistics and Psychology. Recently Dr Burns was appointed professor in Language Education at Aston University, and professor of TESOL at the University of New South Wales.”

“Susan Barduhn is a professor at the School of International Training (SIT) Graduate Institute in the U.S., where she is also chair of the summer MA TESOL program. She has been involved in English language teaching for more than 30 years as teacher, trainer, supervisor, manager, assessor and consultant; and she has worked for extended periods in several countries. Susan is a past president of IATEFL; the former director of the Language Center, Nairobi and was deputy director of International House, London,” Lauren continued.

“And now to Dr Christine Coombe.” Lauren gestured to Christine on her right.

“Dr Coombe is the current president of TESOL Inc. With more than 15 years experience of teaching and leading in the Arabian Gulf, Dr Christine Coombe works as an assessment leader and faculty member at Dubai Men’s College at the Higher Colleges of Technology. During her time in the Gulf, she has served in various leadership positions on the TESOL Arabia executive council including president and conference chair. She has also served on the IATEFL conference committee and on the TESOL board of directors.”

“Finally allow me to introduce our last participant, Mr Peter Grundy. Mr Grundy began his teaching career in the 1960s when, in his own words, “revolution was on the streets as well as in the air,” and since then has taught in schools in the UK and Germany, in initial teacher training and in higher education in the UK and Hong Kong. He retired from full-time employment at the University of
Peter smiled graciously at the audience as Lauren moved on to explain the way the discussion would be structured.

“I will ask participants to respond to the questions already sent to them in advance. As in many panel discussions, it is up to the participant to decide if they wish to make a contribution to that topic area. It is not my expectation that all participants will, in fact, respond to every question, although naturally, responses from all of you are welcome,” Lauren explained.

“Well …if there are no questions let’s begin then with your brief definitions of leadership?” Lauren invited.

“I suppose leadership has to do with having responsibility over and above that for the job for which one’s competent,” Peter began.

“For me leadership is a set of skills, qualities and experience that are used in service to a group of people, project, idea or organization,” Susan said. “The key word is service. I value teams and collaboration (Note to self: So Susan’s ideas clearly link to Greenleaf’s (1970) servant leadership, Anderson’s (2012) and Lave and Wenger’s (1990) team oriented work). I am willing to advocate for teachers’ and students’ needs. I value feedback systems and regularly collect feedback from teachers and students, both during and at the end of a program to inform future planning. I try to act on feedback immediately but if I cannot, I like to explain why. I recognize when someone comes up with good ideas, and try to use my position, skills, energy and enthusiasm to pursue those ideas.”

“I think it was St. Francis of Assisi who said ‘for it is in giving that we receive,’ Christine offered. This is also primarily my view on providing service to others both from a personal and professional perspective (Note to self: This is another service oriented perspective (Hersey and Blanchard, 1993). I feel extremely lucky that I was able to get a great education and have always felt that it was my duty to share some of that education with those less fortunate.”

“I think one of the key questions facing our profession is how we can convince all teachers that they are leaders,” said Neil (Note to self: This supports the perspectives of Harris (2005) and Lambert (2002) that leadership is the responsibility of all). “I agree that leadership is service and I define leadership as the skill set used by capable individuals, regardless of their position, to help bring out the very best in others. The skill set is comprised of eight essential abilities: the willingness to work with others to set a group vision and goals and work well with others to achieve the vision and goals; the ability to use time effectively; a desire to contribute in positive ways to a meeting; the ability to communicate effectively; the insight to recognize an individual’s strengths; the foresight to focus on solutions instead of problems; the ability to mentor others, and a willingness to continue to learn and develop as a leader. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler (1996) stress that “leadership is an act of balancing competing wills” (p. 5). Each of the skills are key areas that compete in the leadership balancing act. This skill set should be developed by all English language teachers. One does not need to be in a titled leadership role to develop this skill set. The more teachers who have this skill set, the more positive leadership experiences we will all have.”
“What do you think Anne?” Lauren asked.

“Lao Tse, the sixth century Chinese philosopher once said that ‘a leader is one who serves’ (cited in Bethel, p. 16). For me leadership is not a question of being out there in front and assuming people will come along with you, or that decisions from the top will automatically be accepted. It’s more a philosophy of how leaders work with others and how their actions influence others (Note to self: this is yet another leadership as service perspective (Greeleaf, 1970) and resonates with Nemerowicz and Rosi’s (1997) characteristics of shared leadership). Leaders need to roll up their sleeves and be prepared to do the things they recommend that others do. I’ve always thought too that good leaders trust their colleagues to do a good job and don’t micro-manage how they do it – they get out of their way!

One of the most important attributes of a leader in my opinion is to listen and to have the patience to listen to others and acknowledge and respect their point of view, even when one may not agree with what is said, or even when what is being said is critical of the leader (Note to self: this is Nemerowicz and Rosi’s (1997) characteristic of effective communication). It’s also important for leaders to give others the bigger picture viewpoint, so that thoughts, reactions and feelings can be located in the wider context of what is valuable for an organization or field (Note to self: this is another example of Nemerowicz and Rosi’s (1997) characteristics).

The kinds of phrases I find non-productive, unnecessarily bureaucratic or backward looking include ‘these are the reasons this won’t work,’ ‘you need to fill in ten forms to start doing that,’ ‘we’ve always done it like that!’ I am task-oriented and like to get things done and produce good quality results. I believe that rapid and constant change can destabilize people. Instead I prefer an approach where incremental steps are taken towards improving what already works well. Similarly to Susan, getting feedback is also important to me and it is this feedback on my leadership style that has really helped me to understand the way I would like to work with others (Note to self: this supports Anderson’s (2009; 2012) perspective that leadership is a social process).”

Conscious of time here, let’s move on to the question of the influences on your leadership practices?” Lauren queried.

“I’d like to add something though, if I may?” Anne requested. “Based on my own experiences future leaders will need good skills in understanding the key and most pressing issues in their fields (that is keeping their ear to the ground and listening to their constituency), developing future directions based on the insights gained from listening and consulting with participants, connecting with and lobbying political leaders and educational policy makers, managing available resources more cost-efficiently and with an orientation towards environmental pressures, and above all outstanding interpersonal skills. I feel very strongly that if you can’t relate well to people and have them work with you, it’s impossible to be a good leader (Note to self: this again supports Nemerowicz and Rosi’s (1997) shared leadership characteristics).”

Peter then commented on the various types of leadership and management.

“There is flat management, hierarchical management, aggressive management, jargonized management, and so on. Having worked in different countries, I think some imported leadership styles go down well and others can create problems. Usually, any disruption of the understood way of structuring things will be felt good by those who benefit (whether in the hierarchy or the lowerarchy) and bad by those who don’t. So leadership is situational (Note to self: this links with Hersey and Blanchard, 1993)
and leaders can only change things if they are clever. Leadership only really works if it is consensual. For me, leadership skills are developed on the job and come about by thinking hard about people and the situation, and remembering that in a sense the leader is only there, and certainly only leading effectively, because others agree to it. I see leadership as institutionalized to some degree so that almost everyone will succeed as a leader in the right institution and almost everyone will fail in the wrong one.”

“At the moment I am based in the U.S. Compared to other countries where I’ve lived, leaders are less hierarchical, more consultative.” Susan offered. “Although bullying from managers is not uncommon, it is considered inappropriate. Leaders are expected to be responsive to the needs of the employees. And TESOL leadership is too often a consequence of someone who is good at teaching being promoted, but they are often not given training in the new and necessary skills to be an educational administrator. A responsible administration will identify those whose experience lends them insight to the real needs of students and teachers, and then follow up with appropriate training and mentoring.”

Neil added “I think that leaders also need to be very much aware of the conditions in which they lead. All institutions of learning have their own individual cultures. The culture of my home institution at Brigham Young University is quite different from the culture at other institutions. Even institutions within the same country can face very different cultural issues.”

“So what particular circumstances, leaders or leadership approaches have most influenced your leadership practice?” Lauren asked.

Peter smiled, “Well, I really don’t like uniforms and badges of office. No seriously, I think you can get people to do a job by telling them what it is that you expect them to do, but usually they’ll only do it minimally. To get everyone to do great work, they have to be in an environment where leadership is shared and they set their own targets and are trusted to get on with it. Some people will fail, but most will achieve far more than in the “this-is-your-job” culture. I think sharing ideas is obviously important. Respecting those who are younger or older than ourselves or who look different or whose experience has got them to a different position, and so on.”

“Yes, I’m most influenced by leaders who adopt a mentoring approach,” Anne added. “In my experience, they open up opportunities for you that take you beyond your current comfort zone (for me, for example, being asked to edit a journal when I was a very early career researcher). Then, they give you support to do the job at just the right time, but make themselves available as soon as they can for input and advice when you need it. The rest of the time they get out of your way and show you they have confidence in you to do a good job. These kinds of leaders are also generous in not taking credit for work that others have done or being threatened by talented people they have around them”.

“To be honest,” Peter said, “I try to use mentors as a last resort. I kind of skim read the files handed to me when I became IATEFL president, and tried not to be too influenced by them. But then I wouldn’t have wanted to become president (or director of a summer school) if I hadn’t had lots of ordinary experience of the set-up already. Mentoring, by definition, is for people who don’t know enough to do a job. I prefer the system in which you get asked questions on a need to know basis if you’re a person who might mentor.”
“Mmm…I’m not so sure,” Neil said. “I mean I have been significantly influenced by learning about TESOL’s past leaders. For me they were role models of strong leadership and I have benefited from these role models. More recently I have been influenced by five TESOL presidents: Donald Freeman, Denise Murray, Mary Ann Christison, Kathleen Bailey, and David Nunan. These five individuals have served as mentors of leadership. As I have watched their exemplary leadership, I have learned to develop my own leadership skills. Each of these leaders has extended personal invitations to me to enhance my skills and take on new leadership roles. As I have benefitted from mentors, I recognize that I must serve as a mentor for others. Therefore as I have been actively involved in TESOL leadership roles, I have tried to identify, encourage and support others who can serve as leaders. My point is that we can each benefit from mentors and from being a mentor.”

Susan agreed, “Yes, for me leadership support has very often come from friends and colleagues. I have had many opportunities, both because I love to grab onto new challenges, and because my skills and talents have been recognized. I also had an aunt and uncle who were influential in many ways.”

She then commented specifically on the support and leadership mentoring of Adrian Underhill at various stages in her career.

Christine had also been influenced by a number of individuals in her quest for professional success.

“Well, for some reason that I cannot explain I have always been driven to succeed. As a young woman there were all the influences at university – so many professors who instilled in me a love of teaching and inspired me to start my career abroad. Fast forward a bit to my time in the Gulf, perhaps the most significant event for me in my development as a leader was my involvement with TESOL Arabia (TA) because it was with TA that I acquired and honed most of the skills in my leadership arsenal. The most significant has been my involvement with organizing events. This experience was largely responsible for my being elected convention chair for Tampa. My role models for this were the past convention chairs who were always ready to provide advice and support when things got difficult. Similarly, in my quest to be TESOL President, several people were very supportive of my nomination. As far as being a professional in TESOL, I am greatly inspired by the work of Kathi Bailey, David Nunan, Tom Farrell, Tim Murphey, Andy Curtis and JD Brown. All of these individuals have served TESOL and are familiar and successful in both ESL and EFL contexts.”

“So turning to the nature of your beginnings in leadership?” Lauren probed.

Christine began, “As a young woman, I achieved great success in athletics in high school which led to a university scholarship. An illness in my early years in university took away any opportunities I might have had in athletics and so I transferred my energies to academics. I feel that this ‘taste’ of success motivated me to be driven in other areas as I got older. Some very significant events in my life include being the only person in my family to have a college education, graduating with a PhD before I turned 30 and being elected TESOL President in 2010.”

Christine paused, took a sip of water and continued, “I really believe I have acquired leadership skills through the observation of both good and poor leaders. Although I have never had any formal coursework or graduate study in leadership skills, it has always been a keen interest (Note to self:
this supports Shannon’s (2003) view that practicing leadership is how leaders learn leadership). I just want to succeed and this is what has driven me. Maybe it was because my parents were extremely supportive of me throughout my youth and university career. They regularly expressed their pride in me and that was a motivator for me to do more. I also believe that being active both personally and professionally makes me more productive. In fact, one of my mantras is ‘the more you do, the more you can do.’ In 2006 when I was thinking about running for TESOL President, I embarked on the study of what a good leader is and from this study came an edited book on leadership skills for EL teachers (Note to self: see Coombe, McCloskey, Stephenson and Anderson, 2008). The research for that volume gave me a good background in what is needed to be a successful teacher leader.”

“Yes, you are certainly a true exemplar of that mantra, Christine,” Neil smiled. “The event that opened up professional leadership opportunities for me was an invitation from Mary Ann Christison to serve as her associate chair (Note to self: this is another example of opportunities to learn leadership on the job (Bailey, 2002; Shannon, 2003) and through trial and error (Liebermann and Miller (2004). Following my professional service in this task, Mary Ann, along with other TESOL leaders, encouraged me to run for election to the board. I ran in 1996 and was elected to serve as the chair of the 1998 TESOL convention. Serving in that position was one of the most rewarding leadership opportunities I had enjoyed up to that point in my career. I determined after this positive experience that I wanted to run for TESOL president. I was on the ballot in 1999 but I lost the election. I ran again the next year and won. I must credit my wife and family for their support and encouragement to run for election and to take on leadership responsibilities. Without their support I would not have been able to carry out the tasks.”

“It was a bit similar for me” said Anne. “I mean I didn’t set out to be a ‘leader’ or have advanced plans about where my career should go. Basically I was just very interested in and fascinated by the field I found myself teaching in, realized that I didn’t know enough about it and wanted to learn more through further studies and teaching experiences. Once I started finding out more about theory, research and practice in the TESOL field I wanted to go on and I loved the intellectual stimulation as well as the opportunities and challenges of putting theories into practice (or not!). As I worked in various places, I feel I’ve been very fortunate indeed to have opportunities put in my way by great mentors who sort of ‘tapped me on the shoulder’ and gave me opportunities to participate or pushed me to go beyond what I was currently doing. I was also really fortunate throughout the 1990s to work at NCELTR. In the 1990s it became one of the leading centers internationally for research, teacher education, library resources, and publications. I had wonderful, high achieving and generous colleagues there who developed a great team. I learned a lot about leadership from that team and also benefitted tremendously from the fact that the team worked closely with adult ESL teachers from all over Australia (Note to self: this also resonates with the concepts of leadership learning on the job (Bailey, 2002; Shannon, 2003). That combination of participants was very unusual at that time and looking back I was very lucky to be in such a positive and unique situation.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever asked for a leadership post but have always been asked to take something on,” Peter said. “Usually, you’re asked to take something on because they can’t find anyone else – this is to some extent a compliment but mostly reflects the fact that most people are too nice to want to be leaders or too honest to be likely to do the job well. I don’t think this is the way it works in politics. By nature I side with the underdog and have very little time for leaders. Inevitably one finds oneself in a leadership role from time to time in life, both at work and in one’s family relationships. Professionally, I’ve been fortunate enough to be able to avoid most leadership roles in a long and
undistinguished career which began in 1968 when I got my first full-time post in a school. The few leadership experiences I’ve had include directing summer schools; being head of an English department in my fifth year of teaching; being deputy principal and acting principal; chairing the research committee in a large university department, being elected deputy dean of my faculty, which I did for three years before taking early retirement. (Had I not retired, I would in all probability have been elected dean, but the vice-chancellor, who knew a thing or two about leadership, would no doubt have seen to it that I didn’t take up the post),” says Peter smiling and continued “and being IATEFL president (Note to self: this again supports Bailey (2002) and Shannon’s (2003) views that much leadership learning occurs on the job rather than through formal training).”

Lauren turned to Susan and gestured.

Susan said “Yes, well I’ve always been someone who is asked to take on extra responsibilities and positions of leadership. My brothers and I were raised by a single working mother, and as the only girl I was expected to manage the household (a sign of the times!). In school I held elected office and ran committees. I started teaching English in Colombia when only 18. I was identified early for administrative and teacher development roles. At the age of 29 I was given the tremendous opportunity to go to Kenya and create a language school. It was an immediate success and I remained the director for eight years. It is still going strong! After that I moved to London to International House and was soon promoted to deputy director. I remained with IH for ten years before going freelance – trainer, trainer of trainers, consultant, assessor, school inspector, supervisor, conference organizer, president of IATEFL. After four years of this, I found myself longing for daily interaction with a team of dedicated colleagues, and was delighted to accept a faculty position at the SIT Graduate Institute, where I am now professor and chair of the Summer MA in TESOL program. I still travel extensively, lecturing, training and supervising educators, and speaking at conferences…”(Note to self: this example also supports Bailey (2002) and Liebermann and Miller’s (2004) views that teachers learn to become leaders through trial and error on the job).

Concluding Reflections, 10.55am in Room C108, The Convention Center

The following concluding reflections draw together my interpretation of the findings and are organized around the three key research areas and the strongest trends emerging: the leadership perspectives and practices of the five TESOL leaders; the influences that have shaped their leadership development and how they became leaders in the profession.

Firstly, it is apparent that the participants’ different experiences have shaped their beliefs, perspectives and practices. For example, the majority of the participants see leadership as service to others resonating with servant leadership perspectives (Greenleaf, 1970). For all participants the conversation indicates that their leadership style is service oriented and in keeping with Greenleaf’s (1970) servant leadership, mentoring significantly influences the majority of the TESOL leaders. Christine states “for it is in giving that we receive.” In keeping with Greenleaf’s (1970) servant leadership, mentoring significantly influences the majority of the TESOL leaders. Christine and Susan noted the significance of leadership mentoring at various stages in their careers. Anne states that she was “most influenced by leaders who adopt a mentoring approach.” Similarly Neil was “greatly influenced by… TESOL presidents: these…individuals… served as mentors of leadership.” As Neil observed them he “learned to develop [his] own leadership skills.” However, Peter disagreed. “Mentoring, by definition, is for people who don’t
know enough to do a job. I prefer the system in which you get asked questions on a need to know basis if you’re a person who might mentor.”

As I reflect on the influences that have shaped the five TESOL leaders, I note that the participants also practice shared leadership in various ways across the globe to work with and influence others, building relationships based on mutual respect and learning (Leiberman and Miller, 2004). The importance of giving people leadership opportunities and trusting them to do their best work highlights that these TESOL leaders view leadership as the responsibility of everyone and the professional work of all (Anderson, 2009; 2012; Lambert, 2002). Each leader states their belief in maximizing their own potential as well as that of others and of situations. From this perspective, people are viewed as active participants working together in the process of leadership. As such, it is the quality of their interactions that distinguishes these TESOL leaders, and they clearly evaluate leadership by how people work together. The combined perspectives of all the participants in the panel discussion are aligned with all of Nemerowicz and Rosi’s (1997) characteristics: seeking a common good; actively participating interdependently in the process of leadership; working to enhance the process and to make it more fulfilling; communicating effectively with an emphasis on conversation; valuing democratic processes, honesty and shared ethics; recognizing that the quality of people’s interactions is the distinguishing factor rather than their position; and evaluating leadership by how people are working together.

Neil advocates for shared and teacher leadership suggesting that “all teachers are leaders” (Anderson, 2009). He states “leadership is a skill set used … to help bring out the very best in others… This skill set should be developed by all English language teachers.” He is a facilitator in support of the development of the language teachers he works with and sees himself as a partner in the leadership development of his colleagues. Peter also advocates shared and teacher leadership perspectives stating that leadership doesn’t work if it isn’t shared. He believes that “to get everyone to do great work, they have to be in an environment where leadership is shared and they set their own targets and are trusted to get on with it.” He suggests that “almost everyone will succeed as a leader in the right institution and almost everyone will fail in the wrong one.”

There is also significant evidence of shared leadership in Anne’s comments. Similarly to Nemerowicz and Rosi’s (1997) characteristics she states that leadership is “a philosophy of how leaders work with others …to listen to others and acknowledge and respect their point of view, even when one may not agree…” Anne states emphatically “I feel very strongly that if you can’t relate well to people and have them work with you, it’s impossible to be a good leader.” Anne clearly is people-oriented. She aims to encourage and inspire and has given people the confidence to do things or to try something new. Empathy is very important to Anne and she seeks as much input and feedback as possible: “Getting feedback is important …and [it] has really helped me to understand the way I would like to work with others.”

Another commonality is that they all base their leadership approaches on the situations that they find themselves albeit in slightly different ways (Murray, 2005; Pennington & Hoekje, 2010). Anne’s perspective resonates with Hersey and Blanchard’s (1993) situational leadership because she states “It’s …important … to give… the bigger picture …, so that thoughts, reactions and feelings can be located in the wider context.” Similarly for Neil, “leaders also need to be … aware of the conditions in which they lead. All institutions of learning have their own individual cultures… institutions within the same country can face very different cultural issues.” Also for Peter Grundy “…leadership is situational and leaders can only change things if they are clever.” For Peter, leadership skills are not only situational but are learned on the job (see Bailey, 2002; Shannon, 2003) – they “come about by thinking hard about people and the situation”.
The third and final reflection I have today concerns how the participants became leaders in TESOL. Although the contexts and the specific learning paths of the five TESOL leaders differed, it is clear that they all possess a “leadership intelligence” that encompasses a belief that we can all lead; a focus on service; a sharing of leadership; a focus on situational perspectives; fearlessness and courage to ‘give it a try’; and stepping up when opportunities arose either through mentors who recognized “something” in them or as a result of serendipity. They are all committed TESOL professionals who have decided to take action and/or who have accepted invitations to do so in various ways that involve taking on increasingly greater leadership responsibilities and juggling those responsibilities accordingly. Susan notes that leadership in TESOL “is too often a consequence of someone who is good at teaching being promoted, but they are often not given training in the new and necessary skills to be an educational administrator” (see Shannon, 2003). For Christine, Neil, Anne and Susan leadership learning occurs often through being mentored, observing role models and mentoring others. For all participants, leadership learning is about learning on the job, rather than participating in the leadership courses on offer (Bailey, 2002; Shannon, 2003).

A clear commonality across each of the leadership cases is that these TESOL leaders are recognized in some capacity by others. They have been “extended personal invitations to enhance [their] skills” or “tapped on the shoulder”, or “[asked to take] on extra responsibilities” or because they “love to grab onto new challenges, or because [their] skills and talents have been recognized” or in Christine’s case they were “driven to succeed”, they rose to the occasion and led well.

This panel discussion was interesting and thought provoking. These five TESOL leaders demonstrate care, commitment, concern and the courage to have the difficult conversations necessary to grasp leadership opportunities necessary for continual learning and improvement in the TESOL profession. As we heard today here at the TESOL Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, the participants illuminate ways for other future leaders in TESOL to develop such as taking advantage of the leadership opportunities that come their way; practicing shared, service oriented leadership and fostering leadership development opportunities for others.

11.15am, Room C108, Panel Discussion Closure, The Convention Center

There is a need for more research in the area of leadership in TESOL, in its various forms. Future TESOL leaders would also value more practical, hands-on advice about how to be an effective leader in the field. I can only hope to sit one day and actually participate in a real panel, where we are all present in the same room, discussing critical questions for leadership in TESOL. My sincere thanks to all for this leadership learning opportunity.

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References


Dependency Relations in the Syntactic Structure of Tunisian Arabic

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Abstract

This paper deals with facets of the derivation and representation of sentences in Tunisian Arabic (TA), a Null Subject Language (NSL). The focus of investigation is on the dependency relations that make it possible to have sentences that are mainly the result of Merge and insertion/deletion processes in an Agree-, Phase-theoretic framework of assumptions (Chomsky 2001, 2004). These Merge processes also include movement (the operation Move as part of Merge) for the satisfaction of the EPP (Extended Projection Principle – namely, every sentence must have a subject) at the interface between syntax and discourse. Central to the EPP-feature driven movement analysis is the assumption that morphological rules operate first pre-syntactically, at vocabulary selection in the Numeration, and have post-syntactic effects, i.e. at Phonetic Form (PF), without affecting Logical Form (LF) representations (Roberts 2010a,b; Holmberg 2010). As in Miyagawa’s (2010, pp. 5, 9) agreement approach to the EPP, not only are Merge and Move undertaken as a single syntactic operation – where elements projected onto the syntax are Merged and are then reprojected in a second-Merge operation – but also Move and the relation Agree are no longer distinguishable.

Keywords: Probe-goal, Spec-head, EPP, feature-driven, pro
1. Introduction

In the derivation of syntactic structure, the operation Move is primarily driven by the need to ‘localize’ the relation Agree by implementing Spec-head agreement between the probing head and the goal of the agreement relation or ‘Probe-Goal Union’ (Miyagawa 2010, p. 35). One representative example of such ‘localization’ of agreement relations in the derivation of sentences in null-subject languages is the generation of null pro elements. Such elements are generated (either by pure Merge or by Move) in the subject position of the relevant sentences as in Roberts’s (2010a,b) analysis of Romance null-subject systems.

In section 2, I show, by reference to sample examples of complement that-clauses and definite restrictive relative clauses in TA – with some cross-linguistic parallels – that instances of the pronominalization of gaps in subject position in the relevant null-subject sentences are instances of a general copy (pro) deletion mechanism (Holmberg 2010, Roberts 2010a). As far as pronominalization of a gap in subject position is concerned, copy deletion does not involve a trace, but a silent pronominal pro. Since the ban against that-t configurations (as far as gaps in subject position are concerned) should be operative cross-linguistically (cf. Roberts 2010a), allowing a gap in subject position in the relevant restrictive relative clauses in TA involves a silent pro allowing the that-t configuration to be overridden. In these instances of gap pronominalization, pro is referential, since in this case, pro is bound by an antecedent acting as a topic.

In section 3, I extend the analysis to wh-questions. In the derivation of subject wh-questions, the gap in subject position represents a silent expletive pro. The copy-deletion mechanism also operates in the derivation of such null-subject sentences whereby expletive pro deletes at PF, and is not represented at LF (Roberts, 2010a).

According to the proposed analysis of the derivation of null subject positions in a NSL like TA, a subject-related pro (referential or expletive) will always be instantiated in case no overt D or DP element is phonologically realized in subject position in these languages triggering subject-verb agreement (Roberts 2010a, p. 85, Biberauer 2010, p. 195).

The existence of subject-related pro elements in the derivation of the syntactic structure of Arabic has been the subject of a lot of research and debate in the Arabic linguistics tradition. Most linguists in this tradition would agree that referential pro is somehow involved in the derivation and representation of subject positions in the sentence structure of Arabic (Mohammad 1989, Benmamoun 1992, Fassi Fehri 1993, 2000, Soltan 2006; see Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998, 2001 and Akkal & Gonegai 2000 for an opposite view). However, the status of expletive pro in the sentence structure of Arabic has been much more controversial than referential pro. Whereas Fassi Fehri (1993, contra Mohammad 1989), Soltan (2006), Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (1998, 2001) and Akkal & Gonegai (2000) deny the existence of expletive pro in Arabic/NSLs, Benmamoun (1992) argues that expletive pro is only present in the standard variety of Arabic to the exclusion of the modern spoken dialects of Arabic (Moroccan Arabic in Benmamoun’s (1992) analysis of subject-verb agreement in Arabic). Another view is that: “…although there may very well be an expletive element preverbally in the VS cases – which we actually believe – this is not the element with which the verb agrees. Rather, it agrees directly with the postverbal subject” (Aoun et al., 1994, p. 200).
In section 4, I ultimately show how the analysis extends to DPs, assuming that Tense is somehow instantiated in DP by the head D itself (cf. Pesetsky and Torrego’s 2001, p. 361 claim that Nominative case is an uninterpretable T-feature on D: \(uT\) on D). Taking into account the uninterpretable D(efiniteness)-feature on T (i.e., \(uD\) on T), \(uD\) on T and \(uT\) on D are equally important properties of the Tense/agreement pronominal system of Null-subject/Romance languages. The feature composition of D/DP elements and of the functional node that probes these elements (namely, T) is the basis of the dependency relations in the syntactic structure of TA in terms of which the agreement approach to the EPP finds further support.

In this light, the inter-dependency of feature interpretability in the IP/TP domain of sentence structure is reduplicated in the CP domain as evidenced by the structure of definite restrictive relative clauses and wh-questions (sections 1 and 2, respectively). These C-(T)-D/D-(T)-C interrelationships are first and foremost interpretable by virtue of the dependency/ordering relations that *derivationally* form them in the grammar (cf. Manzini 1995).

The sample sentences from Tunisian Arabic in this paper can be compared to similar examples in Talmoudi (1981), Halila (1992) and Chekili (2004). The examples are also very close to their Moroccan counterparts (e.g., Benmamoun 1992).

I followed the Qalam transliteration system of Romanization of Arabic for the transcription of the Arabic letters except for the ‘hamza’ letter/sound \(\text{ﺃ}\) and the pharyngeal glide sound \(\text{ﻉ}\) for which I adopted the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcription symbols \(ʔ\) and \(ʕ\), respectively. The reason for my adopting the IPA symbols \(ʔ\) and \(ʕ\) is that the ‘hamza’ and the pharyngeal glide are not easily distinguishable in the Qalam transliteration system as both are represented by a quote-like diacritic.

2. Dependency relations in the structure of restrictive relative clauses

Holmberg (2010, p. 91) gives the following typology of languages as far as null subjects are concerned: the co-referential embedded subject position is obligatorily left empty in a consistently NSL like Italian (sentence (1b)), but only optionally in, what Holmberg (2010) calls, ‘partially NSLs’ like Marathi (sentence (1c)). None of these two paradigms is available in a non-NSL like English (sentence (1a)):

(1) a. John\(_i\) said that he\(_i\) wanted to buy a car.

   b. Gianni\(_i\) dice che (*lui\(_i\)i) vuole comprare una macchina. (Italian)

   Gianni says that he wants buy a car
   ‘Gianni says that he wants to buy a car.’

   c. Ram\(_i\) mhanala ki (tyani\(_i\)i) ghar ghetla (Marathi)

   Ram said that he house bought
   ‘Ram said that he bought a house.’
An Embedded subject position in TA would seem to pattern like the Marathi-type languages:

(2) Zaidi qaal illi (huwwa, yiyi-Hib yi-shrii daar) (TA)

Zaid said that he 3-want 3-buy house

‘Zaid said that he wants to buy a house.’

The free alternation of the pronoun and the gap in subject position in examples like (1c) and (2) above is evidence that some deletion mechanism operates on the structure of such sentences yielding two representations that converge at LF with the same interpretation.

A similar phenomenon also obtains in the object position of embedded sentences in TA (example (3a)) and Greek, another NSL, (example (3b)), but not in English (example (3c)):

(3) a. Shkuuni zaid yi-fakkar zainab baash titzzaw(-u)? (TA)

Who Zaid 3-think Zainab will marry(-him)

‘Who does Zaid think that Zainab will marry?’

b. Piooni ipoptefhike i Maria oti tha toni kalesoume? (Greek; adapted from who-acc suspect-3sg the Maria that will him-acc invite Alexopoulou and Keller 2003: 16)

‘Who did Maria suspect we will invite?’

c. Who does John think that Mary will invite (*him)?

Following Tsimpli (1999), Alexopoulou and Keller (2003, p. 16) note that resumption in Greek is only acceptable when the gap is embedded at least one that-clause away from the matrix (as in sentence (3b) above). A similar phenomenon is found in English whereby resumption becomes more acceptable as the extraction site becomes more deeply embedded (examples from Erteschick-Shir 1992, cited in Alexopoulou and Keller 2003, p. 16):

(4) a. This is the girli that John likes ti/(*heri).

b. This is the girli that Peter said that John likes ti/??heri.

c. This is the girli that Peter said that John thinks that Bob likes ti/??heri.

d. This is the girli that Peter said that John thinks that yesterday his mother had given some cakes to ??ti/heri.

In matrix clauses in English as well as in Greek (examples (5a) and (5c), respectively), resumption is no longer an option, but, in TA, they are perfectly well-formed (example (5c)):

(5) a. Whoi did you fire ti/(*himj)?

b. Piooni ti/(*toni) apelises? (Greek; Alexopoulou and Keller 2003, p. 16)
Dependency Relations in the Syntactic Structure of Tunisian Arabic

This is accounted for by maintaining that the resumptive pronoun -u in the extraction site in the object position of sentence (5c), co-referring to the wh-word shkuun, is ‘optionally’ realized as pro (cf. Cinque’s 1991 binding chains that involve a pro in the base position of a wh-moving operator constituting what Cinque 1991, p. 98 calls a “(resumptive) A’-bound pro strategy”). On this account, the difference between object wh-extraction and subject wh-extraction (see section 3 below for subject wh-extraction) is that, whereas in both wh-extraction types the resumptive pronoun is ‘optionally’ marked for deletion (i.e. optionally realized as pro), only subject wh-extraction would involve the kind of movement operation from a post-verbal position that Rizzi (1982) identified as characteristic of NSLs. I will come back in section 3 to wh-extraction out of the subject position for its direct relevance to the type of inter-dependency relations I am primarily interested in in this paper. (For an overview of the differences between the resumptive and the gap strategies in wh-extractions (Standard Arabic and Lebanese Arabic, in particular) and the syntax of wh-constructions in Arabic, see Aoun et al., 2010, Chapter 6).

In restrictive relative clauses like those in (6) below, pronoun deletion is as acceptable as in the other embedded contexts in (1c) and (2) above. I will mainly be dealing here with relativized subjects. The sentences in (6) are examples of relativization where the head of the relative clause, i.e. D, is [+Def] (see (9) below for the structure of the relative clause in TA):

(6) a. il-ulidî illî (huwwaî) njaH fi-l-imtiHaan … (TA)

the-boy that (he) succeeded.3MS in-the-exam

‘The boy who passed the exam …’

b. il-ulaad/il-bnaatî illî (humaî) najH-uu fi-l-imtiHaan …

the-boys/the-girls that (they) succeeded-3P in-the-exam

‘The boys/girls who passed the exam …’

In these relative clauses, the head noun is obligatorily [+Def], i.e. it must be preceded by the definite article il since it is only in such a context that the relative particle illî is obligatorily inserted. As exemplified by (7) below, illî cannot co-occur with an indefinite head noun:

(7) *jaâ ulîd illî njaH fi-l-imtiHaan (TA)

came boy.indef. that succeeded in-the-exam

‘A boy who passed the exam came.’
The fact that the resumptive ‘co-referential’ pronouns in the subject position of the embedded clauses in (6) are optionally phonologically realized as a subject pronominal or left unpronounced as a silent referential pro suggests that illi is not a relative pronoun. In either case, however, full subject-verb agreement obtains in (6a) and (6b) determined by Spec-head agreement between the pronoun in [Spec, IP] (phonologically realized or not) and the Agr element of INFL.

The kind of embedding we find in such subject relative clauses as in (6) above is determined by morphological processes that largely operate pre-syntactically in the Numeration and are carried out derivationally in the form of Merge processes from the Numeration to Spell Out (PF, the interface between syntax and the world of discourse on the sensory-motor side of the grammar) deriving one structure out of another (see section 4). If Nunes (2004, p. 174, note 2) is right in the claim that a DP part of larger phrase marker is derived independently of the larger structure and then merged to it, the relative clause in (6a), for example, could be ‘decomposed’ into two chunks:

(8) a. [DP [D il-[NP ulid]]] (TA)
   the.boy
   ‘The boy …’

   b. [CP C illi [IP [Spec pro [r [I-V njaH/yi-njaH fi-l-imtiHaan ]]]]]
   that       pro succeeded.3MS/3-succeeds in-the-exam
   ‘ … that succeeded/succeeds in the exam …’

The silent argumental pro in [Spec, IP/TP] in (8b) corresponds to the optionally realized overt pronominal huwwa in (6a). The logic of this ‘decomposition’ view of the restrictive relative clause in TA is that the formation of such a clause consists in merging the DP in (8a) and the CP in (8b). The structural link between the two independently merged structures is the article-like (D-like) non-anaphoric C-particle illi yielding the restrictive relative clause in (6a).

The suggestion here is that relative clause formation in TA is a simple process of merging two independently derived structures into one bigger structural entity. This process is reminiscent of Clitic Left Dislocation (Topic-comment structures) in NSLs and Romance in general. In both relativization and Clitic Left Dislocation of the subject NP/DP, the process whereby the subject NP/DP is realized to the left and higher than the IP/TP is base-generation in that position. No movement of the relativized/Clitic Left Dislocated NP/DP ever occurs in these structures.

Thus, I suggest that the basic structure of subject relatives in TA is as in (9) below (to be compared with the structure of relative clauses in a language as English (Kayne 1994) as represented in (10)): 
In (9), D is the head of the relative clause and it c(onsituent)-commands any of the nodes downwards. Thus, D can enter into anaphoric binding relations within this c-command domain (cf. Manzini’s 1992: 76 notion of locality of dependency relations). This dependency relation that is established in this domain links D il to C illi (i.e., <il, illi>). Then, the chain/binding relation continues further down linking D-C to I, and – by virtue of the relation between I and [Spec, IP] (a basic Spec-head agreement configuration) – the sequence of structural dependencies establishes a link between the D in CP and the subject in [Spec, IP] – namely, the licensing of subject pronominalization as evidenced by the structures in (6) above.

Kayne (1994, p. 183, note 67) entertains the idea that there may be two levels of D-like projections above CP in relative clauses. The first of the two must be D since this is the only category that can be represented highest in the architecture of the relative clause. Presumably, the second projection that directly links to D is N (i.e., the head of the NP picture in (10) below), over and above the necessary relation between D and C. Kayne (1994, pp. 87, 112) identifies the problem of positioning the relativized noun (NP) as a conceptually important one. According to him, relative clauses are not complements of N. Nor are they right-adjointed to N or D. As Kayne (1994) maintains, in a structure like (10b) for the relative clause in (10a) below, NP raises from within IP up to [Spec, CP] in English-type languages:
Kayne (1994, p. 154, note 8) notes that the relation between the D element *the* and the NP *picture* in (10) is reminiscent of an ECM construction. Nevertheless, Kayne (1994: 154, note 7) entertains the idea that this is not the only possibility that languages could opt for.

Another possibility is that the structure of the relative clause could be simply \[DP D CP\] without movement of NP to \[Spec, CP\]. Kayne (1994, p. 154, note 8) adds that, in some languages, a process of N-to-D raising applies from within \[Spec, CP\] by left-adjoining N to D. This process can be observed in relative clauses in Romanian – a NSL – as exemplified by (11) below (Kayne 1994, p. 88, example (11)):

(11) Certea pe care am citit-o (Romanian)

Book-the pe which I-have read-it

‘The book which I have read.’

Note that the possibility of having base-generation of NP in \[Spec, CP\] in (11) coincides with the resumptive pronoun strategy which is employed to a large extent in NSLs, as in TA (sentence (3a) above), or, in Greek (sentence (3b) above).

On this account, NSLs would opt for base-generating the relativized NP in \[Spec, CP\] and having a resumptive pronoun in the gap position in the IP. Disregarding the process of N-to-D raising in CP (which could, at best, be characterized as a language-specific mechanism much akin to the process of pronoun cliticization in subject-clitic NSLs), the process of deriving a relative clause in a NSL like TA (see the sentences in (6) above) is by optionally phonetically realizing the gap position. Alternatively – according to the copy deletion analysis (Roberts 2010a,b) – the subject pronoun is optionally deleted and ‘realized’ as *pro* at PF.
The licensing of pro at PF is achieved via the anaphoric links that relate pro in IP to its antecedent – the relativized NP in [Spec, CP] –, and ultimately, to D-C (due to transitivity of Spec-head/head-head agreement relations, à la Rizzi 1990). As Cinque (1991, p. 115) observes, the anaphoric relation linking the silent pronominal element to its A’-antecedent “… provides the overt grammatical indication needed for the φ-features of pro”.

As discussed above, it is by virtue of the intrinsic relation that links the D-element il and the Complementizer illi in restrictive relative clauses in TA that the anaphoric relations between D-C and I and C and [Spec, IP] are established. The legitimacy of phonetically realizing the subject (and, for that matter, the gap in object position in object relativization) is evidence that:

(i) illi is not pronominal. Illi is an article-like (D-like) non-anaphoric C-particle, inserted under C to provide a structural link between D in CP and C, and between C and I. Ultimately (by transitivity of structural agreement relations), the dependency relation is established between the gap (phonetically pronominalized or realized as pro) in [Spec, IP] and the antecedent in [Spec, CP]

(ii) Relative clause formation in TA is a simple process of merging two independently derived structures into one larger structural entity. This process is reminiscent of Clitic Left Dislocation (Topic-comment structures) in NSLs and Romance in general.

(iii) Over and above the licensing of a referential pro in [Spec, IP] via Spec-head agreement with the Agr element of INFL (or in object position licensed by the light verb v* inside vP/VP), a resumptive A’-binding agreement strategy is at work linking [Spec, CP] and the pronoun/pro (with no movement ever involved to link the two elements).

In this respect, relativization coupled with pronominalization of a gap in a NSL like TA is similar to the process of Clitic Left Dislocation in NSLs and Romance.

In the following section, I deal with subject wh-extraction in TA.

3. Dependency relations in subject wh-extractions in TA

Although in subject wh-extraction similar structural dependency relations to those operating in the derivation of relative clauses apply, the copy deletion mechanism seems to operate differently. The examples in (12) below show that a pronominal is barred from being phonetically realized in subject position in wh-extractions:

(12) a. Shkuun jaa?

who came

‘Who came?’

b. Shkuun (*huwwa) jaa?

who he came

‘Who came?’

The ungrammaticality of (12b) with the subject position [Spec, IP] phonetically realized is significant in that it testifies to the adequacy of the conclusion arrived at in section 2, namely, that for the (resumptive) pronoun strategy to work in that position there must be a necessary
an anaphoric link establishing the dependency relations in CP and IP. In this light, consider (13) below, where *illi* is inserted in the C position of the wh-structures in (12):

(13) a. Shkuun *illi jaa? (TA)
   who that came
   ‘Who came?’

   b. Shkuun *illi (*huwwa) jaa?
   who that he came
   ‘Who came?’

As the analysis of subject restrictive relative clauses in section 2 shows, *illi* insertion is not enough to insure that a link will be established between the head noun in [Spec, CP] and the pronominal (overt or null) in [Spec, IP]. In this respect, the sentence in (13b) with a phonetically realized *pro* in subject position yields an ungrammatical result. The necessary link could only be established via a D-C (head-head) dependency relation (i.e. the essential *il-illi* head-head agreement), which in turn could be linked to I and to [Spec, IP] by virtue of Spec-head/head-head agreement relations, mainly based on c-command relations as in the structure of the relative clause in (9) above.

As shown in example (5c) above, as the object position does not depend on any such structural dependency relation between D-C, I, and their Spec positions, no such restriction is witnessed in object wh-extraction cases, and TA makes free use of the phonetic realization of the resumptive *pro* in object position with or without the presence of *illi*, as exemplified in (14):

(14) a. Shkuun *illi ?istadšii-t-u? (TA)
   who that invited-you(-him)
   ‘Who did you invite?’

   b. Shkuun *illi ?istadšii-t?
   who that invited-you
   ‘Who did you invite?’

   c. Shkuun ?istadšii-t?
   who invited-you
   ‘Who did you invite?’

The legitimacy of the phonetic realization of the gap in the object position in the wh-construction in (14) follows, without stipulation, from the fact that the structural object position is not derived in structural terms since it is complement-selected by the verb of the sentence (*?istadšii* ‘you invited’, in (14)). On this account, the resumptive pronominal in (14) (phonologically realized as...
–u or left silent as pro) does not depend on any licensing condition other than its being selected by the verb (i.e., via the θ-role assignment and Case-marking). By contrast, the structural subject position (i.e., [Spec, IP]) in the wh-constructions in (13) is necessarily derived and would have to meet some structural condition for its being pronominalized in such wh-extraction contexts. This is due to the absence of any structural link (i.e., the D-C link) that could establish the dependency relation between C, I, [Spec, CP] and [Spec, IP] as discussed in section 2 above in relation to the derivation of subject relative clauses in TA.

Nevertheless, the cases of optionality of phonetically realizing the subject position in embedded subjects in complement clauses, as in example (2) above, seem to be a counter-example to the restriction on the subject position witnessed in such subject wh-extraction contexts as in (12b) and (13b). The answer to this objection is that the silent pronominal copies are different in the two cases: in the case of an embedded subject in complement clauses (as in the case of subject restrictive relative clauses), pro is a resumptive pronoun referentially linked, in an anaphoric relation, to its A’-antecedent in [Spec, CP] (as summarized in point (iii) at the end of section 2). This co-referential anaphoric relation between the two elements explains why, in this instance, pro could easily be phonetically realized in [Spec, IP].

To understand the mechanisms that are involved in subject wh-extraction in TA, I first introduce in section 3.1, below, Chomsky’s (2008) phase-theoretic view on subject wh-extraction in English. Then, in section 3.2, I show how subject wh-extraction in TA, in such cases as in (12a) and (13a) above, is substantially different from its counterpart in English. The difference finds a plausible account in terms of a silent EXPL(etive) pro that is licensed in the subject position of the clause [Spec, IP] via Spec-head agreement with the Agr element of INFL, which is an intrinsic property of NSLs.

3.1. Subject wh-extractions in English-type languages -Chomsky’s (2008) phase-theoretic view on subject wh-extraction

Chomsky (2008, pp. 149-150) maintains that two different chains are formed when the subject of a sentence is wh-moved. In (15) below (Chomsky’s (10)), the subject is extracted out of the subject position inside ν*P/VP. (15a) and (15b) show how the derivation proceeds. (15c) is the phonological output of the derivation at PF:

(15) a. C [T [who [v* [see John]]]]

b. Who, [C [who, [T [who, v* [see John]]]]]

c. Who saw John?

Chomsky (2008) contends that movement of a wh-phrase out of the subject position in v*P, yielding the wh-question in (15c), forms two different chains: (a) an A’-A chain (chain1), and (b) an A-chain (chain2). Chain1 links who in [Spec, v*P] to who in [Spec, CP] – a typical A’-position. Chain2 links who in [Spec, v*P] to who in [Spec, TP] – a typical A-position. Since the two copies of the wh-phrase target two different positions in the derived wh-question, it is plausible to argue that two different features are valued in each chain. If Chain2, linking [Spec, v*P] to [Spec, TP], is arguably responsible for valuing T’s Agree-features and its EPP feature (both of which, presumably, are transmitted from C to T; cf. Chomsky 2008, pp. 144-149, 157),
values a certain Edge feature (EF) that C withholds from transmitting to T. For reasons of linearization processes at the PF component, only the first copy (i.e., the copy involved in Chain₁ <\text{who}_i, \text{who}_k>) gets a phonological matrix. The second copy (i.e., the copy involved in Chain₂ <\text{who}_j, \text{who}_k>) remains silent.

Chomsky’s (2008, p. 149, example (12)) evidence for two different copies \text{who}_i and \text{who}_j in (15b)) in subject wh-extractions comes from such contrasts as in (16):

(16) a. Who was [who] never seen?

b. *Who was there never seen?

In (16a), the square-bracketed lower wh-moving copy who is silent. If, prior to the deletion of the wh-copy who, at PF (as argued above), no other element can occupy the landing site of this lower wh-copy, then the ungrammaticality of the wh-extraction case in (16b) is explained: EXPL there in (16b) cannot be inserted in the position where the lower copy of who is supposed to land.

As first argued by Rizzi (1982), NSLs ‘naturally’ resort to the post-verbal position (which, under current Minimalist assumptions, is [Spec, v*P] after V-to-T movement applies) for subject wh-extraction. The effect of this extractability procedure is that that-t violations are successfully avoided because of the free option available to NSLs of having an EXPL pro occupy [Spec, IP]. As the subject wh-extraction examples in (12a) ad (12b) show, illi-insertion is as legitimate as in the cases of embedding in complement and relative clauses in TA (see section 2). Thus the structure of subject wh-extraction in TA necessarily involves an EXPL pro which would be the counterpart of the silent wh-word Chomsky (2008) gives evidence for in English. At PF, EXPL pro, in the case of subject wh-extraction in TA, and the silent wh-copy, in the case of English subject wh-extraction, delete for PF interpretability and constraints on linearization.

As argued above, there is no way that a C-I dependency relation can be established in subject wh-extractions in TA in the absence of the required D-C link in CP. Thus, as Manzini (1992, p. 72) notes, since the structural conditions for extractability of the subject apply without having recourse to any agreement mechanism between C and I, null-subject languages – in contrast to English-type languages – do not resort to such mechanism for extraction purposes. Instead, extraction of the subject from a post-verbal position is the only option these languages can opt for.

3.2. Subject wh-extractions in NSLs –Subject wh-extraction in TA/NSLs necessarily involves an EXPL pro in [Spec, IP/TP], not a wh-copy

As discussed in relation to (12a) and (13a) above, the derivation of subject wh-extraction cases in TA involves an EXPL pro since only that category can license the NSL specific feature D on T/I. A silent copy in [Spec, IP] of the wh-moved subject could not satisfy such an inherent feature in TA as a NSL. On this account, the derivation of a subject wh-extraction case in TA (sentence (17a) below) would have the structural representation in (17b) (I use the trace convention for ease of exposition):
(17) a. Shkuun illi pro shaaf-ik? (TA)

   who    that      saw-you

   ‘Who saw you?’

b.

As can be seen in the representation in (17b), the wh-word *shkuun* is extracted directly from its base position in [Spec, v*P] without having to leave a copy of its movement in [Spec, IP], which position is already occupied by EXPL *pro*.

Some interesting evidence, involving EXPL *there*-associate pairs in English, suggests that the EXPL version of subject wh-extraction could also be available in a strictly SVO language like English. Thus, Chomsky 1995, p. 158) makes reference to such contrasts as the following (Chomsky’s example (50) from Safir 1985):

(18) a. *[wh How many men] did John say that there were *t* in the room?  

b. *[^wh How many men] did John say that *t* were in the room?

(18b) is a common *that*-t violation that is obviated in (18a) by virtue of *there*-insertion. As Chomsky (1995, p. 158) notes, this is essentially Rizzi’s (1982) analysis of wh-extraction of subjects in Italian, with the only difference that the EXPL in English-type languages must be overt, whereas it has to be null in TA as a NSL – namely, *pro*. The TA examples in (19) are the counterpart of the English examples in (18):
In (19), over and above the role EXPL pro plays in valuing the EPP-feature of T, the presence of this EXPL element is also fundamental in the valuation of the T-node’s intrinsic D-feature. The wh-question (19b) shows that, in TA, nothing other than a silent EXPL pro can occupy [Spec, IP/TP]; hence, the ungrammaticality of spelling out the EXPL as a pronominal (huma in (19b)) in that position. Thus, the existence of such parallels in the realization of EXPL-associate pairs in English and TA lends credence to the EXPL pro analysis of the relevant data in a null-subject language like TA.

As in normal cases of EXPL-associate pairs, the presence of the EXPL is a necessary condition on the derivation/representation of the sentence: T can value its intrinsic [uD] feature by virtue of the dependency relation that EXPL establishes with the associate. As Biberauer (2010, p. 163) notes: “In the specific case of expletive subjects, it would seem that [uD] on T can be valued either [+definite] or [-/indefinite] as T appears to agree with the associate” as the contrast in (20) shows (Biberauer 2010, p. 162, example (11)):

(20) a. There remains a problem/*the problem /*every problem.
    b. pro\textsubscript{EXP} irthe kapios fititis/o Petros/to kathe pedi (Greek)
        arrived some students/the Petros/the every child
        ‘Some student/Petros/Every child arrived.’

On this account, the absence of any ‘Diesing Effects’ in (20b) is the consequence of T’s D-probe bearing a movement trigger necessitating the EXPL-associate dependency relation to be established. The same is true of TA, as the sentences in (21) show:

(21) a. jaaw l-qliil min l-ulaad (TA)
    came.3P the-few of the-boys
    ‘A few boys came.’
    b. jaaw l-ulaad l-kul-hum
    came.3P the-boys the-all-them
    ‘All the boys came.’
c. jaaw barsha ulaad wa bnaat
came.3P many boys and girls
‘Many boys and girls came.’

d. jaaw ulaad wa bnaat ya-sʔal-uu ʕan-k
came.3P boys and girls 3-ask-P about-you
‘(Some) boys and girls came and asked about you.’

As Biberauer (2010, p. 195) puts it: “English, Msc [Mainland Scandinavian] and, on the deletion analysis, canonical NSLs have a canonical subject position in the sense of the original EPP, i.e. a position which must always be occupied either by a subject or a subject-related expletive”. As Biberauer (2010, p. 162) further explains: “…the deletion approach to null subjects entails SpecTP projection, with the difference between canonical NSLs and non-canonical NSLs being that the feature composition of T in the former is such that pronouns which have undergone raising to SpecTP will be deleted at PF”. In relation to Chomsky’s (2008) subject wh-extraction examples in (15) above, this is exactly what happens to the silent wh-copy who in [Spec, TP], with the only difference that in an NSL language like TA, the silent element is an expletive pro, as discussed above.

The relevant feature composition Biberauer (2010) alludes to is the additional D-feature of the I/T node, which as an uninterpretable feature [uD] of the probe must be valued by an interpretable D-feature on the goal. The effect this feature has on structural representations – and dependency relations in derivational terms – is to relate D on T to φ-feature specification, and by that token, pronominalizing the structural subject position of clauses for EPP satisfaction. As Roberts (2010a, p. 80) puts it, “…pro is just like an overt pronoun; its non-overtness is purely a PF matter.”

In this section, I have discussed some relevant evidence in relation to the derivation of wh-extraction of subjects showing that TA, as a NSL, is not so different from a language like English. Both languages must fulfil the requirement of filling up the subject position by merging some element in subject position of the relevant structures. In this respect, T, in English and TA, has an EPP feature that has to be valued by filling up [Spec, IP/TP] (cf. Roberts 2010a, p. 76). Nevertheless, the two language types differ in that T, in TA, has an additional D-feature that is an inherent characteristic of the subject position in NSLs. Unlike the EPP feature, the D-feature allows a null EXPL pro to be inserted so that the subject could be wh-moved directly from a post-verbal position. Similarly, the same procedure applies in EXPL-associate pairs. The fact that English shows evidence of the involvement of EXPL-associate pairs in such instances of subject wh-extraction, as in (18) above, lends credence to the EXPL pro analysis of the relevant data in an NSL like TA.

In the next section, I briefly consider the structure of simple DPs in TA, and show how the present analysis in terms of dependency relations between constituents in the derivation of structural representations yield the same effects – namely, relating T (or C-T) to D and vice versa.
4. Dependency Relations in the Structure of DP in TA

The sentences in (22) are instances of simple DPs in TA:

(22) a. il-ulid il-Sghiir (TA)
   the-boy the-little
   ‘The little boy’
   a’. ulid Sghiir
    boy little
    ‘A little boy’
   b.* il-ulid il-Sghiir il-mriiD
    the-boy the-little the-sick
    ‘The little sick boy’
   b’. * ulid Sghiir mriiD
    boy little sick
    ‘A little sick boy’
   c. il-ulid il-Sghiir wa il-mriiD
    the-boy the-little and the-sick
    ‘The little sick boy’.
   c’. ulid Sghiir wa mriiD
    boy little and sick
    ‘A little sick boy’

As the examples in (22) show, in TA, the structure of the DP (definite, marked by the use of the article il or indefinite, marked by the absence of the article il) allows only one AdjP to co-exist with the head N/D. The DP in (22b, b’) with two adjectives become grammatical if coordination separates the two adjectives, yielding (22c, c’). The same facts apply if the DP is derived within a sentence as exemplified in (23):

(23) a. * jaa il-ulid il-Sghiir il-mriiD (TA)
    came.3MS the-boy the-little the-sick
    ‘The little sick boy came.’
a’. * jaa ulid Sghiir mriiD  
  came.3MS boy little sick
  ‘A little sick boy came.’

b. jaa il-ulid il-Sghiir wa il-mriiD  
  came.3MS the-boy the-little and the-sick
  ‘A little sick boy came.’

b’. jaa ulid Sghiir wa mriiD  
  came.3MS boy little and sick
  ‘A little sick boy came.’

Again, unless coordination is used to link the two adjectives, the sentences are ungrammatical.

An important fact of the definite DPs in (22) and (23) is that they allow illi to replace the second instance of the definite article il, as illustrated in (24):

(24) a. il-ulid illi Sghiir (TA)  
  the-boy that little
  ‘The boy who is little’

b. il-ulid illi Sghiir wa illi mriiD  
  the-boy that little and that sick
  ‘Lit: The boy who is little and who is sick’

c. jaa il-ulid illi Sghiir  
  came.3MS the-boy that little
  ‘Lit: The boy who is little came.’

d. jaa il-ulid illi Sghiir wa illi mriiD  
  came.3MS the-boy that little and that sick
  ‘Lit: The boy who is little and who is sick came.’

The interchangeability of a [+Def] D head il with the Complementizer illi used in such definite restrictive relative clauses as those in section 2 above is significant in that it signals a close relationship between the [+Def] article il and the Complementizer illi. The suggestion here is that definite restrictive relative clauses are derivative from simple DPs in TA. The facts about coordination in (22c, c’), (23b, b’) and (24b, d) show that the derivation of the structure of the DP in TA is by generating the elements composing it in their base positions and applying Merge
operations to extend the derived structure by concatenating the elements already formed. The same is true of the derivation of the structure of definite relative clauses.

Similar considerations arise in other contexts as in the examples in (25):

(25) a. il-ulid il-raakib darraaja (TA)
    the-boy the-riding a.bicycle
    Lit: ‘The boy riding a bicycle’

    b. il-ulid illi (huwwa) raakib darraaja
    the-boy who (he) is.riding a.bicycle
    ‘The boy who is riding a bicycle’

    c. il-ulid y-irkib darraaja
    the-boy 3-ride/be.riding a.bicycle
    ‘The boy rides/is riding a bicycle.’

Examples (25a) and (25b) represent a DP and a relative clause, respectively. They are for that reason incomplete thoughts, but are in themselves complete referring expressions (i.e., DPs) and two alternative ways to refer to il-ulid (the boy), specifying that he is, at the moment, riding a bicycle. The same meaning applies to example (25c), but here the expression is a complete sentence informing the interlocutor about il-ulid (the boy) – that he is, at the moment, riding a bicycle or that he is usually doing so.

Again, the suggestion is that these examples are counterpart of one another in structural terms. In these examples, it is a D-feature on the functional head D (realized as il) in (25a), on the functional head C (realized as illi) in (25b), and on the functional head T in (25c) that allows the kind of dependency interrelationships exemplified in the previous sections. These interrelationships can find an explanation in the system of Chomsky (2001, 2004, 2008) in that D, C, and T are elements that are directly involved in phases (only derivatively for T, i.e. C-T) in the process of deriving syntactic derivations, and they are prone to show structural affinities that explain the dependency relationships they exhibit.

Another explanation for these interrelationships can be formulated in Pesetsky and Torrego’s (2001, p. 361) terms that Nominative case is an uninterpretable T-feature on D (i.e. uT on D). Similarly, the definiteness feature that is peculiar of Definite relative clauses and Definite DPs in TA could be thought of as an uninterpretable D(efiniteness)-feature on T and C (i.e. uD on T and C).
5. Conclusion

The copy-deletion analysis of the derivation and representation of the subject position in the sentence structure of NSLs is adequate enough to cover the empirical facts dealt with in the previous sections – namely, the availability of pro elements (resumptive/referential or expletive) in such languages.

The advocated analysis has also shown that EXPL-associate pairs are attested cross-linguistically. In NSLs, these pairs involve an EXPL pro. In English-type languages, they must involve a phonetically spelled-out EXPL, without which the sentence, where the EXPL-associate pair is derived, will not find an interpretation (violation of the EPP).

In all the instances of the derivation and representation of the subject position in the language types discussed above, EXPL plays a fundamental role in the syntax of these languages reducing to a minimum the variation that exists between such language types in the relevant structural contexts.

Due to the amount of similarity witnessed in EXPL-associate pairs cross-linguistically, the next step in the study of the feature structure of typologically different languages is to show that the availability of an additional intrinsic [uD] feature, in conjunction with the EPP, might also arise in the very instances where such EXPL-associate pairs obtain irrespective of language type. Such an attempt is the subject of ongoing research (Jouini, forthcoming a,b).
References


Native and Non-native English Teachers in the Classroom: A re-examination

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Abstract

Native English speakers are often claimed to be better language teachers than non-native English speakers, both by those who have not reflected critically on the inherent differences between knowing how to use a language and knowing how to teach a language, and by those who assume that non-native English speakers are by definition not fluent. Nativeness is thus equated with pedagogical superiority. This claim, whether it is made by students, parents, hiring boards, or other interested parties, is detrimental to non-native English teachers as educators and to the students who learn from them. Non-native English speaking teachers may be demoralised or discriminated against in hiring practices. Students lose when they are taught by teachers with nativeness as their defining characteristic, rather than by the best teachers. In this article the native speakers model, itself a problematic concept, is analysed to show how supposed nativeness is difficult to define accurately. Then the benefits of being taught by native English speakers and non-native English speakers are outlined, with a view to promoting more just hiring practices and sounder educational results for students of English worldwide.

Keywords: native, non-native, ELT, teachers
Native and non-native English teachers

As the demand for English language teaching spreads throughout the world, what has been called the “mystique” (Ferguson, 1982, p. xiii) of the native speaker seems to have grown, despite opposition from researchers who have sought to champion non-native English speaking teachers. Jenkins (2012), for example, argues against the belief that only the English of native speakers is the proper variety. Native English speaking teachers often have privileged roles as classroom teachers, despite a lack of training or experience. Advertisements for private language schools, elementary schools and universities often mention a candidate’s nativeness, itself a problematic term, as a prime qualification. In Hong Kong, native English speakers (NESs) were introduced as part of the Expatriates English Teaching Scheme (EETS), which was rather unsuccessful. Boyle (1997, p. 174) argues that “the root of the problem was that the [Hong Kong] Education Department had not really tuned in to the local teachers’ resentment at the implication of the EETS that an expatriate native-speaker teacher of English was better than a local teacher.”

Historically, this privileged status for native English speakers has also had effects on both linguistic research and on English language teaching (ELT). The native English speaker is often taken as the control for research purposes (Kachru, 1994; Sridhar, 1994), the evaluator of what is or is not correct English usage for dictionaries (Paikeday, 1985), the ideal English language teacher (Honey, 1997; Medgyes, 1992) and the most qualified contributor to teaching and linguistic journals (Flowerdew, 2001).

If countries in the Arab world and elsewhere are to successfully develop their ELT programmes, it is necessary to be aware of the benefits and limitations of all teachers, and to avoid the common practice of preferring NES teachers to local teachers.

Criticism of the native speaker construct

Over time the volume of criticism of the idea that the native speaker is the ideal language teacher has been building. Some are critical of using the native speaker as the only standard for applied linguistics research (Kachru, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Sridhar, 1994). Others are concerned with the often real, but sometimes unstated, tendency of educational administrators to show preferential treatment to native English speakers in ELT hiring (Braine, 1998; Christophersen, 1992; Cook, 2000; Forhan, 1992; Liu, 1998; Medgyes, 1992). It has been pointed out that some people’s speech may display features of both native and non-native English and cannot be called one or the other (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001). Individual native speakers may speak and write in markedly different ways from those in their communities who use standard English forms (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997), which often means that for ELT purposes only certain NESs will be favoured, typically those who use the language variety of the most socially powerful groups.

Other people, like balanced bilinguals, may also not be easily named NES or non-native English speakers (NNESs) (Genesee, 1987). However, the fact that some people cannot be easily categorized does not necessarily invalidate the categories themselves. There may be certain people whose linguistic characters make it difficult to decide whether they are native speakers of
a language or not, but that does not mean that other people with less complex linguistic histories cannot be classified as native speakers.

Cook (1999, p. 187) summarises the popular perception of a native speaker as “a person is a native speaker of the language learnt first”, but some argue that the entire concept of the native speaker is a flawed construct (Paikeday, 1985), coining new terms such as “accomplished users” (Edge, 1988) of English or “expert” speakers (Rampton, 1990) of English to replace it. Pennycook (1994) has even turned the traditional terms around, claiming that in English as a foreign language contexts it is the local teachers who should be called native teachers while expatriates from America, Britain and other inner circle countries should be called non-natives because they are not indigenous to the locales where they are working.

Such terms and new definitions tend not to last, with the native and non-native dichotomy remaining current in both popular and professional use (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Holliday, 2006), perhaps because of its convenience (Medgyes, 1999). There may be individuals with complex linguistic histories who are difficult to categorise firmly as either NESs or NNESs, like the people described by Boyle (1997), but there are also many people, monolingual English speakers for example, who can quite easily and clearly be called NESs. As Leung (2005) writes, there are clearly native speakers, even if we cannot pinpoint exactly how they use their language.

It has been pointed out that the NES / NNES dichotomy is often based on power relations (Liu, 1998; Phillipson, 1992) and that the dichotomy is a useful tool of discrimination (Braine, 1998) because certain powers were both created and maintained by the split between NNESs and NESs. NESs maintain their exclusive status (Widdowson, 1997) and English language teaching remains the domain of NES teachers (Braine, 1998; Forhan, 1992). This preference by some administrators and students for NES teachers over NNES teachers (Butler, 2007; Lee, 2000; Takada, 2000) as ideal ESL language teachers has been documented to the extent that it has been dubbed ‘native-speakerism’. (Although it is worth noting that a recent study by Ling & Braine (2007) in Hong Kong found that students did not seem to have a negative attitude towards NNES teachers, despite the fact the administrators and parents were said to.) Holliday (2006, p. 385) defines native-speakerism as “a pervasive ideology within ELT, characterized by the belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology”. NNES teachers are thus considered unsuitable for certain jobs (Forhan, 1992) or told outright that NNES teachers need not apply (Braine, 1998). (Although see Clapson & Hyatt (2007) for a discussion of how bureaucratic rules can also inhibit or prohibit NESs who wish to work outside their home countries as EFL teachers from ever achieving professional parity with local NNES teachers.) Those NNESs who do become ELT teachers, or even those NESs whom students perceive to be NNESs for some reason, may be questioned about their English competence by their students (Amin, 1988; Takada, 2000), because of the assumption that NNESs must be sub-standard ELT teachers. Students’ parents can also affect the status of NNES teachers in relation to NES teachers. Takada (2000) reports that parents of students at her Japanese middle school were active in campaigning to have the few NES teachers at the school handle more English teaching duties, which would simultaneously reduce the teaching duties of local Japanese teachers of English. This could cause the Japanese teachers to question the effectiveness and validity of their own teaching abilities, as Crooks (2001) argues that the presence of NES teachers often does. The NNES teachers may therefore feel that they have to do twice as well as NES teachers to be
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seen as good teachers and to be accepted as equals by their colleagues (Thomas, 1999). Jenkins (2007) points out that ELT is an anomaly among school subjects, as it seems to be the only one where the preferences of students and their parents for a certain type of teacher is given such weight both by administrators and by researchers (cf. Timmis (2002) for an example).

The NNES teacher’s race or ethnicity can also play a role in the discrimination he or she faces. Students have asked a Hong Kong teacher of English working in Canada if she was a volunteer (I. Lee, 2000), making the assumption that no one would pay a Chinese person to teach English. Respondents to Amin’s (1999) interviews with English as a second language (ESL) teachers who immigrated to Canada as adults reported that students often felt only white people could be NESs and that only NESs could teach real Canadian English. Even English teaching professionals were sometimes shocked and embarrassed when Amin described herself as an NES, perhaps because she is a non-white person with a Pakistani accent. Non-Western teachers, whether they are NESs or NNESs, may be resented when jobs are scarce in Western universities, and thus passed over when they rightfully deserve employment (Braine, 1998). If people who are not white are sometimes thought of as not being capable of being native English speakers or credible English teachers (Lin et al., 2004; Thomas, 1999), then the reverse can also be possible. In some cases race and its correlation with native English speaker status may have even led to NNESs being employed as NESs, perhaps because their fair hair and light-coloured eyes and skin made them seem more likely to be native English speakers in the eyes of some audiences (Kim, 2006). Kubota (2002, p. 87) argues that whiteness and the ideal of the native speaker are in a “complicit relation” with each other, prejudicing some against, and causing disadvantages for, NNES teachers who are not white.

A vice-chair of the Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching, a lobby group for assistant teachers in Japan, wrote an article critical of pro-white bias in some Japanese hiring practices, asking “What about native English speakers from India? Why haven’t the Philippines been added to the list of participating countries [from which native English speakers could be hired]?” (McConnell, 2000, p. 80). It may be a linguistic prejudice against certain varieties of English that limits natives of some countries who look for work in Japan, and it may also be a discriminatory preference among some administrators and students for what Duppenthaler (1989) called the most marketable attributes of foreigners in Japan: tall people with blond hair and blue eyes. An African respondent to Murphy-Shigematsu’s (2002, p. 23) interviews told him “Japanese think Africans are inferior. They even think other Asians are inferior. They can’t believe we have a good education. But they look up to Westerners. If an American comes to our department, all the Japanese want to meet him.” This pro-white bias has also shown up in language marketing. Piller and Takahashi’s (2006) analysis of advertisements from four major English language schools in Japan found that photographs in the advertisements all showed smiling white men. The accompanying text elaborated on the teachers’ personal lives, not their teaching credentials, and implied that a female student would learn English quickly because she would be “anxious to see her good-looking, white male teacher again soon” (Piller & Takahashi, 2006, p. 65).

The pro-NES teacher assumption is supported in popular opinion in numerous ways: advertisements that seek NESs to be teachers, regardless of any other qualifications, books with titles like Teaching English abroad (Griffith, 2005) that reinforce the idea that professional qualifications are of secondary importance to NES status for language teaching, ELT dictionaries and textbooks based exclusively on native speaker corpora like the Collins COBUILD series and
students who demand only native English speaking teachers (Braine, 1998). There is sometimes the assumptions that simply speaking English well is enough to qualify someone as a teacher (Clayton, 1990; Thomas, 1999). It has been noted that native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006) is now even being extended to discriminate between varieties of native speaker English, so that in certain cases speakers of British English varieties may be favoured over speakers of North American varieties (Braine, 1999).

While discrimination against non-native English speakers and non-native English speaking teachers should not be accepted, it remains generally acknowledged that linguistic differences between the two do exist. The exploration of these differences has led over time to the production of a body of literature that seeks to explain these differences in terms of how they relate to both native and non-native English speaking teachers. There does remain a conservative element which continues to favour NES teachers wholly and uncritically. Honey (1997, p. 252), referring to the idea that NNES teachers do most of the English language teaching in the world, claims that “fortunately the most advanced modern technology is beginning to make access to native-speaker guidance and support a practical possibility even in remote parts”. This comment assumes that somewhere there is the financial and technological ability to bring NES teachers, or at least their guidance and support, to all parts of the world. More worryingly Honey’s comment also posits the necessity for native speakers to assist their NNES colleagues, taking a deficit perspective on NNES linguistic and pedagogical abilities without acknowledging that NES status is no guarantee of teaching ability. Other recent research accepts the idea that NNES teachers have their strengths as teachers, and just as importantly, that NES teachers have their weaknesses.

**Standard claims for native English speakers’ superiority as teachers**

A common feature of advertisements for language schools in Japan is the suggestion that native English speaking teachers will provide more exposure to English than Japanese teachers of English (Clayton, 1990). This seems to assume the suitability of the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), the idea that language learners need maximum exposure to the target language to progress in their knowledge of it. Although this hypothesis is controversial in its most extreme form (Prabhu, 1987), it is generally accepted that input is important for language learning. Native English speakers, out of necessity if they are monolingual, are likely to use more English in the classroom than are NNESs (Cook, 1999), who are sometimes reported to lack the linguistic confidence to use English as a medium of instruction (Hyde, 2002). Samimy and Brutt-Griffler’s (1999) survey of beliefs about this issue found that NNES teachers believed NES teachers would provide their students with a model of informal, yet fluent and accurate English.

In addition to providing the most exposure to English, NES teachers by definition provide the best model of the target language as it is spoken by native speakers (Cook, 1999; Mahboob, 2004; Tajino & Tajino, 2000) in a range of communicative situations (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). This may seem self-evident, but it is worth mentioning because in most teaching contexts the native speaker norm remains the standard model. Until governments, universities and other concerned institutions change their targets for language learning away from native speaker models, students will have an interest in learning native speaker English. Research on English learners, such as Tang’s (1997) or Miyazato’s (2002) interviews with students, has often found that students continue to think of NES teachers’ English as their language learning target.
Criticism of the idea that native speaker English is the best model for language learners makes sense in contexts where NES status does not enhance communication (Jenkins, 2000; Phillipson, 1992), but in places where native English norms remain the goal native input may be necessary (Honna & Takeshita, 1998). Native English speakers may not always be internally consistent or in agreement with each other over what constitutes native speaker English (Alptekin, 2002; Christophersen, 1992), but by virtue of them being native English speakers they will provide an accurate model of at least one form of it.

Of course, there is no guarantee that NES teachers will use the same kind of English that students are exposed to in their textbooks or that the teachers will even speak standard English, as few native speakers do (Leung et al., 1997). As more and more NES teachers are hired it becomes evident that while they may provide exposure to authentic English, the varieties spoken by them will increase in number concurrently (Zimmerman, 2007).

Exposure to NES English is the most obvious thing NES teachers can offer their students, but there are others. NES teachers may provide motivation to English learners, especially in a country where students exist on a “cultural island” (Ellis, 1996, p. 215), with little or no contact with English in their everyday lives. English learners in schools that take English as part of the school curriculum may see very little need to study it other than to pass their courses. As one of the student respondents in Miyazato’s (2002, p. 47) interviews reports “Having NSTEs’ (native speaker teachers of English) classes is like an instant studying abroad… being with foreigners is so much fun for me because it rarely happens in my daily life.” NES teachers may provide additional motivation for students, as they attempt to communicate with the teacher, perhaps to teach him or her about their own culture and language (Carless, 2006; Tajino & Tajino, 2000). Conversely, NES teachers can also act as cultural informants, introducing students to their home cultures, which may be of interest to students in some situations and which may provide additional motivation (Ellis, 1996; Tajino & Tajino, 2000).

On the other hand, Lung (1999) has reported that the early increase in motivation provided by having an NES teacher at hand may soon be replaced by a decrease in student participation. Lung’s Chinese secondary school students seemed initially pleased to practise their English with a native speaker, growing more confident as they used their skills. However, students soon began to complain that the NES teacher’s use of songs for young children and emphasis on native-like pronunciation were embarrassing. There were also worries that the focus on oral communication was reducing the time spent on preparing for important government examinations. This is a good example of a case where the use of an NES teacher, if not “culturally attuned and culturally accepted” (Ellis, 1996, p. 213), will create more problems that it might possibly solve.

It has also been suggested that NES teachers offer the most up-to-date ELT methods (Honey, 1997; Quirk, 1990). While this claim is not often made as forthrightly as it is by Honey and Quirk, it is inferred in numerous articles that offer advice on exporting communicative language teaching, a method strongly associated with NES teachers in much of the world, from the West to other countries. This may have been true at one time, if we conveniently forget the fact that teachers in some contexts may not have been interested in NES-driven teaching methods and remained happy with proven methods for their home contexts. The argument that NES teachers are the most pedagogically skilled holds little weight now, when the ready availability of journals, for those who can access them, and the popularity of studying abroad, for those who
can afford it, means that teaching methods can spread quickly if they are popular and NNES teachers have access to up-to-date teaching methods (Takada, 2000). The more important point vis-à-vis NES and NNES teachers and their teaching methods, as Tang (1997) has pointed out, is that as methodological fashions change so do the status of those who teach them. The audio-lingual method of language instruction advocated the complete avoidance of errors, putting NNES teachers in favoured positions because of their perceived superiority with regards to linguistic accuracy. The more recent trend in favour of communicative language teaching favours NES teachers with their supposed superiority as speakers of native English. The balance of power may again shift in favour of NNES teachers when favoured methodologies change again.

**Counter-arguments in favour of non-native English teachers**

It may be true that NES teachers can offer their students certain advantages, but that doesn’t prove that NES teachers are inherently capable of either good teaching or of better teaching than NNES teachers. The assumptions that NES teachers can demonstrably do certain things more effectively than NNES teachers and are therefore better teachers have allowed the NES model of language teaching to remain dominant. NES teachers may provide more exposure to accurate native speaker English, but it is not clear that this is what English learners really need. NES teachers may provide certain kinds of motivation to their students, but NNES may provide their students with different, more powerful, motivation. NES teachers may be aware of the newest Western language teaching methods, but that doesn’t mean that NNES teachers are not aware of them, or that those Western methods are even appropriate in all contexts. The re-examination of the NES as ideal English language teacher proposes that NNESs might be equally or even more effective language teachers. Although there are several reasons given for this, one stands out as a key argument; that NNES teachers provide students with an imitable and realistic model of English as it is used by successful non-native English speakers (Tajino & Tajino, 2000).

If NNESs are as likely to become NESs as ducks are likely to become swans (Cook, 1999), perhaps it is not necessary, or even beneficial, for English learners to have an accurate NES model of English in the classroom. They may be better off studying with a NNES teacher, who provides an example of skilled NNES English use (Lee, 2000; Mahboob, 2004; Milambiling, 2000). If students learn to see NNES teachers as realistic “learner models” who have succeeded in mastering English (Medgyes, 1992, p. 346), instead of as failed native speakers (Cook, 1999), students may come to respect their teachers’ success and look to emulate them. (On the other hand, one of the NNES teachers in Liu’s (1998) survey said he found students were intimidated when they realized how much they would have to study and practice to reach his level of competence. This is an intriguing point that deserves additional study.)

Students will also have the benefit of hearing a NNES’s accent, which will almost certainly be different from the British or American accents that are most common in language teaching audio materials. Exposure to accents from around the world is something that is often avoided in language teaching, but listening to these accents can reasonably be assumed to help prepare students for the various different accents they could possibly encounter in their daily lives. Some students may prefer NNES teachers for precisely this reason, as the various NES accents may not be appropriate for all students. Pride in a regional accent and the desire to display features of
one’s first language (Jenkins, 2003), or fear of being mocked for speaking differently from one’s neighbours (Christophersen, 1992) (i.e. with a native accent rather than the accent displayed by other students in the classroom), may lead students to avoid NES accents.

NNES teachers also have the advantage of being skilled in at least one other language, and have consciously learned English during their own studies (Lung, 1999; Milambiling, 2000), which gives them a rich resource to draw on for examples and comparisons (Ellis, 2004). This may make them more aware of metalanguage, as bilinguals tend to be (Genesee, 1987), and more able to explain and apply English grammatical rules than NES teachers (Medgyes, 1992) who unconsciously acquired English. NNES teachers working with a monolingual class with a shared native language can rely on their native language to teach and to show differences and similarities between it and English (Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Tang, 1997). Students in Hong Kong reported favourable attitudes towards their NNES teachers’ use of Cantonese in the English language classroom, especially after Cantonese became more prestigious with the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule (Ling & Braine, 2007). Lung (1999) argues that the use of the students’ native language is also more likely to be effective for maintaining discipline with unruly students. NNES teachers can also use the shared native language to provide translations, a method that is often downplayed by monolingual NES teachers but that has the advantages of relating new language learning to students’ previous linguistic experiences (Seidlhofer, 1999). NNES teachers will also be experienced in using English as an international language (EIL), that is, using English for purposes that may not be the same as the purposes for which NES teachers use English. Llurda (2004, p. 318) argues that “with the increasing establishment of English as the world lingua franca, non-native speakers will be in optimal positions to lead their students into the realm of EIL”.

A NNES teacher may also be better able to teach students learning strategies that served him or her while learning English, to anticipate students difficulties (Ellis & Berger, 2003; Lee, 2000; Medgyes, 1992), and to bond with them (Liu, 1998; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). NES teachers, especially those who are monolingual, may be unable to do these things as effectively as NNES teachers. This may be part of the reason that some students feel NES teachers are professionally and academically weaker than NNESs (Holliay, 2005). According to research by Ellis (2006, p. 3) bilingual teachers are more likely to see language learning as “a challenge, but possible and entirely normal”, while monolingual teachers can see it as an impossible process. NNESs are by definition at least bilingual and so will be more likely to implicitly and explicitly expect their students to succeed.

As Seidlhofer (1999) argues, the NNES teacher’s position is often seen as the weaker one, but in fact it is a stronger one because he or she has experienced what the students are experiencing and has reached the goal they are seeking to reach. An NES monolingual will not have the shared language learning experience to draw upon. Having learned English explicitly is also supposed to make NNES teachers more able to explain grammar, something NES teachers are often thought not to be able to do (Arva & Medgyes, 2000), but there seems to be little evidence for this beyond the anecdotal.

Non-native English speaking EFL teachers often share their students’ culture, assuming they are working in their home country or with students from the same background, giving them access to an effective way to teach their students the target language by drawing on their shared cultural
knowledge (Auerbach, 1993; Medgyes, 1992). Such teachers will also know what subjects and materials may not be appropriate for their students, so they can avoid making any inappropriate cultural gaffes by asking their students to do things that may annoy or offend them (McKay, 2000). They know which teaching methods are unlikely to work in their home countries and they will be aware of the importance of covering the curriculum, as successful completion of exams is very important to their students (Samimi & Brutt-Griffler, 1999).

Finally, there is some limited evidence that NNES teachers may expose their students to more complex English in larger lexical chunks than do NES teachers, which is an idea that is counter to the usual claims about pedagogical practices of NES and NNES teachers. Shin and Kellogg (2007) found that a Korean teacher of English asked more questions of her students than did an NES teacher at the same school, which led in turn to the students speaking more English to the Korean teacher than to the NES. The Korean teacher also used more subordination and other grammatically complex sentences than did the NES. Shin and Kellogg largely attribute these differences to the Korean teacher being experienced and the NES teacher being a novice, but a close reading of their article also suggests that the NES might have been using foreigner talk, the simplified language sometimes used by native speakers to those they see as linguistic and social inferiors (Long, 1983; Lynch, 1988). Whatever the reason, Shin and Kellogg’s study provides some initial evidence that the almost uncontested claim that it is NES teachers who provide the most exposure to English may not always be true.

Mahboob’s (2004, p. 142) survey of ESL learners in the United States found that students held an appreciation for the strengths of both NES and NNES teachers, leading him to conclude that this “shows that students are not naïve and do not necessarily buy into the “native speaker fallacy” (Canagarajah, 1999), that only native speakers can be good language teachers”. Unfortunately, this positive attitude is even now not always held by policy makers and employers, making it all the more critical that information is disseminated to them in an effort to promote fairness in employment and better results in student achievement.

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References


Electronic Portfolios as an Effective Tool for Learning and Skills Development with Omani Students

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Abstract:

This paper discusses the rationale for implementing electronic portfolio projects with Omani university students who are engaged in advanced English as a Foreign Language study at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman. Electronic portfolios (EPs) are based on a specific software program which the students use to showcase their cumulative academic abilities, accomplishments and personal reflections. In the process, they develop a variety of academic, personal and social skills, and prepare themselves to compete for positions in a globalized economy. The use of electronic portfolios supports Wagner’s (2008) vision of how the development of critical skills for the 21st century can be achieved meeting educational, communicative and technological objectives. This helps students in their present and future academic studies, and later in the workplace. Capitalizing on the first-hand experience of two SQU English language teachers, this research explores students’ learning using high-tech media and specific application of electronic portfolios in their academic and professional world. It focuses on criteria for successful implementation and highlights the broad ranges of benefits for Omani students enrolled in classes that build EPs. A number of pedagogical, technical and organizational considerations are discussed. Recommendations, guidelines and solutions to potential problems are provided so that instructors in other educational institutions in the Sultanate of Oman who are new to this technology can receive advice about how to implement electronic portfolio projects.

Keywords: electronic portfolio, language learning, skills development
Introduction

Electronic portfolios (EPs) are tightly integrated, personalized collections of Internet documents – text and multimedia – that highlight the interests, qualifications and aspirations of advanced students on the university. Students collect, organize and publish these files by using a software application that posts them on the Internet, making them accessible to an audience that can include instructors, classmates and potential employers. Electronic portfolios are used in schools of higher education worldwide as a learner-centered tool for learning, development, presentation and collaborative work (Andrews & Dominick, 2011). Challis (2005) describes them as selective and structured collections of information gathered for specific purposes and evidencing one’s accomplishments and growth - stored digitally and managed by appropriate software - developed by using appropriate multimedia and customarily within a web environment - retrieved from a website. Hezen et al. (2011) further elaborate in saying that EPs “can develop students’ creativity, critical thinking and communication/presentation skills, they can have a chance of presenting collaborative works, they can develop using information and communication technologies skills…” (p.47). EPs present a promising solution to preparing students around the world for the educational, communicative and technological demands of the workplace in the 21st century. In addition to the classroom challenge of EP implementation, another major task is to inform, influence and get “buy-in” from fellow-instructors, and thus share the benefits of integrating electronic portfolios school-wide in the curriculum. For this purpose, the authors relate their personal experiences in using EPs and share thoughts on possible initiatives at the Language Centre, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). The authors do not endorse a position of promoting “technology for technology’s sake,” but believe that using Internet applications – building, managing and employing EPs for various academic purposes – can help Omani students to learn skills that are needed for their “successful careers, continuous learning, and active, informed citizenship” (Wagner, 2012).

Reflections on integrating technology in higher education in Oman

Teachers in Omani schools of higher education work with increasing numbers of students who have been exposed to globalized 21st century media innovations and its digital devices. It is obvious that almost all of the students function quite well with the four primary types of ‘high tech activities’ that are available in their world today: conversing and texting on smart phones, and emailing and surfing the Internet on computers. A current appraisal of university-level students’ use of technology might lead one to exclaim: “All of our students are so technologically engaged – they’re part of the digital revolution!” And yes, they are busy with their mobile phones and tablets, PC’s or Macs. Most students in our hyper-connected world are digitally savvy – they have grown up taking in much of the available data and stimuli of the electronic world through these means, often while multitasking – listening to music, gaming, surfing or texting, and talking to friends. However, from the standpoint of sociology, technology, and communication, today’s students are simply ‘consumers’ – they know how to utilize these tools and access features, but are not ‘creative’ with them – they can’t create or build anything of significance for learning. Unfortunately, most of them cannot take their understanding of technology beyond the realm of accessing entertainment and communication. Subsequently, our students are not truly digitally literate.
One wonders: Are there true educational benefits from students’ engagement with gadgets and multi-tasking behavior? Do these activities in any way compliment the academic coursework – including English-language classes – presented by the Omani higher education system? (In contrast, one can easily observe that the non-university-educated segment of Omani society is engaged in the same behaviors, albeit with less expensive devices and fewer opportunities to connect to the Internet. One would ask if this somehow elevates their understanding of technology, just as one might expect for their university-educated counterparts. The obvious answer is “no.” People from all strata of life and educational backgrounds use these devices, and their proficiencies are limited to the devices’ features: primarily accessing and using software applications that entertain or connect them to other students and friends.)

If these technologies are used only passively, then the users are not able to capitalize on the educational benefits that technology can provide. The obvious challenge is to ‘take the students behind the scenes’ of how technology works and teach them ‘from the inside out’ - creating, authoring, and collaborating on Internet-based projects. This enriches their educational experience, technologically, interpersonally, professionally, and truly helps them to prepare for their future.

Another significant issue in observing how Omani students chose to use their time pursuing technology is social media – and specifically applications like Myspace, Facebook, Google+ and Twitter. Informal polls show that students overwhelmingly prefer Facebook over other applications for self-education; electronic portfolios, blogs, websites, and the like. Today, Facebook is immensely popular in every culture and major language group around the world because it addresses students’ needs for meaningful social engagement, self-expression and high tech connection. (Twitter is also gaining popularity rapidly, but for different reasons.) Unfortunately – in the eyes of the authors – neither entertainment nor communication (including social networking) make significant contributions to improving English-language skills, or understanding the technology behind the devices – skills necessary for the workplace in the future. People may talk about how technology engages students, but from the authors’ viewpoint, only select types of meaningful, constructive engagement with technology leads to enlightened forms of literacies – in language, in computing and in specific survival skills for the 21st century workplace.

Recent initiatives of the higher education authorities in the Sultanate of Oman to introduce technology and electronic services into education have been met with enthusiasm. Reporting on Oman’s attempts to use modernization to boost educational outcomes, Dr. Hussein Shehadeh (2012) contends:

The Network Readiness Index of the Global Information Technology Report 2012 reveals a lot about the advancement of the IT and telecommunications sectors in the Sultanate. The Sultanate, through its policies, has shown that it does not want to be among the countries that have been left behind by time. In every area, the stress is on modernity. All the policies formulated over the years bears testimony to this truth. Foremost among them is the policy in the sphere of education. It’s based on the principle that education is for all. Literacy is the platform on which any country can achieve development. Hence, many millions of rials were spent over the years to ensure that
people even in the remotest corners of the Sultanate had access to education. Schools – from the primary level upwards – were opened in every nook and cranny of the Sultanate. So were colleges and universities. Technical institutions were started. IT education was given due importance with enough institutions imparting knowledge in the subject. Besides the public sector, the private sector was given a major role to play. As a result, thousands of students are graduating every year from them and entering the job market, which is flush with vacancies. Statistics reveal that scores of youth are finding lucrative employment in the public and private sectors. In fact, the private sector has of late started playing a major role in providing employment. Building a modern nation on firm ground is the aim of Sultan Qaboos. In other words, this means equipping the people with everything that is modern even in the sphere of education and thought. This policy has certainly succeeded as Omanis are a people with a modern outlook that is based on the firm foundation of a rich and ancient past (n.p.).

While all these developments are welcome and point to the fact that higher education in the Sultanate of Oman is on the right track, there are also some challenges and concerns. Vytautas Vitkausas, president of the Association of Information Technology, Telecommunications and Office Equipment of Lithuania, who visited the Sultanate of Oman in May 2012, observes:

…though Oman has taken huge strides in the way it uses information technology, there remains a need for proper strategic planning on improving connectivity and proper application of the solutions available (Muscat Daily, May 7, 2012).

In addition, relatively few technology programs inside the schools of higher education in Oman provide students with opportunities to be co-creators of learning, which minimizes the educators’ overall effectiveness in preparing students for the competitive world that awaits them. At the same time, students report that some computer-assisted language learning activities in the normal university curriculum are often boring and repetitive. Thus, the success in preparing students for the competitive world that awaits them is reduced – a complex world where there are seemingly ambiguous directions, tasks, methods, and training in their workplaces. With regard to the implementation of technology in education, young Omanis should be provided with more opportunities to excel in various aspects of the real world, exercise their agency, make meaningful actions and see the results of their own decisions and choices (Warshauer, 2000).

The authors are concerned with how administrators and instructors in Omani schools of higher education can prepare their students for the educational, communicative and technological demands of the workplace in the 21st century. Leading thinkers in education and the social sciences are grappling with issues of student readiness and how to improve the capabilities of educators and institutions. Although it is difficult to predict what the world will look like in ten or twenty years, we teachers are nevertheless entrusted with the task of preparing students to function successfully in that world. Emerging technologies, globalization and changing business practices have resulted in great complexity, more difficult and sophisticated tasks and perplexing problems in the workplace. These should be taken into account by educators, and used as valuable data to help them steer a course of improved curriculum development and teacher
engagement. The graduates of SQU who are destined to enter the global workplace should aim at not just surviving, but making a significant impact, based on their preparedness. Therefore, the authors have taken-up that challenge by investigating and employing technological approaches – specifically student electronic portfolios – in the midst of teaching English at the Language Centre of SQU.

Electronic portfolios in higher education

Taking advantage of the developments in technology, and the associated changes in educational pedagogy, many schools of higher education worldwide are now actively promoting EPs or PLSs (Personal Learning Spaces) in their programs as tools that can establish a students’ lifelong journey in a protective environment and have a positive effect on students’ development and their digital literacy (Chesney & Dalziel, 2011, p.67).

Educational portfolios have been employed by universities and colleges in a number of countries since the early 1980’s to replace earlier paper format “systematic collections of student work selected to provide information about student’s attitudes and motivation, level of development and growth over time” (Kyngore, 1993, p.3). Since their inception, EPs have been used as:

1. A site for students to deposit their work, get feedback (Muir & Murray, 2011, p.27) and document their learning over a long period of time. In this regard, EPs can feature a student’s specific skills area, an overview of academic accomplishments, or display a student’s life objectives.

2. A medium of learning and self presentation (Andrews & Dominick, 2011, p.65). A number of so-called” artifacts” are inserted into an EP: writing samples, photographs, videos, completed projects, reflections, observations and evaluations from instructors. It is through collecting, evaluating, and inserting these items into the EP that the students participate in their own learning.

3. A learner-centered developmental tool or “progress file” with the intent of enabling students to provide written reflections of their current knowledge level and learning needs (Nielsen et al., 2011, p.14; Aikaterini & Fotini, 2011, p.73) and increasing active participation in their own learning (Purnell & Holland, 2011, p.32). Important considerations for choosing portfolios for these purposes include promoting the student’s own reflections on the contributed pieces of evidence, the motivation for choosing them, and what learning the EP creator has gained in the process of creating and assembling it.

4. A tool for joint working between the students and other stakeholders of the educational process (Nielsen et al., 2011, p.14), identifying students in who are having difficulty (Muir & Murray, 2011, p.27), and supporting students’ active learning and future job applications.

Building and using EPs is a complex process that combines a number of components, socio-cultural, educational and technical issues (Stefani et al., 2007, cited in Aikaterini & Fotini, 2011, p.74). There are numerous pedagogical factors that support the implementation of electronic portfolio projects, all based upon developing the 21st century learner. These include widening participation, lifelong learning, personalization of learning, and meeting employment and skills
requirements (Aikaterini & Fotini, 2011, Dew, 2011; McLeod & Lehmann, 2011; Wagner, 2008). However, a variety of challenges and problems arise in providing learners with access to technology, creating and selecting the appropriate form of the EP (Lai & Chan, 2006); structuring the curriculum in a way that favors using EPs at the expense of learning traditional skills (Neilsen et al., 2011, p.15); and engaging and motivating all the stakeholders of the educational process to use EPs (Aikaterini & Fotini, 2011, p.74).

Some specific problems that arise when implementing electronic portfolio projects can be attributed to the lack of well-defined guidelines and helpful examples of previous portfolios. This can lead to confusion and anxiety among administrators, teachers, and students about the scope, nature and value of the task (Darling, 2001; Smith & Tillema, 2003). Concerns are also expressed over the difficulty of assessing portfolios. Smith & Tillema (2003) have noted a lack of harmony between assessment criteria and the goals of the program of study; when student competencies lag, a tension is sometimes revealed between a push for higher academic standards and a desire to promote the creative process, which comes through student engagement when using software to develop web pages and reflect on the content.

Evidence from research shows that the following elements are necessary when implementing EP projects: a clear statement of the EPs’ purpose, content, fulfillment of curriculum, expectations of various stakeholders and decisions about the software, platform or tools chosen. In addition, the commitment and encouragement of the teaching staff, and helping the students take control over their learning can contribute to making the project interactive and interesting (Purnell & Holland, 2011; Aikaterini & Fotini, 2011; Coolin et al., 2011). Any shortcomings with these or other actions can lead to challenges in implementing and using the EPs, leading to unsatisfactory educational experiences for some students (Purnell & Holland, 2011).

Existing research about electronic portfolio projects in schools of higher education consistently shows that they have been successful. Through the process of portfolio construction, students are able to plan creative layouts, gain a broader sense of what they are learning and reflect on their own practices, while identifying strengths and weaknesses. They also act in an independent and a self-regulated manner (Abrami et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2007; Grant, 2009; Jafari & Kaufman, 2006; Purnell & Holland, 2011; IMS, 2005). Engaging students in building portfolios promotes a pedagogical model that strengthens learners’ competencies and enhances skills needed to solve complex problems and meet real life challenges (Aikaterini & Fotini, 2011).

**Seven Survival skills for 21st Century Students**

One innovative movement - ‘21st Century Education’ - has made significant progress in identifying and prescribing solutions to the challenges of student readiness for the future world of employment. Advocates strongly maintain that today’s schools of higher education are largely ill-equipped for addressing students’ educational, communicative and technological needs. Because the world has changed so much, and schools have not, they maintain that much of the educational experience is now obsolete, or at best marginally effective. Indeed, the myriad of complex educational, business, and socio cultural problems in the 21st century call for entirely different solutions. One forward-thinking individual, Scott McLeod, has issued a challenge to the educational community in his personal blog – calling for a plan to get us from "here" to "there" – from our current place of educational stagnation to an undefined place in the future where our students’ personal, computing and professional skills will intersect with the inevitable and non-
negotiable requirements of the 21st century workplace. McLeod & Lehmann (2011) state, "Whether it is the expansion of social networking technologies, the power of digital media creation tools, or the ability to publish to the world instantly, our students and teachers have access to more information than ever before. We all possess the ability to interact with learning networks much wider than at any other time in history. We all now have the unprecedented ability to create powerful artifacts of learning. It is an exciting time to be a teacher and a learner."(p.vi)

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) programs which are now presented as a part of the normal university curriculum seldom provide students with opportunities to be co-creators of their own learning experience. In fact, students often maintain that many CALL activities are boring and repetitive. Thus, the overall effectiveness in preparing students for the enormously competitive world that awaits them is minimized – a world where there are seemingly ambiguous directions, assignments and methods – necessitating the type of thinking that a relatively easily attained by mastering Internet applications like electronic portfolios. When students puzzle over how to format an html document, create a powerful visual effect, or embed a Youtube video, the need for these Web 2.0 Internet skills is readily apparent. The authors also believe such skills are also transferable beyond the realm of digital media to the students’ future high tech work realm, as well.

The authors maintain that teachers of English in Oman should promote the use of building-creating technologies in conjunction with their language classes so that students can become truly media literate - researching, evaluating, analyzing, processing, and applying what they learn (Bloom’s Taxonomy). Building electronic portfolios is one process that moves them toward these skills, and helps them to be more creative and competitive.

A cutting-edge approach to developing the necessary skills for the 21st century - interdisciplinary, integrated, and truly effective - focuses on seven survival skills advocated by Tony Wagner in his ground-breaking work, The Global Achievement Gap. First published in 2008, the book focuses on how educators in the United States should make changes to prepare their students for the competitive, globalized knowledge economy of the future. He maintains that the current approaches of ‘raising standards’ and ‘trying harder’ are not adequate to address the underachievement of schools and students, and argues that the old ways of thinking about education and classroom teaching are unsuitable and incapable. If educators are to close the gap between what’s being taught and what students need to know, then this must be accomplished by focusing on a core set of skills that he outlines.

Based on research, campus visits, and numerous interviews with high-level managers of leading companies, Wagner ‘backward engineers’ a new definition of literacy and explains what kind of thinking and what kind of changes will be necessary to produce sustainable change in the workplace.

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The rapidly changing world of work requires a unique combination of “soft skills” (personal and interpersonal) - and “hard skills” (technical, problem-solving) that now distinguish 21st century corporate work culture. Here are some thoughts to consider in this regard:

- A “newly flattened world” – a phrase borrowed from Thomas Friedman (2005)– has already arrived, and the business, corporate and industrial world is now looking for employees with new types of minds and skills.

- What skills do today’s employers really want in their workers? Are these requirements ever communicated to administrators in high educational circles, and taken seriously by educators?

- Educators on the front line – new and experienced – generally don’t have time and desire to be concerned about abstractions like a ‘globalized world’ or ‘workforce preparedness.’ They are probably not aware that such needs exist. Most are genuinely and rightly concerned with how to increase English language fluency levels of their students in the classroom… and meeting the demands of curricula, overseen by administrators who have full agendas and only remote concern for the conditions faced in the working world beyond.

- One question arises in this context: “Are the advantages to the student who works on digital projects like building an electronic portfolio so attractive to teachers that they would change their pedagogical perspectives, lesson plans and in-classroom capabilities to incorporate it?”

- A second concern is: “Do most teachers today have enough technical savvy to integrate EPs into their curriculum and teach them effectively?”

- And, finally: “How do teachers develop convictions to believe that such efforts in the classroom are necessary and non-negotiable?”

Certainly, the same sentiment of these North American educators rings true in overseas environments, like in the Omani schools of higher education. The authors’ experience in introducing electronic portfolios based on available software applications, like Foliospaces, Weebly and Mahara, may provide part of the solution to these challenges.

Following is a list of the seven skills presented by Wagner (2008): 1) critical thinking and problem solving; 2) collaboration across networks and leading by influence; 3) agility and adaptability; 4) initiative and entrepreneurialism; 5) effective oral and written communication; 6) accessing and analyzing information; 7) curiosity and imagination. The authors maintain that at least five of the seven “survival skills” are addressed accurately by inserting electronic portfolios into the curriculum.

**Critical thinking and problem solving**

Critical thinking, problem-solving and asking good questions are qualities that most 21st century managers desire to have in their employees. Following orders and knowing the answers to questions are no longer adequate for being a successful, productive worker.
Employees have to deal with increasing amounts of ambiguity in the modern workplace, as things are no longer clearly defined – tasks, relationships, chain-of-command, and procedures. Problems change, and also the means to find answers to them. Simply asking straightforward, non-insightful, linear questions with supervisors and peers is no longer helpful. Instead, co-workers should ask nonlinear, counterintuitive ones. If our students, who become employees after graduation, lack confidence in themselves and their abilities, then it is likely that problems will arise based on their inability to think, perform and interact skillfully. The marketplace and workplace environments are now highly demanding and are changing rapidly, and employees must respond in kind to be truly productive.

The authors believe that students working “behind the scenes” on websites provides excellent practice in identifying ambiguity, and working through it. In the early days of their website-building experience, they often ask themselves: “What am I supposed to do?” or “How am I supposed to carry-out this task?” Although applications like Weebly.com rarely leave you “completely stranded” – without available answers – one still has to learn how to “think software” and pursue an answer, realizing it is probably somewhere close at hand. Such solutions posed by software problems, as every reader knows, don’t just “fall out of the sky.” Working with technology forces the students into a realm where questions demand immediate answers, and traditional thinking or reasoning is not always helpful. Once the students finally admit that they are stuck and can’t move on, they still have to know where to go to get solutions. Wagner (2008) argues:

One of the biggest issues facing corporations in America today is changing how we think about problems: ‘This is the way we’ve always looked at it’ versus understanding the problem from the perspective of a ‘flat world’. So we need to approach problems and challenges as a learner as opposed to a knower. We need to be curious versus thinking ‘I know the answer.’ Yesterday’s solution doesn’t solve tomorrow’s problem. (p. 16-17)

Teammates, both those physically present, and those in a virtual team may be the best source of good answers, but you still have to know how to ask good questions to both – in speaking and writing. Carefully thinking through issues and not simply responding with spontaneous answers is now required. This takes preparation and practice. According to Wagner (2008):

Work is not longer defined by your specialty; it’s defined by the task or problem you and your team are trying to solve or the end goal you want to accomplish. Teams have to figure out the best way to get there – the solution is not prescribed. And so the biggest challenge for our front-line employees is having the critical-thinking and problem-solving skills they need to be effective in their teams – because nobody is there telling the exactly what to do. They have to figure it out. (p.15)

One of the authors reflects: “So it is with using software for the first time. You are confronted with a flood of questions, and the answers are not necessarily at hand, especially if you lack experience and don’t know what to expect or how to make something happen. You can interrupt
Collaboration across networks and leading by influence

Communication via email and conference calls has now become the norm in the globalized workplace, mainly due to technological advances and physical displacement or relocation of employees. This creates so-called ‘virtual teams’, which are groups of employees separated by time zones and space, and differentiated by project function and roles. They don’t work in the same building, but they routinely collaborate on the same project, making valuable contributions from their different work perspectives and physical locations.

Many of our recent graduates unfortunately display a naiveté about how work gets done in high tech environments, and tend to believe that everything is clearly outlined, that the boss gives the directions, and everybody works together until the job is finished. They don’t understand clearly how to perform individually, and then collaborate with co-workers, near or afar, to contribute to the solutions.

At Sultan Qaboos University, students have opportunities to work together on producing websites in small groups in a computer lab. They learn to take on different roles and assist each other in solving problems, based on their strengths. They have to learn how to deal with differences of opinion and decide collectively how to make decisions – demonstrating team-based leadership.

In today’s corporations, senior leaders are no longer expected to have all the answers and solve problems by themselves. They expect employees to contribute their expertise and help them make decisions. Traditional top-down hierarchical structures are being rapidly replaced by horizontal networks and teams.

Agility and adaptability

A shift away from this hierarchical authority in the workplace has resulted in the emergence of a fast-paced, team-based work environment where workers now have to think creatively, be open to change, flexible, and be adaptable to use tools and approaches that didn’t exist earlier. Because jobs and work assignments change rapidly, and they have to be prepared to train-into new environments. Wagner (2008) reports in his book:

To survive, you have to be flexible and adaptable and be a lifelong learner… And so some of the key competencies we hold employees accountable for include the ability to deal with ambiguity, the ability to learn on the fly, and strategic agility… You have to be able to take in all sorts of new information, new situations, and be
able to operate in ambiguous and unpredictable ways… You have to thrive in this environment and deliver results. (p. 30-31)

Things are not as prescriptive as they used to be in top-down, hierarchical companies. Workers are expected to perform, but they are not given the ‘instruction booklet.’ This seems to imitate the way a new software program presents itself to beginners!

As mentioned earlier, current educational programs have difficulty finding time and reason to identify and address such skills, especially while dealing with curricular and instructional challenges. Agility and adaptability are necessary behaviors in the high tech world, and are also required in building electronic portfolios.

**Initiative and entrepreneurialism**

Today’s leaders want their employees to take more initiative and be more entrepreneurial as they do their work inside of companies. This means they should be self-directed and create new opportunities, strategies and ideas for improvement.

Companies struggle when their employees display risk aversion or a lack of confidence. On-line activities help educators to challenge their students to think as entrepreneurs. Giving students freedom to create and collaborate provides these benefits.

**Effective oral and written communication**

Many young people around the world are not capable of expressing themselves in their own native tongue, not to mention standard English, mainly because of factors such as their educational background, mother tongue and other cultural factors. Wagner (2008) reports:

> The biggest skill people are missing is the ability to communicate: both written and oral presentations. It’s a huge issue for us… We are routinely surprised at the difficulty some young people have in communicating: verbal skills, written skills, presentation skills. They have difficulty in being clear and concise; it’s hard for them to create focus, energy, and passion around the points they want to make. (p.35)

The authors’ thesis centers on the feasibility of using EPs to promote language fluency. This is based on the fact that students have wide exposure to an Internet audience with their EP, and not want to be embarrassed by their writing mistakes. Furthermore, in their effort to use accurate and correct text in their files, they may be tempted to “cut and paste” into their web pages. Subsequently, instructors need to keep an eye out for copying, and establish a policy of plagiarism.

**Accessing and Analyzing Information**

In today’s digital world there is so much information available that it may be simply overwhelming to the user. If our young people, newly graduated, are not prepared to access, sort and process the information effectively, they may be rendered ineffective in their positions. According to Wagner (2008):
In a very short period of time, with the advent of the Internet and the increasing availability of fast connections, we have evolved from a society where only a few people had limited information to one where all of us experience information flux and glut – and can look up almost anything imaginable on our computer in a search that takes nanoseconds. (p.35)

Young people in Oman and around the world need to be trained to use digital information and search engines, and not simply copy into their documents. Learning how to think about text and meaning, and exercise mastery over it is an enormous challenge for all instructors.

They also learn to actively pursue answers and solutions under pressure, by themselves or with the help of other students. The tasks teach them to be efficient, time-sensitive, flexible, and eager to change.

Curiosity and imagination

Many students are surprised and pleased to discover that they have the power to unleash creativity and imagination within themselves – and in their website. This category represents some of the qualities that are most closely addressed by this electronic portfolio project. As in creative writing, they must first envision what they want to create visually and aurally, and use the EP software to capture it and reproduce it.

EP projects implementation in Omani context

One important factor in the development of an EP is the quality of reflection spent in the process of building it – the student should ideally spend an adequate amount of quality time conceiving, pondering and producing content materials, as this is an area where a great deal of learning takes place. A number of specific content files or contributions - so-called "artifacts" - are inserted into an electronic portfolio - writing samples, photographs, videos, completed assignments, reflections, observations and evaluations from instructors. It is through collecting, evaluating, and inserting these items into the EP that it provides an opportunity for the students to participate in their own learning.

Neither collecting nor selecting the components that are to be incorporated into a portfolio constitutes worthwhile learning activity without being accompanied by reflection. An instructor should provide plenty of opportunities for continuous reflection, which undergirds the entire process of portfolio development and its supports its pedagogy.

As mentioned earlier, electronic portfolios have been used by universities and colleges in many countries since the early 1980’s. They encompass a broad range of functions based on the software that supports them:

- promoting digital literacy
- boosting students’ online presentation skills
- providing a forum for reflective learning
- documenting academic progress or achievement
- helping students develop basic technology skills
- promoting an awareness of design
thinking critically and reflecting
considering how to best present their accomplishments to an audience

Popular software applications that are currently used to construct EPs are Foliotek, Weebly, Mahala and Google+ docs. All of these have the same attributes: they are simple to set-up, edit and publish. Students no longer need to have a knowledge of a computer language (including html), nor a sophisticated application like Microsoft Publisher or Dreamweaver.

Criteria for successful implementation

A number of pedagogical and technical issues are critical to the successful adoption of electronic portfolios in a classroom or lab setting for university students. Following is a list of recommendations that could be made for a program implementation with Omani students – these things have been proven necessary, through experience:

- Clear guidelines explaining the overall purpose of the project, its evaluation and on-going value
- The immediate benefits to the students – how it will help them with their job search, teach them about the “behind the scenes” of the Internet, web development, graphic art and html
- Familiarity with the EP concept, and an understanding of both the process and what the finished product should look like
- The right balance of structure and freedom, maximizing the prescribed project software for individual, creative expression
- Availability of on-going feedback and assistance during each stage of the development process
- Understanding of how reflection and personal expression play important roles in reaching a particular audience
- Understanding how EPs contribute a favorable impression in a job search
- Motivation to increase understanding of digital design, websites, graphics and other media
- Implications of students taking ownership of the electronic portfolio
- Implication of students making connections between their content placed in the EP on the Internet and the outside world and the outside life of the student
- Learning how to write to a digital target audience

Electronic portfolios provide a valuable learning experience because they include the student’s own reflections on the contributed pieces of evidence, require motivation for choosing them, and demonstrate what he or she learned in the process of creating and assembling them.

Benefits for students

Through the process of portfolio construction, students “get the bigger picture” of the Internet for the first time, and receive insights into how hypertext mark-up language (html) functions. They become excited, as their learning and creativity unfolds, and receive an awareness of their strengths. Electronic portfolios help to focus the students’ thinking, provide a means to translate theory and tangible work into digital media, and document a learner’s progress over time. They
Electronic Portfolios as an Effective Tool

Emerson, Tuzluova

Electronic Portfolios have the potential to improve students’ communication and organizational skills and are a way of identifying and recognizing prior learning, leading to new learning outcomes.

Depending on which type of electronic portfolio software has been chosen, several benefits are available to students who actively pursue the development experience. These benefits can be divided roughly into four main categories: Technology, Linguistic, Intrapersonal and Social. The chart in Appendix 1 highlights how these benefits are distributed based on the authors’ use of the Weebly.com platform:

### Engaging and motivating learners

Simply using high-level technology can be a motivational factor for students creating portfolios, especially if instructor makes the process enjoyable and rewarding for the learners. Instructors should give them an opportunity to express their own voice and unleash their own creatively in their portfolios without outside interference. As schools implement EP projects, it will be important to do more than replicate a simplistic blog-style system (text and photos) that limits students’ flexibility on the web. The entire digital world is moving toward multi-media, and educators should make every effort to encourage the incorporation of sound and video files in the students’ repertoire of abilities. As an example, EP’s can provide a terrific opportunity for storytelling in a colorful, multimedia digital format.

### Purposes and guidelines

Several decisions should be made on an administrative level before implementation, such as how training is to be conducted, what skills are necessary, and what constitutes a completed project.

Zeichner & Wray (2001) generated the following list of questions for those considering implementing a portfolio:

- What is the school’s vision for the portfolios?
- What is the purpose of the portfolio: for learning…?
- Who decides what should be included in a portfolio: the teacher compiling the portfolio, the students for whom it is being created, or both?
- How prescriptive should guidelines for creating a portfolio be?
- How should the pieces of evidence in the portfolio be organized: around themes chosen by the student, around program goals, or around achievement standards?
- What kinds of artifacts are acceptable as pieces of evidence? What should, and should not, be included in the portfolio?
- How frequently should students be expecting feedback on their progress?
- How should the portfolios be assessed: through very specific evaluation criteria and grading rubrics, or should a more informal methodology be put in place?
- What should happen to the portfolio after it is finished? Is the process ongoing?

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One of the skills identified within the theory of Multiple Intelligences, developed in the early 1980's by Howard Gardner. It refers to self-reflection and the capacity to respond appropriately to others' moods and emotions. It includes self-awareness and being in tune with feelings, values, beliefs and thinking.
Problems and issues

A variety of challenges and problems arise when implementing electronic portfolios projects in academic settings. In this particular case at SQU, the purpose of the EPs is to be a tool for self-reflection and self-presentation in employment searches.

- EPs can cause confusion and anxiety among administrators, teachers, and students based on the scope, nature and purpose of the project
- Students may be hesitant to get involved during the initial stages of the project. One of the authors remarked: “I find that the students approach EPs like young children approach swimming lessons in deep water at the swimming pool: a few jump in without hesitation, most stand on the side of the pool waiting for some form of encouragement, and a few avoid it. It’s like a bell-shaped curve.”
- Concerns are also expressed over the potential issues of confidentiality and accessibility for outside users. Some students want to know that only those people they designate can view their work.
- A lack of congruence between what students produce and the original goals of the project. Some students want to include their own ideas and ‘artifacts’ that represent their own agenda.
- Lack of competencies or skills that the students need to develop in order to perform
- A tension between the fulfillment of project standards established by the instructor and presented by a particular software application, and promotion of creativity and reflection
- Learning and reflection may be compromised if the slower learners struggle to develop competencies

Support and technical considerations

Administrators and instructors who plan and implement electronic portfolio systems must consider a number of technical issues. Software that builds electronic portfolios is currently available in the following categories: a) web-building tools (templates and web-editing software), b) stand-alone commercial products, c) Open Source Portfolio software, d) university designed software, e) virtual learning environments, f) learning management systems and g) Web 2.0 technologies (Aikaterini & Fotini, 2011, p.74).

Before the primary software application is chosen, the purpose of the project, who will use it, how support will be offered to the students, and who is the audience need to be considered (Appendix 2 features an emailed invitation to the students to build their own electronic portfolio; and Appendix 3 contains specific information with technical support documentation for the students). Following are some of the reasons why the Weebly.com software program was chosen:

- Attractive GUI (Graphic User Interface)
- Low cost – students did not have to pay to use the software
- Capability of storing large amounts of data
- Ease of use – “drag-and-drop” technology, with simple menus and tabs
- Ease of critiquing, storing and publishing files
- Recognition and use of graphic file formats
Conclusion

Schools of higher education in Oman should make adaptations to respond to the changing realities and imperatives of the 21st century – “driven by profound social, political, economic and technological changes… continual increases in computing power, the spread of e-commerce, the rapid diversification of the workforce, the globalization of the economy, and the relentless ratcheting upward of the pace of business – all at an ever-accelerating rate of change” (Goldman et al., 2002, p.246).

The authors believe that skills our students need for the 21st century can be developed through flexible, technology-aided curriculum, based on the Internet, inquiry and well-devised projects. Electronic portfolios can serve this purpose.

Teachers intending to implement EP projects should have “a clear sense of intended purpose from the start” (Barrett, 2006, p.4), and conduct electronic portfolios projects in conjunction with their classes. They should develop their own hands-on, practical experience in building (teachers’) electronic portfolios. Otherwise, they will lack credibility and the necessary knowledge to guide the students and trouble-shoot when problems arise.

Perhaps the most fundamental reason for implementing electronic portfolio projects is to provide the students with an opportunity to take charge of their own learning (Tan, 2003). An instructor’s role is to maintain this motivation by facilitating student interaction with technology, exercising competence and building relationships an eagerness to see the students develop as they make their own decisions and release their creativity.

As the students explore their own learning space and gain confidence to present themselves to the public in the Internet, they develop resourcefulness and independence – solving problems and becoming self-sufficient.

About the authors:

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Victoria Tuzlukova is the Head of Professional Development and Research Unit at the SQU Language Centre. She has been working in the field of English language teaching for 30 years. Her research interests focus on sociolinguistics, intercultural communication, foreign language acquisition and the role of culture in foreign language teaching and learning.
References


Appendix 1

Distribution of the EPs’ benefits and their brief explanation based on the authors’ use of the Weebly.com platform:

A. Learning - the project contributes learning in all four of the areas
B. Collaborating – this describes how students learn to work with others
C. Creating - building an EP increases creativity in all four domains
D. Thinking critically – students practice focused, purposeful thinking
E. Self-presentation - sharing with others for the purpose of making a positive impression or influencing them
F. Critiquing – students can learn a valuable lesson in revising or editing
G. Problem-solving - developing patience, overcoming ignorance and frustration
H. Reflecting – taking time to think thoughtfully about what is happening and why
I. Evaluating - students’ organizing, prioritizing, seeking the best procedure
J. Influencing – students thinking about their place in the world; measuring their impact on others; changing how they impact others
Appendix 2

An invitation to the students to participate in electronic portfolio project (email)

Dear Student,

I want to send you an invitation to participate in a project that could help you with your job search before you graduate. If you are not too busy this summer, and have a connection to the Internet, it may be a fun project.

This project is voluntary - it has nothing to do with our LANC 2160 Engineering class, and will not affect your marks. And, if I teach LANC 2161 (Engineering 2), and you're in my class, it won't help you with your mark!

I want to give you an opportunity to prepare for your future - specifically for getting a job – by building an electronic-portfolio or e-portfolio. E-portfolios are widely used in the English-speaking academic world. They have nothing to do with the project in the Language Centre in the Intensive Program. A Google search will turn up a large number of sites:

https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ie=UTF-8#hl=en&output=search&sclient=psy-ab&q=electronic%20portfolios&oq=&gs_l=&pbx=1&fp=51a6e4b639342c8a&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.,cf.osb&biw=1440&bih=837

NOTICE: If you didn't enjoy building a blog, you won't enjoy this, either - I suggest you not start it.

I made an Electronic Portfolio as a model for you and to let other teachers at the SQU know what I'm doing. I plan to keep it for the rest of the time I'm teaching at SQU. Please study my own sample which I built with software called “Weebly”:

http://clifforddemerson.weebly.com/

If you choose to work on this, I will send you some directions on how to get started. I have no rules - you can create what you want.

I will send you an invitation from weebly.com (I think this is the best software) after this email.

Dr. Victoria Tuzlukova is working with me on this project. Some of you might remember her from the Intensive Program.

Please send me an email if you decide to participate. If you are not interested, please do not contact me.
Appendix 3

Suggestions for Developing your own Electronic Portfolio

Dear SQU Student,

Thank you for your interest in building an Electronic Portfolio (EP).
In case you need some brief instructions on how to get started with Weebly.com, please read this document. I have made some screen shots for you.

Web Page #1: There are two things to do on this page (above):

1. Watch the video (maybe even when you need some more help)
2. Sign up – it’s free!
Web Page #2: The “Log-in” page. You can see (above) I am building 3 websites. The program gives you a web address / URL (below the blue title). This is how you, or others (like me), access your web page. Click on the “Edit” button to start working.

Web Page #3: This is your web site’s Home page. It is the place where you start working. You will click on buttons or words on:

- Elements, Design, Pages and (rarely) Settings
- Basic and Multimedia
- Publish, Close, and (sometimes when it appears: Save)
- Don’t use the other menus or buttons, unless you want to explore
Are there specific ways to use technology at SQU to prepare the students to work and live in a technological world?

Ideas from some of the most progressive thinkers in education and social sciences today provide insights...

Quotes from The Global Achievement Gap, by Tony Wagner:

Page 8 “...the global achievement gap – (is) the gap between what even our best... schools are teaching and testing versus what all students will need to succeed as learners, workers, and citizens in today’s global knowledge economy.”

The 7 Survival Skills:

1) Critical thinking and problem-solving
2) Collaboration across networks and leading by influence

Web Page #4: Always import (cut & paste) “unformatted text” from MSWord. When working with text already in Weebly, you select it and then the blue Tool Bar will appear. Weebly.com is very user-friendly, so be patient and try to figure-out how it works. Its “Drag & Drop” technology is fantastic, and also fun to use.

Web Page #5: Important: When you are finished creating something, click on the blue x button in the top, right corner of the “Website Published!” window to close it. Don’t click on the Facebook or Twitter buttons.
Building an EP involves creativity. Visit the following site and click on the sample EP’s for ideas: “35 Professionally Designed Personal Portfolio Websites”
http://www.webappers.com/2011/03/08/35-professionally-designed-personal-portfolio-websites/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Webappers+%28WebAppers%29

Here are some additional websites about Electronic Portfolios:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWJqJ8NhQlc
http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/e-portfolios

Or, you can Google the term: “Electronic (digital) Portfolios”.
The familiar & strange ‘Other’ – A Portfolio Assessment of Intercultural Competence

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Abstract

This study examines the (inter-)cultural experiences of female undergraduates attending a government-funded university in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. The study examines written narrative data gathered from a sample of female Arabic-speaking students enrolled in the Colloquy Program at Zayed University (ZU). It reports important findings arrived at on the basis of deciphering written portfolios. Here, student written scripts are taken as mirrors of the socio-cultural world which shapes the participants’ cultural awareness (CA) and intercultural competence (IC), in a context of English as a Second Language (ESL). In general, the findings revealed two broad types of feelings vis-à-vis ‘others’ who are sometimes perceived as ‘familiar’ and sometimes as ‘strange’. The findings should be of interest to teachers of English as second/foreign language and to academics studying (inter)cultural issues.

Keywords: ESL, portfolios, intercultural competence, identity, otherness.
Introduction

The global reality – rife as it is with severe grievances and agonies in these troubled times – is such that there is an unprecedented urgency to deepen and broaden dialogue among civilizations, and to create change for a better future. In a world marked by social, political, and cultural tensions, there is a particular need to eradicate prejudice and stereotyping. An honest pledge to promote dialogue among cultures is in order; this requires a strong value that unites our common humanity while asserting local and individual identities. Language education can play a crucial role in bringing about much needed changes. Modern technologies, globalization, widespread migrations and multiculturalism constitute important factors that expedite the need for developing and promoting IC.

Intercultural Competence

The cultural component in the EFL/ESL classroom is now firmly and widely recognized in research by Kramsch (1993), Byram (1997), Fantini (2006), and others. Culture is no longer treated as a separate strand in teaching English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL). Furthermore, the invaluable and vital gains of teaching culture in the language classroom are substantially well-documented. Paige et al., (2000), for example, offer an excellent review of the literature pertaining to culture learning in language education programs. Recently, increasing awareness of the crucial role of the cultural dimension in EFL/ESL education has led to further developments which have culminated in the emergence of a recognizably important component in the field - namely IC.

Following Fantini (2006), IC involves “a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (p. 12) [emphasis in original]. It involves the ability to explore and interrogate different cultures and decipher relationships between them. As Byram (2000) suggests, it is the ability “to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people”. Therefore as Byram goes on to conclude, an interculturally competent person should have “a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures - someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural.”

Developing IC within the context of EFL/ESL involves more than merely acquiring communicative competence in that language. As is now widely acknowledged, command of a foreign language is not the sine qua non of intercultural competence. IC requires acquiring specific skills, attitudes, values, knowledge items and ways of viewing the world as well as learning “new foundations for reception of information, but new foundations for interpretation, judgment, and understanding of that information and, thus, their lives.” (Serçu, 2002, p. 63). IC starts with the ability to describe and analyze one’s culture and then grows into developing an awareness of how culture impacts one’s and others’ attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. It also encompasses the ability to decipher how perceptions of difference promote or impede social interactions. IC calls for the skills that help in conflict resolution, decision making, and participation in social action (Meltzoff and Lenssen, 2000).

With the increasing emphasis on the intercultural dimension of foreign and second language education, the language learner is now viewed as an ‘intercultural speaker’, someone who
“crosses frontiers, and who is to some extent a specialist in the transit of cultural property and symbolic values” (Byram and Zarate, 1997, p. 11). A consequence of this development is that the goals of IC in language education encompass the need to improve linguistic proficiency, acquire factual and cultural knowledge, enhance acculturation, and mediate between different cultures (Corbett, 2007).

Assessing Intercultural Competence

A major difficulty characterizing culture instruction is the adoption of a model of IC based on the native speaker benchmark, usually embodied by American or British English speakers. With the ‘Triumph of English’ (The Economist, 2001) as the language of international business, communication, diplomacy, science, technology, etc., English is now viewed as an international language (EIL) (Sharifian, 2009) rather than a foreign or second language. Therefore, the term ‘native speaker’ model, which has for long enjoyed the luxury of providing a standard for optimal performance, has of late come under vehement attack (Cook, 1995).

For Kachru and Nelson (1996, p. 81), the term qualifies as “casual labeling, which used to be so comfortably available as a demarcation line between this and that type or group of users of English must now be called into serious question.” Medgryes (1996) corroborates a similar view and notes that it is very difficult to define who is and who is not a native speaker in today’s international society. Therefore, foreign/second learners should be treated just as learners in their own right, rather than emulating the native speaker norm. One can only be a native speaker of one’s own language and a member of one’s own culture. Kramsch (1998, p. 79) points out that “the identity as well as the authority of the native speaker have been put into question.”

As learners stand to gain from their intercultural experiences, we have to recognize that learning involves the process of exploration and the students’ autonomous, personal construction of meaning. Therefore, we must allow for diverse pathways to and demonstrations of knowledge, attitudes, and understanding, which are all crucial to developing and fostering IC. With the recent developments made in teaching English as a foreign/second language, a central issue for EFL/ESL researchers, teachers and learners alike concerns the issue of measuring IC. Born out of the recognition that if we truly value student growth and understanding of cultural knowledge, then we must find ways to assess this knowledge and understanding, there is a pressing need to resist the temptation to treat cultural knowledge merely as the only vehicle for facilitating learning about others; attitudes and behavior are essential channels for facilitating and empowering such learning, too.

Given the multi-faceted and complex nature of IC, as a composite of skills and knowledge, developing the different aspects of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness is “a longitudinal and on-going process” and, as such, triangulating diverse and multiple “benchmarks may be helpful to mark one's journey along the way.” (Fantini, 2001, p. 2). Assessing knowledge is but a small part of what must be measured, and assessment should also encompass the ability of learners to “step outside, to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange, and to act on that change of perspective.” (Byram, 2000).

To operationalize participants’ intercultural practices, the present research used portfolio assessment, which is a useful means of maintaining an ongoing record of student learning. Portfolios also facilitate reflection on the learning experience, retrospectively and prospectively.
Unlike traditional forms of assessment that aim to quantify learning, portfolios serve as templates for evaluating students’ awareness of events occurring in their life experiences (Schulz, 2007). As such they are ideal repositories of qualitative data for discourse analysts, ethnographers and action researchers.

**The study**

This study explored the (inter-)cultural experiences of undergraduate students at Zayed University (ZU), Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. The research presented here was conducted at ZU and employed narrative portfolio assessment as a means of documenting students’ reflections on their experience of (inter)cultural learning. Drawing on portfolio narratives from a sample of female students, it reports findings from student written scripts. Student narratives are taken as mirrors of the socio-cultural world that shapes the participants’ IC, in an ESL context.

This study involved undergraduate female students at ZU, a federal university for women established in 1998 in the Arab Gulf State of the UAE. Zayed University has two campuses, one in Dubai and another in the capital Abu Dhabi, and is led by a single administration. It prides itself on using new, state-of-the-art facilities and technology. The students gain an international experience through a blend of a western model of education, global issues courses across the curriculum, exposure to faculty from more than 30 different countries, clubs which focus on cultural issues, partnerships with various western universities from around the world, student exchange opportunities, high profile guest speakers, and international conferences.

The mission espoused by ZU emphasizes fostering student understanding of their relation to the world. The stated learning outcomes are geared toward developing students’ ability to “think critically about the relationship between local contexts and global forces through a comparative engagement with the world, its histories, its problems, and its successes.” (The Zayed University Catalog 2007-2008, p. 33). Within an interdisciplinary focus that supports the ZU Learning Outcomes, the learning goals include Global Awareness, Critical Thinking, Computer Applications, Information Literacy, English, and Arabic. Of these, Global Awareness implicitly refers to learning about “other societies and other cultures” and stipulates that students will be able to conceptualize the influence of “global forces on their local contexts while at the same time being able to acknowledge, appreciate, and understand the artistic, cultural, and political values and beliefs of others.” (ibid.).

ZU aspires to become the leading university in the region, adhering to the same rigorous standards and intellectual criteria deeply seated in prominent universities worldwide. During their first two-year phase at ZU, students experience arduous standards in the Colloquy program, a program similar to the two-year general education programs followed in North American universities. The five core courses that constitute the Colloquy Program – Global Awareness I (Global Studies I), Global Awareness II (World Humanities), Global Awareness III (Global Studies II), Islamic Studies I and Islamic Studies II – all underscore the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and the contributions of the various disciplines over time and from different parts of the globe. All university students enroll in the Colloquy Program and during each of the first three semesters of their baccalaureate program they enroll in these courses. The Global Awareness courses are offered as a sequence during the first three semesters of the first two years of university education.
The focus of Global Awareness I is ‘emerging civilizations’ where students examine some ancient civilizations, including the Greek, Roman, Mogul, and the Persian empires). Global Awareness II explores ‘Imperial encounters’ and concentrates on the encounters between the Aztecs and the Spanish, between African empires (Congo, Ghana, Mali, Songhai); and the Europeans, and between the Ottoman Empire and neighboring rivals (Mongols, Safavids, Byzantines). This course also explores the British Empire and its Indian colony. In Global Awareness III, emphasis is placed on ‘The 20th century and globalization’ and students probe topics such as the collapse of empires, state and society in Europe, contemporary world history and society, the first and second world wars, the reasons and effects related to each, and the cold war era. The courses are taught by faculty with diverse national and educational backgrounds. The students taking these courses are required to take an objective examination that tests students’ acquaintance with a body of knowledge acquired during the study of a particular civilization, encounter, or event. In addition, students take a critical thinking essay examination. During the course of the semester, they are also required to complete two in-class writing assignments. Class projects, discussions, presentations, and other activities are left to the instructor’s discretion.

In addition to exposure to multi-national faculty currently teaching at ZU, undergraduate students are exposed to a western model of education and across-the-curriculum courses that deal with global issues. The students often also have guest and visiting professors from prestigious partner institutions in the West. Moreover, international academic, scientific, and medical influences have a strong presence in the country and many top-notch Western higher education institutions have launched programs in different parts of the UAE. Beyond the university campus environment, a wide range of English language media is on offer. Satellite TV channels, such as BBC World, BBC Prime, CNN, Fox news, Sky News, etc. are all at one’s finger tips. A local cable network, e-vision, and other English-speaking channels, including Dubai TV, MBC2, City 7 TV, etc. are all at hand. Moreover, major English-speaking newspapers from the UK, the US, and Australia are available on a daily basis. Local English-speaking newspapers include Gulf News, Khaleej Times, The National, etc. The UAE as a whole is a country with one of the highest rates of diversity in the world, with more than 200 foreign nationalities living in the country (Matthew, 2008). In brief, many students experience some kind of interaction with people who appear culturally different from themselves.

Methodology

The study’s overarching research questions were formulated as follows:

- Do the three Global Awareness courses assist students in developing their IC (especially in terms of knowledge, understanding, and empathy) and hence effect change in their perceptions of ‘otherness’?
- What are the implications of these courses for students’ own identity when confronted with that of the ‘others’, i.e. English-speaking people?

To decipher how written narratives convey underlying opinions expressed by the student participants, this study utilized student portfolios. The written scripts embody stances that privilege the individual subjectivity of the students. Studying the students’ perspectives opens the way to a broader comprehension of the ideas, moods, passions, and motivations
expressed in the written scripts; it also offers insights into the contents of the inner life of the individual writers. The view espoused here is that ardent attention to the outside of things risks ignoring the deeper soul of things that often lies beneath. Therefore, texts – viewed here as the flesh and blood of a culture – are examined as functional and intentionally crafted language, and as cultural sites of values and ideologies (Anstey and Bull, 2000).

The use of the portfolio was examined in the context of anonymity, methodological rigor, and robust qualitative data. The fact that the students wrote solicited narratives within the context of an assessment event also needs to be acknowledged. Three courses constituted the focus of this study: Global Awareness I, II and III. Students taking these courses were required to submit a written portfolio, as part of their overall assessment. The aim of student portfolios was to investigate different topics for the purpose of furnishing an opinion on controversial aspects of a topic and creating an argument that supports that opinion. The students were required to articulate arguments that rest solidly on wide-ranging research and that culminate in an essay; they were asked to examine certain topics within the context of their own society, in comparison to the Western societies they were most acquainted with. The topics covered religion, women, government, education, freedom, daily life in their own society and western society.

Each student submits a compilation of representative course materials, including the course syllabi and course descriptions (with details of content, objectives, methods, and assessment procedures), written assignments, exams and quizzes, handouts, lecture notes, reading logs, and reflection narratives, including a summary of what had been learned from the course. These components were put together as a portfolio displaying illustrative samples of students’ written work. Using portfolio data in the present research is a useful way of tapping students’ cognitive (knowledge) and affective (attitudes) facets of intercultural competence. This aids in exploring their involvement in the ‘conscious pursuits of meaning’ (Greene, 1995, p. 176) which in turn helps to unravel the meanings underlying the individual voices of the student participants.

Portfolios bring together authentic examples of student work, framed by narrative descriptive, interpretation, and reflection. The narratives were analyzed for content and recurring themes that capture student perceptions, feelings, values, and beliefs. The themes identified in this research are viewed as cultural sites where socio-cultural aspects of students’ written texts unfold. As such, they delineate the positions and viewpoints of the student participants and thus encompass the attitudes, values and beliefs of a community. Two culturally-oriented goals were identified: Knowledge (the ability to recognize cultural information) and understanding (the ability to explain cultural information). Therefore, the aim of this research was to probe students’ knowledge (what the students knew) and opinions and viewpoints (what they thought). The aim was to decipher how student written narratives demonstrated the depth and breadth of the writers’ views and opinions. Although none of the written material was treated as data until the course was completed, it needs to be admitted that this might impact the students’ discourse practices. However, this does not necessarily mitigate the sincerity of the opinions expressed in their written scripts. Using loose portfolio data, even when triangulated with a second set, can be fraught with hazards related to subjectivity and may fall prey to reductionism or other fallacies.
caused by over-reliance on self-reported data. A stronger ethnographic approach would need to comprise observational data.

The sample

Data for the study was collected from a sample of 35 female students; all were national women taking Colloquy courses. The students were informed that some of their portfolios would be used for research purposes and were asked to express their consent or dissent regarding the use of their portfolios for the research. Accordingly, in this study only the portfolios compiled by the students who expressed consent were used. In undertaking this task, three colleagues teaching the Global Awareness courses helped in doing the same in their respective classes in collecting their students’ portfolios. Furthermore, the students were assured the use of the portfolio data had nothing to do with their performance in class. The student age range was from 18 to 24 with a mean of 21. The participants who partook in and wrote reflective narratives of their own exposure to and experience of the target culture agreed for their reflective journals to be used for this research. For purposes of confidentiality, the names of the portfolio writers are not revealed in this paper.

Mode of analysis

Drawing on grounded theory tradition, this study underscores symbols and meanings and seeks to decipher students’ experiences of the ‘other’ culture. The analysis, which is of an interpretive nature, focuses on student written discourse measured against the backdrop of the socio-cultural processes that impact upon language practice and linguistic selection. It examines discourse as language in use, i.e. language situated in context. In trying to explore evaluative language, the study sets out to identify a mode of evaluative positioning, i.e. the attitudinal in students’ statements which convey positive or negative assessments. Themes – the chief units constructed from the data analysis – are viewed as platforms for investigating lived experiences and function like “knots in the webs of our experiences [and] the stars that make up the universe of meaning we live through.” (Manen, 1990, p. 90).

The approach adopted in this study views ‘text’ as an iceberg of information, whereby only the tip is manifestly expressed in words, phrases and sentences. It is assumed that the covert rest is supplied by the structures implicitly underlying the written scripts. Accordingly, analyzing the ‘implicit’ in student written scripts sanctions the study of underlying misconceptions and ideologies. Language and meaning are treated here as social constructs, and texts are therefore considered functional and intentionally crafted language and as transmitters of values and ideologies, i.e. as cultural sites (Anstey and Bull, 2000, p. 186).

Analysis and discussion of the findings

The view espoused in analyzing the portfolio data is that students’ written scripts need to be regarded as functional and intentionally crafted language. Drawing on the relationship between discourse and culture, texts can be read to reveal cultural information. In effect, through texts it is possible to gain access to worldviews, values and ideologies (Callow, 1999, p. 2). Hence, studying student discourse to unravel traits of ‘otherness’ helps to reveal how one society projects a set of characterizations onto a confronted unfamiliar culture. As Scarino (2000) contends, considering that viewpoints are culturally conditioned, students engage with otherness.
In this research, the discourse configurations in students’ written narratives are regarded as sites of identity construction and hence the production of binary oppositions. Each participant is viewed as “a complex social being, whose identity is produced within and through language” (Pomerantz, 2001).

This study is situated in the nexus and intersection of identity dynamics whereby socio-cultural learning is located within the domain of the complex identity relationships of the students. The analysis below positions identity formation within a dynamic, relational, and multi-faceted context of interlocking relationships involving lived experience, discursive portrayals and ways of knowing. Identity is viewed here as a (relational) social and cultural construct par excellence, for our identities stem from our sense of belonging to distinctive national, religious, cultural, ethnic, and racial cultures. The construction of identity involves the formation – and transformation – of an opposite ‘other’ whose existence is subject to our interpretation of how different ‘They’ are from ‘Us’. The formation of an ‘Us’–‘Them’ polarized duality delineates the identity of the ‘other’ and of the ‘Self’ and leads to establishing opposites and ‘others.’ Accordingly, this study explores instances of identity formation and negotiation through the voices and perspectives expressed in the portfolio narratives viewed here as ‘conscious pursuits of meaning’ (Greene, 1995: 176). It examines the ways in which adversarial identities are socially constructed according to notions of difference which yield a comparison to, and sometimes a confrontation and rejection of, others. Students’ written narratives yielded depictions that are essentially framed by historical, social, and political events and, more importantly, by the media, in addition to the ethnocentric predispositions, negative or otherwise, which many displayed.

**Cultural identities and perceptions of ‘Otherness’**

A common thread that runs through participants’ written scripts demonstrates a dichotomized division of others into circles of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. The results from the data analysis yielded dual categorizations of ‘We/Us’ and ‘They/Them’ that are of a predominantly ethnocentric nature. The ‘Us’ (self) dimension embodies a sense of belonging to an inner circle of positioning and reflects a relationship of closeness and inclusion whereas its ‘Them’ (other) counterpart characterizes an outer circle of positioning that involves a relationship of distance and exclusion. It is one’s identity, firmly anchored in one’s native culture, which identifies similarity and convergence or difference and divergence. Because we negotiate our identities with people who are similar to or different from us, our identities are constantly subject to change; they develop and are transformed in and through processes of social interaction which always take place in particular contexts characterized by power relationships and power struggles. Holliday (1999) speaks of the “fluid, amorphous, constantly in flux phenomena that represent the cultural” (p. 238).

Overall, the written scripts demonstrated two essentially broad and divergent sets of ‘otherizing,’ hence exhibiting two rather distinct forms of otherness. As Papadopoulos suggests, the results revealed a distinction between two different kinds of ‘others’: a distant, ‘foreign’ or ‘strange’ other and a somewhat close, ‘familiar’ other. Of these polarized ‘others’ identified in the data narratives, the first relates to the distant, foreign ‘other’, a rather negative attitude that typically devalues these strange and foreign others. It entails an exclusive distribution of the outsider – an
'adversary other’ – and hence typifies exclusion and rejection of those who happen to be different from ‘Us’.

The written scripts, for example, characterize ‘Their’ culture as being very different from ours in many different ways” because “A lot of the things they do seem very strange and hard to understand.” The student reports pointed to a trend whereby ‘They’ are depicted as “so different from us.” Because there is a distinct ‘other’ being addressed – the West in this case – the written narratives yielded accounts that position ‘them’ as distant and ‘very unfamiliar’. Whereas these perceptions might be viewed as another glimpse into the suspicion, fear or even resentment harbored by some against Westerners and their culture – an example of the toxic antipathy that dominates parts of the Arab Street – they may also be dismissed as misunderstandings of the misinformed.

Religious fervor remains one chief driving force behind the views expressed in the accounts and religious zeal could have breathed life into much of the claims made in the narratives. One’s religious belief systems provide a framework for understanding the beliefs of others and as a lens through which ‘They’ are portrayed as ‘secular’ because “they do not take much interest in their religion.” Student accounts value judgments showing that religious belief systems play an important role in how one deals with those for whom “religion is not an important matter in their lives.” Often, these others are considered ‘atheists’ who lead a life void of “important religious values that are essential in life.” Moreover, while recognizing that Islam and Christianity share certain common beliefs, claims that “it is not easy for Muslims and Christians to live together” are not uncommon.

The written scripts also appear to conceal fears of a confrontation between students’ Arab-Islamic cultural identity and Western (Anglophone) culture. A tendency for Anti-Western attitudes, embodied as a reaction against American cultural and economic dominance, is rampant in many Arab societies. This tendency which sometimes takes the form of cultural nationalism and protectionism and religious revival in Islamic countries impacts greatly on various aspects of daily life, including education, food habits, dressing styles, etc. Islam in the Islamic world is normally viewed as a way of life and pervades all aspects of Muslims’ daily lives, and not simply a faith.

The misperceptions about ‘Them’ tend to be informed more often by stereotypes than by facts or firsthand knowledge since such depictions of ‘Them’ appear to be generated based on what ‘We’ do, and ‘Our’ lifestyle, norms, traditions, and mindsets. In the absence of informed, conscious awareness of how another culture differs from their own one’s own, there is an inclination to see others through the lenses of one’s own culture. Ignoring or misunderstanding the standards of others and failing to see other points of view than our own and other beliefs than those we have been taught to cherish, there is a risk of setting one’s own so high, as if ordained by nature, and identifying oneself along the lines of religious ‘selfness’. The result is ethnocentric evaluation and cultural differences become subjective and negative, not objective and neutral.

The West is also blamed for many of the woes that cripple most of the Arab world. Protests against Western policies have proliferated in the wake of 9/11 and the plight of the Palestinians in particular. Western powers are often described unfavorably as ‘aggressive’, ‘unfriendly,’ ‘biased,’ and ‘hostile’. Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia are quoted as places where “you get the same terrible thing: war, crimes against humanity, and ruin.” Some of the comments that
emerged from the narratives depict the West as “all the time trying to monopolize our countries in the name of freedom and democracy.” As is evident in the student accounts, the reason lying behind “the damage they inflicted on our countries” is the rich natural resources that are plentiful in the region.

It is true, however, that widespread anti-Western sentiments (primarily anti-American) mood in the region is undeniably prompted by partial mass media rather than state policy. The post-2001 US pre-emptive war in Iraq and Afghanistan, backed by Britain, has triggered a significant rise in prejudice, anger, and even resentment among embittered, suspicious masses in Arab and Islamic countries. Strong feelings of anti-Americanism seems to have taken root in the Arab world since the start of the Intifada (uprising) in September 2000. This has made worse the smoldering Arab resentment of the US because of its uncritical, inexorable support of Israel. Arabs are especially angered by America’s unwavering diplomatic, military and financial support of Israel in a prolonged occupation that suffocates the Palestinians’ yearning for liberation.

Support for repressive Arab dictatorships, military bases on Arab soil, and an oil revenue which continually makes its way westwards are all factors that produce considerable popular anti-American sentiments, not to mention the long history of American military interventions in the region. In such a favorable climate, anti-Western violence and resentment flourish. Regardless of their political orientation, many Arabs have come to regard America as a source of evil and most of the political ills and misfortunes that have befallen the Arab/ Muslim world in the last few decades. The scripts yielded characterizations that portrayed ‘Them’ as belonging to a modern-age colonial power, demonstrating what appears to be an imperialist type of otherness which reduces the other to sheer rejection and refusal. As one student put it, “America is the great Satan. Very simply, it’s all because of their imperialistic goals. All it takes is to look at the kind of freedom and democracy they brought to Iraq and Afghanistan.”

The students’ construction of dichotomized identities accentuate perceived cultural differences between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ which play an important role in shaping how ‘strange’ or ‘foreign’ others are identified and responded to. The construction and maintenance of these identities not only has a tendency to homogenize populations, but also creates antagonistic and conflict-oriented relationships. Caution needs to be taken not to delineate culture along national parameters, for as Guest (2002) notes, identifying national characteristics when comparing and contrasting cultures often leads to an oversimplification that overlooks the individual, idiosyncratic and diverse range of equally important subcultures of which every individual is a member.

Beyond the panoptic chasm manifest in the pitting ‘Us’ against ‘Them’ dichotomization identified in the scripts, sympathetic attitudes and tolerant, welcoming views of these others were also communicated. The narratives revealed portrayals of a ‘familiar’ other, depicted in fairly positive terms, thus allowing some space for accepting these not-so-strange others. This involves a ‘different’ otherness allowing the other to enter into a sphere of acceptance that emerged in depictions provided by some students. It is this sphere of common ground that grants in-group membership to ‘Them’ – the ‘benign other’ – and allows ‘Them’ to be familiar to ‘Us’. Despite the widespread Anti-Western (specifically anti-American) feelings prevalent in some reports, other accounts disclosed admiration of much of what the West has to offer to the rest of world.
The US (and Britain) were viewed as the best representatives of what is most admired about the West. ‘Democracy’, ‘freedom of speech’, ‘technological inventions’ and ‘scientific progress’ are examples of popular themes that emerged from the data narratives.

The written narratives also reveal instances of valorization of otherness. It is possible to be Arab/Muslim and not necessarily at odds, but at ease, with these (Western) ‘others’. The positive attitudes towards ‘them’ which came out of the written accounts are, for the most part, receptive: “Many of them come to our country looking for jobs and they end up living over here. They’re friendly and nice people.” Interestingly, a distinction is drawn between Western governments and the masses they represent, a point the following statement captures: “It is true that their governments are always trying to monopolize our resources but it is also true that their people are very different.” Acceptance and tolerance of ‘others’ illustrate empathetic attitudes towards these others:

- “People from so many different countries live in peace here in the UAE. There are Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus and so on”
- “Although some people claim that they may be a real danger to our culture and society in terms of our culture, religion, customs, lifestyles, etc., I don’t think this is necessarily true. I can’t deny that there are differences between their way of doing things and ours, but these differences we also find in our own society and culture.”

Tolerance means acceptance, allowance, and permission of the other and of diversity. Related to tolerance is co-existence, the basic tenets of which accentuate the worth of the ‘Other’ and valorization of diversity. This entails recognizing difference, embracing diversity, and a commitment to tolerance. It involves a “conscious ability to transform cultural practices by using language from “a position which acknowledges respect for human dignity” (Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001, p. 7). At the core of coexistence, symbiosis and harmony is the awareness that individuals and groups differ in numerous ways including nationality, religion, social values, beliefs and mindsets, etc. As such, coexistence fosters cohesion based on fair treatment, mutual respect, and unbiased inclusion. In short, it promotes reciprocal recognition of each other as fellow human beings despite their potential differences.

An essential part of what IC entails is engagement with others’ worlds, which involves the ability to function properly in another culture. Because “the powerful ways in which one’s self-concept as a member of a particular cultural group filters our interpretation of the world” (Lusting and Koester, 1999, p. 136). Looking through the frame of one’s own culture can distort one’s view of the new culture. For old frames offer are arbitrary and taken-for-granted ways of seeing, thinking and acting. The ability to have a new perspective permits seeing cultural differences through the prism of cultural relativism, which allows approaching others with empathy, understanding, and objectivity. It allows target language learners to revisit, revise and alter their original perspectives and perceptions of others and their worldview as a whole, a process which assists in accommodating “transcendence and transformation of one's original mode of perceiving, knowing, and expressing about the world” (Fantini, 2001, p. 1).

Because it involves “observation, description, and hypothesis-refinement” which are all diverse forms of “cultural exploration” (Phillips, 2001), IC entails a pursuit of knowledge and a quest for refining one’s understanding of others, which both enable one to “have ‘new eyes’” (ibid.).
Undoubtedly, the success of interaction is not solely confined to effective communication, as was the goal of communicative language teaching; it entails the ability to “decentre and take up the other’s perspective on their own culture, anticipating, and where possible, resolving dysfunctions in communication and behaviour” (Byram, 1997, p. 42).

The tendency to depict others as foreign and strange can impose barriers and hinder intercultural exchanges. From a subjective point of view, the students passed judgments based on their thoughts, feelings, values, and beliefs, which might be typified as ‘cultural provincialism’. This can only lead to a myopic, shortsighted view of the world around us. The rigid application of one nation's formulas to another nation’s manners has very obvious disadvantages. Portraying the ‘other’ in rather positive terms may enhance intercultural communication and foster communication. Intercultural learning therefore becomes a resource to build on in order to promote empathy, respect, tolerance and understanding. The students’ binary forms of otherizing – the familiar versus the strange other – need to be interpreted against the backdrop of their exposure to and contact with international, but specifically Western, influences that bear upon their lives, both within and outside the university setting.

The Colloquy courses purport to develop students’ intercultural learning and help them explore their multi-faceted identities, as women, as Arabs, and as Muslims; the courses seek to help students to frame their own viewpoints and appreciate the perspectives of others; they strive to develop their ability to become more aware and articulate about their role in both local and global environments. The expressed goal of the Colloquy Program outlined in the ZU mission statement is to promote student appreciation and understanding of local and global relationships, forces, and events. Yet, some written reports reveal biased judgments engendered by social and political factors that bear upon their society regionally and internationally. The students need to get a better perspective on their own cultural frames of reference, including their taken-for-granted assumptions about themselves and others whom they perceive as ‘different.’ There is need, therefore, for increasing learners’ awareness of cultural diversity and common humanity, and developing sensitivity to potential cultural differences. It is important to promote the skills necessary for interrogating and challenging compartmental thinking, stereotypical portrayals, and false assumptions of others, still perceived by some as ‘strange’ and ‘imperialist’.

The results are of interest and students’ portrayals of others must therefore be considered in the light of these internal and external contextual factors. However, the abundance of cultural materials and easy access to and frequent contact with native speakers may not warrant automatic development of IC, as some students’ negative depictions of others revealed. Comparative, triangulated data that explores the amount and kind of out-of-class contact with foreigners, would further inform and illuminate the findings.

Real intercultural learning is best achieved when it is encountered, used and implemented in real world contexts. To develop their intercultural competence, students need appropriate skills and content that will empower their learning experiences. They need an intercultural experience that will enable them to increase their awareness of cultural diversity and develop their sensitivity to potential cultural differences which may be encountered in present and future intercultural situations. By enacting culture and providing for experiential learning in the language classroom, learners stand better chances of interrogating stereotypes and challenging biased judgments. They develop the ability to see their own and others’ cultural practices from a broader, more...
informed perspective. This helps to provide a rich opportunity for interrogation and reconciliation of selfness and otherness. Hence there is a need for an essentially reasoned, constructive, and fact-based engagement with otherness that will help develop learners’ balanced and informed perspectives of self and others.

Recommendations

One desired outcome an EFL/ESL learner must demonstrate is an understanding of the culture of FL/SL speakers. By gaining an informed, objective, and balanced understanding of aspects of the history, food, music, dance, art, and theater of a target culture, a FL/SL learner can better understand the language and be better prepared for interactions with native speakers. To capture the patchy and diverse character that typifies many English-speaking pluralist societies, language teaching materials need to reflect the multiple perspectives that characterize these societies. This constitutes a necessary step toward engaging students in a process of genuine IC learning. While stressing the richness that diversity can bring to learning, this approach engages learners’ and others’ identity and takes their respective perspectives into account. An environment where multiple and diverse perspectives are fostered aids learners to become better educated and more enlightened.

Learners should be enlightened about the true meanings and significances of cultural material. This they can gain through research and other diverse forms of cultural learning harvested from experiential learning, rooted in discussions and exploration, and based on analysis and cultural comparison. This is an essential step toward fostering an objective image of others. Discussion, exploration, and analysis, consolidated by comparison of cultural icons and practices, all contribute to productive and transformative intercultural encounters. They present rich opportunities for exploring the true meaning and significance of cultural practices from an insider’s viewpoint. This in turn helps to develop learners’ alternative and balanced views and enhances their understanding and appreciation of other people’s culture and identity, a gap that is yet to be bridged in the views some student scripts displayed. Engaging learners in a process of exploration, discovery, and reflection is an ideal opportunity for creating and investing in intercultural encounters where others are treated as different from ‘Us’, not as foreign and strange. To understand that stereotypes and prejudices are value-laden is to triumph over the limitations of ‘otherizing’ and ‘exoticizing’ others from the prism of one’s own cultural background.

Conclusion

English should not be viewed as a cultural symbol, but rather a means of enabling understanding and furthering communication. Cultural information should be presented in a non-judgmental fashion that does not place value or judgment on distinctions between the students’ native culture and the culture explored in the classroom. This research shows the need for forging ‘a third place’ which learners can occupy as learners in their own right, rather than striving to emulate a native speaker norm that violates their very own identities. Interrogating and mediating both the native and foreign cultures need to involve familiarizing – rather than exoticizing – the target culture. Once cultural differences are viewed through the prism of cultural relativism, all cultures become of equal value; other cultures can be approached with empathy, understanding, and objectivity and this may inculcate a more inclusive humanistic vision. A critical, culturally
sensitive, pedagogy, – a ‘pedagogy of respect’ (Johnson, 2006) – will help to surpass dichotomizing identities into ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ and encourage new ways of being.

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Peer Collaboration for Text Comprehension among Taiwanese University Learners

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Abstract

This study investigates how the Taiwanese university students collaboratively constructed meaning from the texts in an English classroom. The study is qualitative, classroom-based and examines the pattern of collaborative interaction of the EFL learners for 14 weeks. Based on the analysis of group discussions, five distinct patterns of peer collaboration emerged from the transcription data. It was found that the learners with relatively homogenous English ability provided collaborative scaffolding for text comprehension through co-construction, elaboration, appeal for assistance, corrective feedback and prompts. The results of this study suggest that, through engaging in construction of meaning with their peers, the Taiwanese university students demonstrate great amount of mutual support, feedback and guidance and have more opportunities to collectively scaffold their language development. At the end of the study, some pedagogical implications are discussed, which is believed to be beneficial for ESL/EFL teachers who are interested in increasing their instructional repertoires to maximise students’ English learning.

Keywords: Peer collaboration, collective scaffolding, sociocultural theory, reading comprehension, meaning construction
Introduction

For the past decades, a large body of first and second language research has recognised the significance of peer collaboration in language classrooms. Advocates for collaborative learning call for a need to switch from the traditional teacher-dominated teaching method to a learner-centred approach in ESL or EFL instruction for the purpose of maximising learners’ opportunities for language practice. Based on this line of studies, language competence is developed through social interaction such as communication, information sharing and meaning negotiation. Classrooms focusing on peer collaboration provide a non-threatening environment in which learners are encouraged to clarify their meaning, explore to different viewpoints and modify their understanding, which is believed to be beneficial for learners’ construction of knowledge and cognitive development (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Donato, 1994; McDonell, 1992; Mercer, 2000; Storch, 2007; Swain & Lapkin, 1998).

However, despite the abundance of interesting research examining learners’ collaborative interaction, much remains unanswered. Most of the existing studies either focus on form-based tasks with pre-determined grammatical features (for example, Ohta, 1995; Storch, 2007; Swain & Lapkin, 1998) or L2 writing revision tasks (for instance, Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Anton & DiCamilla, 1999; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994, 2000). Since different task types and linguistic aspects may prompt students’ involvement in dialogic interaction to different degrees, empirical studies are needed to shed some light on how L2 learners help each other in tasks with an open-ended nature such as reading for text comprehension.

The purpose of this study is to examine how the Taiwanese university students collaboratively constructed meaning from the texts and expanded our understanding of the patterns of their helping behaviours.

Literature Review

According to sociocultural theory of cognitive development, dialogue plays an important role in the process of language learning (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). For the past decades, studies in peer collaboration have paid much attention to the nature and role of peer dialogue in second language acquisition. Swain (2000) defines collaborative dialogue as “dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building” (p. 102). According to Swain, peer-peer dialogue is a form of output and it is a socio-cognitive process which mediates language learning. Based on Vygotsky’s perspective of mind, language is a cognitively mediating tool and knowledge building, such as reading for text comprehension, is dialogically constructed. That is, learners collaborate to negotiate meaning and co-construct knowledge through dialogical scaffolding. They provide assistance to each other and contribute what they know to the process of meaning-making for text comprehension (Donato, 1994; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Mercer, 2000; Ohta, 1995).

As Swain & Lapkin (1998) point out, collaborative dialogue in which learners work together on problem-solving tasks is believed to foster second language learning. The researchers theorise that the more learners negotiate with each other through collaborative dialogue, the more opportunities they have for second language comprehension and learning. In addition, peer-peer dialogue is assumed to provide an ideal milieu for L2 learners to recognise a gap between their interlanguage and the target language in terms of linguistic form and meaning, allow learners to
test their hypotheses about the target language, improve fluency through practice and help internalise language learning through the joint construction of linguistic knowledge (Storch, 2007; Swain, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 1998, 2000).

A large amount of literature related to peer-peer dialogue has focused on L2 writing tasks. Conducting a microgenetic analysis of the dialogic interaction of two eighth graders in a French immersion program, Swain & Lapkin (1998) investigated how L2 learners collaboratively created a storyline and composed the story. Their study focused on the analysis of the occurrence of language-related episodes (LREs), defined as “any part of a dialogue where the students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others” (p. 326). The nature of LREs in the task was classified as form-based or lexis-based. Based on the results of the study, Swain & Lapkin suggest that LREs foster language learning. Peer-peer dialogue emerging during collaborative writing work allows the learners to pool knowledge to achieve the task and monitor their own understanding of specific linguistic forms.

A study by Storch (2007) compared individual and collaborative work and examined the nature of peer dialogue and its impact on tertiary ESL learners as they engaged in a task related to grammar-focused text editing. Sixty-six students from four intact classes were divided into 20 pairs (1 group of 3) and 25 individuals. The analysis focused on the editing work produced collaboratively and individually and transcription of pair talk with regard to LREs as learners discussed the proper forms for the given text. The occurrences of LREs were categorised as grammar, lexis and mechanics-based (writing formats such as punctuation and capitalization). The results showed that group work did not lead to greater accuracy on the target task. However, the analysis of peer dialogue suggested that learners in pair work collaborated to resolve linguistic problems, co-construct knowledge and provide scaffolding for each other for language development.

The research of Storch (2007) and Swain & Lapkin (1998) shares a similar limitation. Although these studies have provided valuable insights regarding how second language learning occurs through joint construction of L2 knowledge, they did not provide information about the relationship between each type of LREs and learning outcomes. More in-depth analysis of this issue would have helped us build up a clearer picture of the individual impact of LREs.

In another study, Ohta (1995) explored how peer scaffolding affects language use. Two American university learners collaboratively worked to make polite requests in Japanese. The results supported the benefits of collaborative work for L2 learning of grammar features. Ohta claims that the learners increased their language competence through peer-peer dialogic interaction. During the scaffolding process, the expert-novice relationship is not necessarily constant. The construction of the roles relies on the strengths which learners can contribute to the collaborative work. Furthermore, it was found in Ohta’s study that corrective feedback in learner-learner collaborative interaction leads to second language development.

In addition to Ohta (1995), other researchers have also investigated the impact of peer corrective feedback as learners co-construct linguistic knowledge. Carroll & Swain (1993) compared the effects of explicit and implicit corrective feedback, defined as correction for erroneous performance offered directly or indirectly, on adult ESL learners while learning the English dative alternation rules. The results indicated that learners benefited more from receiving direct corrective feedback than indirect feedback. Carroll and Swain postulate that implicit error
correction requires a large amount of guesswork; whereas explicit feedback provides sufficient information for ESL learners to reduce confusion of the meaning and form that they failed to understand. On the other hand, Storch (2007) values the importance of repetition, one type of indirect corrective feedback. According to her, learners’ repetitions signify that they notice their peers’ deviation from the target linguistic forms. This kind of implicit error correction may help raise L2 learners’ consciousness of the language use and internalise the new linguistic features.

Additionally, Aljaafreh & Lantolf (1994) provide an alternative view on corrective feedback and suggest that both explicit and implicit negative feedback is necessary for linguistic development depending on learners’ proficiency level and the types of erroneous performance. Aljaafreh & Lantolf further highlight the importance of self-correction in language learning and argue that “too much guidance or other repair, might inhibit or at least retard the development of self-repair” (p.480). In other words, excessive amounts of explicit feedback may be detrimental to language development. To achieve a higher level of ZPD, L2 learners need to be trained to self-correct their own erroneous linguistic performance.

Researchers are also concerned about the nature, content and form of peer collaboration for text comprehension. Almasi (1995) examined the nature of two different instructional contexts: teacher-led and collaborative group discussions on students’ socio-cognitive conflicts. According to Almasi, socio-cognitive conflicts occurring in a social context refer to disagreements which challenge or change learners’ interpretations of a reading text. In this study, three types of socio-cognitive conflicts were categorised including (1) conflicts within self, which refers to uncertainty about one’s interpretation, (2) conflicts with others, pertaining to inconsistent ideas with other peers, and (3) conflicts with text, defined as misunderstanding of the text. It was found that students in peer collaboration engaged in more conflicts within self and with text than students in teacher-led groups. This study provides an interesting discussion regarding the benefit of peer-led discussions from the standpoint of sociocognitive conflicts and contributes to our understanding that peer-led discussions promote greater opportunities for learners to recognise and resolve their cognitive confusion and misunderstanding of the text meaning.

Deering & Meloth (1991) investigated the content and form of elementary students’ verbal interaction using a coding scheme of four categories including procedural, academic, individualistic and socio/emotional. The quantitative analysis of students’ utterances during reading discussion activities found that great amount of interaction was procedural and academic talk; however, the length and cognitive development were not significant. In another study, Klinger et al. (1998) investigated the peer collaboration of fourth graders when they engaged in a comprehension strategy instruction. The results of their study indicated that 65% of the peer-led discourse was academic, 25% of the group discussion was content-related, 8% was feedback and only 2% was task unrelated.

Although the studies of Deering & Meloth (1991) and Klinger et al. (1998) add to our understanding of how learners learn to comprehend reading passages, much remains unanswered. As the quantification of peer collaboration does not provide much insight into the gradual process of intellectual development for reading comprehension, research focusing on discovering learners’ collaborative efforts at meaning construction during peer discussion for text comprehension is needed.
Method

Participants

This study was conducted in a university in the southern part of Taiwan. Participants were recruited from an intact class of 54 first year non-English major students taught by the researcher. They were required to take “Practical English” three hours a week. All of the students majored in subjects related to engineering such as Electrical Engineering and Computer Information Engineering. Their English levels ranged from low-intermediate to intermediate levels.

Procedures and Instructional Materials

The instruction was composed of pre-reading, during reading and post reading tasks. In pre-reading activity, students were asked to discuss questions provided in the texts to help them activate their background knowledge related to the topics. During the reading task, they would discuss the meaning of difficult words leading to reading obstacles and tried to identify the topic sentence in each paragraph to help them distinguish the main idea from the supporting statements in the passages. After reading, students would work collaboratively to summarize what they had learnt from the texts. In the follow-up stage, the teacher involved the whole class to check students’ reading comprehension. If there were difficult sentences or passages, the teacher would explain them to help the students clarify the text meaning.

The implementation period of peer collaboration lasted for 14 weeks. At the beginning of the instruction, learners were divided into 10 small collaborative peer-led groups consisting of 5 or 6 people. There were four roles assigned to the group members, namely leader, clunk expert (dealing with difficult words), gist expert and reporter to scaffold their content learning and reading comprehension (Cohen, 1994; Klingner et al., 1998). Students decided how the roles could be allocated. They stayed in their original group but rotated the roles on a regular basis to foster their participation and experience different responsibilities of the tasks.

The reading materials used in the present study consisted of selected texts from three textbooks called Reading for the Real World 2 (Zwier & Stafford-Yilmaz, 2004), Issues for Today: An Intermediate Reading Skills Text (Smith & Mare, 1995) and Reading Challenge 3 (Malarcher & Janzen, 2005). These reading materials are expository texts suitable for the low-intermediate and intermediate EFL readers. The selection of the reading materials was based on the following criteria: (1) level of difficulty, (2) level of interest, and (3) variety of topics related to the real world.

Data Collection and Analysis

The technique of audio-recording was used to investigate how the university learner collaboratively constructed meaning from the texts. Group discussions were audio-taped at the beginning, middle and end of the instruction to examine the nature of peer collaboration. Three out of ten groups (Group 2, 5 & 6) were randomly selected to be recorded and 9 recordings of group discussions in total were collected for data analysis. Small unobtrusive microphones and recorders were used and before audio-taping, they were tested to ensure the quality of the recordings. The titles of the texts discussed in the recorded sessions were “Bill Gates: Good Businessman or Bad?” (1st transcript), “Loneliness: How Can We Overcome It?” (2nd transcript)
and “The Best Medicine” (3rd transcript). The recordings were transcribed verbatim first, and Mandarin, the students’ mother tongue which was mainly used for group discussions, was then translated into English for the ease of presentation of the data analysis.

To analyse the small group discussions, I abided by the principles of open coding suggested by Strauss & Corbin (1990). According to them, open coding is an analytical process aiming at “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data” (p. 61). To do this, I repeatedly read the transcripts making constant comparisons and highlighting similar themes with colour pens in order to code the utterances into categories relevant to the research inquiry of this study.

The next step was to further investigate the categories by applying the principles of axial coding (Flick, 1998; Silverman, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The purpose of axial coding is to refine the relations among categories and establish the sub-categories for further investigation of the phenomena or concepts.

Findings

In terms of collaborative group work for text comprehension, ample evidence was found to suggest that the university students were actively engaged in the group discussions and contributed what they knew to understanding the meaning of the texts. Based on the investigation, five salient recurrent categories emerged from the data which captured the collaborative feature of how the learners negotiated and constructed the meaning of text and how collective scaffolding contributed to their reading comprehension and language development. These patterns included: (1) co-construction, (2) elaboration, (3) appeal for assistance, (4) corrective feedback, and (5) prompts. They will be discussed with examples provided from the excerpts in the following subsections:

Co-Construction

In the analysis of the transcripts, the first salient pattern with regard to peer collaboration for text comprehension was called co-construction, which was defined as a joint effort students put in their group discussions to scaffold each other for the aim of understanding the meaning of the text. In this study, it was found that across the groups, the students were frequently involved in the process of co-construction to infer the meaning of the texts. This collaborative work allowed learners to focus their attention on the tasks, provide solutions to specific problems, and accomplish the goal, which cannot be achieved individually. The following excerpt from Group 6 provides an example of this scaffolding behaviour.

Excerpt 1 (The Best Medicine – Group 6)

112. Fang:  Laughter also provides excellent exercise for your heart. After a good laugh, a person’s heart rate is well above normal, and it remains high for up to 5 minutes.

113. Young: 笑對心臟很好。<Laughter is good for heart.>

114. Chuan: 在大笑之後，一個人的心臟速率會在正常之上。<After laughing, a
In this episode, Fang read part of the fourth paragraph in the article of *The Best Medicine*. In line 113-114, Young and Chuan tried to contribute what they have known to help the rest of the group facilitate their understanding of the sentences. In line 115, Bin said, 比平常還高嗎? <Higher than usual?>. This rising intonation question showed that he was not sure about the meaning of “well above normal” and required other group members’ confirmation or refutation. His uncertainty was clarified by Chuan’s positive response, 對! <Yes! >, and Chuan’s further explanation, 會持續高達五分鐘 <It stays high for 5 minutes.>, provided an explicit solution to Bin’s ambiguity. However, another student, Zao, unable to figure out what “it” referred to by himself, searched for assistance from other members (line 117). Although Bin supplied his answer to the question, 心跳 <heart beat>, the sound of “um” followed by a long pause expressed his hesitation. Interestingly, Jack did not express his opinion in Mandarin; instead his discourse in English – a person’s heart rate, supported by Young at the end of the excerpt, directly pointed out the reference of the pronoun – “it” for his peers who were not able to understand the grammatical item (line 119-120).

**Elaboration**

Elaboration was another frequently emerging pattern found in this study and it referred to a student’s adding more detailed information on others’ previous utterances. It was suggested that there were two functions of this kind of discourse. One was to help create an environment for a deeper understanding of some particular linguistic inquiries and the other one was to help maintain the group dynamics and interaction. In the following extract from Group 5, the students were engaged in a pre-reading activity to activate their background information of the topic to be discussed and be prepared for the text they were going to read. In order to help the group fully understand the two most important words in the article, Sih, as the leader, initiated the discussion by asking his peers to differentiate between “lonely” and “alone”.

**Excerpt 2 (Loneliness – How Can We Overcome It? – Group 5)**

1. Sih: “Lonely”跟“alone”有什麼不同? <What is the difference between “lonely” and “alone”?>
2. Yu: “ Alone”是“單獨”的意思。<“Alone” means “nobody keeps you company”>
3. Haw: 一個是身體的，一個是心理的。<One is physical, and the other is psychological.>

9. Yu: 對, 對…<Yes, yes…>

10. Wei: 換句話說寂寞是心理的狀態，而孤單是自己一個人。<In other words, loneliness is a psychological status, while being alone is that you are with yourself.>

11. Yu: 也就是周圍沒有別的意思。<That is, there is nobody around you.>

As shown in the above exchange, peer collaboration was involved to elaborate the definition and notions of “lonely” and “alone”. The many turns of expanding and explaining their linguistic knowledge of the words gave the impression that elaboration played an important role in making the linguistic features more comprehensible and facilitating a deeper understanding of the lexical entries for the students.

**Appeal for Assistance**

Throughout the group discussions, it was found that the participants consistently and regularly made explicit requests for assistance with the meaning of the content and linguistic items, for example, semantic, phonological features or grammatical structures of words, phrases and sentences. The learners were sensitive to their partners’ experiences of difficulties. When an appeal for assistance was heard, normally an instant response was forthcoming. In general, the collaborative behaviour was in the form of inquiries composed of “how” or “what” questions. Based on the analysis of the transcripts, students’ discourses with regard to this category can be further divided into three types, namely, appeal for assistance with pronunciation, spelling and the meaning of lexical units.

The first subcategory – appeal for assistance with pronunciation was mostly found when students were reading a passage out loud. When giving assistance, they intentionally articulated the words in distinctive syllables for their peers to follow. Excerpt 3 provides an example to demonstrate how Chuan assisted Bin in pronouncing the word “loneliness”.

**Excerpt 3 (Loneliness – How Can We Overcome It? – Group 6)**

29. Bin:  *This kind of* lo---那麼唸啊? <How to pronounce this word?>


31. Bin:  Lone---


33. Bin:  Loneliness. *Loneliness is not serious*......
The second recurrent type of appeal for assistance found in this study was students’ request for the spelling of particular lexical words. This kind of interaction occurred, in most cases, when students were engaged in after-reading activities to generate questions or write down a summary of what they had read. An example is presented below in Excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4 (Bill Gates: Good Businessman or Bad? – Group 5)

235. Hong: 我們可以來問…嗯..Microsoft 的電腦的市佔率是多少? <We can ask…um…what is the market share of Microsoft’s computers?>

236. Wei: 我也想問這個。<I want to ask this, too.>

237. Hsien: 這句英文要怎麼開頭阿? <How to start the sentence in English?>

238. Wei: What is the…um.. percentage of Microsoft operating system is used in the world’s computers?

239. Haw: Percentage怎麼拼阿? <How to spell?>


In the course of understanding the text, there was almost a routine dialogue found in the data that the group leaders regularly checked if the group members had something they did not understand and frequently there were some members who requested explanations of some lexical items that they had difficulties with. Excerpt 5 from Group 2 below shows that the group leader, Juang, employs a comprehension check to make sure of his peers’ understanding by asking the question, 有沒有不懂的? <Is there anything you don’t understand?>. When Chi calls upon the other members for the meaning of “heal”, the designated vocabulary expert is asked for support to the request (line 32-34).

Excerpt 5 (The Best Medicine – Group 2)

31. Juang: 有沒有不懂的? <Is there anything you don’t understand?>

32. Chi: “Heal”是什麼意思? <What does “heal” mean?>

33. Juang: 請單字專家回答。<Clunk expert, please answer the question.>

34. Shiang: “Heal”是“治療”。<“Heal” means “cure”>

Corrective Feedback

In the field of language learning, learners’ errors can provide deeper insights into their understanding of linguistic constructs. Being seen as a prominent type of negotiation for meaning, the corrective feedback, or error correction, normally provided by teachers offers instant feedback in support of learning. In this study, the findings revealed that students consistently produced teacher-like corrective feedback while noticing misconceptions or errors made by other group members. It was noticeable that utterances in relation to corrective feedback, for most of the time, was provided explicitly and eventually led to learners’ awareness
of their own mistakes. A particular excerpt illustrative of such collaborative interaction is presented below.

Excerpt 6 (The Best Medicine – Group 2)

137. Juang: 那現在來看主旨句。<Let’s discuss where the topic sentence is now.>

138. Shien: 第一句跟最後一句。<The first and last sentences.>

139. Juang: 第一句跟最後一句，是嗎?<The first and last sentences; is it right?>

140. Chang: 不對喔! <It is not correct!> 應該只有第一句吧! <There should be only the first sentence!>

141. Shiang: 我也覺得是第一句。<I think it is the first sentence, too.>

142. Chang: 這段主要是在講笑是最好的藥。<The main idea of this paragraph is that laughter is the best medicine.>而...第一句就在講笑可以減輕痛苦。<And...the first sentence talks about that laughter can alleviate pain.>

143. Juang: 最後一句說小丑像阿斯匹靈一樣會帶來歡樂。<The last sentence is to say that a clown is like an aspirin who can bring us happiness.>

144. Shien: 什麼意思阿?<What does it mean?>

145. Shiang: 阿斯匹靈是止痛藥。<Aspirins are pain killers.>

146. Chang: 小丑也是止痛藥。<Clowns are pain killers, too.> 所以...<So...>

147. Shiang: 應該是。<I think so.>

148. Shien: 所以主旨句是第一句。<So, the topic sentence is the first one.>

還有沒有問題?<Any more questions?>

149. Ss: {沒有。<No.>

The discussion shown above took place while students in Group 2 were trying to search for the topic sentence of the last paragraph in the article of The Best Medicine.

In line 137, Juang, the leader, overtly drew his peers’ attention to the task by saying,
那現在來看主旨句<Let’s discuss where the topic sentence is now.>. Among the students, Shien was the first to respond, but his answer was incorrect, which triggered peer collaborative effort to correct his mistake. Juang’s repetition of Shien’s utterance with a question intonation served the function of implying that there was a discrepancy between what had been produced and the correct answer (line 138-139). In line with Shiang’s feedback, Chang expressed an explicit corrective response, 不對喔! <It is not correct.> 應該只有一句吧! <There should be only the first sentence!>, to pinpoint the correct answer to the problem. Going further, Chang and Juang explained the main idea of the paragraph and tried to help Shien understand that the last sentence was part of the supporting detail for the main idea, in this case, the first sentence of the paragraph. In response to Shien’s inability to understand the metaphor, 小丑像阿斯匹靈 <a clown is like an aspirin>, Shiang and Chang elaborated on Juang’s previous explanation. Shien’s affirmative, 喔^ <Ou^>, indicated his understanding of the analogy and his reformulated utterance seemed to acknowledge that the corrective feedback offered by other group members had helped his learning.

In addition to explicit other-correction, indirect corrective feedback also occurred although it was occasionally used. The indirect error correction was provided through different approaches such as clarification requests or confirmation checks. In only two occasions, it was found that the corrective feedback was elicited implicitly, which resulted in the learners’ attention for self-regulation. Excerpt 7 below illustrates an example of this feature. In this segment, Wei proposed the meaning of “distract” as “separate” and called for a confirmation check. Sih did not provide an instant answer to the request. Instead, his utterances, 是嗎? <Is it right? > 怪怪的! <It does not sound right!>, implicitly disapproved Wei’s suggestion and requested for further clarification leading to forcing him to re-examine his original proposal (line 167). Wei’s statement, 哦,我講錯了,“分心”<Oh, I made a mistake. It should mean “disturb”>, indicated that he noticed his own mistake due to the slip of tongue and, thus, was able to initiate a self-repair to modify the discrepancy.

Excerpt 7 (The Best Medicine – Group 5)

166. Wei: “Distract”是“分離”嗎? < Does “distract” means “separate”?>
However, it was interesting to find that most of the cases with relation to indirect corrective feedback seemed not to help the learners revise their incorrectness of linguistic errors. An episode is given in Excerpt 8 showing how the students in Group 6 discuss the unknown expression - “come under fire” in the sentence – *However, he has come under fire for being too aggressive in his approach to business*.

Excerpt 8 (Bill Gates: Good Businessman or Bad? – Group 6)

41. Jack: “Come under fire”是什麼意思啊? <What does “come under fire” mean?>

42. Young: “Come under”是“在下面”的意思嗎? <Does “come under” mean “below”?> 那…“come under fire”會不會是“如火如荼”的意思啊? <Is it possible that “come under fire” means “like a raging fire”?>

43. Chuan: 如火如荼? <Like a raging fire?>

44. Young: 我也不知道…<I don’t know…> 每個字都懂…<I understand every word…>

45. Chuan: “批評”啦! <It means “criticise”.> 我查字典這是一個片語耶。<I looked it up in the dictionary and found that it is an expression.>

46. Young: “批評”喔? <“Criticise”?>

47. Chuan: 對啦! <That’s right!>

Here, as we can see in line 41, Jack asked for the help with the meaning of the unknown phrase “come under fire”. Obviously, Young, without having the knowledge that it is a fixed expression, tried to uncover the meaning of the clunk by inferring the meaning in a word-by-word fashion. Then he came up with a literal interpretation, 如火如荼 <like a raging fire>. Being not intrusive, Chuan’s repetition of Young’s response indirectly disconfirmed his peer’s hypothesis and implicitly indicated that the interpretation needed to be reformulated. However, it seemed that Young did not benefit from this feedback. His utterance in line 44 revealed his incompetence to unfold the meaning on his own in spite of knowing the meaning of every single word. From lines 45-47, it was evident that Chuan’s provision of the translation of the difficult clunk provided the scaffolding his peers needed to comprehend the expression which was new to them.
**Prompts**

Besides the afore-mentioned patterns of collaborative interaction in meaning construction, the transcripts also suggested that students made prompts for participation to recruit other group members’ attention in the problem-solving tasks. Despite the fact that, in general, all groups were engaged actively in group discussions, unsurprisingly, there were some occasions when some of the group members went off-track. While this occurred, usually the group leaders or someone in the groups took the initiative to revert the group back to their tasks. In the particular instance from Group 5 illustrated below, a student seems absent-minded and inattentive. Here the leader and other group members are trying to engage him in participation.

Excerpt 9 (The Best Medicine – Group 5)

122. Wei: 那還有什麼句意不懂的嗎? <Anything you don’t understand?>
123. Hsien: 我找一下。<Let me see.>
124. Wei: 快點啦! <Hurry up!>
125. Hsien: 沒有不懂了! <There is nothing I don’t understand.>
126. Wei: OK，吉他手，吉他手，講一下! <Guitarist, guitarist, talk!> [talking to Hong]
127. Ss: {ㄟ..ㄟ..,吉他手! <Heh..heh.., guitarist!>
128. Wei: 你都不太講話。<You do not talk much.>
129. Hong: 叫誰啊? <Who are you talking about?>
130. Wei: 叫你啊! <It’s you!> 趕快，趕快現在找主旨句。<Hurry up, hurry up and find the topic sentence now.>
131. Hong: Um…我覺得是第一句。<I think that it is the first sentence.>
132. Wei: Very good!

As shown in the above excerpt, we can see that in line 122, Wei, as the leader, was doing a comprehension check to see if there were still some clarifications needed to be made in his group and his prompt, 快點啦! <Hurry up!>, indicated that he did not want his group to waste too much time waiting for Hsien’s response (line 123-124). He prompted again when he noticed Hong’s inattention, thus inviting him to participate by saying, 吉他手，吉他手，講一下! <Guitarist, guitarist, talk!>. Another indication of prompting was students’ choral discourse, ㄟ..ㄟ..，吉他手! <Heh..heh.., guitarist!>. The phonological marker, ‘ㄟ’, is a particular sound in Mandarin used to attract someone’s attention and it seemed that students employed it to divert Hong’s attention from the world in which he was absorbed. The group leader’s assertion ‘你都不太講話<You do not talk much.>’ overtly pointed out Hong’s lack of engagement and again, he used another prompt, 趕快，趕快現在找主旨句。<Hurry up, hurry up and find the
topic sentence now.>, in an attempt to assign a task for him to retain Hong’s focus on the collaborative group work.

In addition to prompt for participation, occasionally, it is found that students also made affective prompts to praise their peers’ performance. The following is an illustrative episode from Group 6. In this excerpt, Chuan points out a trouble source “internal jogging” in the sentence – some doctors refer to laughter as “internal jogging”. Jack and Fang offered collective assistance to dissolve Chuan’s puzzle. Elaborating on Jack’s semantic definition, Fang’s deliberate explanation helped clarify the abstract connotation of the linguistic metaphor and added to the group’s understanding of the author’s analogy between laughter and internal jogging. The students’ choral complimentary remarks, Wow! 厲害歐! <Formidable!>, showed their admiration on what Fang had contributed to the group work.

Excerpt 10 (The Best Medicine – Group 6)

123. Chuan: ㄟ...“internal jogging”是什麼？<Heh...what is “internal jogging?”>
125. Chuan: 那是什麼意思？<What does it mean?>
126. Fang: 就是...身體沒有在跑但..um..感覺到那種達到慢跑的效果。
   <That is, you don’t run, but ..um.. you can feel there is an effect of jogging inside your body.> 反正笑就像慢跑一樣啦! <Anyway, laughter is just like jogging.>
127. Ss: {Wow! 厲害歐！<Formidable!>

Discussion

Despite some off-track utterances, the findings indicated that the participants consistently assisted each other to comprehend the passages. Five salient patterns of peer collaborative behaviours emerged from the data including co-construction, elaboration, appeal for assistance, corrective feedback and prompts. Instead of appearing individually, these patterns often occurred in combination with one another depending on different situations. In this section, I will discuss the students’ peer-led small group discussions from the perspective of meaning-construction within the Vygotskian sociocultural framework (Donato, 1994; Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Tudge, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).

The process of peer collaboration for negotiation of meaning as joint construction in interaction is much in evidence in the collaborative dialogues in this present study. Based on the data analysis, the learners collaborated to solve linguistic problems they encountered and they pooled knowledge to co-construct meaning for text comprehension. Collective peer dialogue not only helped clarify confusing and uncertain points about the texts but also provided them with the opportunities to evaluate and improve their own language learning through the assistance of other individuals (Donato, 1994; Mercer, 2000; Storch, 2007; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). In Excerpt 11, the students in Group 5 collaboratively look for the topic sentence to construct the gist of the second paragraph in the text of Loneliness – How Can We Overcome It?.

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Excerpt 11 (Loneliness – How Can We Overcome It? – Group 5)

53. Sih: 那這段的主旨句是什麼？<What is the topic sentence of this paragraph?>

54. Wei: 會不會是這段的第一句….嗯…還有第三句?<Is it the first sentence of this paragraph …..um…and the third one?>

55. Yu: 這段主旨怎是第一句呢？<Why the topic sentence of this paragraph is the first one?>

56. Shien: 第一句不是只有寂寞的一種種類嗎?<Does the first sentence only talk about one kind of loneliness?>

57. Wei: 對阿! <That’s right!>所以第一句是寂寞的第一個種類。<Therefore, the first sentence talks about the first kind of loneliness.> 第三句是第二種。<The third sentence talks about the second type of it.>

58. Shien: 為什麼不是第五句，在第十一行?<Why isn’t it the fifth sentence in line11?>

59. Sih: Although this kind of loneliness can cause physical problems, 這是在講第二種寂寞的情況所以應該不是主旨句。<This is about the description of the second kind of loneliness; therefore it should not be the topic sentence.>

60. Shien: 哦^^ …所以其它的句子都只是在說明第一跟第二種的寂寞。<Ou^^… so the rest of the sentences are used to explain the first and second kinds of loneliness.>

As shown above, the members in Group 5 actively engaged in the meaning-construction activity. In line 53, Sih, assuming the role of leader initiated the co-construction process. Wei, playing the gist expert, contributed what he knew to the problem-solving event in spite of his uncertainty of the answer. Disagreeing with Wei’s suggestion, Yu made a request for a further clarification (line 55); while Shien offered another possible answer to the target task (line 58). Sih’s elaboration on Wei’s proposal, disconfirmed and rejected Yu and Shien’s hypotheses about the most important information of the paragraph. In line 60, Shien’s rising tone, 哦^^ <Ou^^>, and repetition of what he had learned seemed to recognise the beneficial effect of collective scaffolding (Donato, 1994). As De Guerrero & Villamil (2000) argue, providing mini-lessons is one type of scaffolding mechanism. It was evident that the mini-lessons given by Wei and Sih, helped mark a critical feature and provided a model of appropriate performance (Wood et al., 1976). More importantly, the collective scaffolding made the learners advance in linguistic ability, which they may not have been able to achieve if they had worked individually.
The present study seems to suggest that peer scaffolding also helped reduce the degree of frustration. During the interaction to construct meaning, students sometimes were discouraged, which could hinder the process of text comprehension. For example, while the students in Group 2 were engaged in the wrap-up activity where they worked to summarise what they had learned from the text, Chi, as the reporter, expressed his inability to do the complicated task by saying, "The summary writing is so difficult!" I don't know how to do it." His utterances revealed his frustration that he was not able to complete the task on his own. Shiang, as the leader, provided scaffolding by responding, "That is why we have to discuss it together." The leader's use of the pronoun "we" emphasised the significance of the joint effort in the problem-solving activity. Furthermore, his encouraging utterance was crucial to alleviate Chi’s stress and anxiety in confronting the difficult work and prevent him from giving up on the target task.

Another collaborative recurrent pattern found in this study was prompting, which according to Ohta (1995) is an important technique to promote higher level of language involvement and production. The data revealed that the learners prompted when it was necessary during collaborative group work to call for participation and encouragement. In this study, it was noticeable that various types of approaches were used as prompts including (1) sounds, for instance "ㄟ" (a special sound in Mandarin to draw attention as discussed in Excerpt 9), and, “囉” (a sound for stop), (2) someone’s nicknames, for example, 吉他手, 吉他手..講一下! (Guitarist, guitarist.. talk!), (3) roles in group work, i.e., 聞字大師, 來回答!<Clunk expert, answer this question!>, (4) comprehension check, 有沒有問題? (Are there any questions?), (5) other utterances, such as, 輪到誰了? (Whose turn is it?); 趕快, 趕快現在找主旨句。<Hurry up, hurry up and find the topic sentence now.>, and (6) affective praise, for example, 厲害歐! (Formidable), and, 很好! <Very good!>. These prompts served the functions of enhancing the group members' active engagement, recruiting interest in the task and giving praise for contributions. The versatile tactics of prompting suggest that these learners displayed a high degree of intentionality to keep the interaction going, maintain the group dynamics, prevent inattentive behaviours, stay focused on the target tasks, and encourage contributions to the collaborative group work.

Within the sociocultural framework, corrective feedback is a fundamental component in scaffolding instruction as it is an important source of regulation to activate learners’ zone of proximal development (Aljaarfeh & Lantolf, 1994; Carroll & Swain, 1993; De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000). In this study, much evidence was found that students often provided negative or positive evidence as corrective feedback on erroneous utterances during the process of co-construction of text meaning. The nature of the corrective feedback was related to both the meaning and form of the content. What is interesting and, therefore, worthy of some discussion is how learners’ linguistic errors or incorrect understanding of text were responded to and revisited through corrective peer feedback.

When an error was noticed, explicit corrective feedback was frequently offered to draw the learners’ attention to the target trouble source and to rectify the misconception. The data indicated that occasionally implicit corrective feedback was elicited in form of confirmation check or repetition. However, the indirect corrective feedback did not always result in raising
learners’ awareness of mistakes. An example from Group 6 was reported and discussed in the previous section (Excerpt 8). Another example from Group 5 is presented in Excerpt 12 below.

Excerpt 12 (The Best Medicine – Group 5)

97. Hong: 什麼是“internal jogging”? <What is “internal jogging”?>
98. Haw: 這個地方看不太懂。<I don’t quite understand it.>
99. Sih: “Jogging”就是…<“Jogging” means…>
100. Wei: 單腳跳。<Jumping on one leg.>
101. Sih: 單腳跳?<Jumping on one leg?>
102. Wei: “Jog”不是單腳跳嗎?<Doesn’t it mean “jumping on one leg”?>
103. Sih: 不對吧!<I don’t think so.>
104. Wei: 沒錯吧。<It should be right.> 我記得我在哪裡看過…<I remember I saw it somewhere…>
105. Shien: 你弄錯了吧!<There must be something wrong!>
106. Sih: “Jog”是“慢跑”啦!<“Jog” means “run slowly”.>
107. Wei: 啊! 非常抱歉!<OK, I am sorry.> 我弄錯了!<I was wrong!>

As the episode shown above, the students in Group 5 were trying to resolve the linguistic difficulty – “internal jogging”. Probably having a vague memory of the word “hopping”, Wei guessed the definition “jumping on one leg” for “jogging” (line 100). Sih’s repetition in line 101 apparently was one type of indirect corrective feedback to signify that he noticed Wei’s deviant explanation of the word “jogging”. Another implicit negative feedback offered by Shien, 你弄錯了吧!<There must be something wrong!>, was used to disconfirm Wei’s interpretation (line 105). It was evident that the implicit corrective feedback was not effective in providing sufficient information to help Wei recognise and self-correct his mistake.

Previous research has stressed that both direct and indirect corrective feedback is important for language learning (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Ohta, 1995; Storch, 2007). It was beyond the scope of this study to investigate the effect of explicit and implicit corrective feedback on the adult EFL learners’ reading comprehension. However, it was interesting to find that explicit corrective feedback was more efficient and salient than implicit feedback to scaffold the other group members’ linguistic deficiency. In other words, the Taiwanese university learners seem to rely on more directly responsive feedback. In this regard, I would agree with Aljaafreh & Lantolf (1994) that learners who can modify their errors with implicit corrective feedback demonstrate higher level ZPD because they do not need much regulation from others. However, as Carroll & Swain (1993) argue, indirect corrective feedback lacks precision and involves learners’ guesswork. Since the EFL learners in the study do not seem to be ready for indirect guidance,
explicit corrective feedback pointing out the place and nature of erroneous performance may be still needed.

One note of caution is that, as Tudge (1990) warns us, peer collaboration can lead to regression in language learning as well as to advancement; therefore, the potential risk of group scaffolding should not be neglected. In this study, the participants were, to some extent, homogenous in their English abilities. It was not surprising that peer scaffolding did not always lead to successful text comprehension as the texts involved different degrees of linguistic complexity. This can partly be attributed to the students’ limited linguistic knowledge and partly to persistent students who insisted on their own interpretations, which resulted in misleading the other students. As De Guerrero & Villamil (2000) posit, peer scaffolding in second language learning is not a smooth process of development, but “an irregular and dynamic movement entailing the possibility of regression, creativity, and progress” (p. 65). For this reason, L2 learners’ comprehension failure or incorrect explanations of particular linguistic features should be viewed as a natural learning process where learners make use of their available linguistic resources to construct meaning and reflect what they comprehend about the text; thus, these imperfections can be seen as indicators to understand learners’ weaknesses and which specific linguistic aspects need further scaffolding from the teachers for learners’ further second language development.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The study found that the Taiwanese university learners with relatively homogenous English level worked together through collaborative discussions, assisting each other in negotiating and discovering meaning of the reading texts they had been assigned. Such assistant behaviour was evident in abundant episodes where the learners engaging in peer-led group discussions contributed their expertise to the meaning-constructing tasks, elucidated unclear explanations or comments made by others and provided necessary assistance for the understanding of the text meaning. Of particular interest was that the EFL learners used multiple techniques of prompting in the process of problem-solving activities. Different prompting strategies were used, for example, role assignment, special sounds calling for attention, group members’ nicknames, comprehension checks and complimentary utterances to sustain collaborative interaction, call for task involvement and express praise for prominent contributions to the target tasks.

Furthermore, it was found that the provision of corrective peer feedback was an important means of aiding text comprehension. The instant corrective feedback was offered explicitly or implicitly by the peers when misunderstanding or erroneous interpretation was noticed in the collaborative work. Interestingly, the finding suggested that the learners tended to rely much more on explicit corrective feedback to modify deviant text understanding. The nature of the tasks and the level of English proficiency may have contributed to this phenomenon. As text comprehension involves complex linguistic knowledge, it seems that explicit corrective feedback providing a clear model of appropriate linguistic performance may be beneficial to learners with low-intermediate to intermediate English ability who may not be able to notice and repair their mistakes from implicit guidance.

In terms of the pedagogical implication, this study suggests that a language classroom setting should create meaningful social literacy activities that provide the chance for students to collaborate not only with teachers or more advanced learners but also with peers with similar
language competence (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Lantolf & Appel, 1994). The implementation of peer collaboration enables teachers to create a more effective and interactive context for English learning so that they can recognise individual learners’ strengths and weaknesses and provide instant assistance to those who need it in order to maximise students’ learning potentials. Through collaborative small group discussions, students take on more responsibilities for their own learning by performing the assigned roles. In spite of similarly limited linguistic proficiency, they pool their linguistic knowledge to the problem-solving tasks and develop text understanding through collective thinking.

**About the Author**

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Investigating College Students’ Competence in Grammatical Collocations

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Abstract

Collocations are arbitrarily restricted lexeme combination, whose importance in language has been increasingly recognized in recent years. The importance of collocations in foreign language learning, and the problems face the learners in using collocations have been underscored by numerous researchers. As a result, this study has devoted special attention to grammatical collocations. Collocations, in which a lexical and a more grammatical element (such as a preposition) co-occur, are called ‘grammatical collocations’. Lexicographic evidence confirmed that collocations may appear in a large spectrum of configurations. Thus, the BBI collocation dictionary (Benson et al., 1986a) provides a very comprehensive list of grammatical collocations consists of eight patterns; the last pattern comprises nineteen English verb patterns. For the present study, only three patterns of grammatical collocations have been chosen to be probed (GI, G5, G8), these patterns are the collocation of NP, AP, or VP with PP. The reason behind selecting these three particular patterns is, actually, an attempt to find a sort of connection between these patterns of grammatical collocations, and the co-occurrence restrictions proposed by Chomsky in his standard theory. In “Aspects of the theory of syntax”, Chomsky postulates that the syntactic structure imposes co-occurrence restrictions on the syntactic constituents. These co-occurrence restrictions consist of subcategorization rules and selectional restrictions. The present study, as a result, purports to be an investigation of the university students’ grammatical collocation competence, a sample of sixty five college students at University of Baghdad, College of Languages, Department of English of the academic year 2011-2012, served as subjects. A test of 90-item of grammatical collocations was designed to assess the students’ competence in both the receptive and productive collocational aspects. The data were examined and results showed that students encountered more difficulties on the production level than on the recognition level.

Keywords: grammatical collocations, subcategorization rules, selectional restrictions, collocational competence, collocational errors.
Introduction

Since the term "collocation" has been discussed in many linguistic areas such as semantics, phraseology, corpus linguistics and systematic linguistics, researchers have categorized collocations from different perspectives. Mackin (1975) classifies idioms and collocations into four categories based on idiomaticity from most to least fixed: pure idioms, figurative idioms, restricted collocations, and open collocations. Wood (1981) (cited in Nattinger & De Carrico, 1992), on the other hand, categorizes collocations a part of word combinations in addition to idioms, collocations and free word combinations on the basis of semantic and syntactic criteria in a continuum.

In fact, there are various categories of collocations which have been adopted by different linguists; however, most of them classify collocations into two major categories: lexical collocations and grammatical collocations. Lexical collocations consist of co-occurrence of two lexical elements. For example adjective + noun (warmest regards) as in I send her my warmest regards. Grammatical collocations or colligations consist of co-occurrence of grammatical element (such as a preposition) or grammatical structure (such as to + infinitive) and lexical elements. For example (verb+ preposition), ‘depend on’ as in He depends on his writing for his income. (Verb + that-clause) as in she believed that she was wrong. The category of grammatical collocations is characterized by eight (8) basic types of collocations, and designated by G1, G2, etc., as shown in table (1) below:

Table 1. Grammatical Collocations according to Benson et al (1986)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>Noun + preposition</td>
<td>She has fondness for chocolate. The government placed restrictions on the sale of alcohol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>Noun + to-infinitive</td>
<td>He was a fool to do it. They felt a need to do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3</td>
<td>Noun + that-clause</td>
<td>We reached an agreement that she would represent us in court.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4</td>
<td>Preposition + noun</td>
<td>We met with accident at the airport, I saw him in agony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G5</td>
<td>Adjective + preposition</td>
<td>Jack is afraid of the dog. Sandra is good at needlework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G6</td>
<td>Adjective + to-infinitive</td>
<td>It was necessary to work. It’s nice to be here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G7</td>
<td>Adjective + that-clause</td>
<td>She was afraid that she would fail, it was imperative that I be here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8</td>
<td>Verb + preposition</td>
<td>We rely on his decision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study adopts a framework based on the grammatical collocations, in particular, the patterns G1, G5, and G8. This framework consists of collocation of nouns, adjectives and verbs with prepositions as shown in Table (2) below:

**Table 2. Framework of Grammatical Collocations Adopted in This Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Lexical items collocate with Preposition</th>
<th>Example of Grammatical Collocations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>N+ Prep</td>
<td>What is the reason for Hong Kong’s air pollution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G5</td>
<td>Adj+ Prep</td>
<td>I was disappointed with the gift.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G8</td>
<td>V+ Prep</td>
<td>Obviously you need to adapt to changing circumstances.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transformational Generative Grammar Treatment of Grammatical Collocations**

**Chomsky’s Mechanism of Co-occurrence Restrictions**

Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) is a theory about syntax. Descriptions and explanations of phenomena of natural language are modeled in terms of syntactic structures. If such a syntactic theory has anything to say about collocations, it will be in syntactic terms. According to Transformational Generative Grammar, collocations live somewhere on the borderline between syntax and the lexicon, i.e. between free combinations (lexical items) on the one hand and completely fixed combinations (idioms) on the other hand. (Wouden, 1997: 25)

Chomsky in the *Aspect of the Theory of Syntax* (1965:191) points out that the expression *decide on the boat*, meaning ‘choose to buy a boat’ contains the combination *decide on* (in Chomsky’s terminology: close construction), whereas *decide on a boat*, meaning ‘make a decision while on a boat’ is a free combination (in Chomsky’s terminology: loose association). The phrase *decide on the boat* is ambiguous between a fixed collocational reading, in which *decide on* functions as a semantic unit with the meaning ‘choose’, and a free combination reading, whereas *on the boat* functions as an adverbial phrase with a locational meaning. In the collocational reading the preposition *on* is obligatory, whereas it may be replaced by other locational prepositions in the free combination reading; such as *decide near the boat, decide in the boat*, etc. Chomsky also points out that the verbs in close construction are very different from verbs, which involve loose association. In the close constructions, the choice of the preposition is often constrained by the choice of verb (for example, ‘argue with X about Y’); therefore it is necessary to indicate that such lexical items as (*decide, argue*) take certain prepositions and not others. This information can be presented by assigning a contextual feature to the verb (for example, the contextual feature of *decide* will be [_ on ~ NP], and the contextual feature of *argue* will be [_ with ~ NP ~ about ~ NP]. (ibid.)
Therefore, Chomsky has been among the first to suggest the treatment of word combinations by semantics and syntax. Even though Chomsky does not examine collocations, he distinguishes between 'strict subcategorization rules', i.e. rules that "analyze a symbol in terms of its categorical context", and 'selectional restrictions', i.e. rules which "analyze a symbol in terms of syntactic features of the frames in which it appears" (Chomsky, 1965:95). These rules assist the generation of grammatical strings. The breaking of strict subcategorization rules will result in such ungrammatical strings as e.g.: '"*you must abide my decision' '"*John fond for Mary'" and '"*John emphasize on the positive aspects of discipline', while failure to observe the selectional restrictions will give sentence like 'Colorless green ideas sleep furiously' ‘john argues with politics’. (ibid.:149)

Since, the aim of generative paradigm is to provide a competence model of language with important implications for the view of lexical collocations and grammatical collocations or colligations. Chomsky in his Standard Theory (ST) (1965) recognizes the necessity of incorporating a component into transformational grammar that could handle individual combinatorial properties of categories of lexical items. This has been achieved mainly by the introduction of subcategorization rules or valence and selectional restrictions to handle syntactic-semantic combinatorial features. (Bartsch,2004:39)

According to Mitchell (1975:10), ‘‘the concept of lexical collocation and grammatical collocation or colligation relate to a syntagmatic view of lexical and syntactic structure. TGG’s subcategorization and selectional restrictions are apparently similarly motivated.’’, thus, Mitchell points out that the present subcategorization rules and selectional restrictions of TGG are benefited from the Firthian collocation. The subcategorization rules are also called the C-selection (Categorial Selection rules) and selectional restrictions are called S-selection (Semantic Selection rules) in more recent modification of TGG theory. (Chomsky, 1986)

These two types of restrictions govern the relationships between predicates and arguments. Thus, Collocational restrictions comprise information pertaining to requirements regarding how the argument structures of different elements are satisfied appropriately (Bartsch, 2004:41).Subcategorization rules specify what kind of complement a certain item subcategorizes. The subcategorization frame for fond simply specifies that the Prepositional Phrase (PP) complement subcategorized by fond takes the preposition of as its head constituent. Thus, a subcategorization rule for the predication use of fond looks like this:

\[
\textbf{fond: CATEGORICAL FEATURES: [ +N]}
\]

\[
\text{SUBCATEGORIZATION FRAME: [N,____+PP]}
\]

Example: \textit{she is} \hspace{1cm} \textit{fond} \hspace{1cm} \textit{of} \hspace{1cm} \textit{animals.}

For angry, a subcategorization rule looks like this:

\[
\textbf{angry: CATEGORICAL FEATURES:[ +Adj]}
\]
SUBCATEGORIZATION FRAME: [Adj, ___+ PP]

Example: *She had been angry at the person who stole her purse.*

On the other hand, the subcategorization rules are complemented by rules modeling the selectional restrictions, dealing with the semantic properties of the complements (i.e., in its non-metaphoric usage), through covering the semantic feature structure of potentially combinable linguistic items, for instance verb *apologize to* usually selects a complement that is + HUMAN. (ibid.:42)

For *apologize to*: a selectional restriction looks like this:

**Apologize to: SELECTIONAL RESTRICTION**: [+ HUMAN]

Example: *John apologized to the head master.*

Whereas, *apologize for* usually selects a complement that is – HUMAN. For *apologize for*: a selectional restriction looks like this:

**Apologize for: SELECTIONAL RESTRICTION**: [- HUMAN]

Example: *The children apologize for being late.*

**Collocational Competence**

One of the debatable issues in linguistics is the term ‘competence’, which has been used by different contexts to refer to different types of knowledge. However, it was originally set out by Noam Chomsky. Within the initiation of Chomsky’s generative grammar as the dominant force in mainstream linguistic theory, there was a shift of focus towards syntax-centred linguistic theory. The prime aim of this theory is to develop a model of the abilities of native speakers of a language, which enable them to speak and understand their language fluently. (Erton, 2007:60)

Chomsky (1965) defines linguistic competence as; “the speaker-listener’s intrinsic tacit knowledge of language”. He also assumes:

Linguistic theory is primarily concerned with ideal speakers-listeners in completely homogeneous speech community who know their language perfectly and are unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention in applying their knowledge of the language in actual performance. (p.104)

Therefore, Chomsky presents the linguistic competence as an idealized understanding of the rules and construction of a given language. This includes the distinct lexical items used in the language, the combination of these lexical items, the creation of sentences and the interpretation...
of these sentences. Once the speakers master this set of rules, they can use grammar to produce grammatical sentences that will be understood by other speakers of the same language (Radford, 1988:17). Later, Chomsky makes a neat distinction between linguistic competence (the speaker’s or hearer’s knowledge of language) and performance, (the actual use of language in concrete situations). (Chomsky, 1965:4)

Chomsky’s linguistic theory also deals with how to use linguistic competence in a social context. Thus, the notion of communicative or pragmatic competence has early defined by Chomsky (1980: 224) as the “knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use (of the language), in conformity with various purposes”. This concept has been seen in opposition to linguistic (grammatical) competence that in Chomskyan terms is “the knowledge of form and meaning.” According to Widdowson (1989:135), “communicative competence is the ability to put language for communicative purposes”. This category of competence considers language as a tool used for communication. Therefore communicative competence does not only aim to focus on the development of four language skills (writing, speaking reading, and listening) but also depends on the correlation between these skills. By doing so, the language users will be able to convey the right message.

Canale and Swain (1980:5) find that there is a reciprocality between the language rules and the rules of language use. For this reason, Canale and Swain consider the term “communicative competence” a mediator, which refers to the relationship between grammatical competence (the knowledge of the rules of language) and the communicative competence (the knowledge of the rules of language use).

Consequently, knowledge of a language is the result of many competences grouped together; hence, it is necessary to work on these competences to achieve the fluency in language. There are, actually, many types of competences: linguistic and communicative competences are familiar; but “collocational competence” is usually an unfamiliar concept coined by Lewis (2000: 49) who says: “We are familiar with the concept of communicative competence, but we need to add the concept of collocational competence to our thinking”.

Without this competence, learners face many problems in their use of language. One of which is grammatical mistakes, as “learners tend to create longer utterances because they do not know the collocation which express precisely what they want to say” (Hill cited in Michael Lewis, 2000: 49). Therefore, it is important to focus an attention to the relationship between words that often appear together in order to help learners pass over collocational problems. Hill states, “Any analysis of learners’ speech or writing shows a lack of collocational competence”. Actually, learners’ lack of collocational knowledge makes them not very competent in their language use. Some examples of wrongly used collocations are *good in, *afraid from, *amazement about, *jealous from. (ibid)

Thereby, the development of students’ collocational competence would result in the improvement of linguistic and communicative competences. Writing as well as speaking would be more fluent, accurate and meaningful since the learners know the most common collocations that enable them to speak and write more efficiently. Hence, developing collocations competence means developing the linguistic and communicative competences, and this would facilitate the task of performing better in foreign language.
Grammatical Collocational Errors

Many researchers have attempted to analyze collocational errors made by learners in order to demonstrate their difficulties in collocation use. Analysis of collocational errors committed by the learners is an alternative approach that allows having a better understanding of the language learners’ collocational competence. A common problem that learners have with collocation use, as observed by Lennon (1996) and others, is that they lack collocational knowledge.

According to Flowerdew and Mahlberg (2009:90), the most frequent category of collocational error is grammatical collocation or colligation. Learners’ errors in this category were primarily with following prepositions. Nouns, verbs and adjectives can be followed by many different prepositions and there does not seem to be any apparent systematicity in their use. A preposition error can be a case of incorrect preposition selection (*They are good in swimming), use of a preposition in a context where it is prohibited (*They came to inside), or failure to use a preposition in a context where it is obligatory (*He is fond this book). However, one can make the argument that preposition errors deserve a different and deeper kind of treatment, because they tend to be more semantically motivated. Therefore this would be an area worthy of study, in order to account for the difficulty learners have faced in such category of collocations.

Categories of Errors

A number of different categories for describing errors have been identified. Firstly, Corder (1973) cited in Mersin University Journal (2005:264) indicates that errors can be classified in terms of the differences between the learners’ utterance and the reconstructed version. In this way, errors fall into four linguistic types in terms of linguistic categories: omission of some required elements, addition of some unnecessary or incorrect elements, selection of an incorrect element, substitution of elements, and disordering of elements.

Nevertheless, Corder himself adds that this classification is not enough to describe errors. That is why, Corder (1973) cited in Allen & Corder (1974: 130) identifies psychological categories of errors, which explain the sources of errors such as: (1) Language Transfer (2) Overgeneralization or analogy (3) Methods or Materials used in the Learning.

Richards (1974) cited in Richard (1973:172) categorizes four major types or causes of errors (1) language transfer (interlingual and intralingual interference) (2) ignorance of rules restrictions (3) incomplete application of rules (4) false concepts hypothesized. Later, Richards adds other sources of errors, namely: (I) overgeneralization (2) performance errors (3) markers of transitional competence (4) strategies of communication and assimilation and (5) teacher-induced errors. Selinker (1972) cited in Richard (1974:35) classifies errors into five categories:(I) language transfer (2) transfer of training,(3)strategies of second learning, (4) strategies of second language communication, (5) overgeneralization of target language’s linguistic material.

Richard and Simpson (1974:3) advocate the study of learners’ approximate systems and identify six factors characterizing second language learner systems, namely: (1) language transfer (2) sociolinguistic situation, (3) modality, (4) age, (5) successions of approximative systems (6) universal hierarchy of difficulty. Tylor ( in Ellis,1994:29) identifies four different categories of error on the basis of a broader view: (1) psychological categories, the difficulty of
production(2) sociolinguistic categories, the difficulty in adjusting language in accordance with social contexts.(3) epistemic categories, learners lack of knowledge, and (4) discourse categories, problems with organization of information into a coherent text.

Concerning collocational errors, many recent experimental studies, (Channell, 1981; Zughoul, 1991; Bahas, 1993; Bahns & Eldaws, 1995; Liu, 1999; Flowerdew & Mahlberg, 2009) have pointed out several factors that may influence learners' competence in making correct collocations. The researchers discover that the causes of collocational errors are related to many sources such as; (1) language transfer (interlingual interference) (intralingual interference) (2) analogy (3) overgeneralization(fossilization) (4) ignorance of rule restrictions (5) paraphrase (6) shortage of collocational knowledge (7) context of learning (8) incomplete application of rules.

Table 3. Major Factors Behind Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Major Factors Behind Errors</th>
<th>Categorizations of Factors Behind Errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Strategies (Transfer)</td>
<td>Interlingual Transfer</td>
<td>-Interference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intralingual Transfer</td>
<td>-Overgeneralization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Context of learning</td>
<td>- Ignorance of rule restrictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Incomplete application of rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paraphrase</td>
<td>- False concept hypothesized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Approximation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Use of synonymy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transfer

Transfer is a general term describing the carryover of previous knowledge to subsequent learning. George (1971) and Lance (1969) find that one-third of the deviant sentences from learners of target language could be attributed to language transfer. Transfer can be divided into two types: Positive transfer, and Negative transfer that is responsible for the intralingual and Interlingual.

Interlingual Transfer (Interference)

Interlingual transfer is a significant source of error for all learners. The beginning stages of learning second language are especially vulnerable to interlingual transfer or interference from the native language. In these early stages, before the system of the second language is familiar, the native language is the only previous linguistic system upon which the learner can draw. The cognitive strategy of interlingual transfer or interference is evident example of errors committed by students on both recognition and production tasks. In the recognition, evidence of this
strategy is provided by items 5,8. In these items, it is quite possible that interlingual transfer is the driving force behind the errors, and such errors have been fossilized and become part of learners’ collocational competence.

5. *He was very good in swimming. Q1

In response to this item, forty one (41) subjects chose the wrong preposition (in) instead of (at), since the grammatical collocation (*good in) is closer to the possible use in Arabic.

8. *I gain admission from one of the best universities in the USA. Q1

Likewise, in item (8), forty six (46) subjects chose the incorrect preposition (from) instead of the preposition (to), which leads to the miscollocation (*admission from).

**Intralingual Transfer (Overgeneralization)**

Overgeneralization is a crucially important and pervading strategy in human learning. To generalize means to infer a law, rule or conclusion usually from the observation of particular instances (Brown, 2007:103). Accordingly, the term overgeneralization refers to the reliance on a prior learning to facilitate new learning. Evidence of such a strategy in the present study, is errors committed by students by overgeneralizing the use of preposition (on) in item (3) without noticing that AP (dependent) collocate with the preposition (on) when it is affirmative; while it collocates with the preposition (of) when it has the meaning of negation, which leads to a miscollocation as in follows:

3. *Mary is entirely independent on her parents. Q3

Item (29) is also another example of error can be traced back to the overgeneralization of a syntactic rule in the target language, in this item (47) subjects chose the preposition (of) depending on overgeneralizing the rule that AP (fond) collocates with the preposition (of), such as “Mary is fond of Jack”, without taking into account that the NP (fondness), unlike its Adjective, collocates with other preposition which is (for).

29. *I have always had fondness of her. Q1

**Ignorance of Rule Restrictions**

This type of learning strategy is identified by Richards (1974:175) which results from learners’ failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures, i.e., the application of rules to contexts where they do not apply. Some rule restriction errors may be accounted for in terms of analogy; other instances may result from the rote learning of rules. Accordingly, failures to observe rules restrictions may lead to analogy, i.e., the learner rationalizing a deviant usage from his previous experience of English which based on ignoring rule restrictions. (ibid.)

Evidence of such a strategy in the present study, an extensive number of errors which reveals the students’ unawareness of the rules restricted the grammatical collocations. Examples of such errors item (6):

6. *They have got to abide in the rules. Q1
In this item(6), thirty (30) subjects use the incorrect preposition (in) as a result of their ignorance of the syntactic restriction which impose the rule that the VP (abide) should co-occur with the preposition (by) Accordingly, any change in this preposition will generate deviant structure.

**Incomplete Application of Rules**

Under this category, it can be noticed that the occurrence of structures whose deviancy represents the degree of development of the rules required to produce acceptable structures.(Richards, 1974:177) as for the present study, the data reveal numerous examples of errors made by students in grammatical collocations as a result of incomplete application of rules. The grammatical collocations are produced according to the rules of co-occurrence restrictions, either the syntactic or semantic rules; any case of incomplete application of these rules would constitute deviant and unacceptable structures. The following errors are examples of incomplete application of rules:-

9.*The airports all over the world divide to local and international.*

17.*They have been deprived from all their civil rights according to the court’s resolution.*

**Context of Learning (False Concepts Hypothesized)**

This strategy is another major factor behind error; it overlaps both types of transfer. “Context” refers to the classroom with its teacher and its materials, which negatively influence the learning of the target language. In a classroom context the teacher or the textbook can lead the learner to make faulty hypotheses about the language, what Richards (1974) called “false concepts” and what Stenson (1974) termed induced errors.

Accordingly, the grammatical collocations have almost been neglected within the context of learning. Brown (2007:266) indicates that two vocabulary items presented contiguously – for example, point at and point out – might in later recall be confused simply because of the contiguity of presentation. That is why the data revealed many examples of random choice of prepositions that confirms the shortage competence or knowledge of grammatical collocations and the false concepts about this category of collocations.

21.*It is not polite to allude on someone’s disability.*

25.*People should be equal; no one has advantages on another.*

28.*This figure could reflect their dissatisfaction about the percentage of achievement.*

**Communication Categories of Errors**

The speculative early research of the 1970s (Varadi, 1973 and others) led to a great deal of recent attention to communication strategies (Bialystok, 1990; McDonough, 1999; Chomat, 2005). Faerch and Kasper (1983:36) define communication strategies as” potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual present itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal”.
Paraphrase

Avoidance Strategy

Avoidance is a common communication strategy. The phenomenon of avoidance behaviors was first brought to light by Schachter (1974), who points out the importance of examining not only the target language forms that were actually produced by the learners of a foreign language, but also the target language forms they seem to avoid using consistently. Among the various types of avoidance strategies, the first type is syntactic avoidance, where the students can make use of paraphrase relation in order avoid difficult structures i.e., rewording the message (Schachter, 1974:361). The second type is lexical avoidance, which is manifested when there is a lack of vocabulary knowledge; accordingly, the students choose a synonym, or a superordinate term or paraphrasing. Topic avoidance is identified by students avoiding the talk about the concepts. (ibid.)

As for the present study, the semantic avoidance seems to be relevant to the errors found in the data.

1. Semantic avoidance of grammatical collocations is a avoidance strategy in translation; whereby the subjects under study avoid the lexical item entirely for not being able to come up with the lexical items required to be produce the grammatical collocations i.e., the students resort to another lexical items instead of the required form of grammatical collocations while still conveying the same meaning through producing the sentence. Evidence of this strategy in the present study is a number of examples in which students avoid using the grammatical collocations due to their unawareness of the prepositions which collocate with the NP, VP or AP as in the items as follows:

11. The book is not restricted to discuss the political issues.

22. This metal is resistant to corrosion and rust.

Approximation Strategy

According to Liu (1999:147), “approximation strategy” is a type of paraphrase which is used to make up a new word for the purpose of communicating the desired lexical item; this strategy motivated by a substitute option based on certain semantic properties, or some kind of ‘semantic approximation’. Thus, errors which are caused by approximation either share similar syntactic features with the correct items or have semantic affinity with the target items. The learners resort to the strategy of approximation as the correct structure in the target language has not been firmly formed. They also resort to the strategy of approximation when they are not certain about the correct structure. In short, learners tend to approximate to ease their linguistic burden. Evidence of this strategy in the data is as follows:-
4. The trees and flowers have great benefits since they minimize the rate of environmental pollution.

9. The airports all over the world bisect local and international.

Use of Synonymy

Blum and Levenston (1987:65) observe that the recourse to semantic affinity is a common lexical simplification strategy. Learners may not be fully aware of the complete collocational distribution of synonymous words in certain linguistic contexts. That is why; they use near-synonymous words to substitute each other without considering the collocability and contextual appropriateness of the substituting word with the neighboring items. Accordingly, the subjects of this study resort to the use of synonymy to avoid using grammatical collocations. This strategy can be seen as a compensatory strategy motivated by an alternative choice based on some kind of similarity in meaning but different words. It seems that the subjects do not have learned the co-occurrence restrictions of subcategorization rules that is why they have ignored the use of grammatical collocations replacing them by one word.

16. The political leaders should know the demands of people

3. Football team contains eleven players.

Mean

The mean is the most commonly used measure of central tendency. It is computed by dividing the sum of the separate scores by the total number of the testees. For this purpose the following formula is used:

\[ M = \frac{\Sigma X}{N} \]

M= mean
\( \Sigma \) = the sum of scores.
N= number of testees.
Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Mean for the Variable of Recognition for each Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>*G1</th>
<th>*G2</th>
<th>G1 &amp;G2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>14.60</td>
<td>Mean 24.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*G1= second stage, *G2= fourth stage

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of the Mean for the Variable of Production for each Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>G1</th>
<th>G2</th>
<th>G1&amp;G2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>Mean 19.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the value of M Rec. is greater than that of M Prod., it is clear that student’s competence at the Rec. level is better than that at the Prod. level. The values according to both tasks of (Rec. and Prod.) are as follows:

18.98 Rec. > 13.12 Prod.

Standard Deviation

The standard deviation refers to the extent to which the scores deviate from the mean. It illustrates how the scores spread out on each side of the mean. It is computed by the following formula:

\[ \text{Standard Deviation (S.d.)} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum d^2}{N}} \]

d\(^2\) = the square value of the deviation of each score from the mean.

N= number of testees.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Standard Deviation for the Variable of Recognition for each Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>G1</th>
<th>G2</th>
<th>G1 &amp;G2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>S.d.</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>S.d. 7.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of the Standard Deviation for the Variable of Production for each Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>G1</th>
<th>G2</th>
<th>G1 &amp;G2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>S.d.</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>S.d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value of S.d. Rec. is less than that of S.d. Prod., it is clear that student’s competence at the Rec. level is better than that at the Prod. level, since the less the value of S.d., the better is the value. The values according to both tasks of (Rec. and Prod.) are as follows:

7.48 Rec. < 8.63 Prod.

Reliability

A test is not valid if the scores are not reliable. A reliable test is defined as “one that procedures essentially the same results consistently on different occasions when the conditions of the test remain the same.” (Madsen, 1983:179)

The method adopted to estimate the reliability of the data of this study is Cronbach's Alpha formula:

\[
\alpha = \frac{n}{n-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum Vi}{V_{test}}\right)
\]

- \( n \) = number of questions
- \( \Sigma \) = the sum of scores.
- \( Vi \) = variance of scores on each question
- \( V_{test} \) = total variance of overall scores on the entire test

The reliability of both tasks was found out to be: 0.64 for the Rec., 0.78 for the Prod., and 0.86 for the total which indicates that the test is reliable.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of the Reliability for the Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach' Alpha</th>
<th>Rec.</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>N of Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N of Tasks</td>
<td>2(a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prod. Value</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N of Tasks</td>
<td>2(b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rec. &amp; Prod. Value</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Value</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Tasks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correlation

For knowing whether there is a correlation of a significant difference between the Rec, and Prod. levels for each group, Spearman-Brown Coefficient is used for this purpose. The results prove a highly positive correlation between the Rec. and Prod. levels between the two groups and within each group. The correlation is illustrated in the following table:

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics of the Correlation for the Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlation between (R&amp;P) for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>second stage = 0.78**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>fourth stage = 0.60**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 &amp; G2</td>
<td>total = 0.72**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**t-Test**

The t-test is used to find out whether to validate or refute the hypotheses (2,3) of the test mentioned above. The formula below satisfies the objectives of the present test:

\[ t = \frac{X - M}{S.d./n} \]

To know whether there is statistically significant difference between the Rec. and Prod. levels for each group (G1,G2), the t-test formula is used for the two dependent samples, the results are as follows:

1- **Second Stage (G1):** the statistical analysis for (G1) proves that the computed t-test value equals (8.09) is more than the tabulated t-test value which equals (2.63) at the significant level (0.01), with taking into consideration that the Mean value of the Rec. level is (14.60); while the Mean value of the Prod. level is (7.34) that means, there are statistically significant differences between the Rec. and Prod. levels. Accordingly the student’s competence of G1 at the Rec. level is better than that of the Prod. level.

2- **Fourth Stage (G2):** the statistical analysis for (G2) proves that the computed t-test value equals (2.15) is more than the tabulated t-test value which equals (2.01) at the significant level (0.05), with taking into consideration that the Mean value of the Rec. level is (24.10); while the Mean value of the Prod. level is (19.85) that means, there are statistically significant differences between the Rec. and Prod. levels. Accordingly the student’s competence of G2 at the Rec. level is better than that of the Prod. level.

3- **G1 & G2:** the statistical analysis for (G1, G2) proves that the computed t-test value equals (6.06) is more than the tabulated t-test value which equals (2.28) at the significant level (0.01), with taking into consideration that the Mean value of the Rec. level is (09.89); while the Mean value of the Prod. level is (03.02) that means, there are statistically significant differences between the Rec. and Prod. levels. Accordingly the student’s competence of G1 and G2 at the Rec. level is better than that of the Prod. level, and the competence of fourth stage’s students...
(G2) is better than the competence of second stage’s students (G1) in using grammatical collocations at the Rec. and Prod. levels.

Table 10. Descriptive Statistics of t-test for the Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St.d.</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>t-tab 0.05</th>
<th>0.01</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Stage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14.60</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Stage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24.10</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19.85</td>
<td>7.55</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1&amp;G2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>18.98</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>HS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S: Significant at level P < 0.05.
HS: Highly Significant at level P <0.01.

Recognition Level vs. Production Level.

To know whether there are statistically significant differences between G1 and G2 in each level (Rec.& Prod.), the statistical analysis of the test results verify the following as shown in the table :-

Table 11. Comparison between Groups in each Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>t-tab 0.05</th>
<th>0.01</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Second Stage</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14.60</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forth Stage</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24.10</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Second Stage</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>8.43</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forth Stage</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19.85</td>
<td>7.55</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Second Stage</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21.94</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forth Stage</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43.95</td>
<td>13.69</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S: Significant at level P < 0.05.
HS: Highly Significant at level P <0.01.
Investigating College Students’ Competence

Mohammed, Mustafa

1-Rec. level: since the computed t-test value of the Rec. level equals (6.58), and this value is more than the tabulated t-test value, which equals (2.66) at the significant level (0.01), that refers to existence of statistically significant differences between second stage’s students (G1) and fourth stage’s students (G2). Noticing that the Mean value of G2 equals (24.10) which is also more than the Mean value of G1 which equals (14.60). Accordingly, the fourth stage students’ competence at the Rec. level is better than second stage students’ competence.

2- Prod. Level: since the computed t-test value of the Prod. level equals (8.43), and this value is more than the tabulated t-test value, which equals (2.66) at the significant level (0.01), that refers to existence of statistically significant differences between second stage’s students (G1) and fourth stage’s students (G2). Noticing that the Mean value of G2 equals (19.85) which is also more than the Mean value of G1 which equals (7.34). Accordingly, the fourth stage students’ competence at the Prod. level is better than second stage students’ competence.

3- Rec. & Prod. Levels: since the computed t-test value of the Prod. & Rec. levels equals (8.75), and this value is more than the tabulated t-test value, which equals (2.66) at the significant level (0.01), that refers to existence of statistically significant differences between second stage’s students (G1) and fourth stage’s students (G2). Noticing that the Mean value of G2 equals (43.95) which is also more than the Mean value of G1 which equals (21.94). Accordingly, the fourth stage students’ competence at the Rec. & Prod. levels is better than second stage students’ competence.

However, the findings reveal that students’ collocation knowledge is quite insufficient, and the overall results show that students’ competence in collocations is far from satisfactory, since the students don’t demonstrate sufficient collocational knowledge.

Subjects’ Competence in Three Patterns of Grammatical Collocations (VP, NP and AP +Preposition)

For knowing whether there are any significant differences between G1 and G2 in terms of the three patterns of grammatical collocations. The z-test formula is used to testify the error percentages. The results prove the following:

1-Errors in Grammatical Collocational Pattern (VP+ Prep): the computed z-test equals (6.65) is more than the tabulated z-test which equals (2.57) at the significant level (0.01), that means there are statistically significant differences between G1 and G2 in errors committed in VP pattern. Given that the percentage of error committed by G1 in this pattern is (%75.64), comparing with the percentage of error committed by G2 is (%61.92). Accordingly, G2 is better than G1 in this pattern of grammatical collocations.

2-Errors in The Grammatical Collocational Pattern (NP+ Prep): the computed z-test equals (7.82) is more than the tabulated z-test which equals (2.57) at the significant level (0.01), that means there are statistically significant differences between G1 and G2 in errors committed in NP pattern. Given that the percentage of error committed by G1 in this pattern is (73.43%), comparing with the percentage of error committed by G2 is (57.67%). Accordingly, G2 is better than G1 in this pattern of grammatical collocations.
3-Errors in Grammatical Collocational Pattern (AP+ Prep): the computed z-test equals (0.83) is less than the tabulated z-test which equals (1.96) at the significant level (0.05), that means there are no statistically significant differences between G1 and G2 in errors committed in AP pattern. Given that the percentage of error committed by G1 in this pattern is equal and approximate. The percentage of errors committed by G1 is (%77.24), and the percentage of error committed by G2 is (%75.44). Accordingly, the errors percentages of G1 and G2 are approximates; even though G21 is also better than G1 in this pattern of grammatical collocations.

The conclusions that are drawn from the statistical findings prove that the higher error percentages of G1 and G2 in the three patterns of grammatical collocations are AP, VP, and then NP respectively. That mean the subjects’ competence in NP is better than VP and AP.

The tables below illustrate the error percentages in the three patterns.

Table 12. Percentage Errors of the Patterns of Grammatical Collocations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Patterns</th>
<th>Error Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>G1 VP</td>
<td>73.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AP NP</td>
<td>75.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2 VP</td>
<td>77.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AP NP</td>
<td>57.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1 &amp; G2</td>
<td>VP AP</td>
<td>61.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AP NP</td>
<td>75.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>77.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics of z-test for the Patterns of Grammatical Collocations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patterns</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>% error</th>
<th>z-test</th>
<th>z-tab 0.01</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Second Stage</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>75.64</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth Stage</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Second Stage</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>73.43</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth Stage</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>57.67</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Second Stage</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>77.24</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth Stage</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75.44</td>
<td></td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HS: Highly Significant at level P <0.01.
NS: Non Significant at level P >0.05.
Conclusions

L2 learners of English still have problems with English grammatical collocations; the students’ overall proficiency in this linguistic area was found as inadequate. The study aims at probing any discrepancy in the learners’ competence on the set tasks according to their academic levels. It also investigates the communicative strategies employed by the learners when attempting translation from the native language into the target language. On the whole, the study has subscribed to the role of native language in the foreign language learning, concluding that the majority of errors made by the two groups are the result of the learners’ mother tongue interference as the major creative cognitive source of errors. However, the transfer of the target language itself as overgeneralization and ignorance of rule restrictions appeared as the possible twofold cause of intralingual errors. This reflects the learners’ incompetence in recognizing the syntactic and semantic co-occurrence restrictions on the correct use of English grammatical collocations.

The aim of this study is to identify students’ competence to collocate English grammatical collocations correctly. Motivated by this, the study has reflected L2 learners’ poor competence in producing and recognizing the patterns of this category of collocations. That is to say, without thinking about grammatical rule of collocational restrictions, the subjects failed to recognize or produce the correct prepositions that collocate with lexical items to constitute well-formed grammatical collocations.

The present study seeks to investigate the productive and receptive knowledge of grammatical collocation of learners of English. The results of the data validate and refute some of the hypotheses of the study. It was found that the subjects’ receptive collocational knowledge was broader than their productive collocational knowledge. Moreover, participants did not seem to have difficulty with adjective-preposition collocations; however, verb-preposition and noun-preposition collocations were very challenging and much more difficult. In summary, the results showed that collocations present a source of difficulty for English language learners. Therefore, collocations need more attention from L2 curriculum designers and teachers.

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Reference


Appendix A. Tasks of grammatical collocations

PART ONE

TASK I

Complete each sentence with a suitable preposition that follows the verb, adjective or noun.

1. They are interested ----- collecting stamps.
   A. from     B. of     C. in     D. with

2. Can you dispose -------- the rubbish?
   A. for     B. to     C. by     D. of

3. We are able to cope -------- all of these difficulties.
   A. to     B. from     C. with     D. over

4. I don’t think she is envious -------- your success.
   A. of     B. for     C. to     D. from

5. He was very good -------- swimming.
   A. in     B. at     C. of     D. on

6. They have got to abide -------- the rules.
   A. to     B. in     C. by     D. for

7. We stayed at home because Ann wasn’t very keen -------- going out in the rain.
   A. for     B. to     C. on     D. of

8. I gain admission -------- one of the best universities in the USA.
   A. from     B at.     C. in     D. to

9. BBC stands -------- British Broadcasting Corporation.
   A. by     B. of     C. for     D. off

10. The flat consists -------- four rooms.
    A. from     B. of     C. for     D. on

11. There has been an increase -------- road accidents recently.
    A. in     B. of     C. over     D. at
12. I'm preparing ------ my exam.
A. to       B. of      C. on      D. for

13. They make generous contribution ------ charity.
A. in       B. to      C. from    D. with

14. Who was responsible ------ this noise last night?
A. of       B. to      C. for     D. about

15. There is a great insistence ------ changing the current system.
A. on       B. for     C. by      D. of

16. If children were inferior ------ other children, their confidence would be declined.
A. for      B. with    C. to      D. from

17. I objected ------ being kept waiting.
A. to       B. over    C. on      D. by

18. We rejoiced ------ the good news.
A. of       B. about   C. from    D. at

19. The Italian city of Florence is famous ------ its art treasures.
A. for      B. with    C. in      D. of

20. It is stupid ------ her to go out without a coat.
A. from     B. of      C. to      D. for

21. It is not polite to allude ------ someone's disability.
A. by       B. at      C. on      D. to

22. The train was late but no one knew the reason ------ the delay.
   A. of       B. about   C. in      D. for

23. There has been too much concentration ------ women's issues.
A. with     B. to      C. on      D. of

24. Let's hope they will refrain ------ hostile action.
A. by       B. of      C. in      D. from
25. People should be equal; no one has advantages ——— another.
   A. on       B. over      C. of       D. to

26. His amazement ——— the news was immense.
   A. on       B. about      C. in       D. at

27. Linda is married ——— an American citizen.
   A. of       B. to        C. with      D. from

28. This figure could reflect their dissatisfaction ——— the percentage of achievement.
   A. of       B. about      C. in       D. with

29. I have always had fondness ——— her.
   A. for      B. by         C. about     D. of

30. The situation was worsened by lack ——— communication.
   A. for      B. in         C. of       D. with

**TASK II**

Please choose the correct prepositions in the two blanks.

1. He did apologize ——— the headmaster ——— being late.
   A. with    B. for        C. about    D. to

   A. about   B. in         C. of       D. with

3. Do you agree ——— me ——— the course of action?
   A. on      B. with       C. to       D. in

4. We all pray ——— God ——— peace and stability.
   A. for     B. about      C. to       D. in

5. They were angry ——— their neighbour ——— the noisy party.
   A. on      B. about      C. for      D. at

6. The thieves quarrelled ——— one another ——— how to divide the loot.
   A. to      B. for        C. over     D. with
7. We are grateful ----- Mary ----- her help and encouragement.
   A. about       B. to       C. of       D. for

8. They complained ----- the receptionist of the hotel ----- the service.
   A. for       B. about       C. on       D. to

9. The representatives negotiated ----- the commander ----- release of the prisoners.
   A. with       B. on       C. about       D. for

10. You are responsible------- the manger ------- the petty cash.
    A. with       B. for       C. on       D. to

PART TWO

TASK III

1-Please fill in each gap with a suitable preposition.

An Open Letter from Prof. Charles and Mrs May Wan Kao

Since the announcement on 6 October 2009 that Charles has been awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physics. We are overwhelmed by the sea of congratulatory messages from so many people, and the many requests (1) ______ interviews from the media.

A Nobel Laureate of Chinese ethnicity is a rare event and we understand the outpouring (2) ______ happiness and pride (3) ______ our people throughout the world wherever they live. The Nobel Prize is an international prize and has been awarded (4) ______ work done internationally. Charles Kao did his primary research in 1966 at Standard Telecommunication Laboratories (STL) in Harlow, UK. Finally, he came to CUHK, Hong Kong in 1987 to pass on his expertise in fiber optical to a new generation of students and businessmen. Charles really does belong (5) ______ the world!

In this open letter, we would like to thank all who have concerned (6) ______ his health. Unfortunately there is no cure at present for Alzheimer's. Charles shares this problem of coping (7) ______ Alzheimer with other eminent persons, Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, to name a few. Charles keeps fit playing tennis and other exercises. He does not smoke, and he engages (8) ______ many activities.

He is eminently proud (9) ______ his past achievements and excited (10) ______ becoming a Nobel Laureate an unexpected award. The press and media have interviewed him and he is happy. So he is more than ready (11) ______ a quiet and undisturbed life now, and he asks that the media respect this.

Our greetings to everyone in Hong Kong, to staff, faculty and students past and present of CUHK, and all our very good friends especially our tennis friends. Thanks for all your good wishes and congratulations. Now you know who is responsible (12) ______ the fiber optical
cables that enable all the excessive information, both true and false, good and bad, that circulate on the Internet.


2- Please supply the following sentences with correct preposition.

1. Obviously you need to adapt changing circumstances.
2. All Hong Kong people were concerned the recent economic crisis.
3. Mary is entirely independent her parents.
4. He should be praised his honesty.
5. All the police officers were equipped shields to defend themselves against the rioters.
6. Young people are the most susceptible advertisements.
7. He has become addicted drugs very early.
8. Such behavior detracts your beauty.
9. She took her revenge him for leaving her by smashing up his car.
10. If we lose the case we may be liable the costs of the whole trial.
11. Parents enjoy boasting their children's achievements.
12. The report recommends that more resources be devoted teaching four year olds.
13. My sister is allergic wool.

ASK IV

Please translate the following sentences into English.

1- أعترف القاتل بالجريمة أمام القاضي.
2- هيلين ماهرة في إعداد أطباق شهية.
3- يتلف فريق كرة القدم من أحد عشر لاعباً.
4- إن الأشجار والزهور فوائد كبيرة فهي تقلل من نسبة التلوث البيئي.
5- أنا أسف لأنني لم أتمكن من الرد على رسالتك البائقة.
6- كانت السيدة سعيدة مدهشة من كلم زوجها.
7- يرحب وزير الخارجية بالوفود المشاركة في القمة العربية.
نعيش في عصر التكنولوجيا المزدحم بالمخترعات الحديثة.

تنقسم المطارات في دول العالم إلى محلية ودولية.

يهيمن مشروع محو الأمية إلى التطور التكنولوجي في الزراعة فضلاً عن تعليم القراءة والكتابة.

ليس الكتاب مقتصرًا على بحث الأمور السياسية.

هل صوت لصالح الرئيس الجديد؟

إن الخسائر الناتجة عن الحروب فادحة مما يجب أن تعمل رعاية لحل مشاكلنا سلميًا.

هل كانت إيمي خائفة من الظلام؟

تنعم الدول المتقدمة بثورة ثقافية تمثل في مكتبات الأطفال والشباب في كافة المدن والقرى.

ينبغي على القادة السياسيين أن يكونوا على دراية بمطالب الشعب.

هذا المعدن مقاوم للتآكل والصدأ.

كان أحمد يائساً من الحصول على وظيفة.

أحب بيل أخته كثيرًا وما زالت موتها يؤثر فيه بوضوح.
Self-Perceptions and Practices of a Group of Omani Cooperating Teachers for Supervising EFL Student Teachers’ Grammar Teaching during Practicum

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Abstract
This study sought to investigate: a) practicum supervisors’ attitudes towards grammar teaching, b) their perceptions of their practices in developing student teachers’ grammar teaching, and c) the relationship between their attitudes towards grammar teaching and their practices in preparing student teachers to teach grammar. The participants were 47 cooperating teachers from a variety of locations throughout Al-Batinah in the Sultanate of Oman in the 2010-2011 academic year. Data were collected via a literature-based instrument whose analysis revealed that 86.4% of the cooperating teachers “agreed” with the statements associated with the grammar teaching self-perception scale with a mean of 4.32. This implied they showed a positive self-perception. Results indicated that the average mean of participants’ practices on the four subscales, namely: modeling, personal attributes, pedagogical knowledge and feedback was 4.04. This implied that they perceived themselves as having “medium” capability to supervise grammar teaching. Results also confirmed that cooperating teachers’ self-perceptions on teaching grammar were positively related to their own practices for supervising grammar teaching. Implications were drawn from the study for practicum programs and the training of cooperating teachers.

Key words: practicum, cooperating teachers, teaching grammar, self-perception, Oman
Introduction and Background

The education of EFL student teachers is a place to focus attention on in an effort to obtain quality EFL teaching as research has shown that high quality teachers will create a high quality education system (Borg, 2009). Thus, the Ministry of Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman has established a number of programs to prepare EFL teachers and equip them with the necessary strategies and teaching skills to enable them to execute their roles effectively. One of these teacher training programs is the Teacher Education Program at Sohar University. It is designed to produce knowledgeable and creative teachers who due to their training at the program will be known for their successful teaching strategies and be able to improve the English language teaching in the Omani educational context. In achieving this goal, the program places a strong emphasis on providing its students with adequate teaching practice both at the university (Micro-teaching) and at schools (Teaching practice).

Teaching practice is a strategy designed to provide pre-service teachers with hands-on experience. For this reason, it occupies an important role in the entire process of teacher education (Mohanraj, 2004; Koc, 2008 and Ystifçi, 2011). Without adequate practice in the art of teaching, a fresh graduate assuming the role of a teacher would really be left in the lurch, (Mohanraj, 2004). Furthermore, Beck and Kosnik (2002) assert that a poor teaching practice experience may be of little or no value. Thus, the main aim of practicum in teacher training is to provide hands on experience to student teachers in the art of teaching. In this regard, Mohanraj (2004) argues that teacher training is compared with military training. He states “Let us see some of the tenets of military training. First and foremost principle is discipline and obedience; the second is the turnout (appearance or the way one is dressed); and finally the third principle is the need to adhere to rules and time” (p 1).

In the existing body of literature, one can find several studies that emphasize the importance of teaching practice and identifies student teaching practice at schools as the most helpful part of their professional development since it consists of the first steps of a personal journey to become a teacher (Williams, 2001; Jasman, 2002; Power et. al, 2002; Thibeault, 2004; Walkington, 2005; Koc, 2008 and Ystifçi, 2011). It provides prospective teachers with the bridge between theory and practice and the opportunity to define and refine their practical skills and knowledge needed to function as an effective EFL teacher (Koc, 2008 and Ystifçi, 2011).

Practicum supervision at Sohar University is normally carried out by a university supervisor and a cooperating teacher. These people work together to assist their student teachers to develop competent knowledge and professional skills (Chow et al, 2004; Mule, 2005; Hudson et al, 2008). The main objective of practicum cooperating teachers is not only to evaluate the performance of student teachers, but rather to provide them with essential feedback in order to facilitate their professional development and practices in order to develop their teaching strategies and motivate them to work better (Glickman et al.,2004). Koc (2011) is of the view that the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher whose roles are defined as the supervisor, the observer, the model teacher and the supporter, are important to help the student teachers to gain the necessary skills and a teacher identity during practicum. Furthermore, Mohanraj (2004) argues that the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher should be responsible for maintenance of discipline in the student teachers such as attending the
cooperating school regularly, following the schedule, participating in discussion, preparing and submitting the lesson plans in time and participating in the school activities.

During practice teaching at schools, student teachers need to have practice in teaching the four language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. They also need to practice teaching content areas such as grammar and vocabulary. Teaching strategies and lesson planning vary with language skills and content areas in terms of objectives, preparation, presentation and practice. Therefore, the practicum supervisor should familiarize the student teacher with the following six lesson types: grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Thus, the number of lessons a student teacher teaches should be able to provide practice in all these. That means while scheduling the lessons, the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors, should take care to see that all the students get equal number of lessons, and have an opportunity to practice all the skills and content areas. It might be worth mentioning that the focus of this paper is on grammar teaching due to the dearth of previous studies in this area.

Hudson et al, (2008) point out that supervisors’ perceptions on subject specific supervising practices may enhance their student teachers’ learning experiences with real opportunities for developing effective teaching skills within school settings. Furthermore, Hudson (2006) points out that each cooperating teacher’s self-perception of his or her own performance can determine the development of their student teachers in their teaching strategies as a result of the effects of satisfaction, motivation, confidence, professional knowledge and modeling. Thus, the present study aims to explore EFL practicum cooperating teachers’ attitudes, self-perceptions and practices in improving student teachers' grammar teaching strategies during practicum.

Literature Review

A brief theoretical background for this investigation will be presented in the following section including: cooperating teachers’ roles and practices and practicum cooperating teachers' self-perceptions within the theoretical framework of grammar teaching.

Cooperating Teachers’ Roles and Practices

University staff and cooperating teachers in their roles as practicum supervisors within school settings play important roles for developing their student teachers’ teaching skills in EFL. Koç (2008) defines the term “role” as “how individuals perceive each other’s expectations and how those self-perceptions affect their behavior” (p 7). According to Shantz and Brown (1999) cooperating teachers are expected to provide their student teachers with a model of instruction, a source of support, feedback and evaluation. There are no clear universal practices of cooperating teachers in their roles as supervisors due to the highly personal interactions conducted under different circumstances in different schools (Zanting et al, 2001 and Koç, 2011).

Ystifçi (2011) investigated the practicum supervisors’ styles of a novice and an experienced supervisor in pre-observation conferences and the effects of the styles on the student teachers’ lesson plans. The behaviors and styles of the novice and experienced supervisors were compared and the results revealed some similarities and differences between the novice and experienced supervisor. Similarities include the use of certain behaviors more than the others such as clarifying, reflecting and directing behaviors. Both the novice and experienced
supervisors seemed flexible and eclectic because they changed their behaviors according to student teachers’ needs. Furthermore, the data revealed that the student teachers applied changes in their lesson plans according to the feedback given by the supervisors in the pre-observation conferences.

The only study conducted in the Omani context in relation to the roles and practices of the university supervisors is Al-Mekhlafi’s (2004) in which the EFL student teachers’ self-perceptions of their university instructors’ practicum supervisory behaviors were investigated using a literature based questionnaire consisting of 20 statements covering the main teacher supervisory behaviors. The findings revealed that the supervisors listened to their student teachers’ self-reflections about their teaching before giving them feedback. Furthermore, there was no difference between male and female student teachers’ self-perceptions of the teachers’ supervisory behaviors.

Researchers (e.g., Hudson et. al, 2008) have identified five main factors underlying effective practicum supervision. The five factors are: personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modeling, and feedback. Each factor has its own supervision practices which may help student teachers improve their teaching skills.

**Supervisors’ Perceptions within the Framework of Grammar Teaching**

A review of the literature reveals that there are a number of research studies that have investigated generic aspects of EFL practicum supervision at schools. That is non-specific language area (not on the supervision of the teaching grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing and speaking). (For example, Al-Mekhlafi, 2004 and Ystifçi, 2011). However, there are very few in-depth supervision studies related to the teaching of specific language areas. The only study conducted in relation to EFL writing is Hudson’s et. al (2008) in which 100 Vietnamese EFL student teachers’ self-perceptions of their practicum supervisors’ practices for developing their teaching of writing were investigated using a survey questionnaire consisting of 34 items. Their results revealed perceptions of inadequate supervision on how to teach effectively EFL writing. More than 50% of the participants reported that their supervisors did not provide them with supervision for developing their teaching of EFL writing.

Although there is a lack of studies related to cooperating teachers’ (senior teachers) self-perceptions about their own practices in developing their student teachers’ grammar teaching, a number of studies were conducted to investigate teachers’ perceptions and practices in teaching grammar (e.g., Shulman, 1987; Grossman et al, 1989; Borg, 1999; Borg 2001; Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam, 2011). To sum up, the existing body of literature on supervision contains a number of studies that examine the attitudes, views and self-perceptions of educational supervisors, and how these may differ according to their gender. However, it seems there is a lack of studies related to practicum cooperating teachers’ self-perceptions of their own practices in developing their student teachers’ teaching strategies of specific EFL areas such as grammar teaching.

**Present Study**

*Our World through English* textbooks used in the Omani schools are based on an integrated approach to language learning with grammatical and functional aspects of the language, listening, reading, writing, pronunciation and vocabulary. Among these, teaching grammar continues to be a challenge to student teachers during their practice teaching. In this...
regard, Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) reported that the self-perceptions of their participants who were EFL teachers in the Omani school context indicated that they faced difficulties with regard to grammar teaching. Hence, understanding how EFL practicum cooperating teachers perceive their own roles and practices in developing their student teachers’ grammar teaching is essential.

As introduced above, the review of related studies on practicum supervisors’ perceptions within the theoretical framework of English grammar teaching shows that no study has yet been carried out on the attitudes and self-perceptions of EFL practicum cooperating teachers’ roles and practices in developing their students’ teaching of EFL grammar. Demirkol (2004) observes that there are many uncertainties regarding university supervisors, cooperating teachers and their self-perceptions. Therefore, this study will hopefully contribute to our understanding of these perceptions.

The following research questions were generated to guide the inquiry:
1. What are Omani cooperating teachers’ attitudes towards grammar teaching?
2. How do they describe their practices in developing their student teachers’ grammar teaching?
3. Is there any relationship between their attitude towards grammar teaching and their practices in developing their student teachers’ grammar teaching?
4. How do EFL cooperating teachers perceive:
   a. The ability of teaching grammar of most of their student teachers?
   b. Their student teachers’ attitudes towards grammar teaching?

Method and Procedures

Participants

The participants of this investigation were 47 cooperating teachers who supervised 92 fourth-year student teachers (supervisees) from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Sohar University in the Sultanate of Oman during the second term of the 2010/2011 academic year. The cooperating teachers were 47 females from 14 cooperating schools in Al-Batinah region in the Sultanate of Oman. The sample ranged in age from 25 to 42 years. 38 participants (80.9%) had the bachelor degree in Education (B.Ed.), 4 (8.6%) had a Two-Year’s Diploma in English and 5 (10.6%) the M.A. degree in English language teaching. Table 1 below presents the distribution of the participants according to their teaching experience.

Table 1: Cooperating Teachers according to their Teaching Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Group (Years)</th>
<th>No of C Teachers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regard to the number of years they spent in teaching English, Table 1 above shows that 18 cooperating teachers (38.3%) had 1-5 years’ experience in teaching English, 15 (31.9%) had between 6 - 10 years, 4 cooperating teachers (8.6%) had between 11 – 15 years and the remaining 10 (21.3%) had between 16 – 25 years.

The data for this study were collected by means of a literature-based survey questionnaire. The researcher adapted the instrument depending on the relative research studies and relevant literature with specific reference to Hudson et al (2005) and Hudson et al (2008). They developed and used the Mentoring for English as a Foreign Language Teaching (MEFLT) instrument. It consists of thirty-four statements which are organized into five domains, namely: personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modeling, and feedback. It provides information about how the student teachers feel about their supervisors’ practices for enhancing their pedagogical development in teaching writing.

The adapted version of the relevant sections from the MEFLT was used to elicit the self-perceptions regarding the cooperating teachers’ practices and supervising behaviors in developing their student teachers’ grammar teaching. It was amended in accordance with the requirements of the present study. For example, the introductory statement “During my final field experience (practicum) for mentoring the teaching of writing my mentor…” was changed to “During Practicum 4, for supervising the teaching of English grammar, I felt I …”. Moreover, the word ‘writing’ was changed to ‘grammar’ throughout the questionnaire.

Table 2: Distribution of Items on the 5 Domains and Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Sample Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G. T Self-perception</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>I want the supervisees to teach grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Attributes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>I was supportive of the supervisee for teaching G.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>I modeled the teaching of grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Knowledge</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>I guided the ST with G. lesson preparation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>I discussed evaluation of their teaching of G.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: G = Grammar G. T. = Grammar Teaching

To address the questions related to the subjects’ attitudes and self-perceptions about the teaching of English grammar, the researcher added Part Two of the questionnaire which contained six items to elicit respondents' self-perceptions and attitudes towards the teaching of English grammar. Furthermore, 30 items were adapted to answer questions related to the cooperating teachers’ roles and practices in developing their supervisees’ English grammar teaching strategies during practicum. Thus, the final copy of the questionnaire developed for the purpose of the present study was out of forty items distributed on five domains (Table 2 above).

The instrument utilized a Likert scale format with response categories of: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree. The authors of the original instrument calculated the internal consistency estimates of reliability (Cronbach’s alpha). They reported that four of the
five factors had acceptable Cronbach alpha ranging between 0.74 and 0.89, that is personal attributes, feedback, modeling and pedagogical knowledge (Hudson et al, 2008: p 5). The five subscales of the present study had acceptable Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient scores greater than 0.70. Alpha scores ranged between 0.74 and 0.82 which indicates reliability of the instrument. Frankel and Wallen (2006) argue that the reliability coefficient scores should be at least 0.70.

According to Cox (1996) consistency is generally the most important issue for survey questionnaires. Thus, a pilot study was implemented twice, with a three week interval, to assess the reliability of the adapted questionnaire. Five faculty members at Sohar University who supervise the student teachers in cooperation with the cooperating teachers (the sample of the study) participated in the pilot study. They were selected to participate in the pilot study because they were outside the sample and they had its characteristics. That is they as well as the cooperating teachers supervise the student teachers at school. The results of the two applications were correlated using Pearson’s formula and the score was 0.86 which indicated high reliability.

The 40-item instrument was administered towards the end of the second term of the academic year 2010-2011. The student teachers of the teacher education program at Sohar University in the Sultanate of Oman took the questionnaires to their practicum supervisors at schools (cooperating teachers). The instrument included instructions that specified the purpose of the study and explained the procedures to be followed in responding to the items.

Data Analysis

Following the collection of the questionnaires, the answers were computer-coded using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Program. Descriptive statistics were produced for every item of the questionnaire and the calculations of the means and standard deviations were used. The significance level in this study was set at P<0.05.

Results and Findings

Finding an answer to the first question of this study required the calculation of the means and standard deviations of the six statements relating to the EFL cooperating teachers’ views and self-perceptions on the teaching of English grammar were calculated. The statements, and cooperating teachers’ responses, are shown in Table 3, below. They are reorganized to reflect how strongly respondents felt about each statement, in a descending order.

**Table 3:** Cooperating Teachers’ Views of English Grammar Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar Teaching Self-perception Scale</th>
<th>%*</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All teachers should be able to teach grammar</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teaching of G. is necessary for developing SS’ lang.</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in my field do not have to teach grammar</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want STs to use G. lessons in classes when they teach</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a goal of my supervision to train STs how to teach G.</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above shows EFL cooperating teachers’ self-perceptions and views about the teaching of English grammar at schools in Al-Batinah region in the Sultanate of Oman in response to six statements of the instrument. The bulk of the EFL cooperating teachers (94%) with a mean of (4.70) agree that all teachers should be able to teach English grammar. The table also shows that the statement: The teaching of grammar is necessary for developing students’ language came next with (93.6%) and with a mean of 4.68, while the statement which states that I want the student teachers to teach grammar came last with (79%) and a mean of (3.95).

As stated earlier, the first aim of this study was to investigate the practicum cooperating teachers’ attitudes towards the teaching of English grammar at schools. The results of this study indicated that 86.4% of the cooperating teachers either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the six statements associated with the grammar teaching self-perception scale with an average mean of 4.32. This means that the participants showed a positive self-perception towards the teaching of English grammar at schools. In other words, they strongly believe that all EFL teachers including the student teachers should be very motivated to teach English grammar.

The second question of this study asks: How do EFL cooperating teachers describe their roles and practices in developing their student teachers’ EFL grammar teaching during practicum? The examination of data collected through the survey questionnaires permitted a description of practicum cooperating teachers' self-perceptions of their roles and behaviors in developing their supervisees’ teaching strategies, and gave information about which domains of self-perception cooperating teachers endorse most and least. The means and standard deviations for the different domains of practicum cooperating teachers’ self-perceptions and views about their roles and practices in developing their student teachers’ teaching strategies are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Four Subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Attributes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Knowledge</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Referring to Table (4) above, the responses of the EFL cooperating teachers to the questionnaire expressed as a mean score to the 30 statements that were grouped into four domains. The Modeling (M) subscale came first with a mean of (4.12) out of (5), while the Feedback (F) subscale came last with a mean of (3.97). What follows is an analysis of the cooperating teachers’ practices and behaviors associated with each subscale.

1. Modeling (M)

Modeling teaching is defined as providing student teachers with visual and aural presentations of how to teach English grammar (Hudson et al., 2008). Table 5 below presents the means and descending order of the six items of the cooperating teachers’ behaviors and practices in regard with modeling the teaching of grammar.

Table 5: Means and Descending Order of the Items of the Supervisors’ Modeling for Grammar Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modeling</th>
<th>%*</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modeled effective class managements when teaching G.</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used grammar rules from the current English syllabus.</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeled the teaching of grammar.</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated a good rapport with SS while teaching G.</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displayed enthusiasm when modeling the teaching of G.</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had demonstrated well-designed G. activities for the SS.</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was effective in modeling the teaching of grammar.</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: G. = grammar                    SS = students

The table above shows the cooperating teachers’ practices in modeling the teaching of English grammar. About 83.8% of the EFL cooperating teachers “agreed” and “strongly agreed” that they modeled effective classroom managements when teaching grammar with a mean of (4.19). Similarly, 82% of the cooperating teachers agreed that they used grammar rules from the current English syllabus with a mean of (4.10). It is also clear from the table that 80.4% of the cooperating teachers modeled the teaching of grammar with a mean of (4.02). Nearly 79.4% of the cooperating teachers agreed that they demonstrated how to develop a good approach with students while teaching grammar. Similarly, 78.6% of the subjects agreed that they displayed enthusiasm when modeling the teaching of grammar, while 78.2% of them agreed that they had demonstrated well-designed grammar activities for the students. 76.4% of the cooperating teachers thought that they were effective in modeling the teaching of grammar with a mean of (3.82).
2. Personal Attributes (PA) for Supervising the Teaching of Grammar

Table 6: Means, Standard Deviations of Personal Attributes Subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Attributes</th>
<th>%*</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made the ST feel more confident as a G. teacher</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instilled positive attitudes in the STs for teaching G.</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was supportive of the STs for teaching grammar.</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listened to the STs attentively on teaching G. matters</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was comfortable talking with the STs about teaching G.</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted the STs to improve G. teaching practices</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Average</td>
<td>81.03</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: G. = grammar                      ST = student teacher

Table 6 above shows the means, standard deviations and descending order of the six statements related to the domain of Personal Attributes for supervising the teaching of English grammar.

The results shown in Table 6 above indicate the following:

1. The means for the six statements regarding the cooperating teachers’ personal attributes for supervising the teaching of grammar ranged between (4.15) and (3.98). As for the total average of the six statements, the mean was 4.05.
2. The percentages of EFL cooperating teachers’ views of their practices and behaviors associated with their personal attributes for supervising the teaching of English grammar were all above 70%.
3. The highest rating was given to the statement: *I made the student teacher feel more confident as a grammar teacher* with a mean of (4.15), followed by the statement: *I instilled positive attitudes in the student teachers for teaching grammar* with a mean of (4.06). Then came the statement: *I was supportive of the student teachers for teaching grammar* with a mean of (4.06), followed by the statement: *I listened to the student teacher attentively on teaching grammar matters* with a mean of (4.04). In the fifth rank came the statement: *I was comfortable talking with the student teachers about teaching grammar* with a mean of (4.02). The statement: “I assisted the student teachers to reflect on improving grammar teaching practices” came final with a mean of (3.98).

3. Pedagogical Knowledge (PK)

Practicum cooperating teachers were asked to respond to eleven statements relating to their pedagogical knowledge in supervising the student teachers to teach EFL grammar. The
statements, and cooperating teachers’ responses, are shown in Table 7 below in descending order.

**Table 7: Means and Descending Order of the Pedagogical Knowledge**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogical Knowledge</th>
<th>%*</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Showed the STs how to assess the SS’ learning of G.</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave the STs new viewpoints on teaching grammar</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed the ST’s strategies for teaching grammar</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave the ST clear guidance for planning to teach grammar</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed with the STs questioning skills for G. teaching</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided the STs with grammar lesson preparation</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted the STs with class strategies for teaching G.</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed with the STs the aims of teaching grammar</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed with STs knowledge needed for teaching G.</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted STs with implementing G. teaching strategies</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted the STs to timetable their grammar lessons</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: G. = grammar                    SS = students                    ST = student teacher

Table 7 above reflects how strongly respondents felt about each statement in descending order. This order allows some consideration of where cooperating teachers identify potential priorities for change or improvement. Six statements in this section generated 80%+ agreement or disagreement, while the remaining five statements generated less strong views between 69% and 79% agreement or disagreement.

### 4. Feedback (F)

The constructive oral and written feedback on aspects associated with the cooperating teacher’s pedagogical knowledge that the practicum cooperating teacher provides to his student teachers after observing them teaching in class is a crucial ingredient in the supervising process. It allows the EFL student teacher to reflect and improve their teaching strategies (Bishop, 2001; Hudson et al, 2005).

The cooperating teachers’ responses to the six items related to their practices in providing the student teachers with the necessary feedback for the teaching of grammar during their teaching practice at the cooperating schools are provided in Table 8 below.
Table 8: Means and Descending Order of Statements Associated with Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>%*</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provided oral feedback on the ST’s teaching of grammar</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed evaluation of the ST’s teaching of grammar</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed STs teach grammar before providing feedback</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly articulated what needed to improve G. teaching</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided written feedback on the ST’s teaching of G.</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewed ST’s grammar lesson plans before teaching G</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>79.37</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: G. = grammar                      ST = student teacher

The table presented above shows that the means of the items associated with the feedback dimension for supervising the teaching of grammar ranged between (4.21) and (3.51). The highest rating was given to the statement: *I provided oral feedback on the student teacher’s teaching of grammar*, while the lowest rating was given to the statement: *I reviewed the student teacher’s grammar lesson plans before teaching grammar*.

The second aim of this investigation was to understand the self-perceptions of EFL cooperating teachers about the effectiveness of their roles in developing the teaching of grammar among their student teachers during practicum at schools. The data presented above indicated that the average mean of the cooperating teachers’ practices on the four subscales of the instrument was 4.04 on a 5-point scale. In other words this was 80.8%.

To answer the third question of this investigation, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to investigate the relationship between the participating cooperating teachers’ attitudes towards the teaching of grammar and their self-perceptions of their own roles and practices in developing the student teachers’ strategies of teaching grammar as shown in Table 9 below.
The third aim of this study was to explain any relationship that may exist between cooperating teachers’ experience, attitudes towards the teaching of grammar and their self-perceptions of their practices and roles in preparing the student teachers to teach grammar. Thus, the study correlated practicum cooperating teachers’ experience with their self-perceptions of their own attitudes towards the teaching of grammar as well as with their self-perceptions of their own roles and practices in developing the student teachers’ strategies of teaching grammar as shown in Table (9) above. The results revealed significant experience differences in cooperating teachers' perceptions of their attitudes towards the teaching of grammar and their personal attributes, but not on the other subscales of modeling, pedagogical knowledge or feedback.

Furthermore, the results provided empirical evidence for the association between the cooperating teachers’ attitudes towards the teaching of grammar and their self-perceptions of their own practices in developing their student teachers’ strategies of teaching grammar. In other words, the results indicate a high level of interrelatedness. The existence of these relations would
suggest the existence of multidimensionality of the cooperating teachers' self-perceptions and practices in supervising the teaching of English grammar. That is, self-perception is a multifaceted phenomenon, and participants may have multiple self-perceptions of their roles and behaviors in developing the student teachers’ strategies of teaching grammar. The results also indicated highly significant correlations among the subscales of modeling, personal attributes, pedagogical knowledge and feedback.

The results also showed that statements related to the cooperating teachers’ self-perceptions of teaching grammar (Table 3) had higher scores than those related to their actual practices of supervising the teaching of grammar (Tables 5–8). In other words, the more they had a view that “all teachers should be able to teach grammar”, the more likely they were to self-report their own practices to supervise the student teachers in grammar teaching. Thus, our results confirmed that cooperating teachers’ self-perceptions on teaching grammar are positively related to their own practices in supervising the teaching of grammar. The existence of these correlations underlines the relevance of cooperating teachers’ attitudes relating to their own self-perceptions of their own practices in supervising their student teachers.

The fourth question asks: How do EFL practicum cooperating teachers perceive the ability of teaching grammar of most of their student teachers? To answer the question stated above, the cooperating teachers were asked to rate the ability of teaching grammar of most of their supervisees (student teachers) and their responses were as follows:

**Table 10: Student Teachers’ Ability of Teaching Grammar as Perceived by Cooperating Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST’s Ability in Teaching G</th>
<th>No of Supervisees</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>53.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ST = student teachers   G= grammar

The results shown in Table 10 above, indicate that more than half (53.2%) of the EFL practicum cooperating teachers thought that most of the student teachers had an above average ability of teaching English grammar, while 36.2% of the cooperating teachers thought that the student teachers they supervised had an average ability of teaching grammar. Furthermore, 8.5% of the cooperating teachers rated the student teachers’ ability of teaching grammar as excellent and 2.1% of them rated the student teachers’ ability of teaching grammar as below average.
The cooperating teachers were asked how they would describe most of the student teachers’ attitudes towards grammar teaching and their responses were as shown in Table 11 above. As can be seen from Table 11, just over half (57.4%) of the cooperating teachers thought that their student teachers had a neutral attitude towards the teaching of grammar, while 31.9% of them thought that the student teachers had a positive attitude. Only 10.7% of the cooperating teachers thought that their supervisees had a negative attitude towards the teaching of grammar.

The fourth aim of this investigation was to understand the cooperating teachers’ self-perceptions about the effectiveness and attitudes of most of their supervisees in their skills of teaching grammar during practicum at schools. The results revealed that slightly higher than half of the cooperating teachers rated their student teachers in the category above average in their abilities to teach English grammar. Similarly, more than half of the participant rated their student teachers as having a neutral attitude towards the teaching of grammar.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study was undertaken in an attempt to investigate Omani cooperating teachers’ self-perceptions and views on their own roles and practices in developing the student teachers’ EFL grammar teaching during practicum at schools. The results indicated that the participants, as a whole, performed competently in most of their expected practices pre, during and post live classroom observations. Their modeling teaching and personal attributes were areas of strength, but their providing student teachers with feedback was weak and, therefore, it should be improved. The results provided an empirical evidence for the association between the Omani cooperating teachers’ self-report of their attitudes towards the teaching of grammar and their self-perception of their actual practices in supervising grammar teaching.

The findings of the present study provided a basis for understanding Omani cooperating teachers’ beliefs and practices in developing their student teachers’ EFL grammar teaching. This understanding may help practicum supervisors improve their practices. In line with the findings of this study, the following educational implications were identified:

1. Universities and cooperating schools should set selection criteria for cooperating teachers and university supervisors based on their qualifications, training and experience.
2. University supervisors should pay special attention to new cooperating teachers, assuming the duties of practicum supervisors. They need to provide them with a brief training and constant advice to promote their performance.

3. University supervisors are expected to be familiar with the student teachers’ strengths and weaknesses. Thus, cooperating teachers should consult them in assigning suitable classes to student teachers.

4. Practicum supervisors should realize the complexities of the supervisor-student teacher relationship and it should not be a top-down relationship, but should be built on negotiation and dialogue between the two sides.

5. Cooperating teachers should vary their supervisory styles and use different styles with different student teachers instead of adhering to a certain style.

It should be noted that the scope of the study reported here is limited in terms of the following aspects. It is based on the self-perceptions of the participants as expressed in response to the 40 items of the questionnaire distributed on five domains. Furthermore, the population of this study is limited to 47 Omani female cooperating teachers in Al-Batinah region in the Sultanate of Oman during the academic year 2010/2011. The participants were not chosen randomly, and therefore, caution should be taken in making generalizations from the results to other contexts. Considering other factors such as the respondents’ gender, rural and urban cooperating schools, etc., could also help to provide a clearer picture of Omani cooperating teachers’ self-perceptions of their practices in regard to teaching EFL grammar. Future research studies should use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to deepen our understanding of the issues that were not covered in the present study. Furthermore, a recommendation for further research that could follow the present one be the need to investigate the following:

a. To survey the self-perceptions of the Omani student teachers about their cooperating teachers’ factual roles and practices in developing their EFL grammar teaching.

b. To conduct a comparative study of the self-perceptions of the university supervisors’ practices in developing their students’ grammar teaching skills and that of the cooperating teachers.

c. To conduct a comparative study of the self-perceptions of both the cooperating teachers and the student teachers to explore the dis/agreements between those who supervise and those who are supervised during practicum at schools.

d. To investigate the cooperating teachers’ self-perceptions on other subject specific supervising practices such as vocabulary, reading, writing, and listening and speaking.

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References


LMD New System in the Algerian University

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Abstract

The issues addressed in this work concern primarily the understanding of the licence/bachelor, master, doctorate (LMD) system as a new reform, which has been recently introduced to basic higher education in Algerian universities and its influence on teaching English as a foreign language. Through this paper, we look at to what extent the LMD system influences our understanding and learning. This will contribute to the improvement of the way of studying the process of learning and teaching English, the development of new curriculum, and the understanding of language in use pragmatically.

Keywords: LMD system; Teaching EFL, university education, higher education reform
1. Introduction

Last decades witnessed an immense quantitative evolution of higher education in Algeria. There was an important growth in terms of its infrastructure – be it material or human; this growth was followed by a succession of problems and issues that led to a gradual decadence of the teaching and learning quality at university level. Besides, there was a serious disagreement between social demands, market demands and what the university produced. This fact proved the malfunctioning of the old system implemented in the Algerian universities since the independence of this country.

The classical (old) system, i.e., four years bachelor, two years magister - four years doctorate system, did not respond to main challenges imposed by the changing situation of economy, of politics and of the society in Algeria, an important shareholder of many European countries. The changing situation led the government and education policy makers to re-think the educational system in Algeria and to integrate a new system that can correspond and respond to socio-economic mutations contributing to a significant evolution of this country. As matter of fact, a decision was made to implement the European educational system known as LMD – Licence - Master - Doctorate in 2004. (See “Réformes de enseignements supérieurs”, Juin 2007, the Ministry of Higher Education)

The implementation of the licence/bachelor, master, doctorate (LMD) system in the Algerian university has been examined by many Algerian researchers in terms of its evaluation and assessment. However, in this paper, we are interested in its novelty and reliability, as a new reform, and its impact on teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Although some studies specifically deal with LMD and its implementation in the Algerian context, this study was designed to investigate the Algerian EFL students and teachers’ understanding of teaching and learning English, mainly, the difficulties and challenges they faced and are still facing during the implementation of LMD brought into Algerian universities.

Nowadays, education policy makers emphasise the betterment of EFL students’ levels to get much knowledge in order to secure their jobs through acknowledged degrees and high levels of employment because the spread of joblessness, in Algeria, has upset both the government and the stakeholders. From the various opinions of learners, even longer studies are not an end in themselves, and every learner now understands that schools are the funnel one must inevitably go through in order to realize one's ambitions. Aiming to obtain higher degrees is simply a means to access better jobs likely to lead to higher social status (profession, security, wage, etc.). Thus, English language becomes, for EFL students, a dominant subject, an international language and a means to get access to good jobs. Coleman (2010) addresses a similar question by reviewing the functions of English as a foreign language in development. He refers to four areas where English has often been given a role to play: for employability, for international mobility, for unlocking development opportunities, and accessing information as an impartial language.

According to many writers, the emphasis on foreign languages like English (Graddol, 2006; Batibo, 2007) has been regarded as an insignificant contribution by African education policy makers to knowledge and production, but Phillipson (1996) observes, after independence, that those who were first responsible for making English official and developed are African leaders. For instance, in Algeria, prior to independence and after the 1990s, a new revolution came to the surface. The government or the Algerian authorities started new relations with the
USA and they attached little importance to English that was taught in the middle and high schools. Our EFL students had been studying English from the eight grade in the middle school to the third grade of the secondary school up to 2005. English language teaching and learning too, at that time, was catastrophic because of the lack of interest and many other factors such as economic, political, religious, educational, and so on.

According to some older generation teachers, the majority of pupils were not interested in learning English and even French because they focus their studies on mathematics, physics, life sciences and nature and other fields but not languages, i.e., their world was closed or limited to their social life. Moreover, the majority of teachers were not at all interested in the syllabus presented to them and they found it meaningless and boring. About the reasons behind the failure of these teachers, Bouhadiba (2002) states that under the old time-based teaching program, the learner were supposed to learn at the pace “imposed” by the teacher, the text-book, or the course itself. Yet, we know now that not all learners learn at the same pace, nor is the teacher’s output necessarily the same as the learner’s input (Krashen, 1995). Bouhadiba also argues that the failure of a time-based teaching program, no matter where it is implemented (developing or more advanced societies), lies in the way the teacher that he moves on to the next lesson or the next unit to be within the limits of the scheduled teaching program unlike the competency-based approach.

Hence, “The 1990s brought about many changes: English was introduced as an optional second language as of 1992 and, in 1999, an increased awareness of the importance of education led to 6% of the country’s expenditure being devoted to education (http://www.onlinetefl.com/tefl-chalkboard/travel-guides/147-Teach-English-in-Algeria). It can be argued that the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language has taken many steps to improve the way of acquiring and mastering this means for communication to become closer to joining the worldwide community. The question to be answered was how to make it efficient.

Because English has become the most dominant and useful language among many European languages, many governments have adopted various policies that promote ELT and Algeria is no exception. At present, English is considered as a foreign language that is offered as a required subject at all levels of university education. In order to understand and recognize that the efficiency of English language development in the Algerian educational system paves the way for learners to take part in the globalization, our government has made a huge effort to change the ELT policy and some changes were made in the 1990s.

For instance, at university level, recently the LMD system that is applied as a new approach is based on the Communicative Approach that has been implemented in the Algerian university almost in all subjects and specialties. This “international” system was introduced into our universities by August 2003. The LMD system, as the latest new reform applied in the Algerian universities, aims at bringing the Algerian diploma to the universality and the Algerian student to a higher level of learning on the one hand and to the business world on the other.

The introduction of LMD into the Algerian universities should be accompanied by these new ideas for innovative teaching practices to improve the performance of the university system but also lead to greater employability of graduates. Although the text of regulations in the LMD system brings some innovations in assessment and the roles of teachers and students in the
teaching and learning process, it does not offer any solutions to the employment of graduates. Bringing a certain kind of flexibility in assessment of learning, the new article 18 of Decree No. 137 dated 20/06/2009 states that the assessment of skills and knowledge acquisition is based either on a continuous and regular control or by a final exam or a combination of the two modes of control, but priority should be given to continuous monitoring. Thus, the evaluation of students leans now on a set of procedures meant to measure the results of their learning in terms of the grasped knowledge, the deduced comprehension and the acquired competence. In the same way, within the framework of new procedures in the LMD system that the teacher has to be able to pass logic of knowledge controlling to a process of evaluation seems rather feasible.

Another aspect that the LMD system brings into the universities is the new roles of teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. In this respect, the recent pedagogical procedures that were born out of many reflections tend to transform the student, the docile “object” and the passive agent into a principal active agent as the learner in the learning process. Consequently, the role of teachers has been modified for the reason that it suits the freedom given and prescribed for the learner. Thus, teachers have to accept now their role as a mediator, a facilitator of the knowing and the learning processes. Teachers, therefore, are no more the only, exclusive omnipotent of knowledge. They are called to master not only the discipline they teach but also the methodological competencies that allow them to clearly define the objectives of the learning process as well as the referential of the competence on which the control of the learning process is based.

What is more disturbing is the reaction of teachers for whom a considerable effort is displayed to construct offers of innovative formation, but who barely worry about the questions related to the pedagogic practices and in particular those related to the evaluation of students. Despite that, even if the necessity to renovate the contents of formation is not deniable, the demand of a new vision of the pedagogical act is essential and indispensable. This vision has to integrate the actual realities into the considerable increasing of knowledge. Moving from an annual system to a semi-annual system that tolerates the passing to the following year with debts is often conflicting and it imposes an individualized management of students. Moreover, the temporary co-habitation between the two systems until a full disappearance of the classical system renders the organization of teachers and more particularly the evaluation of students more difficult and those that result in the progression and the orientation in the LMD system. We will observe these in the light of our short experience in Mostaganem University.

To investigate how the LMD system functions in the Algerian university and in English departments in particular, this research study discusses some key issues related to the LMD system and how, whether positively or negatively, it would influence ELT. Our research explores aftermaths of LMD implementation in Mostaganem University in particular. It also considers the impact of LMD benefits related to students.

As for the evaluation of this reform as successful or unsuccessful, we believe that we are not yet at the stage of assessing the LMD system in our universities. This work is, then, about an analytical, optimistic and a future perspective regarding the quality of learning that this system may bring to our learners without ignoring or denying its drawbacks and the obstacles that the Algerian university may face to make it successful.
2. Method

Our research work is a tentative attempt to investigate the attitudes of teachers and students towards the implementation of LMD system and its success or failure. This study focuses on mainly the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of the English teachers towards the implementation of the LMD system in Algerian universities, in particular, Mostaganem University?

2. What are the attitudes of students towards the implementation of the LMD system in Algerian universities, in particular, Mostaganem University?

3. What are the teachers and students' opinions about the contribution of the LMD system to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Algerian universities, in particular, Mostaganem University?

4. What are the difficulties and challenges that Algerian teachers of English face in implementing LMD and the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in their English classrooms?

The present study is a cross-sectional survey under qualitative paradigm. In survey research, according to Fraenkel and Wallen, “Researchers are often interested in the opinions of a large group of people about a particular topic or issue. They ask a number of questions, all related to the issue, to find answers” (2010, p. 390). Considering the purpose of the study, in order to collect necessary data, an in-depth interviewing technique is adopted. This technique is also known as unstructured interviewing; it is a type of interview researchers use to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewees’ point of view or situation. It can also be used to explore interesting areas for further investigation. This type of interview is a face-to-face interviewing that involves asking informants open-ended questions, and probing wherever it is necessary to obtain data deemed useful by the researchers. As in-depth interviewing often involves qualitative data, it is also called qualitative interviewing.

It was decided to use in-depth interviewing as the main method to collect data for this study since an interpretative approach (qualitative in nature) was adopted for the investigation. The central concern of the interpretative research is to understand human experiences at a holistic level. Because of the nature of this type of research, investigations are often connected with methods such as in-depth interviewing, participant observation and the collection of relevant documents. Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 46) state that:

The data of qualitative inquiry is most often people's words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour. The most useful ways of gathering these forms of data are participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews, and the collection of relevant documents. Observation and interview data is collected by the researcher in the form of field notes and audio-taped interviews, which are later transcribed for use in data analysis.

There is also some qualitative research being done with photographs and video-taped observations as primary sources of data.
Accordingly, in this project, only using audio-taped interviews was preferred for it was not necessary to film or photograph our informants as the focus of the study does not require this necessity. Our informants were given, orally, a series of questionnaires, and then given time to answer them. Their answers were analyzed considering their linguistic level arising from their points of views as well as their observations towards the new reforms and the integration of the ICT too in the classroom such as the Internet use. What was observed at a linguistic and didactic level in our data analysis is that teaching and learning English as a foreign language in university, in terms of English development came out of not only the new changes and reforms brought to the educational setting but also other means of communication, notably the Internet use and other means of communication widely used among students and teachers too. Hence, our data would be classified according to the number of students (interviewees) selected and their learning level: first year licence LMD, second year licence LMD, first year master and second year master grade.

2.1. Context

The research study took place in Mostaganem; it has been followed and supervised since the LMD new reform was implemented in Mostaganem University in 2005. This location, Mostaganem city, was selected because Mostaganem University is among the pioneering universities to adopt LMD, thus it could provide us with a sample of students and teachers whose characteristics are appropriate for the research study, and as a teacher at Mostaganem University who witnessed the implementation of LMD new reform, we could have this opportunity to do this investigation.

2.2. Participants

For this study, our participants were thirty Mostaganem University English LMD students from L1, L2, M1 and M2 and 10 EFL teachers at Abdelhamid University. To reinforce our work, we have also interviewed 10 English classical or licence students from the second, third and fourth years.

The age range of the informants was between 18 and 22; 70% of these students are acquainted with ICTs but not so familiar with the LMD system because of its newness. The informants, male and female, were chosen purposefully from different levels according to the conditions mentioned before. The reason for their participation in this survey was to check whether the LMD system affects them either positively or negatively and why in both cases. The sampling method used in this study was purposive sampling as considered appropriate in qualitative research. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2010, p. 431), “Researchers who engage in some form of qualitative research are likely to select a purposive sample, that is, they select a sample they feel will yield the best understanding of what they are studying”.

2.3. Data collection instruments

The data collection instruments used in this research study are a semi-structured audio-taped interview guide that contained 10 items and a questionnaire given to the students mentioned before for the purpose of getting some analysis of their experience as the first generation who welcomes this reform. The aim of the audio-taped interview guide was to collect several responses from different informants; the interviewees’ responses were noted down by the
interviewer. The audio-taped interviews helped us analyze students and teachers’ views, i.e., to analyze the depth of the psychological effects the LMD and the integration of ICTs use have on learners.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

This research study was conducted in two phases that took about one year of observation and analyses to follow the process of learning and teaching advancement. It took a considerable time to get accurate results without any subjective judgment. During the first period, we first selected our sample group of students’ level whom we intended to work with, and then started observing them to collect as many views as we could via audio-taped interviews that took the form of questionnaires (See Appendix A, Appendix B, and Appendix C for questionnaires).

3. Data Analysis

After having collected the responses of the students via the audio-taped interviews and their teachers via the questionnaire, we began working on the classification of their positive and negative responses and then display them via bar graphs, attempting to analyze the EFL teachers’ and LMD/Licence EFL students’ positive responses towards the LMD system. We extracted the students’ positive opinions regarding the LMD system. The views of the teachers collected through our questionnaire were used as a tool of argumentation and analysis at the same time to affirm the aim of this study regarding the psychological dimension of the accepted reform imposed on them without any kind of awareness or pedagogical training supplied by higher educational system.

3.1. Teachers’ responses

From the teachers’ comments about the LMD system, in relation to the questionnaire, we have taken into consideration some significant comments. They are as follows:

“The transit, the shift from classical to LMD system, is more in terms of specialization focused teaching units. It is also at the level of high quality teaching that could be reached through the integration of new technologies, i.e., ICT as teaching materials."

“Now, most teachers probably must give more importance to the students’ capacities and learning abilities, and thus more focus is on the teacher vs. learner partnership rapport.”

“Some colleagues were given new modules to teach. It is indeed a difficult task for the teacher, yet it helps most teachers to improve their knowledge, teaching materials and professional capacities.”

“Coordination is necessary for both teachers of the same teaching unit and the students alike. It is useful for teachers as it allows more cooperation and unified courses and syllabi. As for the students, it is a way of providing all students same chances in terms of teaching materials and assessment.”

“LMD intrusion might be more a progress rather than a retreat if all conditions and more technological and teaching materials are provided to the teachers and the students.”

“LMD as a European educational system is based on using new-tech. ICTs help the students, and the teachers, adopt more autonomy in learning and/or teaching.”
3.2. Students’ responses (Licence and LMD)

From the students’ comments about the LMD system, in relation to the questionnaire, we have taken into consideration some significant comments. They are as follows:

“We are said that studying English under the LMD system gives the students more job opportunities and more specialized training.”

“The main difference between classical and LMD system is in terms of the disciplines taught to both— for the LMD they are more focused, and the many chances of passing years for LMD students.”

“Learning English under the LMD system is more specialized and focused.”

“A good learning of EFL depends on the student’s linguistic capacity, and not on the system itself. However, an LMD student is obliged to do more efforts than a classical student because of the nature of the system.”

4. Results and Discussion

The results show that EFL teachers observe and detect many difficulties in implementing LMD in university particularly in their classrooms. These difficulties influenced teachers, students and the educational system. The results suggest that despite the newness of the LMD as a new reform and the lack of supplying more pedagogical training for teachers and students in university before LMD implementation, Algerian teachers are optimistic about the complete adoption of the LMD system, and thus expect that they can face all sorts of problems in overcoming the difficulties and establishing and mastering the use of ICTS in their classrooms. Therefore, some teachers and learners’ views are positive as well as the LMD system can pave the way for them to cross the globe.

From the teachers’ questionnaire, we have analyzed that the two systems, Classical and LMD system, are quite different for teachers and students. The modules, the scoring, the assessment, the teaching materials and above all the teacher-learner rapport all are distinct in the LMD than in the classical system. Such as (1) the scoring: Classical system or licence students have two terms of exams and two makeup-exams a year while English LMD students have two semesters each one is composed of three kinds of evaluation: everyday control what is called regular control (RC or CC as it is known in Algerian universities, TD, i.e., everyday tasks and TP own or personal work) as well as the final exam and each semester is followed by makeup exam), (2) Some teaching units are similar to those already been taught under the classical system; however, the materials, the pedagogy and at times the program change. For instance, literature as a module must provide the students first basic technical terms in “literary genres”, then as a second year, the students are to be familiar with literary analysis.; this did not exist in the classical system.

Moreover, the licence students have been taught traditional grammar only while the LMD students have more chance in learning grammar, they have another module called “morph syntax” which is divided into two sub disciplines the first is syntax and the second is morphology. Morph syntax made so as to better teaching grammar and then provide the LMD students with more information and techniques in teaching/learning English grammar. The latter reflects what grammar means in convention between morphology, which is the scientific study of the structure and form of words and phrases, and syntax, which is the grammatical arrangement of words in sentences. For that reason, the organizing committee that is responsible for updating
the curriculum development decided to add an extra module called "morph syntax" to reinforce teaching and learning English grammar.

Nowadays, to qualify for teaching students, either LMD or licence students, we require perfect teaching materials in order to develop the individuals’ capacity; for instance, the integration of the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the classroom and mainly the use of the Internet is more in terms of specialization-focused teaching units as well the integration of ICTs in the current system, the LMD system, is also at the level of high quality teaching that could be reached through the integration of new technologies as teaching materials. These disciplines are so current and so focused, thus they are important as new teaching units that meet the needs of English studies under the LMD system.

According to most teachers probably the LMD system purpose must give more importance to the students’ capacities and learning abilities, and thus more focus is on the teacher vs. learner partnership rapport. The LMD new reform might be new up to now; assessing in the LMD system might be seen as complicated for most teachers mainly those in charge of tutorials. The latter requires much coordination which is necessary for both teachers of the same teaching unit and the students. It is useful for teachers as it allows more cooperation and unified courses and syllabi. As for the students, it might be more a progress rather than reducing and condensing years of graduation and post-graduation. The next sections are devoted to show the readers the variable rates of LMD students’ positive responses, licence students’ positive responses and EFL teachers’ positive responses.

4.1 M2 and M1, L3, L2 and L1 students’ positive responses to the new reform

Figure 1 represents the variable rates of LMD students’ positive responses. Involved students from L1, L2, L3, M1 and M2 respectively stand for the transitory period of LMD implementation in English studies department of Mostaganem university. The blue sky colour indicates how, from 2009 to 2010, the percentage of LMD students’ positive responses was, the brown colour indicates how, from 2010 to 2011, the percentage of LMD students’ positive responses has become and the green colour indicates how, from 2011 to 2012, the percentage of LMD students’ positive responses become (See Figure 1).
4.1.1. Interpretation of Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the variable rates of LMD students’ positive responses. We read through the graph changing positiveness in students’ comprehension and conception of LMD.

- For M2, which is the first LMD promotion in this department, their positive responses over the LMD have increased from 60% in the year 2009-2010, to 63% in the year 2010-2011, to a higher rate of 75% in 2011-2012. This rising of M2 positive responses regarding the LMD implementation may be interpreted as a successful first promotion for which important consideration in pedagogical materials and technological means was provided.

- For M1, however, the rate of positiveness over LMD decreases from 60% in 2009-2010 to 56% in 2010-2011, and then a re-increasing to 70% in 2011-2012. The reasons behind the decreasing positive attitude towards LMD go back to a series of events as well as strikes. The academic year 2010-2011 was a year of long term strikes led first by LMD students, and then by students of classical system. The strikes came at a critical moment to shake the students’ trust and beliefs vis-à-vis the viability and credibility of LMD in further contexts, mainly the professional arena. Most students were calling for the official integration of MA graduate students in the status of secondary school teachers, professional grade of 13 and 14. The re-increasing of positive responses goes back to official decisions responding positively to the above quests and re-assuring as such LMD students that this system is a best choice. A same interpretation is given to L3. L2 and L1 are those students who believed in the reforms brought by LMD as an international system and thus the rates vary between 56% as a minimal percentage to 70% as a maximum reflecting then that students are still indecisive about a complete positive attitude and believing in the LMD as a good reform.

4.2. Licence students’ positive responses to the new reform

Figure 2 represents the variable rates of Licence students’ positive responses to the new reform. Involved students licence students from second, third and fourth year. The blue sky colour indicates how, from 2009 to 2010, the percentage of Licence students’ positive responses to the new reform was, the brown colour indicates how, from 2010 to 2011, the percentage of Licence students’ positive responses to the new reform has become and the green colour indicates how, from 2011 to 2012, the percentage of Licence students’ positive responses become (See Figure 2).
4.2.1. Interpretation of Figure 2

Figure 2, displaying Licence or classical system students’ positive responses regarding LMD reflects two facts: first, fourth year students who did not choose, deliberately, LMD embody a legitimate fear over the unknown system. We read 40% in 2009-2010, then increasing to 50% in 2010-2011 and reaching only 55% in 2011-2012. These percentages express the permanent doubt over the viability of LMD as a new reform for fourth and even third year students. However, second year students, after witnessing serious official reactions favoring LMD as system, the positive attitude towards this reform has increased from 40% in 2009-2010, to 50% in 2010-2011 and surprisingly to 70% in 2011-2012. Thus, a second fact we may deduce is that, for younger classical system promotions, LMD is the best choice but it is the difficulty and the complexity, to their minds, of this system that prevented them studying under the new reform.

4.3 EFL teachers’ positive responses to the new reform

Figure 3 represents the variable rates of EFL teachers’ positive responses to the new reform. The blue sky colour indicates how, from 2009 to 2010, the percentage of EFL Teachers’ positive responses to the new reform was, the brown colour indicates how, from 2010 to 2011, the percentage of EFL teachers’ positive responses to the new reform has become and the green colour indicates how, from 2011 to 2012, the percentage EFL teachers’ positive responses to the new reform become (See Figure 3).
4.3.1. Interpretation Figure 3

Figure 3 displaying the changing rates of positive responses provided by teachers of Mostaganem English studies department reflects the increasing will and optimistic attitude towards LMD as a new reform. We read that rates have increased from 55% in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 to 70% in 2011-2012. This finding is the result of serious efforts made by the pedagogic stuff in this department to help students and teachers alike to believe in the success of LMD vis-à-vis ELT. More technological means were provided; more awareness was perceived in the teaching materials provided by teachers and an increasing optimistic perception of LMD as a reform that would promote English teaching in this department.

4.4 Comparison between the LMD and classical teaching of the English language

- From the licence informants’ responses, the LMD students studying English under the LMD system are given more job opportunities and more specialized training, so they are really satisfied for their choice unlike the other licence students, those who are not involved in the research as the LMD students. For instance, our ministry is going to give them the right to share the PhD students' opportunities to get and have part in training abroad to improve their English while licence students not under the LMD system do not have this right.
- Graduating with a licence of four years is better than that of the LMD system. Licence students can teach with their diplomas in secondary schools and/or middle schools while L3 students cannot teach with their degree of L3. Learning English in three years, for LMD students, is difficult, intensive and it contains loaded and full programs.
- The main difference is in terms of the disciplines taught to both - for the LMD, they are more focused, and the many chances of passing years for LMD students.
- Teaching and learning English under the LMD system is more specialized and focused.
- An LMD student is obliged to make more efforts than a classical student because of the nature of the system.

5. Conclusion

All through the present paper, the main issue addressed was the way the LMD system has affected the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Department of English Studies at Mostaganem University. To conceive this influence, a research project was conducted on different groups involved in this educational system: LMD students, teachers and Licence students. Through their positive responses towards the LMD as a viable system, we come to argue that the implementation of the LMD system in English studies departments will promote the teaching of EFL in our universities because, as presented in a previous section, the LMD, in essence, is a system which aims at bringing new ideas in terms of its innovated pedagogic practices meant to improve the output of the university system as well as reach a greater number in employing students graduated.

To conclude, despite some negative aspects of the LMD system related to its novelty, this reform is perceived to be more beneficial and valuable for both EFL students and teachers compared to the classical system applied previously. For the students, it offers internationally recognized degrees and a profound acquisition of English. For teachers, it endorses improving their professional, pedagogical knowledge and skills.
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References


Appendix A: The teacher’s questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data about the teachers’ comments and it contains the following 10 items.

1. As an LMD teacher who has been undertaking the previous experience, i.e. the classical system, how is the classical system different from the LMD?
2. According to your own experience as an EFL teacher in both systems, where does the shift or transit from the classical system to LMD lie in English teaching?
3. To what extent did your teaching and pedagogy as an EFL university teacher change? How is this change perceived?
4. Are you in charge of LMD teaching units similar to those you have taught in classical system? If yes, is there a change in teaching similar modules under distinct systems?
5. Have you been given the responsibility of teaching new disciplines under the LMD system? If yes, have you faced given obstacles in teaching new materials?
6. Is coordination among teachers of the same teaching unit valuable and worth being adopted by English departments? If yes, in which sense?
7. How good are your knowledge and your understanding of new scoring and new ways of assessment under the LMD system as an English teacher?
8. Because the LMD system might be new up to now, might assessing in this system be seen as complicated for most teachers, mainly for those in charge of the tutorials?
9. Do you see this experience of LMD implementation in our country contribute to enhance ELT in the classroom?
10. What is your role in this experience? Is it positive or negative experience to enable the learners to cross the globe?

Appendix B: The licence students’ questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data about the licence students’ comments and it contains the following 10 items.

1. As an EFL student, but under a classical system, how would you evaluate your learning and capacities vis-à-vis an LMD EFL student?
2. Why did you choose to carry on university studies under the classical system?
3. What do you know about the LMD as a new international, educational system?
4. How is a student of classical system different from an LMD student in terms of knowledge background, language acquisition and learning, and further post-studies chances?
5. Do you think that what you have been provided with all through your four or three years of university studies equipped you with the necessary knowledge and language command you need for further ambitions and perspectives? How?
6. Which is more specialized and focused, English learning under the classical system or English learning under the LMD system?
7. What impact does the exclusion of classical system students from master studies have on you?
8. Knowing that master contests will not come to an end until all promotions of classical systems graduate, do you prefer to sit for a master contest in the near future? Justify your choice.
9. You were on strike for two months during 2010. Does this strike impact on you positively or negatively?
10. You are said to be less competent than LMD students of the same level, do you believe in such a stereotype? If yes, why? If no, why?

**Appendix C: The LMD students’ questionnaire**

The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data about the LMD students’ comments and it contains the following 10 items.

1. As an EFL student, but under the LMD system, how would you evaluate your learning and capacities vis-à-vis a licence student?
2. Some years before, you could have chosen to study English under the classical system. Why did you choose to carry on university studies under the LMD system?
3. What do you know about the LMD as a new international, educational system?
4. How is a student of LMD system different from a licence/classical student in terms of knowledge background, language acquisition and learning, and further post-studies chances?
5. Do you think that what you have been provided with all through your three years of university studies equip you with the basic knowledge and the appropriate language command you need for further ambitions and perspectives? How?
6. Which is more specialized and focused, English learning under the classical system or English learning under the LMD system?
7. What impact does the exclusion of classical system students from master studies have on you as an LMD EFL student?
8. Can you perceive the difference between the two degrees (Classical System or LMD)?
9. Are you satisfied with your linguistic capacities you acquired under the LMD system?
10. You are said to be more competent than Licence students of a same level, do you believe in such a stereotype? If yes, why? If no, why?
Prospective EFL Teachers’ Perceptions of the Teaching Practice Experience at AUST

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Abstract:
This study intended to explore prospective EFL teachers’ perception toward the Teaching Practice (TP) they have experienced during their study in the TEFL program (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at Ajman University of Science and Technology (AUST) in the UAE. It seeks answers mainly to questions related to the prospective teachers' perception on: 1) the TP in general; 2) cooperating teachers (schools’ teachers); 3) the academic supervisor; and 4) the school. The data were taken from a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 24 close items and three open ended questions. It was distributed to seventy (70) prospective teachers. The findings of the study showed that the participants' perceptions regarding the TP were generally positive. The participants expressed their appreciation of the cooperating teachers, the academic supervisors, and the host schools.

Keywords: Prospective teachers, teaching practice
Introduction

Teacher Educators, accrediting agencies, and administrators view the TP experience as the most significant component of teacher education programs (Soares & Soares, 2002 and Simpson, 2006). It is a crucial aspect of teacher training program. It is the period when student teachers are guided to put into practice the theories and principles of language learning and teaching which they have learnt in the classroom, as they come in contact with real life situations. Furthermore, besides teaching activities, student teachers are exposed to professional activities, which are part of the teacher roles in schools. Clark, Smith, Newby & Cook (1985) and Lemma (1993) consider the teaching experience as one of the most factors which influences the preparation of student teachers. More, the pre-service teacher’s preparation is considered “essential in training and helping future teachers develop pedagogical skills” (Slick, 1997, p. 714) Student teachers’ relationship with their supervisors, cooperating teachers, and host schools has been considered as the most important part of the teaching experience. This study explores teacher students’ perceptions of the TP. A knowledge of these perceptions should enable teacher educators to be sensitive to the 'teaching realities' the participants faced in the schools which are according to Alexander & Galbraith (1997) " universally proclaimed as essential elements in teacher training” ( p. 18).

Literature review

Terms like the practice teaching, student teaching, field studies, practicum, internship, infield experience, and so on are used to refer to the teaching practice (Taneja, 2000). The term ‘practice teaching/ teaching practice’ includes all the learning experiences of student teachers in schools. It has three major connotations: (1) the practicing of teaching skills and acquisition of the role of a teacher; (2) the whole range of experiences that students go through in schools; and (3) the practical aspects of the course as distinct from theoretical studies (See Stones and Morris, 1972).

The importance of the TP for preparing prospective teachers is realized (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Johnson, 1996; Farrell, 2001; Crookes, 2003; Walsh & Elmslie, 2005; Simpson, 2006). Providing the student teachers with opportunities to connect between their theoretical knowledge and practical experiences should be the first priority of teacher educators (Yost, Sentner & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). However, research studies such as those by Ward and Haigh (2004) and Dobbins (1996) have shown that student teachers’ learning in the practicum is complex.

The TP has been viewed as critical to the development of trainees. It is their first hands-on experience with teaching. It creates opportunities for trainees to develop their pedagogical skills. For Hascher, Cocard, and Moser (2004, p. 626) the TP ‘is the best way to acquire professional knowledge and competences as a teacher’. It provides trainees the opportunity to utilize the various teaching methods in actual classroom conditions under the close supervision of competent and experienced teachers. According to Richards (1990), Grandall (1994), and Johnson (1996), integrating extensive and intensive practical experiences throughout teacher education programs provide student teachers with opportunities to link theory to practice. Further, the TP experience plays a significant role in forming of trainees’ perceptions on their role and responsibilities as future teachers (Harlin et al, 2001). Thus it sets the stage for success or failure in student teaching and a trainee's future in education may be determined by what happens during their training period. Student teachers consider the TP experience as the most
significant element in their programmes (Zeichner, 1990). Quite often trainees claim that they benefit more from spending time in the field watching others teach than from attending sessions at the university or colleges. This has been supported by Tsui (2003) in her discussion on teachers' personal values and beliefs. She claims that teachers consider classroom experience the most important source of knowledge about teaching.

A large part of the TP literature has focused on the role of the associate teacher and been viewed as critical in developing student teachers career (Guyton, 1989; Glickman & Bey, 1990; Cameron & Wilson, 1993; Burgess & Butcher, 1999; Mayer & Austin, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hayes, 2001). Ball (2000) has indicated that learning how to teach depends on how an associate teacher helps the student teachers to understand the links between subject matter knowledge and pedagogy. Mayer and Austin (1999) also stressed the important role the associate teacher played in helping student teachers negotiate their own professional identities within a reflective and goal directed framework. Adey and Speedy (1993) and Hawkey (1998) also emphasized the significant role that both practicum supervisor and a cooperating teacher may play in the success of student teachers in their teaching practice experience. For Booth (1993), the cooperating teacher is perceived as the most significant person in the student teachers’ experiences. Emans (1983) and McIntyre (1984) also consider the influence of the cooperating teacher on student teachers as effective as much if not more than any other person in pre-service teacher education.

Studies related to the student teachers’ perceptions (Williams, 1989; Divins, 1991; Wilson & Cameron, 1994) have reported that the role and the quality of the host schools are factors contributing to the success of the TP experience of the trainees. Further, Kelly’ study (1993) has found that the majority of the conceptions of teaching developed during the practicum are based on the school’s practices and procedures rather than models of teaching promoted in university or college classes.

It is recognized that reflection and the linking of field experiences to theory require a lengthy time commitment of both university lecturers and students (Wentworth et al, 1999). However, it seems that it is difficult for universities’ faculty/staff to maintain adequate time and school visits. Even when a trainee is seen in the host school by an academic lecture (i.e., university lecture), discussion often takes short time and usually focuses on immediate classroom practice and events of the school day (Wentworth et al, 1999). Another problem dealt with in the practicum literature is the lack of integration between the student teaching experience and the university academic courses (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1989; Schlagel et al, 1996; Cohen, 1999).

The purpose of a 'university supervisor' is to endeavor to make some connections between the two contexts of the school and university. Nevertheless, it is observed that supervisory visits are made, sometimes, by part-time staff who have not taught university courses and therefore they face difficulties in making links between theories and practice. Hamlin (1997) has also discussed the disconnection between the university faculty and the cooperating teacher.

The AUST TEFL Program

TEFL program at AUST is a four-year program, which awards the students a B. Ed degree. This program went through considerable development in the last few years in order to meet the accreditation requirements and uphold its academic responsibilities towards the society and its candidates. Therefore, it is considered one of the fewest accredited programs in the Middle East. It aims to prepare prospective TEFL teachers in personal, professional, and
specialist competencies simultaneously in order to provide "the local society and educational institutions with qualified teachers of the English language" (AUST, 2005, p. 118).

A significant part of this program is the TP. It is a 9-credit hour course which students register for in the final semester of their undergraduate study. They are required to be trained for a full semester (i.e. 16 weeks). It is treated as an experience not to be taken before completing significant courses related to language, pedagogy, and personal development.

At the beginning of the first/second semester of the fourth year, trainees are placed in host schools with an experienced English teacher, who is appointed as a cooperating teacher to practice teaching English for a whole semester in their final semester. The main requirement of the trainees in the practicum is to observe their cooperating teachers teach in their classrooms and gradually to start teaching on their own. This usually starts after a short period of getting acquainted with the school. The trainees are assessed by their academic supervisors and cooperating teachers who serve as mentors as well as assessors. The university supervisor has the lion’s share regarding grading trainees (70%), 20% for the cooperating teacher and 10% is for the school director (AUST, 2007). It is ensured that trainees are provided with school environment where they can put into practice what they have learned throughout their course of study.

The schools in which the students are placed are both public and private schools. The majority of the teachers in these schools are from other Arab countries. Many of these teachers might not even have received any effective preservice training themselves (Loughrey et al., 1999). Further, these teachers, according to Alwan (2007) are overloaded with school work duties.

The Aim of the Study

This study tries to determine the perceptions of the TEFL student teachers regarding their teaching practice experience hoping to provide the researcher and the concerned parties some insights to understand the strength and weaknesses of the TP component and thus, consequently, contribute to its improvement.

Study Questions

1. How do prospective teachers perceive/evaluate the TP in general?
2. How do prospective teachers evaluate the cooperating teachers?
3. How do prospective teachers evaluate the academic supervisor?
4. How do prospective teachers evaluate the host school?
5. What remarks and suggestions would the participants make concerning the TP?

Significance of the Study

This study is considered the second one conducted on the TP of the Faculty of Education of AUST whose results would provide valuable data to both applied linguists and decision-makers in making changes and improvements in the teaching practice component. Moreover, this study is the only study which includes open ended questions which may give more insights into the process of the TP.
Statement of the problem

Faculty of Education at AUST has encouraged evaluation and improvement attempts, specifically in the development of its research and accreditation process. TEFL program of AUST is one of the programs in the UAE which should always comply with the accreditation needs stated by the Ministry of Higher Education; therefore, follow up evaluation of their practices is essential. Further, providing a quality education for those who will be teaching at the Gulf schools can be only achieved through consistent and systematic evaluation of teacher preparation.

Limitations

This study is limited to the population surveyed: TEFL student teachers in the Faculty of Education, AUST, UAE. However, the insights gained from this study can be worth taking into account in similar programs in the UAE and other Gulf countries.

Methodology

The instrument

The instrument of this study is a questionnaire. It underwent a four-stage process. First, the researcher surveyed related literature. Second, a first draft was created; it consisted of 36 items. Third, it was given to six members of the educational and TEFL departments at Ajman University, who are experts in educational research, evaluation, and TEFL education to ensure face and content validity. Fourth, guided by the experts’ comments and notes, a final draft was developed. It consisted of two parts: the first one included 24 closed items and the second part included three open ended questions. The closed items of this instrument were tested for the internal consistency reliability estimate by using Cronbach’s alpha, which yielded 0.88. The first part of the questionnaire was designed on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” with values 1-5 assigned to each alternative.

Participants

The participants of the study were 75 female student teachers from AUST, TEFL Department at Ajman and Fujairah campuses, who had done the teaching practice. They were selected on the basis of their availability. Seventy (70) participants returned the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted by using SPSS 10.0. The basic descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and frequency accounts were computed for all the data. The mean was computed for determining the extent to which the participants agreed or disagreed with the items referring to the TP and the factors affecting it. Standard deviation was used to measure the homogeneity or heterogeneity of responses for each item. The frequency accounts were used to calculate the answers gathered from the open-ended questions.
Results and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, simple descriptive statistics, means and standard deviations, were used to analyze the responses. The results and discussion for this study are reported on the bases of the key questions that were formulated for the study.

Question One

How do prospective teachers perceive/evaluate the TP in general?

As seen in Table 1, given below, the results of the perceptions’ participants regarding the teaching practice were generally positive, this can be seen from the total mean scores (3.90) of the statements (i.e. items 13, 5, 9, 15, 16, 19) meant to answer question 1.

Most of the participants of this study strongly agreed (Mean=4.43) that the teaching experience developed their teaching and classroom management style, and also they strongly showed their satisfaction with the teaching practice experience (see the mean scores of item 5). This is similar to the findings of the study conducted by Hoffman et al. (2005) which emphasized the value of pre-service programmes on teachers’ effective teaching experiences. Moving from the university to host schools had been one of the concerns of the researcher, who used to train students teachers in UAE for eight years. It was expected that the participants would strongly disagree with the statement number 9 due to the traffic jam and the long distance between the university and most of the host schools. However, as shown from the mean score (3.35), they considerably agreed with the statement. That is, they considered it not a problem. It could be because they used to commute by the buses of the university, which according to the experience of the researcher were convenient.

The participants’ perceptions concerning the sufficiency of the periods observed by supervisors were positive as well. As shown in Table 1, the mean scores of item 15 is quite high, 3.82. Further, as indicated from the mean scores, 4.25, of item 16, the majority of the participants taught more than three periods, which could imply that these student teachers highly valued the quantity of the periods a week they taught.

The length of the TP was not highly valued as the quantity of periods taught every week by participants (see the mean scores, 3.5, of item 19). However, it could still be considered reasonable for what was expected by the researcher, who used to hear trainees complaining about the length of the TP as being not enough. This result is remarkable as it fulfills the most important component of the TEFL program at AUST, the practice side, which according to Richardson (1996), could shape prospective teachers’ conceptions about teaching, learning and school contexts since they complete their field-based components with positive gains and experiences.
Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Participants’ Perceptions Regarding the Teaching Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. The teaching practice experience developed my own teaching and classroom management.</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I was generally satisfied with the teaching practice experience.</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. It was very easy for me to move from the university to school.</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The number of periods observed by the supervisors were sufficient to evaluate my teaching.</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I taught more than three periods a week.</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The length of the teaching practice was adequate.</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL AVERAGE SCORES

3.90 1.07

Question Two

How do prospective teachers evaluate the cooperating teachers?

As reviewed in Section 2, a need for positive, personal and professional relationships between the cooperating and the student teachers to ensure the success of the TP experience is emphasized.

Five statements were used to measure the perceptions of the student teachers regarding their cooperating teachers. As shown from the total mean scores of these statements, given in Table 2, the student teachers high level of satisfaction regarding the overall quality of the cooperating teacher’s performance was obvious. This result contradicts what was usually held that the participants would not favour the cooperating teachers due to complain some prospective teachers used frequently to repeat.

The participants strongly agreed that the cooperating teachers were very experienced, friendly, beneficial, cooperative and provided frequent and valuable feedback during the TP. In other words, continuous and daily accompaniment of the student teachers’ practices, the overall support given to their learning to the teaching process, or the important values and knowledge conveyed by this experienced professionals teachers were clearly appreciated and referred to by the prospective teachers. Such positive perceptions of the effectiveness of the cooperating teachers can play a very important role in motivating student teachers to try to benefit from the TP experience. They are encouraged to seek help, support, gain experience that may directly or indirectly prompt them to take responsibilities, which were indicated by Nolan and Francis (1992) as an important factor in the learning process, without hesitation or fear.
Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Participants’ Perceptions Regarding the Cooperating Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 The school teachers were very cooperative.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 The school teachers provided frequent and valuable feedback regarding my teaching.</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 I observed experienced teachers at the school.</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 The school teachers were friendly.</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 I benefited a lot from the school teachers.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL AVERAGE SCORES</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That is, the more the trainees have positive attitudes towards the cooperating teachers, the more they make efforts in learning from them how to develop their teaching, which, as mentioned earlier, is one of the main sources. This result supports Cooper (1999) who argues that supervision is a one-to-one relationship where the cooperating teacher and student teacher work together. Guyton and McIntyre (1990) also argue that when cooperating teachers are prepared for their supervisory roles, student teachers develop more positive attitudes which may lead to favor the career in future in general because the student teaching experience plays a significant role in the formation of attitudes and perceptions of preservice teachers regarding their roles and responsibilities as future practitioners. Moreover, Li and Zhang study’s (2000) found that preservice teachers who perceived their cooperating teachers' to be highly efficacious had significantly higher general teaching efficacy than their counterparts.

Question Three

How do prospective teachers evaluate the academic supervisor?

To answer this question, six statements were used. They are, as shown in Table 3, items 1, 2, 4, 7, 12, and 22. They scored generally remarkable high means. This result indicates that the participants’ perceptions regarding their academic supervisors, like their perceptions toward the cooperating teachers, has been found to be very positive. They strongly agreed that the supervisors: 1) allowed them to try new ideas, 2) were helpful, objective, fair and competent, and 3) provided them with:

a) enough guidance both before going to school or teaching each lesson.

b) direct and clear feedback.

This result is really great as it indicates that the role of the academic supervisors has been very effective as it is aimed in the University Teaching Practice manual and therefore the TP experience has been generally done well. The trainees get enough freedom to try/practice theories and ideas they have studied at the university and as a result, course works can be connected with practice especially when the academic supervisors were found helpful, fair and objective in assessing the trainees. As Feedback is regarded essential in the development of the
trainees' professional, personal, and procedural skills, these supervisors used to provide adequate feedback regarding the lesson preparation before and after teaching each lesson, would definitely allow the trainees to learn a lot from the TP for lessons’ preparation process involve these trainees to think, generally speaking, about every single step they follow in dealing with each teaching point and this will have a great impact on the development of their practicum experience. This result supports Zeichner (1990) who indicated that consistent feedback is very significant.

### Table 3
*Means and Standard Deviations of Participants’ Perceptions Regarding the Supervisor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 My supervisor was helpful.</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 I got enough guidance from my supervisor before teaching each lesson.</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The supervisor was objective and fair.</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 My supervisor provided direct and understandable feedback.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 I had enough guidance from the supervisor before starting teaching at the school.</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 The supervisor was competent.</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 My supervisor allowed me to try new ideas in teaching.</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL AVERAGE SCORES</strong></td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question Four

*How do prospective teachers evaluate the host school?*

As argued in Section 2, the host school is considered very important in the success of the teaching experience. One of the objective of the present study was to explore the student teachers’ perceptions of the host school by using five statements (i.e. items 5, 8, 9, 10 and 24). Looking at the data obtained from the descriptive analysis-means and standard deviations—given in Table 4, the participants showed very favorable perceptions towards the host school. They strongly agree that during the teaching practice they felt that they were acceptable members of the host schools. This is seen from the mean scores of item 24 (4.20). Similarly, as shown from the means scores of items 9 and 10 (4.17 and 3.90), the participants strongly appreciate the schools for providing them with the teaching materials. The response of item 8, whose mean score was high as well, statistically justifies clearly the student teachers’ level of satisfaction and appreciations of the schools’ appropriateness and effectiveness for the teaching practice. Such result is significant as it implies the positive role played by the schools which in turn may leave a
positive effect, in the short and long run, on the trainees to: (1) be actively involved in teaching practice as well as in the school activities (2) have good and motivating impression about the work in schools in general. Talvitie et al. (2000) have stressed that carrying out practicum within an atmosphere of friendship and trust strengthen trainees' confidence and encourages them to experiment with new innovative teaching techniques.

Further, as seen in Table 4, item 8, the participants strongly agreed that the schools cooperated significantly with the university as well. This result indicates that the schools have realized their roles for the success of the training and that the university supervisors as well as the concerned members of the faculty of education have succeeded in establishing a good working relation between the university and the host schools.

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations of Participants’ Perceptions Regarding the host School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The school cooperated well with the university.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school environment was appropriate for the teaching practice.</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school gave me the textbooks needed (course books and workbooks) for my student teaching practice.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school gave me the teacher’s book needed for my student teaching practice.</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During my student teaching practice experience, I felt that I was an accepted member of the school team.</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL AVERAGE SCORES</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question five

What remarks and suggestions would the participants make concerning the TP?

The answer of this question was based on the results got from the open-ended questions in order to get more insights to the teaching practice by allowing the participants to write freely about the strong and weak sides of the TP experience and to suggest how to improve it.

All participants, who have answered these open-ended questions, reaffirmed their positive perception regarding the TP and the other related factors i.e. supervisors, cooperating teachers, and the school. As seen in Appendix A, a number of participants have appreciated the school, being trained how to deal with children, helpful school teachers and students, and helpful and cooperating supervisors. Further, these participants have expressed their perception in favour of the TP and the related factors. This strengthens the result gained from the analysis of the 24 closed items. At the same time, it indirectly shows the prospective teachers’ awareness of the role of the TP experience by mentioning significant points such as:

1. Acquiring new experience to apply in the teaching field.
2. Meeting new people with different personalities.
3. Having enough time to get more experience.
4. Freedom to take responsibility.
5. Applying teaching, I applied what I was taught at the university. I learnt a lot from observing the school teachers.
6. Experimenting with new ideas.
7. Having the opportunity to evaluate my way of teaching.

Farther, they provided remarkable suggestions which again show the awareness and understanding of the importance of the TP. As shown in Appendix B, they suggested:

1. Extending the time of the teaching practice.
2. More practice /training on writing the lesson plan.
3. Teaching practice should be more than one course.
4. Dividing the teaching practice into three courses, starting from the second year.
5. Providing student teachers with more background before they go to school.
6. Providing student teachers more chance to observe lessons.
7. Extending the teaching practice to two semesters.

However, as seen in Appendix C, some prospective teachers in this study pointed that they did not like certain things related to the TP such as the principles of school as he/she used to ignore them, taking courses with the TP, practicing teaching in one grade and so on.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the student teachers regarding the teaching practice. The findings of the current study showed that the majority of the participants strongly agreed that the teaching practice experience, school teachers, the academic supervisor, and the host school were effective. Nevertheless, certain participants suggested, in the open-ended questionnaire, the extension of the duration period of the teaching practice, more practice/training of the lesson plan, making the teaching practice more than one course and dividing it into three courses.

Based on the results of this study, an increase in the duration of teaching practice exercise in the TEFL department may be recommended, as a longer period would provide ample time for the practice of professional activities associated with teaching by trainees. Furthermore, it is recommended to carry out the following studies:

1. The relationship between cooperating teachers and student teachers and the relationship between the academic supervisor and the cooperating teacher.
2. The perceptions of the teaching practice cooperating teachers, supervisors and schools principals may help in achieving in depth insights of the effectiveness of the teaching practice.

About the author:

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References


Appendix A: The points which the prospective teachers liked most about the TP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The suitable school atmosphere.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Practicing all the teaching methods.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The helpful school teachers.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Experimenting with new ideas.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learning how to deal with children.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>The textbooks were flexible and easy to get.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The helpful school students.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sharing experience.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>My supervisor who was helpful and cooperative.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>The adequate length of the teaching practice which was useful for me because it allowed me to gain a lot of different ideas that I could use in teaching.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Feeling self-confidence.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>The school teachers were cooperative and gave a lot of ideas.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The availability of the teaching aids like computers, and printers which make the preparation of the materials and the teaching experience easy.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Gaining some skills and benefit from others’ experience to correct our mistakes.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Acquiring new experience to apply in the teaching field.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Having the opportunity to evaluate my way of teaching.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The school teachers helped me to create more new activities and use strategies.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Knowing strong and weak points of my teaching.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Meeting new people with different personalities.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>We taught daily and as real teachers.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Learning how to manage the class.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Small number of students.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Being free to choose the school I wanted.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Observing good teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Teaching a whole period by myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Prospective EFL Teachers’ Perceptions of the Teaching Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>SUGGESTIONS</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Meeting the headmistress.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Freedom to take responsibility.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Having an idea about the situation in the school.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Having enough time to get more experience.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The teaching practice was much easier than the course we studied at the university.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The classroom and playing games with students.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Everyone in the school welcomed me, I could apply what I learnt. It encouraged me to create more new activities of teaching.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>School teachers were cooperative and friendly.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The experience I will not forget.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teaching children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Being creative in teaching and making materials.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The cooperation of the headmistress and supervisor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The supervisor and the cooperating teachers because they enlightened me during the teaching practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Learning how to teach some lessons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Applying teaching, I applied what I was taught at the university. I learnt a lot from observing the school teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The relationship between teachers and students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix B: Prospective teachers’ suggestions for the improvement of the TP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>SUGGESTIONS</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Extending the time of the teaching practice.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>More practice /training on writing the lesson plan.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teaching practice should be more than one course.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dividing the teaching practice into three courses, starting from the second year.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Providing student teachers with more background before they go to school.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Providing student teachers more chance to observe lessons.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>POINTS</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Extending the teaching practice to two semesters.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Having more periods to teach.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Having more micro teaching at the university before going to school.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Having more meetings between trainees and teachers to discuss the problems the trainees face during the TP.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Adding the time of the teaching practice to be more effective and introducing it gradually.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Supervisors should focus on activities especially at schools.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The teaching practice must be at least two courses.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The trainer should treat the student teacher as a trainee not as a teacher or an expert.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The headmaster should know how to deal with trainees.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Making sure that the supervisors do their job honestly.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Ensuring that student teachers apply what they have learnt through practicing creating activities, worksheets, preparing exams and tests.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Being consistent regarding assessing the trainees.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>More cooperation between the school and the university.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Having the instructional means and equipment which aid the teacher to accomplish the lesson.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix C:** The points which the prospective teachers did not like about the TP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The principles of school were not friendly and they used to ignore us all time.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Having courses with the teaching practice.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Practicing teaching only in one grade.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Going to school without guidance from the supervisor; we had no clear guidance how to teach, deal with problems and how to evaluate the class.
5. The school was not prepared to have us.
6. Doing many activities at schools.
7. Lack of equipment and materials.
8. Moving from school to the university.
9. The school and the school teachers were not helpful.
10. The school teachers were not cooperative enough.
11. The school and school teachers did not have an idea about the nature of the teaching practice.
12. Our supervisor was not helpful.
13. The school was far away.
14. I taught the same stage (it is better to teach primary and secondary).
15. There was not enough time for discussing and evaluating our teaching.
16. It took us a long time to adapt with the members of the school.
17. I faced difficulties in managing the class/managing the time of the period.
18. Dealing with pupils.
19. Practicing with the same group of student-teachers and with one cooperating teacher.
Teaching Literature to Foreign Language Learners as a Medium for Cultural Awareness and Empathy

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Abstract:
This paper synthesizes and extends research on the growing body of evidence indicates that teaching literature to L2 learners can provide a number of valuable outcomes, including helping students to understand and appreciate other cultures different from their own. Literature provides useful examples of syntax and language usage in different genres, introducing a level of enjoyment to the learning experience and encouraging L2 learners to pursue additional readings in the target language. The opportunity for immersion in the target culture takes the students to another level of appreciation of the culture and civilisation of the target language. To determine how these desirable outcomes can be implemented in second-language classrooms, this paper provides a review of the relevant scholarly literature of teaching literature to L2 learners in general and as a medium to bridge the gap between cultures in particular. Due to the increase in the pace of globalised communications enables second-language (L2) students to become more proficient and enthusiastic about their learning, teaching literature in the target language has taken new relevance and importance. Examples of the use of literature in the author’s Arabic language classes are provided throughout. A summary of the research and important findings are presented in the conclusion.

Keywords: Arabic language, Arabic literature, pedagogy, second language learners, cultural awareness, linguistic competency, empathy.
Introduction

This research paper will examine the role L2 literature courses can play in bridging the cultural gap between L2 students and the target language community. It will also discuss how teaching literature can help students become more effective communicators in the target language. As the author is a long-standing lecturer of Arabic as a second language to Anglo-Saxon students, this paper will demonstrate the role Arabic literature classes can play in improving students’ cultural-linguistic competence in and empathy towards that language and culture. Like Hymes (1972), Kitao (2000) and Alptekin (2002), this study argues that effective communication requires language proficiency and cultural competence in equal manners. Cultural competence refers to an empathetic understanding of the values, beliefs and perceptions of the target culture combined with the ability to act in accordance with culturally defined norms and expectations. This research will also show that language proficiency and cultural competence both constitute and are constituted by each other and that it is impossible to achieve functional fluency in one without also achieving functional fluency in the other. The paper will argue that, if done well, the study of literature will lead to increased empathy with and respect for the language community, improve student’s motivation and make them more effective communicators in the target language.

The Arabic word for literature is *adab* (الادب). It springs from a word that means etiquette and culture and signifies politeness, sophistication and enrichment. Arabic literature emerged in the 6th century. Arabic now comprises a rich literary corpus that spans sixteen centuries and includes a wide range of genres from different eras and geographical zones. Arabic is a Semitic language that is spoken by at least 250 million people around the world. There are two standardised written variants of the Arabic language, Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic (Ferguson, 1959). The former is the original language used in the Holy Qur’an, the sacred text of Islam, whereas the latter is a modernised version that is used in media. The two variants are very close. Arabic is a diglossic language, which means that the written variants of the language are not actually spoken by any members of the language community in normal day-to-day situations. The numerous spoken variants of Arabic are not standardised and are generally not used for writing. They are often referred to as dialects and can diverge significantly from the written forms (Somech, 1980).

An arguably, the Arabic-speaking world has made significant contributions to global philosophy, science and literature and continues to do so today. Its dominant faith, Islam, has played a central role in World history for centuries. Most second-language students in the West, however, are unaware of the historical and global significance of Arabic or Islamic culture. Especially since the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US World Trade Center, these students are exposed on a daily basis to explanations and descriptions of Arabs and Muslims that are, at best, one-sided. These biased and ill-informed accounts of the cultural practices of Arabic speakers and Muslims generally do little to help language students empathise with, or understand, members of the language community. This study will argue that active engagement with Arabic literature can help students gain a perspective on the Arabic speaking community that is more in line with how Arabs perceive themselves. Conversely, reading literature can also help Western students comprehend the fears and concerns some Arabs feel towards Israel or the United States. Furthermore, this paper will argue that reading Arabic
prose and poetry can improve students’ fluency and help them become more effective communicators.

Is Language simply A Code?

A mistaken view that continues to dominate L2 teaching is the idea that a language is an “autonomous construct,” independent from the people that speak it. It is the belief that language is simply a code and that “one language is essentially (albeit not easily) translatable into another” (Kramsch, 1993: 1). This view holds that foreign-language teaching should focus primarily on ensuring that students master the vocabulary and the grammatical rules of the target language. Educators who adhere to this perspective are not necessarily opposed to teaching the culture of the people who speak the language but regard this merely as a much needed skill for language learners to be acquainted with culture and traditions of the target language (Thanasoulas, 2001). This is however worse than an underestimation of the importance of teaching culture; it demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of what it means to be truly proficient in a language. This paper will show that cultural awareness is an integral part of linguistic competence.

Language is not an “autonomous construct” but is a system influenced by various socio-political processes (Fairclough, 1989 and Bourdieu, 1990: 52). The systems of classification, address and reference forms, specialised lexicons and metaphors used in a language portray an often forgotten or hidden struggle over the symbolic power of a particular way of communicating (Bourdieu, 1990). Language is “a key to the cultural past of a society” (Salzmann, 1998, 41) and ‘a guide to ‘social reality’ (Sapir, 1921: 209). Sapir argued that “language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives” (Sapir, 1921: 207). As one of the Literature course students reflected on his experience:

“… I think studying literature gives a fascinating insight into a culture and its language. The pre-Islamic poetry and writing by Abu Nuwas and the Andalusians were particularly interesting, as much modern Arabic/Muslim propaganda tries to gloss over the subversive and dissenting elements of Arabic culture. It would be interesting also to see some literature from non-Muslim Arabs (Christians, Druze etc) who make/made up a large percentage of the Arabic population.…”

Ever since the 7th century, the Holy Qur’an has had a great influence on Arabic culture and language. We encounter culture-specific associations and meanings in the Holy Qur’an that have shaped the perceptions and understandings of native Arabic speakers for over fourteen centuries. Some of these associations are shared by other speakers. A clear example of this is the emotional perception of colours. For example, English speakers and Arabic speakers have very similar emotional associations with the colours black and blue. The following verses from the Holy Qur’an show clearly how these two colours are perceived:

"يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا" (سورة طه, آية 102)

(Qurán: Taha: 20/102)
Translation:

“…And those on the Day of Judgment, you shall see the faces of those who related falsehood to God, how they will assume blueness expressive of the terror that falls upon them….”

(Quțrât: AL Zu’umar:39 /60)

Translation:

“…The Day shall come when the trumpet is sounded and We throng the sinful who shall look blue, being affected with terror, distress and anxiety….”

Another colour that poses similar connotations between the Islamic and Christian cultures is green. The colour green symbolizes nature and life and is used in the decoration of mosques, the bindings of Qur’an, and in the flags of various Muslim countries. In Christianity, green means hope and growth; it symbolizes the breaking of shackles, fertility and represents bountifulness, hope and the victory of life over death. In general, the colour green is primarily associated with plant life and as a symbol of natural growth and life. The exception is its use in Leviticus to denote disease. For example:

“describing a meat offering” - Leviticus 2:14
“describing edible plants” - Genesis 1:30; 9:3, II Kings 19:26, Job 39:8, Psalm 37:2

These examples only references verses in which the color is used consistently amongst Bible translations, therefore the references are not exhaustive and only demonstrate the plain use of the colour in a passage. These examples, along with others, were presented to students in a lecture which led to a great deal of discussion and association in regard to the similarities and differences between Western and Arabic culture. It was only introduced to make a comparison but it went further in piquing their interest in learning about the Holy Qur’an and Islamic and Arabic cultures. A number of students evolved the discussion into more detailed research projects investigating issues of interest to them as one student commented for such comparison:

“… Both are very varied with their own classic cannon, and fundamentally influenced by religious writing (Arabic has the Koran, English has the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer) - I'm sure that similar themes could be found and compared…. “

The projects were later presented in class in both oral (30-45 minutes) and written (4500 words in Arabic) forms.

Language and culture are so closely interwoven that their boundaries, if any, are extremely blurred (Thanasoulas, 2001). Many people think of culture as what is often referred
to as “high culture”—art, literature, music, and so on (ibid). However, contemporary social scientists define the concept more broadly. For example, Peck defines culture as all the customary and conventional forms of conduct of a particular certain group of people (Peck, 1998). This includes visible external behavioural patterns and tangible or material manifestations such as town planning, advertisements and forms of “high culture.” However, a significant part of culture is neither directly visible nor tangible. Sapir wrote that “culture may be defined as what a society does and thinks” (Sapir, 1921, 233). He argued that language plays a key role in structuring the thought patterns of its speakers, calling it the “how of thought” (Sapir, 1921, 233). He wrote that “language and our thought-grooves are inextricably interrelated, are, in a sense, one and the same” (Sapir, 1921, 232). This is in line with the famous French sociologist Durkheim who argued earlier that language is the core of building ones thoughts and works as the basic structure of organising this thought (Durkheim, 1947). A significant part of culture, then, operates at the internal, often subconscious, level and is shaped by the very language people use. This includes values, ways of perceiving things and thought patterns (Killick & Poveda, 1997). As we will see, a people’s “high culture” is a tangible manifestation of this invisible part of culture and therefore constitutes a window for viewing the ways of thinking, seeing and valuing of that particular people.

Second-language teachers should help students understand that culture predisposes people to a certain worldview and that language plays a key role in this: language maintains and sanctions a particular cognitive framework (Valdes, 1986). Specific socio-culturally structured associations vary from culture to culture and need to be learned and “internalized” (Landar, 1965). To give an example: English speakers have learned to perceive a connection between red roses and romance. Clearly, this is a cultural perception, as there is no natural link between the two particularly. Similarly, Arabic speakers have learned to perceive a connection between swords and time, hence the proverb ‘time is a sword’ (امسحوت محبلا). Different language communities perceive different associations. Language can condition people to see and hear things in certain ways (Howell & Vetter, 1976). Foreign-language learning can, therefore, not be separated from foreign culture learning. It is essential that “… knowledge of the grammatical system of a language be complemented by an understanding of culture-specific associations and meanings….” (Byram et al, 1994: 4). A cultural linguistic system comprises various elementary meaning units (EMUs) which may differ from EMUs that operate in other systems (Lado, 1964: 28). One example of such an EMU would be that of the association between roses and romance that exists in the minds of English speakers, discussed above. Lado regards familiarity with a culture’s EMUs “… necessary for full communication with natives, to understand their reports on great achievements, and to read their classics…” (1964: 28). Indeed, Politzer warned that “… if we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning….” (1959: 100-101).

There are direct pragmatic reasons for teaching culture as an integral part of foreign-language teaching. In order to become functionally proficient in their new language, students need to understand the role of context and the circumstances under which language can be used accurately and appropriately. As an example, the author’s students were given the task of reading ‘The Bad Boy’ (يا قلعة)، a wine poem (khamriyya) of Abu Nuwas (he was of Persian origin). He liked to shock society by openly writing about things which Islam forbade—still; his poetry was considered among the best literary works both during his time
and by future generations. The poem opened a whole new discussion on Arabic/Islamic culture, and was written in a highly complex register that was surprisingly well managed by the students.

In this verse, the poet has changed the classical way of poem’s opening verse where the poet usually remember and cries for the place where his beloved used to live. Abu Nuwas’ described the classical “Arab poets” as wasting their time crying on lost love while he looks for the city’s pub to have a good time by drinking alcohol and enjoying the company of waitresses there.

The students reflected in their essays on their introduction to literary works and noted it in their course evaluation. For example, a student commented on the course that:

“… It is challenging, stimulating and encouraging for open discussions and debates…. ”

The student further commented that the course material opened an authentic image of the culture and the society behind the target language. Another commented on the opportunity to be exposed to a high level language register as opposed to the shallow and superficial language textbook themes. The student went on to describe how reading and discussing the early Islamic era provided an opportunity to investigate the real Islam and what it calls for. In his essay he argued that Islam is much more than what is portrayed in the media and the West. The basic aim of the course is to give students an opportunity to have access to short, readable literary and Islamic texts such as verses from the Qur’an that would give them a rounded and balanced view of the field of Arabic literature. This provides them with a footing from which to seek out research topics, and can guide them in their choices of more advanced courses. For example, one student investigated the philosophy of the Islamic scholar Al-Ghazali and his interpretations of Sufism. Other students were interested in learning about how love, wine, war and women, etc., are portrayed in the course material and take a step further in their own research essay. Another student reflected on her feelings towards the course by saying:

“… Through studying Arabic/Islamic literature, I gained an insight into the emotive use of the Arabic language. The Arabic language used in the literature we studied was not only poetically engaging but very symbolic and open to interpretation due to its metaphorical imagery. This imaginative aspect of the language was therefore better understood through the literature studied. Whilst different periods within Arabic literature displayed different characteristics, studying Arabic/Islamic literature is a way in which students can understand the use of the language to express emotion. This then allows students to further understand the unique cultural and religious aspects of Arabic society, an understanding which is not as easily gained through other means of learning. The complexity of the Islamic culture is further understood through the examination of Arabic literature, as it allows the Western student to contextualize the expression of such fundamental cultural and religious characteristics…. ”

Successful communication requires competent participation in the cultural linguistic community. For this reason, it is vital that students should, at the very least, learn what constitutes conventional behaviour in common situations. If students are to establish themselves as competent participants in their new language community they need to consistently display the “correct” behaviour and perform the “correct” exchanges of language in any given social situation (Lessard-Clouston, 1997). To this end they need to become fully
conversant with their new language community’s cultural knowledge. Cultural linguistic knowledge is “the community’s store of established knowledge” (Fowler, 1986: 19). Thanasoulas (2001), stresses that cultural linguistic includes all types of knowledge that determines, simplifies process or debars the collective experiences of a community. It shapes “not only what the members of a cultural linguistic community should think or learn but also what they should ignore or treat as irrelevant” (Armour-Thomas & Gopaul-Nicol, 1998: 56). It comprises procedural knowledge for “correctly” performing activities such as answering the phone, asking for a favour, cooking, and weaving (Duranti, 1997: 29-29), as well as strict “structures of expectation” (Tannen, 1979) with which everyone belonging to the cultural-linguistic community is expected to comply without error. Samovar et al argue that culture “… is the foundation of communication” for it dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds (1981: 24). It also indicates of how people of that culture interpret meanings, conditions, situations and status of different messages and how they conveyed (Thanasoulas, 2001). Teaching a culture is, then, an equal complement to teaching a language. It is not an optional “extra” but a vital part of helping students become proficient in their new language.

The Importance of Cultural Competence

The teaching of culture in the foreign-language class-room is often limited to the transmission of factual cultural information. Students are, for example, presented with statistical information about the country or given talks about the target language community’s institutions, customs, habits, and folklore (Kramsch, 1993: 24). For example, Spanish language students tend to be presented with lectures or articles about the Spanish cuisine, Flamenco dancing, the Catholic Church and bull-fighting. Although this is valuable information which would benefit those students who wish to acquaint themselves with these topics, on its own it will do little to help students understand and empathise with that culture’s way of life, values, attitudes and beliefs. All that it offers is “mere book knowledge learned by rote” (Huebener, 1959: 177).

The Arabic/Islamic literature studied by the author’s students represented more complex symbolism than that which can be achieved through the use of the English language in Western secular literature. In this way, the teaching of Arabic/Islamic literature differs from the teaching of Western secular literature. Whilst common themes of war and love feature prominently in both literatures, the teaching of Arabic/Islamic literature is inherently more challenging for students which then leads to a deeper engagement with the literature. Furthermore, Arabic/Islamic literature is far less constrained by grammatical rules than Western secular literature which allows students to be less strict in interpreting the meaning and messages of the literature studied. If students are to understand members of the target language community they need to be able to step into their shoes and experience the invisible part of that community’s culture. Educators cannot teach this part of culture any more than they can teach anyone how to breathe (Thanasoulas, 2001). It would be quite wrong to teach students to think about and perceive things in a specific way: such an approach “is corollary and ancillary to cultural and linguistic imperialism” (ibid). It is vital that educators do not teach the foreign culture from an outsider’s perspective. Instead they should enable students to immerse themselves in the foreign culture by turning the classroom into a “cultural island” (Kramsch, 1993, Singhal, 1998 and Peck, 1998). Literature offers a great opportunity for such immersion
for it constitutes a framework of authentic symbols, values and meanings. Under this approach, the second-language teachers should act as cultural mediators, alerting students to aspects of the target culture that are of importance to the members of the target community themselves. They should help students make links between the target culture and their own (Kramsch, 1993: 205) and make students aware of, and help them reflect upon, any preconceived ideas they may be holding about the target culture (Singhal, 1998).

If done well, cultural-linguistic instruction will also garner empathy and respect towards the language community and promote objectivity and cultural understanding (Thanasoulas, 2001). As shown above, communication is not just an exchange of information but a highly cognitive, affective and value-laden activity that both shapes and is shaped by socio-political processes. For this reason, Melde (1987) argues that second-language teaching should foster “critical awareness” of social realities. Many second-language students have little or no systematic knowledge about their own membership in a given society and culture and will therefore struggle to interpret the cultural phenomena they find in the language they are studying (Kramsch, 1988). Students should be made aware that cultural factors, such as age, gender, or social class, shape cultural-linguistic interactions in all societies, including their own. Educators should help students understand that conversing in any language, people presume various cultural and social roles that are heavily imbedded in their train of thoughts (Thanasoulas, 2001). When teaching culture in a foreign-language classroom, it is important to start by raising students’ awareness of their own culture and the ways in which this shapes how they themselves see, value and judge the world around them. Discussing the values, expectations, traditions, customs, and rituals they subconsciously take part in, helps students reflect upon the values, expectations, and traditions of others “with a higher degree of intellectual objectivity” (Straub, 1999: 5). The method used by the author to teach Arabic/Islamic literature was a combination of student-based learning which comprised students reading literature out loud in a classroom context, presentations to peers, and group translation, all guided by the teacher. The chronological order in which the Arabic/Islamic literature is taught allows students to develop an understanding of the importance of rhetoric in traditional Arabic culture and the use of metaphors as it developed over time. The imagery which students can discover and appreciate from the study of Arabic literature is best enabled by promoting this student-based learning.

Learning a foreign culture can be subversive of the assumptions and premises that operate in a student’s native culture (Straub, 1999). Second-language students may experience cognitive dissonance when they seek to integrate the values and meanings of the foreign culture with that of their own (Byram et al, 1994). They may find, for example, that they suddenly understand two different “truths” that are in direct conflict with each other. As Kramsch points out, “… from the clash between the native culture and the target culture, meanings that were taken for granted are suddenly questioned, challenged, problematized….” (1993:238). The result of this is that the student de-centers his or her worldview. This shift of perspective is conducive to intellectual objectivity and increased empathy and respect for the target language community. Educators should guide students in this process as cultural mediators and aim “… to increase students’ awareness and develop their curiosity towards the target culture and their own....” (Tavares & Cavalcanti, 1996: 19). Literature can be used to great effect in this context. If done well, teaching culture in the
foreign-language classroom helps students understand the superficiality of such things as superior and inferior cultures, and that there are differences among people within the target culture too (Thanasoulas, 2001).

**Pedagogical Approach of Selecting Literary Texts**

Which literary texts to use in a second language course is a decision that should be contingent upon a variety of factors within each course. The worst thing that an educator can do in this regard is to make a standard list of literature to be covered in every class without regard to the position of the students. In the case of Arabic literature, one must take into consideration that the Arabic language is very challenging for Western students and therefore a variety of methods are needed for best learning techniques. Student-based learning is a relatively successful method for teaching Arabic/Islamic culture in a Western context as it forces students to engage directly with the material and express their understanding.

However, a combination of methodologies is needed for a comprehensive understanding of the language due to its multi-faceted nature, particularly in terms of correct syntax. This is something that cannot be fully understood by students via studying literature. While this may work in the traditional teaching of literature, where the focus is on the literature itself, it is not an effective method for the second-language course, where the ultimate goal is to have the students learn the language and its culture. While it may be possible that some of the classical literature pieces of the target language may be used in teaching second-language learners, a text should not be included in the curriculum for the simple fact that it is a classic, or otherwise culturally significant. As it has been correctly stated by Hişmanoğlu (2005), literary test should be selected carefully to suit the level of engagement that is desired to obtain form their student as well as students’ cultural background.

Such considerations were taken into account in choosing appropriate texts and resources for the courses the author taught at the Australian National University. The course material and the selection of texts were designed for students who had completed two and a half years of Arabic language courses at the Australian National University or its equivalent. The selection of material was carefully distributed over one semester to cover literature from the pre-Islamic era to the present time. The course had a particular emphasis on the development of students’ understanding and appreciation of literature and cultural aspects of the Arabic language, aiming to expand their knowledge of specific literary eras of Arabic progression and uses over time. The key principle of teaching the course content is to have the students read the text/s and then study the content and vocabulary each week before attending the lecture to ensure maximum comprehension.

The sequence of the learning experience in this course moved in a logical and systematic manner. For example, the introduction of the pre-Islamic era dealt with the purposes of poetry and prose by introducing the main poets of that period and making comparisons with Western equivalents. It is mainly a case-based learning approach which reflects on each student’s past experiences of his or her native language and literature. Therefore, when it comes to choosing which literary work to include, a variety of texts should be held in reserve.

Those who are opposed to using literature are correct when they point out that students
might have little interest, and are concerned that this will result in avoidance and poor performance. Such negative results should not be the case and are completely avoidable—but not by leaving literature out of the curriculum altogether. A good method of picking literature for the class is to get to know the students and create a narrowed list of works that they may be interested in. Then present the students with a basic summary of each text, to spark their interest, and allow the final decision to be up to them. For example, they can vote on which literary work they would like to study—this not only ensures that the material used is correct for that class, but serves to increase their interest in that they will be more eager to study a text that they have chosen to read.

The process of selecting Arabic literature texts is greatly eased by following the above procedure, and what would otherwise be a sifting of literature spanning over almost two millennia becomes much less stressful. In order to properly pertain to the origins of Arabic literature, one must include some pre-Islamic and post-Islamic literature. The latter could cover important evolutionary ages of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, and it is essential to include Islamic literature, in which the Qur’an was the largest influence. The importance of including these lies in the fact that these texts, especially the Islamic ones, are embedded in the Arab culture, irrespective of religion. The use of colloquial phrases such as Mashallah (as God wills it) or Inshallah (God willing) or the Arabic greeting Assalam-u-aleikum might stem from Islamic origins, but are now used by all Arabic speakers and not just Muslim Arabs; therefore these texts are aiding the use of the modern day variant of the language. It is important also to examine literature from more modern times which provides insight into the political and social machinations of society. A great example of this is Alaa al-Aswany’s seminal novel Amarat Yacoubian (The Yacoubian Building) (2000). It not only uses modern-day Arabic but also portrays a multi-faceted— if often fictional—view of Egyptian society.

**Cultural Linguistics**

This paper argues that cultural linguistic immersion is the optimal way of achieving functional fluency in the target language and culture. When it comes to learning a new language there can be no substitute for actually living in a country where this language is spoken. However, L2 teachers can provide the next best thing by turning their courses into cultural hub where students can engage themselves actively with the culture and the language they are studying. A student commented:

“… I think that my experiences in Arabic literature were as good as could have been expected within Australia. I felt the methodology used was helpful in leading us into an acute understanding of Arabic literature’s history, and the teaching method was helpful from day one. While the intensive vocabulary was difficult to absorb in each text, the teaching was such that there was enough time to effectively run through the translation as well as the finer contextual points before truly analyzing the literature itself. I think other than doing a similar course in an Islamic/Arabic country, my experience in Arabic literature was as good as it could have been….”

The emphasis in class should be on ‘… cultural experience….’ rather than ‘…cultural awareness….’ (Byram et al, 1994: 55-60). It is the author’s experience that teaching literature is a great way of motivating students and drawing them in. Contrary to the view of some critics (Jalling, 1968) who argue that teaching literature limits students to taking a
passive role, this paper contends that teaching literature in fact stimulates students to engage proactively with the target language. Duff and Maley pointed out, “literature offers universal themes which are relevant to students’ own experience” (1990: 6). It, unlike many teaching inputs, is also a mirror that reflects and heightens each learner’s perception of the social world. Thus, literary texts are open to multiple interpretation and genuine interaction”. Students cannot remain passive if they are to interpret and understand what they are reading. They are placed “in an active interactional role in working with and making sense of the target language” (Brumfit, & Carter, 1986: 15). Guided by the teacher, students must actively participate in meaningful actual life talking experiences in order to discern meaning (Carter & Long, 1991).

Critics may ask why students should specifically be taught literature. It is true that, as Alvstad (2009) points out, written materials help expand cultural and linguistic competences when learning a foreign language. However, unlike newspaper articles, literature has multiple layers of meaning and therefore furthers group analysis and debate. Teaching literature “stimulates the imagination of students and develops their critical abilities” (Lazar, 1993: 19). Students may become so involved in interpreting the different symbols and meanings found in the text that they become eager to master the language in which it was written too. Learners become more industrious and risk taking when they have sufficient linguistic knowledge to understand the luxuriousness and the range of the target language to make use of it in real life (Hişmanoğlu, 2005).

Culturally and linguistically, the Arabic language is so different from English that there are not many methods available to teach the Arabic culture to Western learners. The study of literature is the best method by which students can dive into the cultural expression of the language and better grasp these aspects via imagery and metaphors. Another method may be to study film and song as well, however these are limited due to their comparatively recent production dates. This is why meaningful or amusing literary texts are vital for learners of a foreign language as it has long term linguistic knowledge effect where the language can be retained easier to some extent (Hişmanoğlu, 2005).

Exposure to literary works helps students expand their language awareness and develop their language competence. It provides them with specific examples of how language is used. Reading literature helps students familiarise themselves with many features of the written language such as the formation and function of sentences, the varieties of possible structures or the different ways of connecting ideas (Collie, & Slater, 1987: 5). It also allows students to acquaint themselves with the lexical and grammatical categories of the target language that shape how its speakers conceptualise the world around them. It shows them elements of culture-specific systems of meaning, value and association in context. A clear example of this is the use of metaphors in poetry or prose. Metaphors “…have been analyzed as providing conceptual schemata through which we understand the world…” (Durani, 1997: 64). The Arabic sayings below are good examples of culture-specific associations and symbolic meanings:
A deeper understanding of other cultures gives students empathy and respect for cultural differences in addition to the understanding of similarities (Gholson & Stumpf, 2005). The increased information about the culture of the target language obtained through the study of foreign literature will further assist the students to develop their awareness and empathy towards that culture (Li, 2005).

However, some educators choose to omit literary works from their foreign-language curriculum, not because they do not understand the benefits of such teaching methods, but because they are uncomfortable in presenting the information. They are overly concerned with cultural sensitivity and feel that the culture of another region may spark great controversy. Indeed, in order to fully master a language, many students and educators alike have deeply rooted stereotypes that they will have to overcome. For example, North Americans have been notoriously stereotyped in the Arab world as having a great level of immorality. A presentation of some literature from that area may be seen as offensive or obscene. As a teacher of English as a second language to Arab students proclaimed that if one takes the cohort beyond their own stereotypes, one need to look outside their own oversimplified conception of culture (Gholson & Stumpf, 2005). This could be a big issue for some educators. Nevertheless, if a student is to communicate effectively with a person from that culture, they will have to overcome these obstacles, and their understanding must go beyond the harboured stereotypes. Or, as aptly emphasised that one who understands a given culture is the one who can actively engaged in that culture (Gholson & Stumpf, 2005). To speak the language of a culture is to participate in it.

This is specifically important when studying Arabic literature, as students from the English-speaking Western part of the world may have a highly biased perception of the Arab-speaking Middle East. This region has generally received negative media for the past two decades. However, once a student has gained the ability to read modern Arabic literature, he or she may cast aside such exaggerations or generalisations. Most modern Arabic literature is penned by authors who now face the consequences and potential repercussions of modern political thought and belief within the region. Furthermore, even confining one’s reading to only classic Arabic literature will help to explain the history of the Middle East, as for most of its history such literature remained tied to either Islam or the ruling courts. Hence this makes the study of the literature an interdisciplinary endeavour.

Literally: “If the sky falls onto people’s land, even if they are angry, it will be shepherded”. This means that if rain falls onto any land, even infertile land, it will turn it green.

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Teaching Literature to Foreign Language Learners as a Medium
Al-Tamimi

 droits réservés
Literature can play a vital role in helping foreign-language students to become acquainted with various linguistic to encode the functions and the meaning of the target language (Hismanoğlu, 2005). There are however a number of pitfalls foreign-language teachers should be aware of. Many students believe literature is difficult and uninteresting and as a consequence, they are negatively disposed toward it from the outset (Chandrasenda, 2007). Furthermore, if students are asked to engage with literary texts that are beyond their level of linguistic competence, there is a risk that they will lose confidence in their linguistic ability and become demotivated but this, however, very much depends on the group of students (ibid).

The author found that her students were motivated to memorise the first verses of each of the Mu‘allaqât (تَلاوَّلَّمَا), seven long poems from the pre-Islamic era, even though they were written in language that was far beyond their linguistic ability. The seven poems, each by a different author, are known as “The Suspended Odes” or “The Hanging Poems” because by tradition they were hung on the wall of the Kaaba in Mecca. The author’s students were keen to understand the symbols and meanings in the text and so challenged themselves to rise to the level of complexity of the language. Studies of teaching Arabic as a foreign language found that the main reasons for students failing to comprehend literary texts were poor preparation by educators, inappropriate teaching strategies and overly ambitious curricula (Kramsch, 1988). Experienced language teachers know that no two groups of students are the same and choose texts that are appropriate to the group’s linguistic ability and specific interests.

Provided the selected texts are appropriate, then, exposure to literary works can help foreign-language students expand their language awareness and develop their language competence. One of the major functions of teaching literature in the foreign-language classroom, however, “is to serve as a medium to transmit the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written” (Valdes, 1986: 137). Foreign accounts of a culture generally provide an outsider’s perspective that may be at odds with the self-perception of the members of a cultural community. Language textbooks are specifically written for foreign-language students and, therefore, present students with a limited and external perspective on the target culture. Literature, on the other hand, is generally written by and for native speakers of the language and is, for this reason, widely regarded as being a source of “genuine” and “authentic” information about the target culture (Collie & Slater, 1987).

Unlike purely informative texts, such as newspaper articles, literary texts give students access to “… a world of attitudes, and values, collective imaginings and historical frames of reference that constitute the memory of a people or speech community….” (Kramsch, 1992: 175). They present students with colourfully created fictional worlds that reflect the cultural codes and preoccupations of the language community from which they spring. By actively engaging with these texts, readers come to understand how the characters in such literary works experience the world and how they speak and behave in different settings. As Gray (2005: 2) points out, “students learn to see a world through another’s eyes, observing human values and a different kind of living, and discovering that others live in very different societies. They will understand and become broadly aware of the social, political, historical, cultural events happening in a certain society (Chandrasenda, 2007). Arabic’s rich literary corpus, spanning the pre-Islamic era to the present day, provides students with the opportunity to gain direct unmediated access to historic and contemporary cultural artifacts. It is the author’s experience that teaching this literature to students greatly boosts students’ level of engagement and motivation. The Arabic poetry verses below are good examples of culture-
specific genuine and authentic information from *Majnoon and Laila* (زرونجم يلیا):

"ألآ أيها الشيخ الذي ما بنا يرضي شقيت ولا ينضب من عيشك الفضما
شقيت كما أشقيتي وتركنتي أهيم بمدخائك لا أطمع الفضما
كان فوادي في مخلاب طائر إذا ذكرت ليلى يشذ به فضاء
كان فجاج الأرض حلقة خاتم علي فما تزداد طولا ولا عرضا"

“Oh, Old man who rejected my proposal I hope that you have lived hard life. Like the One you have imposed on me and left me wondering to perish without enjoying my sleep.

It is like my heart captured by a flying bird’s claws whenever I mention Laila’s name, it digs deeper in my heart. Life on earth is like a ring put on me which does not extend in length and width.”

Literature can help students quickly develop a feel for the cultural norms and expectations of the target culture (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). However, as discussed, if students are to understand and empathise with the cultural logic of the target community it is necessary that they first become aware of the fact that their own beliefs, values and perceptions are shaped by their own native culture. Only when they appreciate the limitations of their own cultural identity, that is, only when they understand that their way of perceiving the world is not universal, can they meaningfully start to interpret and account for the values, assumptions, and beliefs that permeate the literary texts of the target culture (Killick & Poveda, 1997).

The course is presented using social context and cultural background and by no means can one escape the Islamic and political influences on any taught topic and genre. The pre-Islamic era lacked the Islamic ideology, but it did not lack religious influence. This society represented power and wielded influence on the Arabian Peninsula and the pilgrimages to Mecca before Islam. During the eras that followed, Islamic thought and ideology influenced the entire Islamic empire from the East to the West, contributing to large scale division and turmoil in the region.

Arabic literature reflects the values, beliefs, perceptions and preoccupations of the era and geographical region in which it was written. The arrival of Islam had a significant impact on the customs and traditions of Arabs, although some elements of this culture remained unaffected. For example, whereas views on premarital relations changed, the symbolic significance of horses stayed constant. Teaching literature is a great springboard for cultural comparison and raising students’ awareness of both the target culture and their own. It is also a great tool for analysing the ways in which language and social variables, such as sex, age, social class or location, interpenetrate. Straub (1999) suggests, for example, that students be encouraged to speculate on the social status, group membership or approachability of literary characters by examining the symbolic meanings of the words used to describe them. He recommends that students contemplate “… the significance of various styles of clothing, the symbolic meanings of colours, gestures, facial expressions and other nonverbal cues….” (Straub, 1999: 6) mentioned in literary texts and reflect on whether they concur or are at variance with, those in their own culture. Guided by the author, students examined the influence of environment on the style of poetry and prose with great enthusiasm, comparing the works of Arabic authors from different regions such as Syria, Persia and Andalusia. Active
engagement with literary texts raises students’ awareness of their own cultural assumptions and helps them appreciate the significance of a particular term or word in the target language and culture. As Carter and Long (1991: 2) point out, “… teaching literature enables students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space, and to come to perceive traditions of thought, feeling and artistic form within the heritage the literature of such cultures endows…” (Carter & Long, 1991: 2). When done well, teaching literature in the foreign-language classroom enables students to obtain “a higher degree of intellectual objectivity” (Straub, 1999: 5) when interpreting and seeking to understand the target culture. It is a great way to overcome and contest the cultural gap (Swaffar, 1992) and increase empathy with and respect for the language community.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that teaching literature to foreign-language students can help bridge the cultural gap between the students and the target language community. It has demonstrated that language and culture are so closely linked that it is impossible to achieve full fluency in one but not the other. It has argued that in order for students to be able to communicate effectively in their new language they need to gain an empathetic understanding of the target culture and learn to act in accordance with its norms and expectations. This can be best be achieved, it contends, through complete cultural immersion. The paper has highlighted that literature offers students a cost-effective method of doing so. Unlike textbooks or other outsider accounts, literature is written by and targeted at native speakers of a language. It offers therefore an authentic and genuine window upon the culture of the target language. It shows students specific cultural symbols, values and meanings in context and provides them with direct and unmediated access to the thought patterns, judgments and preoccupations of a people at a particular time and place. Furthermore, literature shows how language and social variables interact and also provides students with examples of social roles and expected behaviour in various circumstances. Literature has multiple layers of meaning and therefore lends itself perfectly for critical reflection and debate. Unlike purely informative texts, literature stimulates the imagination and critical abilities of students. It is the author’s experience that studying literature greatly motivates students and gives them a heightened sense of achievement.

The paper has argued that the methodology adopted when teaching literature as part of a foreign-language course is of the utmost importance. Texts need to be carefully selected to meet the needs, motivation, interests, cultural background and language level of the students. This does not necessarily mean that students cannot be presented with texts that are above their level of linguistic competence. The author has found that the richness of meaning encountered in classic Arabic texts motivated students to rise to the level of the complexity of the language. A well chosen literary text, then, can strongly motivate students to engage proactively with the language.

When teaching literature, educators should help students develop the intellectual objectivity required to make sense of the cultural phenomena encountered in the text. They should aim to raise students’ awareness and understanding of what it means to be part of the culture. It is vital that students come to understand that they themselves are products of a
particular culture and that their background shapes the ways in which they make sense of the world. This is an important job for all foreign-language teachers, but perhaps even more so for teachers of Arabic as a foreign language. By enabling students to directly experience Arabic culture as it is written in literary texts, teachers of Arabic can go a long way to counter the generally negative and often hostile accounts of this culture given by Western commentators. Educators should take a proactive role as cultural mediators and highlight aspects of the literary text that are important from an Arabic perspective, and help students make connections between their own culture and the one they encounter in the text. Foreign-language teachers can do no better than to allow the richness and beauty of a culture speak for itself through works of prose and poetry.
References


Designing Multiculturalism-Based ELT Syllabus for Civics Study (MBESCS)

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Abstract

Curriculum which should be developed into syllabus is considered as the key guide for any teaching and learning program. It contains the aims/goals of learning and the sequent target materials to learn by the learners. The Civics Study Program of the Faculty of Teachers Training and Education, University of Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta, Indonesia which had various students descend from different regencies and with different cultural backgrounds did not access the students needs in its syllabus. This paper aims at describing and disseminating the developmental research finding which was in the form of syllabus design using Multicultural Approach (Multicultural-Based English Syllabus for Civics Study /MBESCS) to the readers. This study involved 40 students. The data was gathered qualitatively with conceptually content analysis and quantitatively with conceptual and statistical analysis. It was conducted with the following procedures: (1) exploring the conventional syllabus content; (2) developing the syllabus prototype cyclically; and (3) examining the effectiveness of the syllabus by doing quasi-experimental design with t-test computation. This study resulted that the designed syllabus was considered appropriate to use in the present research setting for the following considerations: (1) it was based on the needs analysis and supporting theories; (2) the result of experiment using quasi-experimental design showed significant gain scores of t-test > t-table with α = 0.05. It means that the designed syllabus was effective to use for the heterogeneous culture students.

Keywords: Multicultural Approach, syllabus, developmental research, ELT, teachers
Introduction

The need of English as a means of world communication cannot be avoided by anyone today, especially for those directly have involvements with the world outsides. Meanwhile, English is still considered as a “haunt” for its difficulty to learn in Indonesia. It is caused by the position of English in Indonesia as a foreign language (EFL) and not as a second language (L2). As an EFL, English is only treated as a knowledge, since the use of English is not supported by any community in this country. That is why, English mastery or ability in using English for both spoken and written forms is still regarded as a “luxurious” thing. Such condition demands the teachers to always find new approaches or methods in their teaching process which enable their learners to learn English joyfully, by considering that learning English for fun may improve their competences.

In line with the demand of English use at any areas, there have been many learning approaches and/or methods suggested by the relevant experts, as what Richards (2001) called “Beyond Methods” such as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Content and Language Integrated learning (CLIL), Multiculturalism, Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), and Quantum Learning. The availability of those concepts should enable the teachers to find their needs in defining the most appropriate methods to implement in their classrooms. But not every teacher has neither intention nor knowledge to improve his/her teaching process by making use of the existence of the concepts as written above. As this fact also occurred in the Civics Study program, the Faculty of Teacher’s training and Education University of Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia in the last 2010/2011 Academic Year. An early observation made by the writer showed that the teacher used improper methods, beside it also showed that he did not acknowledge with the new ELT methods as mentioned above. It can be approved from the available syllabus used by the teacher of English in that time. The conventional syllabus did not illustrate that the designer accessed the current English language teaching (ELT) principles such as: teaching the four language skills, focusing learning activities on learners (students-centred learning / SCL), improving Bloom’s taxonomy integrated learning aspects or domains (cognitive, affective and psychomotor), accessing authentic materials, using authentic assessment and all of the learning process base on the need analysis.

In connection with the facts written above, this study aimed at designing an alternative syllabus using multicultural approach.

The Principle and the Design of Syllabus

Syllabus is a fundamental part in teaching and learning process. Teachers use a syllabus as the guidance in making a lesson plan in a teaching process. A syllabus can be defined as a compendium containing the heads of a discourse, and the like; an abstract (see www.thinkexist.com). A syllabus is a document which contains what will (or at least what should) be learnt (Hutchinson and Waters, 1994: 80).
Figure 1. The role of syllabus in a learning-centered approach (Hutchinson and Waters, 1994: 93)

Syllabus design can be interpreted as an effort to design a syllabus. A syllabus is a specification of the content of a course of instruction, and lists what will be taught and tested (Richards, 2001: 2). It means that syllabus must cover the specific content of a course and listed sequently from the easiest to the more complicated materials. Hutchinson and Waters (1994: 90-94) divide the approaches of syllabuses, namely as follows: (1) a language-centered syllabus; (2) a skills-centered syllabus; (3) a learning-centered approach; (4) the post-hoc approach of materials. In this case, the learners are motivated to enjoy the material in language learning. The process of playing the role of a syllabus based on a learning-centered approach is presented at Figure 1.

In connection with the concepts written above, this study covered integrated syllabus by its content, that is, by accessing the four aspects of language, skills, learning and materials. In this case, materials content was intentionally focused on the students various cultural backgrounds. This was considered important to do since the observed classrooms had various ethnics with their specific cultural differences.

The Nature of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education grew out of the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, and is in part a response to the changing demographics of any nation (Banister & Maher, 1998). It is intended to unite the learners cultural differences to avoid relationships breakings which is defined as “Diversity Within Unity” by Banks et al. (2001). It also means that “A goal of multicultural education is to prepare students to function in today’s diverse society”. It is designed to develop citizens
in democratic society by considering the students needs. It considers how issues of race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, gender, and abilities/disabilities are intertwined with educational process and content.

Nieto (2002: 29) defines multicultural education itself as "a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students" characterized by seven basic characteristics: antiracist education, basic education, important for all students, pervasive throughout the curriculum, education for social justice, a process, and critical pedagogy. Nieto also defined that all aspects of society, including students, parents, families and wider communities need to be involved in decisions to make school communities more inclusive (p. 68).

The development of ELT has made many approaches in delivering the materials. The approaches are developed to motivate the learners in language learning. Multicultural Approach is also developed based on the learners, circumstance. In this case Multicultural Approach is based on the learners’ culture because the learners sometimes come from the different regions. These learners also bring their native cultures in the classroom. It cannot be ignored to develop a good model in teaching and learning process. Teaching with a Multicultural perspective encourages appreciation and understanding of the other cultures as well as one’s own. Based on the above statement, Multiculturalism does not only suggest a variation in teaching process, but also gives a moral value to the learners how to respect other cultures. The main concept of Multiculturalism in this study is to teach English by considering the learners various cultures.

Purposes that in the classroom setting is possible to foster the formation of what is called a third culture, conceived of as the intersection of multiple discourses rather than as a reified body of information to be intellectualized and remembered (Kramsch via Hinkel, 2007: 29). Based on Kramsch statement, cultures in the classroom cannot be separated from the success in teaching and learning process. The various cultures must be acknowledged as a good power to strengthen the different motivations in English learning. Related to this insight, Byram (in Hinkel, 2007: 197) stated that: (1) the development of communicative competence for use in situations the learners might expect to encounter; (2) the development of an awareness of the nature of language and language learning; (3) the development of insight into the foreign culture and positive attitudes toward foreign people.

To respect another culture is not an easy matter. The status quo in Indonesia cannot be neglected from this event. Many cultural conflicts sometimes happen in Indonesia, for example in Kalimantan island. It shows that culture is very sensitive. But, the sensitivity of culture may enable Indonesia to be a strong country by implementing Multicultural Education in its educational system to lead the young generations or learners to have high tolerance toward the multi-societies phenomena with different ethnics, races, and religions (Mahfud, 2010: 1985).

The Mechanism of Multicultural Approach

The main point in this study is the assessments of the learners English learning process. The assessments must focus on the learners’ cultures. A simple example is in writing assessment. The idea in writing assessment must cover the various cultures brought by the learners. In this case, the writer role as a supervisor or
a counselor to control the assessment process. As an example, the students from Papua was given the topics which involved their cultural backgrounds. In this case, the writer’s role was as the determiner in improving the motivation of learners in their learning of writing by embedding the cultural differences between the Papua students and others. As a teacher, the writer must be able to see the result objectively, by considering the ability, the culture, and the idea of learners. In this case, the teacher must make the students realize on how to respect others.

The Current Development on TEFL Curriculum and Syllabus in Indonesia

Since its independence in 1945, Indonesia has been implemented seven curriculums, they are the 1954, 1964, 1974, 1984, 1994, 2004, and 2006. The 2004 curriculum is wellknown as Competency-Based Curriculum or CBC for short, while the 2006 curriculum is also popular as Education Unit Level Curriculum or School-Based Curriculum or SBC for short. In connection with curriculum implementation, Sujana (2011) said that one of the theoretical and practical bases in the current curriculum (School-Based Curriculum/SBC) implementation in Indonesia is the literation level within each of the education targets. In other words, there is literation level which has been defined as a prior level of achievement for each of education level.

Indonesian National Education Department (Depdiknas, 2004) quoted Wells (1987) views who defined the four levels of literation, namely: performative, functional, informational, and epistemic. At performative level, learners are demanded to read, write, and speak by implementing the used symbols. At the functional level, they are demanded to use the target language to fulfil daily life needs like reading parts of newspapers or manual reading they are interested in. At informational level, they are expected to access knowledge by making use of their language competences. While at the level of epistemic, they are expected to be able to transform their knowledges in English. Epistemic level is implemented in higher education levels. Based on the above identification, this study implemented epistemic level within the designed alternative syllabus. The designed syllabus contained materials that enable the learners to use English to transform their knowledges especially related to civics study.

Research Method

This research was conducted to develop a new syllabus based on the cultural differences of learners. This research used a Research and Development (R&D) approach. R&D is a process to develop and validate educational products (Gall et al, 2003: 402). It was conducted by three steps: (1) exploration, which aimed at analysing the available syllabus conceptually based on Hutchinson and Waters (1994) theory; (2) prototype development, which aimed at designing the most appropriate syllabus model using multicultural approach, and (3) experiment, which aimed at testing the effectiveness of the understudied syllabus (Multicultural-based Syllabus for Civics Study or MBSCS for short).

Research Subjects

The research subjects in this study was the first semester students of Civics Study Program of University of Ahmad Dahlan (UAD), Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Civics Study Program of UAD only had one class in the first semester of 2011 academic year. It consisted of 48 students who came from different regions of Indonesia.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Models

The research data was gathered and then analysed by conducting the following activities. First, investigation started by analyzing the cultural problems phenomenon
of the novice learners at the Civics Study (needs analysis) and the available conventional syllabus. The available syllabus was analyzed based on the concept of Hutchinson and Waters (1994: 99-104). The results of analysing the learners needs and the conventional syllabus content were, then, used to base in developing the alternative syllabus content, by embedding learners cultural issues as their target learning materials to discuss.

Second, syllabus prototype development for the research participants. The available syllabus needed developing for it was defined less-appropriate with the learners needs who descent from various different regions, even countries. This step was intended to implement and evaluate the designed syllabus prototype cyclically by using multicultural approach. In this case, learning materials which accessed various learners cultural issues and engaged with their learning target in Civics Study Program were used as instruments to achieve their learning goals. The procedures of developing syllabus was defined by using Glanz and Zuber-Skerritt models. Glanz model includes cyclycal activities on: (1) focus selection, (2) data gathering, (3) analysis and data interpretation, (4) acting, reflecting, and modification (Gall et al., 2003: 585-591). Zuber-Skerritt model (as quoted by Cohen et al., 2000: 235) includes: (1) strategic planning, (2) implementing the plan (action), (3) observation, evaluation and self-evaluation, (4) critical and self-critical reflection on the results of (1)-(3) and making decisions for the next cycle of research. The above procedures was simplified as follows:

Prototype implementation → evaluation → revision → the new prototype implementation → evaluation → revision → and so on, to reach the ideal Multicultural-based syllabus (Hermayawati, 2008: 22).

Third, experimental procedure. In this study, since the setting had only one class, the writer directly conducted post-test because the class was given pre-test and treatments during the prototype development or the second step. The result of the pre-test and the post-test were analysed statistically. In general, this research was conducted as follows: (1) the writer gave the pre-test to the class to find out the first data assumption; (2) the writer gave the Multicultural treatments based on Multicultural-based syllabus to the learners; (3) the writer gave a post-test to find out the effectiveness of the developed syllabus.

**Syllabus Design**

Multicultural-Based English Syllabus for Civics Study (MBESCS) emphasizes the approach of learning which is related to the learners cultural backgrounds differences. The aim of this syllabus is to provide both the teacher of English and the Civics Study students with Civics issues provided in English. It covers the standard of competency, the basic competences, and the indicators of learning. The difference between the conventional and the alternative syllabuses is provided in Table 1.

The standard competency of MBESCS is as follows: (1) Listening skill: students’ ability to comprehend the appeared issues related to Civics in English, and they can afford their cogitation related to Civics issues in English. The course takes 100 minutes in every meeting. The learning strategies of every course are discussion, talks exercise, and practice. The sources of the materials were taken
from Tempo Magazine, English for Law Students, Nationalism written by Hutchinson and Soge and other authentic hand-out materials.

**Table 1**

*The differences of the available syllabus and the new syllabus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Differences</th>
<th>Available Syllabus</th>
<th>New Syllabus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Linguistics aspect</td>
<td>The available syllabus does not give clear purpose of linguistics. For example: the students are able to comprehend the unit without emphasizing to the process of linguistics aspects. For example: the writing and speaking tasks explore the learners competences in using language components integrally in developing speaking and writing skills.</td>
<td>The new syllabus emphasizes the process of linguistics aspects. For example: the writing and speaking tasks explore the learners competences in using language components integrally in developing speaking and writing skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Cultural Pragmatic Language Use</td>
<td>The available syllabus does not provide Cultural Pragmatic Language Use.</td>
<td>The new syllabus provides more chance to the learners to explore their Cultural Pragmatic Language Use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Language Skills Development</td>
<td>The available syllabus does not contain the specific language skill. It can be shown from the verbs as follows: “combat”, “socialize”, and “comprehend”.</td>
<td>The new syllabus gives more chance to develop the target language skills. It can be shown from the use of the verbs: “write down”, and “extend”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Literation Level development</td>
<td>The available syllabus does not provide clear level literation.</td>
<td>The new syllabus develops epistemic literation, that is ability in using the target language learning (English) to transform civics materials to others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the table above, it can be defined that there are three differences between the conventional and the alternative syllabus. The differences are in the existence of linguistics aspect, the pragmatic culture, and the language skills.

**Discussion**

In this case, the product was in the form of an alternative syllabus using Multicultural Approach which, then, can be used by the teachers of English in Civics Study Program of University of Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It is considered appropriate with the learners needs for they come from various islands with their different ethnics, races, beliefs and/or religions. This Multicultural-based syllabus focuses on the details of the learning indicators, and the cultural problems which, then, can be used as the basic of defining English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials as instruments to achieve learners learning goals.

The effectiveness of the available syllabus was examined by giving pretest
and posttest to the research participants. The pre-test aimed at finding the first data assumption from the learners language ability. From the result of the pre-test, it was found that the highest score was 65, 71 and the lowest score was 5, 71. The total score was 35. Total scores were divided by 0, 35 to find out the final score. The percentage of the post-test is: 36.85 x 100% = 36.85%. Percentage of the success of the test before treatment is 36.85%. With the criteria as follows:

**Table 2**

*The Description of Students' Achievement before the Action*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.17%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-64</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41.67%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the data above, it can be defined that students still had difficulties in their English Language Learning. Based on the above case, the writer considered to implement Multicultural-Based English Syllabus for Civics Study (MBESCS).

**Table 3**

*Questions' characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Characteristic of the questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>Listening test from the passage “Forgiving” from Tempo Magazine English Edition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>Understanding of common knowledge about norms in the society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>Reading understanding to the passage about Malay’s norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>Reading understanding to the passage about forgiving in Idul Fitri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>Essay of the understanding to their culture in their region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In MBESCS treatments, the students could improve their knowledge which was related to the course because this syllabus gave more chance to the students to elaborate their opinions freely. The characteristic of the questions are presented in Table 3.

The success of the learners English learning is also provided in the following Table 4.
Table 4

The Description of Students’ Achievement before the Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥80</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>83.33%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-79</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the table above, 83.33% of students got the score ≥80 and the highest score was 100. The eight students got the score 65-79 and the lowest score was 74, 29. Based on the table above, it can be seen that MBESCS treatments was effective to the learners’ learning achievement. It is shown from 48.33% of the increase. The increase of the students’ learning achievement was because of the students ability to comprehend the main course given by the writer.

The success of the students can be shown as the students’ achievement in language learning. It means that the students’ learning achievement had been achieved. Based on the data given above, in a university level, the highest percentage achieved by the students was on “A” marks. So it can be defined that the students has achieved their target language learning goals.

The increase can be seen from the average score D to A. The students’ learning achievement is presented in appendix. The data above prove that the Multicultural-based syllabus is acceptable in the cultural differences such as in University of Ahmad Dahlan.

Validity and Reliability

Table 5

Questions’ characteristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Characteristic of the questions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Essay of the understanding to their culture in their region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The validity of the test was validated by expert judgement. Sugiyono (2010: 177) stated that, to validate the construct validity can be done by using the opinion of the expert (expert judgement). The experience of the expert is used to validate the questions. The expert can be determined as the expert in its subject. Since the writer has the same area with this research, validation of this data was done by using triangulation theories. The characteristics of the questions are presented at Table 5.

The reliability of this test was done by using coefficient correlation formula. The calculation of the reliability is presented as follows:
Table 6. Raw Data to Compute Reliability

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\sum x$</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>$\sum y$</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum xy$</td>
<td>2586</td>
<td>$\sum x^2$</td>
<td>2725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum y^2$</td>
<td>2633</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The writer computed the correlation coefficient for the first step by using the *Split-Half Method*. She used the correlation coefficient formula based on Arikunto (2010: 213). Based on the above data, the writer computed the data as follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n \sum xy - \sum x \sum y}{\sqrt{(n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{48.2586 - 333.325}{\sqrt{(48.2725 - 333)^2(48.2633 - 325)^2}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{15.903}{\sqrt{413.332.449}} = 0.78$$

From the result of computation as written above, it can be found that, $r_{xy}$ is 0.78. Based on the calculation of $r_{xy}$, the writer found the reliability of the test by using Spearman-Brown’s formula (Sugiyono, 2010: 185) as follows:

$$r_{11} = \frac{2r_b}{1 + r_b}$$

The calculation of the reliability is presented as follows:

$$r_{11} = \frac{2.0.78}{1 + 0.78} = 0.87$$

Based on the calculation of reliability above, it can be defined that the coefficient of $r_{11}$ is 0.87.

Table 7

The Value of Reliability Coefficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Reliability Coefficient</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>0.800-1</td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>0.600-0.799</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>0.400-0.599</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>0.200-0.399</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>0.000-0.199</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on Table 7, it can be seen that the reliability of the test is very high and the test is reliable to be tested to the first semester students of Civics Study Program of UAD.

Discussion

Based on the above research findings, it can be found the effectiveness of the Multicultural-based syllabus. The result of pretest showed that the average score of the students was 36,85. It was considered as poor category. While the result of post-test was higher than the pretest. The average score of the posttest was 85,18. It was considered as excellent category.

Beside analysing quantitative data, the writer also interpreted the qualitative data as the result of interview made after treatments. The interview was done to find out the effectiveness of the Multicultural-based syllabus based on the lecturer’s view. The following is the sample of interview with the teacher:

R : What do you thing about the MBESCS Sir?
L : It is good. I think it is more detail and matched the needs of students.
R : Was the implementation of the syllabus effective based on your previous supervision?
L : You were good at implementing the treatments. You gave the students the basic materials

Based on the interview with the English teacher, the writer found the effectiveness of the treatments using MBESCS. The writer also interviewed the students which aimed at finding their views about the alternative syllabus. The following is the part of the interview:

R : What do you think about the English learning method we used?
A-20 : It was good, but the use of English should not be used continuously.
R : Why? And what is the difference with your previous lectures?
A-20 : Our lecture rarely talked about culture but translating the given texts more
R : Was teaching by Multicultural perspective appropriate in your class which was in multicultural circumstance?
A-20 : Yes, it was

The result of interviewing written above shows that teaching by using MBESCS was effective so that it can be used to vary English teaching and learning process. The effectiveness can be seen also from the calculation of the reliability of the test. The coefficient of reliability reached 0.87.
Conclusion

Based on the research findings as written above, it can be concluded as follows. First, MBESCS model was considered effective to use in the research setting. The effectiveness of the Multicultural-based syllabus can be seen through the students’ learning achievement. The increasing can be seen through the gap 48.33% of pre-post test. Second, the interview of the lecturer and the student showed a good impression to the Multicultural-based syllabus. The Multicultural-based syllabus with Multicultural-based treatment got a good acceptance from the lecturer and the student. Third, the Multicultural-based treatment through a Multicultural-based syllabus can be used in a teaching and learning process in a class with various cultures background. The Multicultural-based syllabus can accommodate the interest of the students without creating a gap among cultures.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusion above, the suggestion is addressed to the teachers of English to implement the Multicultural-based syllabus for the following reasons. First, Multicultural-based syllabus can be used to vary learning material, and teaching strategy. Second, by enriching the discourse with various cultural issues may enable the students to improve their insights about various cultures. Third, literating various cultural issues may enable the learners to have deep toleration toward others. Fourth, Multicultural-Based Syllabus is considered matched to use in the countries with multicultural citizen.

About the author:

Dr. Hermayawati is the graduate of English Education and Teachers’ Training at State University of Sebelas Maret Surakarta and currently works at the same field at University of Mercu Buana Yogyakarta.
References


Drawing the Profile of Algerian Students of English as Dictionary Users

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University Constantine 1, Algeria

Abstract

Fifty freshmen students of English took part in a study in order to establish their profile as dictionary users. The respondents completed a questionnaire regarding the types of dictionaries they used, the frequency of use, the main reasons for consultation, the difficulties in the lookup process, instruction in dictionary use, etc. The analysis of data revealed that the students use monolingual dictionaries (MLDs) more frequently than bilingual dictionaries (BLDs), and that the difficulties they have in the lookup process are due to deficiencies in their dictionaries. In addition, the results provide evidence that our students do not take full advantage of their monolingual dictionaries because they hardly make use of the appendices and usage guides in them. The findings also indicate that their dictionary skills are more or less weak. Therefore, this study suggests that our students should receive more training in dictionary use so that they enhance their skills and make the most of their dictionaries.

Keywords: dictionary behavior, user profile, consultation problems, dictionary skills.
Introduction

Dictionaries are often considered as an essential tool in the process of foreign language (L2) learning, and are recognized as the first sources of information L2 learners refer to when they are faced with words they do not know (Songhao, 1997). However, if we want our students to be efficient users of dictionaries, we need to understand how they actually use them so that we better know their needs, identify the difficulties they have in the lookup process, and eventually help them overcome these difficulties.

One of the major advances in lexicography in recent years has been the focus on the user perspective; the literature on lexicography now has a new trend as it has started to focus particularly on dictionary users and seeks to know who uses which dictionary, and for what purpose (Hartmann, 1999a). The significance of the user perspective was highlighted by Stein (1984) in the following words: “Dictionaries are obviously written for their users. We therefore need much more research on the dictionary user, his needs, his expectations, and his prejudices” (p. 4). The quotation by Stein underlines the idea that research into lexicography should include some consideration of the users for whose benefit dictionaries have been compiled.

Since dictionary use is unlikely to have been researched in the Algerian context before, we know nothing or relatively little about how language learners use dictionaries; thus, there is a call for more information about the relationship between dictionaries and L2 learners, and we can access this information only through empirical research on habits of use, needs, and different problems learners might have when consulting dictionaries. The significance of such a study is further endorsed by Hartmann’s (1999b) belief that:

Research into dictionary use . . . provide[s] the framework for all lexicographic production, and more such research will be needed if the level of dictionary awareness is to be raised and the teaching of reference skills is to be improved. (p. 37)

The overall aim of this paper is to advance an understanding of a group of EFL Algerian freshmen students as dictionary users. Specifically, the objectives of our research were to:

1. Identify the dictionary type that is mostly used by freshmen EFL students.
2. Find out to what extent these students take advantage of their monolingual dictionaries.
3. Explore the difficulties these students have in the lookup process and the reasons for these difficulties.
4. Investigate whether the students were satisfied with the instruction in dictionary use they received.

Literature Review

Systematic research into dictionary use is relatively new and a few of empirical studies can be found in this recent field of enquiry. The earliest approach to dictionary use research was the survey by questionnaire, which was pioneered by the American lexicographer Clarence Barnhart in the early 1960s (Diab & Hamdan, 1999). Barnhart’s study, however, was not so authentic
because it relied on second-hand opinions of college teachers; the argument is that the relationship between teachers’ reports and actual dictionary use is indirect since the teachers were not involved at all in the dictionary-using act; thus, Barnhart’s study has been regarded as too distant and weak to yield reliable results (Hartmann, 2003).

The first important questionnaire study involving dictionary users directly was the survey by Tomaszczyk (1979) who asserted that surveying dictionary users directly with a questionnaire is the most popular technique of collecting data from dictionary users. Similarly, Nesi (2000) noted that “questionnaire-based research is perhaps the commonest method of enquiry into the use of English dictionaries” (p. 3); she pointed, however, to some of the problems that are associated with the use of questionnaires in dictionary use research:

Results are often a measure of the respondents’ perceptions, rather than objective fact. The respondents’ desire to conform, their (perhaps unconscious) wish to appear in some way better than they really are, or their inability to recall events in detail may distort the data. (p. 12)

Despite the fact that we should treat the use of questionnaires to elicit information with caution, we believe that using them in dictionary use research remains an important and useful methodology (Lew, 2002). Several up-to-date overviews of research in the field of dictionary use are already available. In what follows, we will tackle some of the most important issues that are particularly relevant in the context of the present study.

**Bilingual versus Monolingual Dictionary Use**

Whether a foreign language learner should use a monolingual or a bilingual dictionary has sparked a heated debate among educators and language teachers. Some educators, among them Baxter (1980), supported the use of MLDs because they improve fluency by offering definitions in context; in contrast, BLDs reinforce learners’ tendency to translate from the native language; as a result, they discourage learners from thinking directly in the foreign language. In addition, Baxter suggested that the exposure to the defining language of the MLD would train users in their paraphrasing skills in the foreign language.

Likewise, Stein (1990) believed that BLDs reinforce the belief in one-to-one lexical equivalence between the two languages, while the meaning of two words in two different languages is virtually never identical, except for certain technical terms in restricted specialist usage. Moreover, Stein argued that most BLDs usually offer a larger number of target language equivalents than just one per headword.

On the contrary of this, some researchers (e.g. Piotrowski, 1989; Bogaards, 1996) argued that it is the BLD that has been the traditional lexical resource of the language learner. In contrast, the MLD for foreign language learning is a new development (Cowie, 1999). Piotrowski (1989) pointed out to the innate difficulty in locating the information in a MLD; he noted that MLD users find themselves facing the paradoxical situation where they need to know the L2 item in order to look it up, but the L2 item is exactly what they do not know and are trying to find.

In the same way, Tomaszczyk (1983) presented two arguments for the use of BLDs by L2 learners: The first argument is that of interference between L1 and L2. Tomaszczyk suggested
that “whether one likes it or not, language learners do rely on their mother tongue to quite a considerable extent. If this cannot be avoided, why not capitalize on it?” (p. 44). The second point raised by Tomaszczyk in support of BLDs is that the majority of dictionary users showed preference for them, as suggested by results of questionnaire studies. He argued that if the users themselves selected to use BLDs, so they must have found some real value in them.

Moreover, Hanks (1987) assumed that the metalanguage of definitions in MLDs differs from natural language in terms of register, lexis, syntax, collocation, and various more puzzling abbreviatory conventions that are typical of lexicographic description. Thus, learners will not benefit from the exposure to the target language in the dictionary. Furthermore, Neubach and Cohen (1988) argued that users often find it difficult to understand definitions or words in the definitions in MLDs. They quote the following comments from students to illustrate the problem in understanding dictionary definitions:

I don’t understand this definition. What should I do – look up meanings of words in the definitions? Where does it stop? Actually the dictionary hardly ever helps me. I don’t understand the definition and I feel that it hinders me more than it helps me. (p. 8)

As already seen, there is no shortage of arguments for and against both types of dictionaries; however, because MLDs may be seen as solving some of the problems presented by BLDs, most EFL teachers prefer their students to use them. However, it may be difficult for a student with insufficient vocabulary to understand a MLD entry that contains unknown words, which makes the whole lookup process time-consuming and even frustrating if understanding the entry requires looking up other entries with still more unknown words.

**Frequency of Dictionary Consultation**

*How often do users consult their dictionaries?* Answering this seemingly simple question requires special attention. User questionnaires have addressed the issue of the frequency of dictionary consultation by users, but findings obtained in this way have to be considered carefully, since their factual correctness cannot be guaranteed (Crystal, 1986).

Available result on the relationship between the frequency of dictionary consultation and learner’s level are contradictory. Some studies (e.g. Knight, 1994; Wingate, 2002) found the frequency of dictionary use to increase with level; other studies (e.g. Atkins & Varantola, 1997; Tomaszczyk, 1979) revealed a reverse tendency, with lower proficiency users tending to use their dictionaries more frequently. Atkins and Varantola (1997) monitored dictionary use in translation by a group of 71 ESL speakers from fifteen different language backgrounds, and found no consistent pattern in their sample. Intermediate users recorded the highest rates of dictionary use, while beginners appeared to have consulted their dictionaries less frequently. Advanced users ranked between the intermediate group and the beginners.

Moreover, Jakubowski (2001) investigated the use of BLDs and MLDs by Polish high school learners and found the frequency of use to be higher for students of higher proficiency level. However, questions about the frequency of dictionary consultation are often asked in the context of reasons for dictionary look-up (Hartmann, 2001).
Dictionary Preference

Surveys of learners' use of dictionaries generally confirm the teachers’ suspicion that many learners still prefer BLDs to MLDs (Garcia, 2011). The preference for BLDs was obvious in the responses of those 228 subjects in Tomaszczyk’s (1979) sample. Tomaszczyk pointed out that “almost all subjects, no matter how sophisticated they are, use bilingual dictionaries” (p. 104). MLDs were used less frequently. Moreover, in Yorio’s (1971) and Bensoussan, Sim, and Weiss’ (1984) study, when the students were put in a free choice of using BLDs or MLDs, more than half of them showed a distinct preference for BLDs. Yorio (1971) concludes that “although frequently inaccurate or misleading, the bilingual dictionary seems to give them security of a concrete answer, while the monolingual dictionary often forces them to guess the meaning, adding more doubts to the already existing ones” (p. 113).

Not all studies, though, have found BLDs to be preferred to MLDs. In Béjoint’s (1981) study, only 17% of the subjects claimed to prefer BLDs. In addition, 85% of the students in the study had chosen their dictionary because their teacher recommended that particular dictionary. Cowie (1999) pointed out that part of the learners’ enthusiasm for the MLD is a result of their teachers, whose recommendations are highly valued and followed by large numbers of learners. As a result, “a wide gap often exists between a student’s perception of the dictionary’s value and its actual usefulness as an aid to learning” (Cowie, 1999, p. 184).

On the whole, studies’ results indicate that users exhibit a clear preference for BLDs because they hope they can find an instantly functional translation of a word they know in their language. In the following section, we will briefly examine the question of whether or not this relationship is affected by the user’s proficiency level.

Dictionary Preference and Proficiency Level

A number of studies (e.g. Atkins and Varantola, 1997; Tomaszczyk, 1979) noted a tendency for higher-proficiency learners to use MLDs relatively more often than BLDs. In addition, Harmer (1991) assumed that students, at early stages, will usually find MLDs too difficult to use because the language in them is highly complicated; as a result, these students will opt for using BLDs.

There is also the question of the different situations and tasks for which various dictionary types are employed. For example, Atkins and Varantola (1997) reported that the principal use of MLDs by the higher-proficiency students in their sample was to aid in the comprehension of L2 expressions and to help with using a known item in production. Jakubowski (2001) looked at the use of bilingual and MLDs by Polish high school learners at two levels, and found, at both levels, a strong preference for the BLD in writing, but less of a preference in reading and listening tasks.

In general, studies indicate that there is a tendency among language learners to prefer BLDs; however, this preference is less common among higher-proficiency learners who are likely to switch into using MLDs as their level improves. Harmer (1991) concludes that:

Whether we like it or not, students will always use [bilingual dictionaries], especially at lower levels. What we can do is show them something different which is just as good-and in many ways better: the monolingual dictionary (MLD). (p. 168)
Information Categories Consulted

Word meaning is the information category which has been identified as the one that is most frequently sought by learners when consulting dictionaries (Hartmann, 1999b; Garcia, 2011). This emphasizes “the dictionary user’s overwhelming preoccupation with meaning” (Cowie, 1999, p. 181). However, it should be pointed out that the relative need for specific information types is likely to depend on the particular task for which the dictionary is being used. Harvey and Yuill (1997) investigated the use of the Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary by learners of English in writing. Their subjects reported that they most often looked for spelling information (24.4% of all lookups), with meaning in the second position (18.3%), synonyms and grammar ranked third (10.6% and 10.5% of lookups, respectively), collocation (8.2%), and inflection (5.9%). Spelling and grammatical information usually ranked somewhat high among the categories of information sought in dictionaries, though spelling tended to be wanted more by language learners than by native speaking dictionary users (Béjoint, 1981).

It seems that the relationship between learners and their dictionaries is so complex and entails a lot of interpretations. Therefore, we feel there is a constant need for empirical data on how language learners use their dictionaries. The next section of this paper will detail the research methods used to capture the empirical data.

Research Design

Participants

Fifty EFL freshmen students (females: 36, males: 14, M age= 18.5, age range: 17-25 years) took part in this study. The students were in their first year of study in the Department of English at University Constantine 1 in Algeria. The main reason for our choice of sample was that these students belonged to the first year of the degree course and, in this way, we would be able to accurately know their starting point in terms of dictionary-using habits and dictionary use instruction. The subjects consisted of homogenous male and female students, all sharing similar educational and linguistic backgrounds, and were regularly taking classes in ‘Written Expression’ with the researcher.

Data Collection

This study employed a questionnaire in order to meet the research objectives. It was based on the one developed by Hartmann (1999b). Our questionnaire was comprised of 22 questions divided into three sections: In the first section, we asked questions which provided personal and academic information about the students who took part in the study. We mainly asked about gender, age, and duration of EFL instruction. In the second section, we asked questions that directly pertained to dictionary use. We asked students about types of dictionaries owned, dictionary mostly used, priorities when buying a dictionary, frequency of monolingual/bilingual dictionary use, reasons for looking up words, difficulties when looking up words and the reasons for those difficulties, use of appendices and usage guides and the “guide to the dictionary page”. In the last section of the
questionnaire, we asked the students about the instruction in dictionary use they received and the perceived usefulness of this instruction. (see Appendix for the complete questionnaire)

**Procedure**

The study took place during the researcher’s regular teaching session and under his supervision. Before the questionnaire was administered, the researcher gave a brief explanation of the purpose of the study. The students were informed that the researcher was just interested in finding out how they use dictionaries, and that their responses would not affect their academic grades in anyway. The researcher also gave feedback about the questionnaire’s content upon the respondents’ requests. The answered questionnaires were collected right after they were completed.

Both descriptive and analytical approaches were used to account for the raw quantitative data. The items in the questionnaire were first illustrated in the form of percentages and graphs and then were interpreted and commented on by the researcher.

In order to meet the objectives of the present study, the questionnaire was carefully designed to reflect the main themes which cover the overall aim and objectives of this research. These themes, however, are interrelated and complement one another, so it is extremely important not to view them as separate topics because they all contribute to the profile of dictionary users. Findings from the questionnaire’s items were combined to yield a more complete picture of dictionary use by freshmen students of English.

**Results and Discussion**

In what follows, we present and discuss the subjects’ responses to the questionnaire’s items that directly pertain to dictionary use, as opposed to those items which rather provided general information on the students who took part in the present study.

**Question 3: What type of dictionary do you own?**

Three choices were offered and more than one answer could be ticked. All the respondents reported possessing English monolingual dictionaries, 90% of them either had English/Arabic or Arabic/English bilingual dictionary. In fact, the higher percentage for the monolingual dictionary was expected; we think that it has become a tradition in the Algerian context that the first thing students usually do as soon as they sign up for a foreign language class is to rush to bookstores and buy themselves monolingual dictionaries.

**Question 4: What size are your dictionaries?**

Three choices were offered for this question. Eighty-six percent of the subjects owned pocket monolingual dictionaries while the remaining 14% reported their monolingual dictionaries were medium-sized. However, it is our belief that pocket monolingual dictionaries are not very useful to learners of English because they contain scanty information and may not deal with all the possible definitions of words. In addition, pocket dictionaries tend to neglect important details about vocabulary such as collocations and idiomatic expressions.
With respect to bilingual dictionaries, 90% \((n=36)\) of the subjects said their dictionaries were medium-sized whereas 10% \((n=4)\) said their dictionaries were pocket-sized. This result is reasonable and was expected, especially if we take into account that the landslide majority of bilingual dictionaries available on the Algerian market are medium-sized.

**Question 5: Which dictionary do you use most frequently?**

The subjects were asked to specify the dictionary type they used most frequently (monolingual or bilingual). The purpose was to concentrate the subjects’ minds on what they would consider the most important single dictionary type. Eighty-two percent of the subjects used MLDs, followed by BLDs with a very low percentage (18%). The obtained results had not been expected; on the contrary, we assumed the students would use BLDs more frequently. Our implicit belief was that these students have no practical English language repertoire yet; therefore, we thought they would necessarily show preference for using BLDs more. Our belief was also motivated by Harmer’s (1991) assumption that students, at early stages, would usually find MLDs too difficult to use.

In Question 6, the subjects were asked to provide the title and publisher of the dictionary they used most frequently. Regarding MLDs, there was no doubt that the majority of the students \((72\%)\) preferred the Oxford Pocket Learner’s Dictionary, published by Oxford University Press (OUP), whereas only a few students preferred Cambridge and Longman dictionaries \((06.38\%)\). It should be noted that Oxford Pocket dictionaries are very popular among Algerian students of English, and part of their popularity is due to their huge availability in bookstores, their relatively reasonable price, and the excellent reputation of the publisher.

Concerning bilingual dictionaries, we found that students’ responses were dispersed between: El Houda bilingual dictionary, published by an Algerian publishing house (Ain Mlila); Al Toullab bilingual dictionary, published by a Lebanese publishing house; and Oxford Word Power bilingualized dictionary, published by Oxford University Press. It should be noted that there are other dictionary titles that were reported but the students failed to remember the names of their publishers.

**Question 7: Are you planning to buy a new dictionary in the near future?**

Only 34% \((n=17)\) of the students surveyed said they would soon buy a new dictionary. This percentage is logical, given the fact that the majority of students already bought dictionaries at the beginning of the academic year, so why would they buy a new dictionary if they already bought one?

**Question 8: What is your priority when you buy a new dictionary?**

Six priorities were offered and the subjects were required to choose up to three of which, which they think are the most important priorities when buying a new dictionary. The figures in Table 1 were obtained:
Table 1. Priorities when buying a new dictionary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities to be considered</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The number of examples</td>
<td>78 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its size (weight)</td>
<td>50 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of words</td>
<td>42 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its relevance to my needs</td>
<td>22 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A reasonable price</td>
<td>18 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reputation of the publisher</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In fact, we believed that the higher percentage would either go to considering a reasonable price of a dictionary or the number of words in it. Unexpectedly, it turned out that our students are aware of the importance of authentic examples in learning English. What was surprising for us is the percentage of students who took the weight of the dictionary as one of their utmost priorities (50%), which was beyond our expectations. Yet, what was more astonishing is that all the subjects who reported the weight of the dictionary as an important variable were females. This might be taken to suggest that female students tend to have a superficial view towards dictionaries and that the only important thing for them is not to have a dictionary that is rich with words and examples, but a dictionary that best suits the size of their always-small purses.

Question 9: How often do you consult your dictionaries?

In this question, the students were asked to specify the frequency with which they consulted their monolingual (English-English) and bilingual (English-Arabic/Arabic-English) dictionaries. Five frequency rates were given and the percentages for each type of dictionary were obtained (Table 2):

Table 2. Consultation frequencies for monolingual and bilingual dictionaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation Frequency</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monolingual</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three/four times a week</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>53.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less frequently</td>
<td>06%</td>
<td>26.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly ever</td>
<td>00%</td>
<td>00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 2, the consultation frequencies for both types of dictionaries are quite contrasting. On the one hand, more than half of the subjects used the MLD on a daily basis and about a third a few times a week; this frequency is logical since the landslide majority of the subjects already reported using MLDs more frequently (82%). On the other hand, about half of the subjects consulted a BLD only once a week, whereas less than one fifth used it every day, which is a very low frequency, but not surprising and correlates with the results obtained for question five. The contrast between the distributions for the two dictionary types is represented in the below histogram (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Consultation frequencies for monolingual and bilingual dictionaries**

On the whole, the pattern in the histogram suggests a big difference among the subjects in terms of the reported lookup frequencies. While ‘Once a week’ was the most popular response for BLDs, the situation was just the other way around for MLDs; where the frequency option ‘Every day’ ranked first in the race for achieving the higher degree of dictionary consultation (56%), and ‘Once a week’ coming last with only 12% of the total votes.

**Question 10: What are your main reasons for looking up words in a monolingual dictionary?**

The subjects were asked for which specific type of information they consulted their monolingual English dictionaries. The results for the eight individual types of information are elicited in Table 3.

**Table 3. Information types often consulted in a dictionary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Information Sought</th>
<th>Percentages of Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning (definition)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage examples</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As had been expected, spelling, meaning, and pronunciation were the primary reasons for monolingual dictionary use. The figures emphasize the primacy of meaning and pronunciation over the other lookup reasons, though we had expected a higher percentage for spelling. The results also suggest that derivatives, phrasal verbs, and idioms are rarely sought by the subjects. Amusingly, collocational information appears to be the least popular and tends to be the last information type the students would ever think to look for in a dictionary.

The obtained results are quite reasonable; the subjects are still in their first year of learning English and have no practical English knowledge yet, so it is no wonder they show interest in the basic types of information first; that is, what a given English word means, how it is written, and how it is pronounced. However, we believe that these students would be more interested in the other types of information (phrasal verbs, idioms, and collocations) as their level advances.

Question 11: What kind of difficulties do you often encounter when you look up words in a monolingual dictionary?

Five options were offered representing the types of difficulties lay students are most likely to encounter. The obtained results are set in Table 4:

Table 4. Types of difficulties encountered when consulting a dictionary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Difficulty</th>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitions are not clear</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The word I am looking for is not there</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information I am looking for is not given</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information I am looking for is difficult to find</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples are not helpful</td>
<td>08%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Table 4, the first problem students mentioned was that the definitions in their dictionaries were not clear (42%). This can be accounted for in two ways: the first explanation is that these students have no practical English vocabulary that would help them understand the definitions in a MLD. The second explanation is that the students’ dictionaries provide vague information that it is hard for these beginner students to understand the definitions in them. This is what we think is not true, considering that the vast majority of the students (72%) possess Oxford dictionaries which are widely acclaimed as the most trusted English dictionaries.
Moreover, the students complained that they did not find words they looked for (40%). We believe this percentage is relatively high. To our mind, it would have been so logical if students complained that it was difficult for them to find specific information in dictionaries, which perhaps would indicate that these students are not good enough in terms of dictionary-using skills because they are not familiar with the metalanguage used in the dictionary, or possibly because the layout of the dictionary itself is not clear. The students’ allegations indicate that they are honestly accusing their dictionaries’ compilers of being deficient since they had failed to list the words the students wanted to know. This allegation is utterly illogical given the fact that 72% of these students have the Oxford pocket dictionary, which is compiled by the best lexicographers in England and specifically designed to meet the needs of beginner learners of English.

Another interesting remark is the percentage of students who reported that the information they were seeking does not exist in the dictionary (24%). This percentage is logical in the sense that 86% of the subjects have pocket monolingual dictionaries, which we already argued are not very helpful because they only list basic information about words and tend to neglect some peripheral details about vocabulary such as idioms, phrasal verbs, and derivatives. Therefore, if students are looking for such types of information, they most probably will not find them all in a pocket dictionary.

Question 12: What are the reasons for the difficulties you encounter when consulting a monolingual dictionary?

This question’s aim was to explore whether or not the difficulties the students had are blamed on their inadequate dictionary-using skills or on the dictionary’s inadequate design. The following results were obtained (Table 5):

Table 5. Reasons for the difficulties when consulting a dictionary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Difficulty</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The dictionary is not very efficient (information is vague or inadequate)</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear layout of the dictionary (organization of information is unclear)</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lack of dictionary using skills</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lack of familiarity with the dictionary</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It seems that the subjects are once again pointing the finger at Oxford dictionaries’ compilers. As evidenced in the table above, the students attributed the bulk of their difficulties when using a dictionary to the dictionary itself, whereas only a few of them considered the difficulties owing to other reasons such as their lack of familiarity with the dictionary, or their lack of dictionary-using skills. The figures suggest that the subjects are free of all shortcomings and that their dictionaries are deficient. Nevertheless, the obtained results overlap with the results for the preceding question and this is what matters the most.
Drawing the Profile of Algerian Students

Question 13: Prior to using your dictionaries, did you ever have a look at ‘the guide to the dictionary’ page?

It was interesting to find out that very few students consulted the guide to the dictionary page prior to using their dictionaries (18%, n=9), while the remaining 82% reported they never had a look at this page. In fact, it was our conviction from the very beginning that the guide to the dictionary page occupies one of the last positions among the students’ interests in a dictionary, which is actually not a good sign. The importance of the guide to the dictionary page cannot be underestimated because it provides useful information about the layout of the entries and the metalanguage used in the dictionary.

Question 14: Do you make use of appendices and usage guides in your dictionaries?

As had been expected, appendices and usage guides are among the information types rarely consulted by students (34%, n=17). This suggests that our students hardly take advantage of these guides, which we consider not a very encouraging result; usage guides provide useful information that students need to know, such as the list of irregular verbs, and the spelling and pronunciation guides. We believe that the familiarity with usage guides could produce an immediate effect in both understanding and time reduction of the lookup process.

In Question 15, the students (n=17) were exposed to a list of options that included the most common information appendices in dictionaries, and for which they were asked to pick out the items they mostly used. Below are the results (Table 6):

Table 6. Frequencies for using appendices and usage guides in a dictionary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendices and Usage Guides</th>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of irregular verbs</td>
<td>64.70% (n=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of abbreviations and symbols</td>
<td>47.05% (n=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling and pronunciation guide</td>
<td>41.17% (n=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical information</td>
<td>23.52% (n=4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In fact, we did expect that the subjects would consult the list of abbreviations and symbols more often than the list of irregular verbs. Our assumption was that these students, who probably were out of touch with MLDs before entering the university, would rather use the list of abbreviations and symbols more frequently in order to become familiar with the metalanguage and symbols used in their dictionaries, which was not the case regarding the obtained results.

The proportion for spelling and pronunciation guide is logical, though we had expected a percentage of no less than 60% regarding the students’ proficiency levels. The lower result for grammatical information does not surprise us as well, given the fact that 72% of the subjects owned the Oxford pocket dictionary which, after we checked, we found not containing any grammatical information labels.
Questions 16 and 17 asked whether the subjects received any explicit instruction in using dictionaries and the duration of this instruction, expressed in the number of sessions they had. All the subjects reported having received instruction on dictionary use as part of the study skills methodology classes they had at the university. The subjects said the instruction they received lasted three sessions (90 min/session). We believe the duration allotted for teaching dictionary use was not adequate in view of the great number of students per group (up to 50) and the level of each student.

Closely related to the previous question, Questions 18 and 19 asked whether the students think the instruction they had in dictionary use was efficient, and if not, what they think are the reasons for the deficiency in the instruction. Interestingly, 74% \((n=37)\) of the subjects claimed the instruction they received was efficient. On the other hand, 26% \((n=13)\) thought the instruction was not very useful due to the inadequacy of instruction \((61.53\%, n=8)\) and the teacher’s poor method in teaching \((38.47\%, n=5)\). Both reasons are logical, given the fact that the students received only very few sessions on how to use a dictionary, and if we consider the huge number of students per group, we believe it would be practically impossible for the teachers to check and make sure all the students benefited from the instruction.

Question 20 investigated whether the students regarded themselves as efficient dictionary users. Unexpectedly, 56% of the subjects considered themselves not good dictionary users, whereas the remaining 44% thought they were good. Actually, we had expected the results to be just the reverse. We assumed that the majority of students would stoutly defend their dictionary skills.

Related to the preceding question, Question 21 asked the students to justify why they think they are or they are not efficient dictionary users. This question was open, with the intention of encouraging the students to use their own words rather than just ticking boxes all the time.

As for the students who thought they were efficient dictionary users, much of them said it was because they found less or no difficulties when looking up words, and that they tended to find the information they were seeking easily. With respect to the subjects who thought they were not good dictionary users, some of them said it was because they were still beginner learners and tended to spend more time when they looked up words. Others said they often found difficulties since it was the first time for them to use dictionaries in which their mother language was not involved at all.

In the 22nd and last question, the subjects were invited to add any personal comments about their experience with dictionaries. In fact, only a few respondents took advantage to add any points \((32\%)\). Some of the interesting comments the students made, and of which much were in Arabic, were that they cannot do without dictionaries as they are indispensable for them to learn English and enrich their vocabulary. In addition, one of the students commented that she never thought using dictionaries would be so easy and interesting. This freshman student even claimed that using dictionaries was the easiest thing she ever experienced in learning English.

However, we found that using dictionaries was not that pleasurable for one of the students who frankly said that using a dictionary is boring, but he most of the time found himself obliged to turn to it when he was stuck for a word he did not know. A student even said that she hates dictionaries despite the fact that they are useful, which we think is a quite paradoxical feeling. One funny comment was from a student who said that using the dictionary is harmful to her eyes.
because of the so-small writing in it. Indeed, when we checked this student’s previous responses, we found that she owned the Oxford pocket dictionary in which the writing is really so small.

**Conclusion**

In the present study, we attempted to investigate a range of issues related to dictionary use by a group of EFL freshmen students through questionnaire surveys. Our overall aim was to draw the profile of these students as dictionary users so as to advance an understanding of how they make use of their dictionaries.

The investigation of dictionary preference revealed that the average freshmen learner of English uses the monolingual dictionary more frequently; in contrast, bilingual dictionaries are used very rarely by our learners. These findings do not agree with the results of those studies which noted the preference for bilingual dictionaries at early stages (Harmer, 1991; Jakubowski, 2001).

The types of information that learners seek from dictionaries tended to be grouped into two clusters: 1- A dominant cluster which comprises meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. 2- A secondary cluster which consists of examples, derivatives, idioms, phrasal verbs, and collocations; these were sought less often and formed the peripheral information cluster.

The students attributed the difficulties they had when they looked up words to their dictionaries; they claimed that their dictionaries were not very efficient and that the information in them is vague and inadequate.

The results of the present study suggest that our students hardly take advantage of the appendices and usage guides in dictionaries. We believe the familiarity with usage guides could produce an immediate effect in both understanding and time reduction of the lookup process.

We believe our students need more instruction in dictionary use since they already reported not being good enough in using dictionaries and thought the instruction they had was not efficient.

**Limitations of the Study**

The present study is limited in a number of ways: First, the methodology used may present some intricacies; potential problems with questionnaires were pointed out by Nesi (2000). We can by no means check the honesty of the respondents’ answers.

Second, the sample used in the study covered only a very small range of students. Therefore, the results of this research cannot be generalized to all freshmen students studying in the Department of English. Due to time constraints, no systematic sampling method was used to obtain a sample that is representative of all freshmen students. The methodological decision of the sample size was motivated by pure pragmatic considerations since the students who took part in the study were taking classes with the researcher.

Bearing the aforementioned conclusions in mind, we hope to move to further research by administering similar questionnaires possibly combined with other methods to a more representative sample of EFL students in order to gain full insight into their general profile as dictionary users.
About the author:

Chaker Hamdi is a teaching assistant of English at University Constantine 1, Algeria, where he received his BA and MA, and currently pursuing his PhD course in Applied Language Studies. His research interests include: Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), electronic dictionaries, L2 motivation, and ESP.
References


Appendix

Questionnaire

I would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions by filling in information or by ticking boxes where appropriate. All your answers will remain confidential.

Thank you in advance for your contribution to this study on the use of learners’ dictionaries!

1- Please specify: Gender: □Male □Female Age: _____

2- How many years have you been learning English? __________

3- What type of dictionaries do you own? (Tick more than one box if appropriate)
   □ Monolingual dictionary: English-English
   □ Bilingual dictionary: English-Arabic/Arabic-English

4- What size are your dictionaries?
   Monolingual: □Pocket □Medium-sized (concise) □Comprehensive
   Bilingual: □Pocket □Medium-sized (concise) □Comprehensive

5- Which dictionary do you use most frequently?
   □ Monolingual □ Bilingual

6- Please provide the following information about this dictionary.
   Title: ___________________________ Publisher: ___________________________

7- Are you planning to buy a new dictionary in the near future?
   □Yes □No

8- What is your priority when you BUY a new dictionary? (Please tick up to three criteria of the following list which you regard as being important for your choice.)
   □ The number of words
   □ A reasonable price
   □ The number of examples
   □ The reputation of the publisher
   □ Its relevance to my needs
   □ Its size (weight)
9- How often do you consult your dictionaries?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Every day</th>
<th>Three/four times a week</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>Less often</th>
<th>Hardly ever</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Monolingual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Bilingual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10- What are your main reasons for looking up words in a monolingual English dictionary?

☐ Spelling
☐ Meaning (definition)
☐ Pronunciation
☐ Usage (examples)
☐ Derivatives, compounds (e.g. “guidance” and “guide-book” are derived from “guide”)
☐ Phrasal verbs (e.g. get up; hung up)
☐ Idioms (e.g. head over heels; on top of the world)
☐ Collocations (e.g. fill in a form; heavy smoker)

11- What kind of difficulties do you often encounter when you look up words in a monolingual dictionary?

☐ The word I am looking for is not there
☐ The information I am looking for is not given
☐ The information I am looking for is difficult to find
☐ Definitions are not clear
☐ Examples are not helpful
☐ Other:

12- What are the reasons for the difficulties you encounter when consulting dictionaries?

☐ The dictionary is not very efficient (The information given is vague or not adequate)
☐ My lack of familiarity with the dictionary
☐ My lack of dictionary-using skills
☐ Unclear layout of the dictionary (organization of the information is unclear)
☐ Other:

13- Prior to using your dictionaries, did you ever have a look at “the guide to the dictionary” page? ☐ Yes ☐ No

14- Do you make use of appendices and usage guides in your dictionaries?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15- If “YES”, what dictionary appendices do you use most frequently?

☐ List of abbreviations and symbols
☐ List of irregular verbs
☐ Grammatical information
☐ Spelling and pronunciation guide
16- Did you have any training in using dictionaries before?
☐ Yes ☐ No

17- If “Yes”, please specify.

Where: ___________________________ How long: _____________________

18- Do you think the training you had was efficient?
☐ Yes ☐ No

19- If “No”, what are the reasons for this deficiency?
☐ Instruction on dictionary use was not adequate
☐ Teacher’s method in teaching dictionary use is not good
☐ Other: ___________________________

20- Do you consider yourself an efficient dictionary user?
☐ Yes ☐ No

21- Please justify your answer: ________________________________

22- Please feel free to add any other points you want to make about your experience with dictionaries. ________________________________
Instructor and Peer Evaluation of Oral Skills in English Speech Class

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Abstract

Peer Evaluation is recognized as having significant pedagogic value and has gained much attention in recent years due to the increasing emphasis on learner self-regulation. Instructors in a number of universities have tried out peer evaluation in collaborative team projects to evaluate student contributions to both process and task. This current study was designed to investigate if the college students were competent in evaluating their peers’ oral performance alongside their instructor in English Speech class. Ninety-eight junior English majors enrolled in English Speech courses were recruited to participate in this study. Some statistical analyses were employed. The researcher first compared the means and standard deviations of the instructor and peer evaluations to determine the levels of agreement between the two sets of marks of the individual speech. Then, independent t-tests were conducted to examine if there were any significant differences between the instructor and peer evaluation of English speech performance. Finally, the Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to test the relationship between instructor- and peer-evaluation. The results revealed that the peer evaluation was similar to the instructor’s assessment. Students’ competencies in peer evaluation appear to be independent on the oral performance. This study provides preliminary evidence that the instructor’s evaluation can be supplemented with peer evaluation in the classroom setting.

Keywords: Peer evaluation, Oral skills, English Speech
Introduction

Teaching English Speech in a university of technology has always been a challenge. As an instructor of English Speech course, I found that many students tended more towards a static lecture style rather than toward dynamic and active participation. Most of the time, students hesitated to take part in a discussion. They entered the English Speech classroom with high levels of anxiety and low expectations. In addition, providing feedback and evaluation for a large-size class is quite effort and time intensive. Therefore, there is a need for change in evaluation to reduce the instructors’ workload, enhance students’ learning motivation, and involve students in evaluating themselves.

According to post-modernistic and constructivist learning theories, the role of the instructor should shift from the “sage on the stage” to the “guide on the side.” The viewpoint has emphasized a major responsibility on students for their own learning. Therefore, teaching strategies should move from “lecture and learn” and toward “collaborate and create.”

Peer Evaluation has renewed attention in recent years due to the increasing emphasis on learner self-regulation and autonomy. Instructors in a number of universities have tried out peer evaluation in collaborative team projects to evaluate student contributions to both process and task (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2005). This increases a huge controversy over the reliability and validity of peer evaluation as a means of evaluating students’ performance related to the planned learning outcomes (Omelicheva, 2005). Moreover, the results of previous studies have been mixed and inconclusive in terms of students’ competence in evaluating peer’s performance.

In this study, the researcher is mainly concerned with examining the competence of college students in assessing their peers’ English speech performance in class.

Literature Review

Pond and Ul-Haq (1997) defined peer evaluation as “an assessment methodology that allows students to provide input into the assessment procedure through evaluating each other’s performance in out-of-class leaning activities, with control of the final grade remaining the teacher” (p. 331).

Peer evaluation has been considered as a valuable and effective approach in helping students develop their critical thinking skills and insight into the evaluation process. Johnson and Johnson (2004) claimed, “Pees are the potential source of the most complete, accurate, and helpful assessments and feedback” (p. 138).

Peer evaluation of the speaker at the post-presentation is an important component of most teaching activities. Students use specified criteria to evaluate the performance of their peers and offer feedback so that peers realize that what they should improve. Applying a rubric or a checklist is especially helpful in guiding the evaluation process. According to Chohen and Spenciner (2007), through the process peer evaluators can develop greater understanding of course objectives and criteria, realize the key features of quality work, and obtain important insights into the reasoning of their peers.

In their studies, Saavedra and Kwun (1993) found that “on the whole, both field and laboratory studies indicate that peer assessment is a valid and reliable evaluation procedure” (p.
In addition, Topping (1998) reviewed studies (1980-1996) on peer evaluation in higher education. The result showed that there was high correlation between instructor evaluation scores and peer evaluation scores in twenty five studies of thirty one. Falchikov and Goldfinch (2000) also reviewed forty eight studies of peer evaluation and revealed that peer evaluation results show similarity with instructor evaluation results.

However, the results of previous studies have been mixed and inconclusive in terms of students’ competence in evaluating peer’s performance. For example, Zariski (1996) brought up the doubts about the constructiveness of students’ feedback and mentioned about insulting language and tone of the comments that may have undesirable effects on class atmosphere and self-confidence of the students. Researchers raised a flag of caution to college instructors who implement peer evaluations in a classroom setting. They suggested that instructors should be concerned with the validity and reliability of the ratings. For example, Holroyd (2000) indicated that some instructors and students questioned about the validity level of evaluation, made by students, at the same knowledge level, about each other. Cheng and Warren (1999) reported low validity ($r = .22$ in geography and $r = .29$ in electrical engineering) of peer assessments. Smith (1997) found out rating bias based on gender in their study of college students. Greenan, Haumphreys, and McIlveen (1997) also indicated that students might have negative attitude toward peer assessment and may conspire to give peers good grades.

May (2008) recommend that evaluator training might be effective in improving the accuracy of peer evaluation in an academic team project setting. In addition, making sure students have a good frame of reference for the rating dimensions should help reduce errors and improve confidence in the evaluating process. Lisk (2000) proposed that the peer evaluation process must include several important conditions to be successful in the classrooms: (a) a clear set of learning objectives that are accepted by all students; (b) positive interdependence, (c) positive social interaction behavior and attitude, and (d) individual accountability.

This current study was designed to examine whether the junior undergraduate students were competent to evaluate their peers’ English public speaking skills alongside the class instructor. More specifically, three research questions were investigated:

1. What were the levels of agreement between the class instructor evaluation and peer evaluation of English speech performance?
2. Were there significant differences between the class instructor evaluation and peer evaluation of English speech performance?
3. Was there a relationship between the class instructor evaluation and peer evaluation?

**Method**

Ninety-eight junior English majors enrolled in English Speech courses (Class A and Class B) were recruited to participate in this study. The participants’ ages ranged from 19 to 22 years old. None of the participants had received intensive English presentation training before this study.

The study was conducted in two English Speech classes offered in a university at the central Taiwan. English Speech was a 3-credit required course and it met during the junior year twice a week for 18 weeks in the semester.
Throughout the semester, students received instruction and delivering English speech, practiced four types of speech (informative, persuasive, entertainment, and impromptu). These students were also trained in evaluating their peers’ speech performance based on the Toastmaster International English Speech contest evaluation form (See Table 1). The criteria include speech development, effectiveness, speech value, body languages, voice, manner, appropriateness, and correctness.

**Table 1.**

*Evaluation criteria for English Speech*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graded Items</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>-Begin with effective attention-getter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Preview body of speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>-Main points clear, use appropriate organizational pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Organization of facts, examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Suitability of purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Cite sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice Quality</strong></td>
<td>-Volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Range of voice (intonation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Pronunciation/Enunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body Language</strong></td>
<td>-Gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Posture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eye Contact &amp; Dealing with Visual Aids</strong></td>
<td>-Maintain eye contact with audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Use visual aids effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>-Signal speech ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Summarize and reinforce thesis/main points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Close with memorable statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the orientation session, the researcher explained her expectations and criteria for being a successful speaker to students. The students realized that the peer evaluation was integral part of the learning process in this class. In the fifth week of the semester, for the first time, students were asked to deliver a 2-minute informative speech (Old Bag Speech) about them using 3 props. They chose a bag that was meaningful to them for some reason and selected three items that symbolized something about the past, present, and future. Students and the instructor listened to the presentation and evaluated the presenter’s performance using the English Speech evaluation form. Following the presentation, oral feedback and comments were provided during the discussion session. The evaluation focused on the introduction, content, language use, voice quality, and suggestions on visual aids, gestures/postures, eye contact, facial expressions. The main purpose of the training sessions was to familiarize the students with the criteria and procedures of peer evaluation. Each of the training sessions was videotaped and students could review the tape on line.
Four weeks later, students were asked to deliver second individual presentation-informative speech. During the presentation, the instructor and peers noted their marks and comments on the evaluation forms. Following the presentation, peers made comments on the speaker’s speech performance.

The researcher first compared the means and standard deviations of the instructor and peer evaluations to determine the levels of agreement between the two sets of marks of the second individual speech. Then, independent t-tests were conducted to examine if there were any significant differences between the instructor and peer evaluation of English speech performance. Finally, the Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to test the relationship between instructor- and peer-evaluation. An alpha level of .05 was used in testing the null hypothesis.

**Results**

All of the participants in Class A and Class B delivered the informative English speech and were evaluated individually by the class instructor and peers as outlined in the procedures of the orientation session. Means scores and standard deviation of the informative speech from Class A and Class B are presented in Table 2. According to Kwan and Leung (1996), the agreement between the instructor and peer evaluations is evident if the mean of the students’ marks falls within one standard deviation of the mean of the instructor’s mark (p. 207). Based on the measurement of agreement, the two sets of evaluations in both class A and Class B showed great agreement.

**Table 2**

*Means and standard deviations of instructor and peer evaluation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class A (N= 48)</th>
<th>Class B (N= 50)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor evaluation</td>
<td>81.47</td>
<td>84. 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Evaluation</td>
<td>79.65</td>
<td>83. 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to examine whether there were significant differences between the instructor and peer evaluation of English speech, independent t-tests were conducted. And the results showed that there was not a significant difference between the two sets of marks (See Table 3).

**Table 3**

*t-test results between Instructor and peer evaluation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Instructor’s Evaluation</th>
<th>Peer Evaluators’ Evaluation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class A</td>
<td>81.47</td>
<td>79.65</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B</td>
<td>84.65</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: p<0.05, indicating a significant difference.*
A Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.74 for Class A indicated that there was a positive and high correlation between the instructor and peer evaluations. The coefficient for Class B was also positive and high ($r = 0.72$). The results suggest that the students were competent to evaluate their peers’ English speech performance alongside the class instructor’s evaluation.

**Discussion**

This study aimed to determine how effectively the college students in English Speech class can function as raters in English Speech class. It is concluded that the peer evaluation was similar to the instructor’s assessment. There was evidence of agreement in the two sets of marks. Also, there were no significant differences between the two sets of evaluations of English speech. This study provides preliminary evidence that the instructor’s evaluation can be supplemented with peer evaluation in the classroom setting. Once peers can get involved in the evaluation process, the instructor’s time could be managed more productively and effectively on innovative teaching approaches.

The researcher finds the other interesting conclusion concerning the educational implication. When students are invited to get involved in setting goals and evaluating peers’ performance, they become active and self-regulated learners in the learning process. Additionally, students feel successful and highly-motivated when they receive feedback from peers because it helps them monitor their improvement on tasks.

In view of the narrow range of the participants, the results of this current study need to be generalized with caution. Further study can be conducted recruiting a wide range of participants in a variety of levels of English ability. Finally, individual interview may be conducted to understand the students’ perceptions toward peer evaluation.

**About the Author:**
**Dr. Pi-Ying Hsu** is an Assistant Professor of the Department of Applied Foreign Languages at Chaoyang University of Technology in Taiwan. She received her Ed. D. in Educational Psychology from Texas Tech University. Her current research interests include self-regulated learning, self-efficacy, and English Language teaching with special emphasis on speaking and listening.
Instructor and Peer Evaluation of Oral Skills in English Speech Class

Pi-Ying

References


Sources of Syntactic Errors in Yemeni Learners’ English Compositions: A Psycholinguistic Analysis

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Abstract

It goes without saying that probing deeply the sources of errors committed by an L2 learner is a psycholinguistic process which is not an easy task. In fact, investigations into learner’s errors reveal that English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) teachers expect their students to speak errorless English (Burt, 1975), however, errors keep recurring and recurring and this makes our task as language teachers rather difficult. However, this does not mean we surrender! We have to seek answers to such questions and investigate such errors and their sources setting our ultimate goal to how to make our students comprehend what they learn, and to how to understand their problematic areas so that we could contribute in solving them. Thus, this study aims at providing empirical data for the sources of syntactic errors committed by Yemeni Arabic-speaking University learners of English. 50 learners selected randomly from the third year, Department of English, Ibb University, Yemen participated in this study. To classify the errors, a comprehensive error taxonomy based on James’s (1998) and Al-Shormani’s (2012) was used. The sources of such errors were classified into four categories, viz. L1-transfer, L2-influence, L1&L2 and unrecognized. The analysis shows that L1-transfer scored (27.90%), L2-Influence scored (63.73%), L1&L2 scored (6.99%) and unrecognized source scored (1.38%) of the syntactic errors committed in this study. The findings have implications for L2 syntax learning and teaching which could be generalized to other ESL and/or EFL contexts.

Keywords: SLA, Yemeni Learners, Error Sources, L1-transfer, L2-influence
1. Introduction

It goes without saying that a psycholinguistic analysis probing deeply the sources of errors committed by L2 learners requires us to seek answers to many questions as to why, when, how and where such errors come from. This actually puts linguists, SLA researchers, scholars and teachers alike vis-a-vis a problematic phenomenon (James, 1977, 1998; Gass & Selinker 2008; Selinker, 1992, 1993; Corder, 1967, 1973; Dulay & Burt 1973, 1974; Dulay et al. 1982; Hendrickson, 1978, 1980; Richards, 1972, 1974; Burt 1975; Duskova, 1969; Taylor, 1975). Such researchers have been long concerned with L2 learner errors diagnosing their sources and seeking appropriate solutions. Error committing tells the researchers and linguists different facts about several issues taking place in the LA process such as the fact that learners are not passive participants in learning process, language is rule-governed, students employ different strategies in LA among other important aspects. Corder (1967) ascertains that errors:

are significant in three different ways. First, to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed.... Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, ...what strategies the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly, ....they are indisputable to the learner himself because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. (p.167) (emphasis mine).

Thus, this study seeks to provide empirical data for the different sources of the most common syntactic errors committed by Yemeni Arabic-speaking University learners majoring in English and to account for the psychological strategies the learner makes use of in such a phenomenon. In fact, our aim in this study is to seek answers to such questions as why such errors are committed. Thus, 50 Yemeni learners participated in this study. These participants were asked to write an argumentative composition on some topics related to their families and ambitions. Adopting James’ (1998) and Al-Shormani’s (2012) error taxonomies, the errors were classified into five categories: prepositions, VP-constructions, Articles, subject-verb agreement and relative clauses. These categories are in turn classified into subcategories such as omission, addition, substitution, tense, voice, etc. depending on the errors identified in our data. A simple statistical method of error frequency count was used. The sources of the errors found in this study were classified into four categories; L1-transfer, i.e. the source is L1, i.e. Arabic, L2-influence, i.e. the source is L2, i.e. English, L1/L2, i.e. the source is both L1 and L2 and unrecognized, i.e. the source is neither L1 nor L2.

2. Previous studies

Researches and studies on errors have been conducted by a considerable number of linguists, applied linguists, researchers, scholars worldwide (e.g. Ellis 1997, Gass and Selinker 2008, Saville-Troike 2006, Dulay et. al, 1982; James, 1998; Cook, 2003; Chomsky, 1968; Tomasello 2007). Arab linguists, applied linguists and researchers seem to be no exception. In that, several studies have been conducted trying to investigate the errors committed by Arab learners of English (e.g. Noor, 1996; Al-Fotih, 1996; Asfoor, 1978; Ghazal, 2007; Hamdan, 1984; Rababah, 2003; Khatib, 1984; Habash, 1982; Hamdallah, & Tushyeh, 1993; Al-Shormani, 2012; Al-Shormani & Al-Sohbani, 2012; Zughoul, 1979; Mukattash, 1979, 1981; Mahmoud, 2011). However, most of such Arab studies tackle the errors committed by Arab learners of
English trying only to classify these errors without probing deeply their reasons, sources and/or consequences. However, there are a relatively few studies which tried to investigate the sources of Arab learners’ errors (e.g. Al-Shormani, 2012; Al-Shormani & Al-Sohbani, 2012; Mahmoud 2011) but these studies did not tackle the sources of syntactic errors because their scopes were something different. However, there are a number of studies done by non-Arab researchers which have tackled the sources of syntactic errors committed by L2 learners whatever their L1s are. In fact, identifying or classifying errors is a linguistic phenomenon whereas identifying the source of an error is a psycholinguistic one which is not that easy task. As far as the scope of this study is concerned, we will try to review some of those studies related to the study at hand. Dulay & Burt (1973) have done a study where they identified four sources the syntactic errors can be ascribed to. In another study, namely, Dulay & Burt (1974), they analyze the errors committed by 179 Spanish-speaking children. They concluded that 87% of the errors committed were caused by L2, i.e. English, 4.7% of the errors were ascribed to L1, i.e. Spanish and 8% were unique. Wang and Wen (2002) did a study examining the source of adjective errors committed by Chinese learners of English. They concluded that 62% of errors were caused by L2 and 28% of errors were caused by L1 among others.

Flick (1980) conducted a study examining the error types committed by Adult SL learners and their reasons. In fact, Flick (op.cit.) supports Dulay & Burt’s (1974) conclusion that errors can be ascribed to different sources the major of which is L2 regardless of what their L1s are. In addition, Grauberg (1971) has done a study analyzing the syntactic errors committed by German First-Year University learners of English. In his study, Grauberg attributes the errors identified to different sources. Dulay, et al. (1982) opine that there are different sources the syntactic errors committed by SL learners can be ascribed to. They are of the view that there are four major sources of errors, viz. L1, L2, both L1 and L2 and no identified source. They state that only 8-23% errors at the case of adults can be ascribed to L1. They also attribute the majority of errors to L2 due to the lack of the sufficient knowledge in L2 linguistic system, faulty conceptions, ignoring rule restrictions etc. Both L1 and L2 as a source of some errors come as a result of identifying some errors in their data where both L1 and L2 contribute in making such errors. The fourth source concluded with by Dulay et al. (op.cit.) is unknown or unidentifiable. “Unidentifiable” in the sense that there are some errors which can neither be ascribed to L1 nor to L2. Accordingly, they classify errors into four types as far as the source is concerned, namely, interlingual, intralingual, ambiguous and unique. Chen (1998) ascribed the difficulties faced by Chinese learners in acquiring English tenses to the absence of verb conjugation in Mandarin Chinese.

Mamoud (2011:28) has done a study where he analyzes the vocabulary errors committed by L2 learners of English. Based on this study, he proposed “a strategy-based teaching technique” to teach vocabulary. His focus, however, was to examine the interlingual and intralingual transfer as a strategy used by SL learners in vocabulary learning. The notable issue in this study is his use of the terms “L1-based” and “L2-based.” Al-Khresheh (2011) conducted a study where he tried to examine the extent to which the errors committed by Jordanian EFL learners in using the syntactic category “and” being equivalent to “wa” can be ascribed to Arabic. He concluded that his subjects committed “a huge number of errors with respect to the coordinating conjunction ‘and’…[and] interlingual interference might be the main cause of committing this huge number of these errors” (p.426). Al-Shormani’s (2012) has done a study on the EG of syntactic and semantic errors committed by Arabic-speaking learners where he
examines the sources of syntactic errors classifying them into four sources, viz. *interlingual*, *intralingua*, *ambiguous* and *unique*. Al-Shormani & Al-Sohbani (2012) have done study examining the sources of semantic errors committed by Yemeni University Arabic-speaking learners *per se* where they ascribe such errors to two major sources, viz. L1 and L2 within each of which, there are many sources.

3. The Present Study

The study at hand focuses on identifying the possible sources of syntactic errors committed by University Yemeni third year Arabic-speaking students majoring in English. This study aims to help university EFL teachers choose and use the appropriate technique(s) in presenting the syntactic categories to their students based on their observations of the students’ errors.

3.1 Method

3.1.1 Participants

This study involves 50 Yemeni Arabic-speaking learners of English selected at random from the students of the third-year, department of English, Ibb University, Yemen, in the academic year 2010-2011. They aged between 23-26 years though some of them may be older but not younger than that. They were male and female, viz. 33 female and 17 male but factors such as age and sex were not considered in this study. They have studied English for about nine years (six years at school and three at university). At the university, they have studied, among other courses, four courses of academic writing, namely, Writing I, Writing II, Writing III and Advanced Composition.

3.1.2 Procedure

The participants of this study were asked to write an argumentative composition (of about 250-300 words) on a topic related to their families and ambitions in a 2-hour time. The total words were 16499 and the mean length of the 50 compositions was 329.98 words (SD= 62.38, min= 243, Max= 484). The number of participants involved in this study (50) allowed for a comprehensive analysis of such participants’ syntactic weaknesses in their English composition.

The researcher (a native speaker of Arabic, Yemeni Arabic) corrected the students’ manuscripts consulting an experienced teacher of English (an Indian Professor of Applied linguistics) and almost they both agree to such identification. When there was a problem of identification, the researcher consulted an experienced University teacher of English (American). In fact, the students’ compositions contained other error types such as word order, negation, etc. but such errors were not very recurrent and hence, excluded. Other types of errors were identified such as spelling, lexical, collocational etc. but because such errors are not within the scope of this study, I excluded them. There were errors not counted because they were counted in other categories. For instance, those counted in *VP-constructions* category were not counted in *subject-verb agreement* category. Here, it is so important to admit that there was some kind of category overlap but everything necessary has been taken into account to make error count as accurate as possible. To differentiate between “errors” and “mistakes,” only those recurrent ones were counted and identified as errors. As far as the sources of the errors identified in this study are concerned, those whose source was L1 were counted in terms of *L1-transfer*. Those whose
source was L2 were counted in terms of \textit{L2-influence}. Those whose source lied within both L1 and L2 were counted as \textit{L1&L2} and those which had no identified source were counted as \textit{unrecognized}.

4. Syntactic Error Classifications

SLA researchers (e.g. Lennon, 1991; Ellis, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 2008; James, 1998; Dulay \textit{et al.} 1982; Dulay & Burt, 1973, 1974; Corder, 1967, 1973, 1975, 1981; Burt, 1975; Olsson, 1972, 1973, 1974; Noor, 1996; El-Saed, 1982; Al-Shormani, 2012) classify errors into general categories like \textit{articles}, \textit{subject-verb agreement}, \textit{prepositions}, \textit{tense forms}, \textit{word order}, etc. which are in turn classified into \textit{omission}, \textit{substitution}, \textit{addition} etc. based on the errors identified in such studies. This type of classification was not satisfactory for some SLA researchers such as James (1998:102-114) who classifies errors into taxonomies including feature taxonomy, linguistic category classification taxonomy, the surface structure taxonomy and combined taxonomies pinpointing that each taxonomy is suitable for a group of errors. Thus, bearing in mind such taxonomies and classifications of syntactic errors and based on the errors identified in this study, I classified the syntactic errors committed by the subjects of this study into five major categories \textit{prepositions}, \textit{VP-constructions}, \textit{articles}, \textit{subject-verb agreement} and \textit{relative clauses}. These major categories are in turn classified into subcategories including \textit{addition}, \textit{omission}, \textit{substitution}, \textit{tense}, \textit{voice}, etc. depending on the errors identified in the learners’ compositions. A summary of the error classification followed here is presented in figure 1 below:

\textbf{Figure 1: Summary of Syntactic Error Taxonomy}

I. Prepositions
   1. Substitution
   2. Omission
   3. Addition

II. VP Constructions
   1. Verb Formation
   2. Tense
   3. Voice

III. Articles
   1. Substitution
   2. Omission
   3. Addition

IV. Subject-Verb Agreement
   1. Number Agreement
   2. Person Agreement

V. Relative Clauses
   1. Substitution of Relative Pronoun
   2. Omission of Relative Pronoun
   3. Addition of Resumptive Pronoun
5. Results and Discussion

To diagnose the sources of the errors committed by the subjects of this study and on the basis of the error taxonomy employed, I will examine every category and subcategory of the errors separately for the sake of clarity and in-depth analysis.

5.1. Prepositions

Table (1): Error Source of Prepositions Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Substitution</th>
<th>Omission</th>
<th>Addition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1-transfer</td>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.78%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-influence</td>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>94.89%</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1/L2</td>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrecognized</td>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.1 Substitution

As shown in Table (1), L2-influence causes the highest number of errors. It includes 372, i.e. (94.89%) errors. L1-transfer causes fewer errors, viz. 7 i.e. (1.78%). L1&L2 causes 13, i.e. (30.33%) errors. This category does not include unrecognized errors.

Examples:

L1-transfer: *My father bought a new watch to me*

Here, the learner substitutes the prep to for for. Arabic is considered the source. The Arabic equivalent to this sentence is ?abi ?ištara sa:%at-an jadi:dat-an li (literally: my father bought new watch to me) where the Arabic prep l exactly means to. What the learner does here is just transfer his/her knowledge of Arabic into English and hence committing such an error.

L2-influence: *My first day in college was my ambition.*

Here, the learner substitutes the prep in for at. The reason why such an error is ascribed to English is that had it been a transfer from Arabic, the noun college must have been accompanied with the article the because in such a context, Arabic does allow such a construction.
L1/L2: *In my free time, I help my mother in home.

Here, in has been used instead of at. This error can be ascribed to L1-transfer because in Arabic, there is only one prep equivalent to in in English which is fi. It can be ascribed to L2-influence in the sense that at home is an idiom which has not been acquired by the learner yet and he/she is still internalizing the article system of English.

5.1.2 Omission

As shown in Table (1), there are 17, i.e. (7.35%) errors caused by L1-transfer. In this category, L2-influence causes 189 errors constituting (81.81%) of the omission errors. 21, i.e. (9.09%) errors were ascribed to L1&L2 and 4, i.e. (1.75%) errors were unrecognized.

Examples:

L1-transfer: *Our exam will begin # Saturday; my ambition is to pass in it.

Here, the error lies in deleting the prep on. This error is ascribed to L1 on the light of its Arabic counterpart which is قمتيحة:نانيا: swaf-a yabda?-u ?asabt-a (literally: our exam will begin Saturday) which is absolutely grammatical in Arabic. Considering Arabic his/her knowledge base, the learner transfers this very structure from Arabic into English and hence, committing such an error.

L2-influence:...*but I am afraid # my future

The error here lies in deleting the prep (position) of. This error is ascribed to L2-influence on the basis of the fact that afraid of is one constituent and the learner has not yet acquired this very structure. It cannot be ascribed to Arabic simply because had it been a transfer from Arabic, it would have been afraid from whose Arabic equivalent is xa:؟ef-un min (literally: afraid from).

L1/L2: *After I put # my clothes, I go to school.

The error here consists in deleting the prep in. This error is L1&L2 because it can be ascribed to L1 and L2. It can be ascribed to Arabic on the basis of the fact that in Arabic, there is a one-word verb, viz. yalbas-u (put on/wear) which does not need a prep. It can also be ascribed to English because put on is a phrasal verb consisting of the verb put and the prep on and the learner seems not to have yet acquired it.

Describing such errors, Dulay et al. (1982: 172) state that such errors are committed as a result of faulty conceptions of some structures in English. They add that such errors resemble developmental errors committed by children acquiring English as their L1.

Unrecognized: *my father spends long time to look #his job.

The error here lies in deleting the prep for which has to accompany the verb look. The unrecognizedness of this error lies in the fact that it can neither be ascribed to Arabic, because even in Arabic, the phrasal verb yabhat-u ?an (look for) has to be used as a whole and we cannot use yabhaθ-u (look) alone. It cannot be ascribed to English because look can be
collocated with several prepositions and if the learner forgot, were not sure of, had a misconception of which prep to choose to use with the verb *look*, he/she would have used another prep here not deleting it at all.

### 5.1.3 Addition

As can be seen in tabl(1), there are 137, i.e. (54.80%) errors caused by **L1-transfer**. In this category, **L2-influence** causes 58 errors constituting (23.20%) of the addition errors. 48, i.e. (19.20%) errors were ascribed to **L1&L2** and 7, i.e. (2.80%) errors were **unrecognized**.

#### Examples:

**L1-transfer**: *I came to school in happily.*

Here, the error lies in adding the prep *in* whose source is purely L1, i.e. Arabic and hence, being of **L1-transfer**. In Arabic, *bi sa%a:dat-in* (in/with happily) is absolutely grammatical. The learner here transfers this very structure from Arabic into English causing such an error.

**L2-influence**: *He asked to me something.*

The error in the example above is a manifestation of **L2-influence**. It seems that the learner analogizes here the verb *ask* with the verb *suggest* and hence, committing such an error.

**L1&L2**: *I came back to home.*

The error here can be ascribed to L1, i.e. Arabic on the ground that in Arabic, *?ila ?albait-i* (to home) is grammatical. It can also be ascribed to English on the fact that the English idiom *at home* seems not have been acquired yet and hence, resulting in such an error.

**Unrecognized**: *Aziza realized of her dream.*

This error is of **unrecognized** source simply because the structure is ungrammatical in both languages, viz. Arabic and English. The Arabic counterpart example *%a:zi:za ?adrakat min %ulma:ha* is ungrammatical and the same thing can be said about Arabic.

### 5.2 VP-Constructions

#### Table (2): Error Source of VP-Constructions Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>VP-Constructions</th>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verb Formation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1-transfer</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>72.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-influence</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>15.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>83.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1/L2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrecognized</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5.2.1 Verb formation

As can be seen in Table (2), L1-transfer scores 301, i.e. (72.88%) errors. L2-influence scores 66, i.e. (15.98%) errors. L1&L2 scores 46, i.e. (15.98%) errors. However, no unrecognized error was identified in this category.

Examples:

L1-transfer: ...*and my mother # a great housewife.

Here, the error consists in deleting the copula be, namely, is. Having Arabic as his/her knowledge base, the learner just transfers this very Arabic structure where be is absent in such nominal sentences. In fact, the Arabic verb yaku:n (be) is absent in Arabic in S(urface) S(tructure) but it is not in D(eep) S(tructure). Describing this phenomenon, (Ouhalla, 1999) states that the absence of be in such nominal sentences constitutes a serious difficulty for Arabic-speaking learners of English.

L2-influence: ...*and my sister can singing very well.

Here, the error lies in the student’s inability to provide the infinitive form sing as required after the modal can. This error is caused by L2-influence because it cannot be ascribed to Arabic simply because modals do not exist in Arabic especially in this context. In fact, Arabic speaking learners of English find such constructions rather difficult because Arabic does not have such restrictions on the formation of verbs.

The issue of L1-transfer and hence, errors have been proved true by a considerable number of researchers. For instance, Dulay and Burt (1972:130) confirming this fact state that “[a] well known corollary of the habit formation theory is “negative transfer” in the form of first language interference...[learners] will tend to use (transfer) the structures of their first language when trying to speak the second, and therefore, will make mistakes when the structures of the two languages differ.”

L1/L2: ...*If I studied hard, I achieved my ambition

This error can be ascribed to Arabic because and especially in the past, Arabic conditional sentences do not require the word swafa (roughly: will). It can be ascribed to English on the basis of the student’s weak competence where his/her linguistic competence of English is not that stable to enable him/her to use the modal would.

5.2.2 Tense

Regarding tense, L1-transfer scores 14 errors, i.e. (9.79%). L2-influence scores 120 errors, i.e. (83.91%). L1&L2 as a source scores 9 errors, i.e. (6.29%) and no unrecognized sources were identified as shown in Table (2).
Examples:

**L1-transfer:** ... *but good students went to school everyday.*

This error is caused by **L1-transfer** because its main source is Arabic. This is simply because Arabic does not differentiate between facts and non-facts and habits and non-habits. Arabs usually commit such errors as *the sun rose from the east.*

**L2-influence:** *My friends came yesterday to our party and leave immediately.*

The error here lies in that the student does not understand tense sequence in English. It cannot be ascribed to Arabic because tense sequence in Arabic is a must.

**L1/L2:** ... *but in our village cows gave us mile.*

This error is of **L1&L2** nature because it can be ascribed to Arabic and English both. It can be ascribed to Arabic on the ground that Arabic does not distinguish facts from non-facts as stated earlier. It can be ascribed to English on the basis of the fact that the learner committing such an error is still internalizing tense system in English and he/she does not have that competence which enables him/her to use English tenses properly and accurately.

**6.2.3 Voice**

As shown in Table (2), voice category includes 11, i.e. (7.97%) errors caused by **L1-transfer**. It includes 127, i.e. (92.03%) errors caused by **L2-influence** and it does not contain **L1&L2** or unrecognized errors.

**Examples:**

**L1-transfer:** *My younger brother sent to USA to study medicine.*

Here, the learner fails to provide the verb be required in English passivized sentences but he/she provides the p.p of the main verb send and here lies the role of Arabic. The error may be ascribed to English but since the learner having Arabic as a knowledge base, he/she just transfers this very Arabic structure into English and here Arabic a source prevails.

**L2-influence:** ... *and all my future will be gave to my parents.*

The **L2-influence** nature of this error lies in the fact that the learner committing such an error has provided the correct form of be but fails in providing the p.p. of the verb give. The impossibility of ascribing this very error to L1 interference lies in the fact that had it been a transfer from Arabic, the learner would not have written will be and hence, English itself as a source of such an error prevails.
5.3 Articles

Table (3): Error Source of Articles Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Substitution</th>
<th>Omission</th>
<th>Addition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1-transfer</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-influence</td>
<td></td>
<td>319</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1/L2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrecognized</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
<td>319</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.1 Substitution

Table (3) shows that 319, i.e. (100%) errors were caused by L2-influence. No errors caused by L1-transfer, L1&L2 nor unrecognized sources were identified in the substitution category.

Examples:

L1-transfer: My first day in an university is my first ambition.

This error lies in substituting the article an for the. The learner thinking that the noun university begins with u, he/she must use an. In fact, this error can partly be described as a result of overgeneralization where the learner committing it considers the letter and not the sound. Yemeni learners in this stage lack the sufficient competence that enables them to use the English article system properly. They may have false conceptions about English article system and hence, committing such errors.

5.3.2 Omission

Table (3) above shows that 98 i.e. (52.55%) errors were caused by L2-influence. 52 errors, i.e. (28.42%) were caused by L1-transfer errors. 12 errors, i.e. (6.55%) were caused by L1&L2 errors and 21 i.e. (11.48%) had unrecognized source.

Examples:

L1-transfer: *I live in Ibb city which is one of # most beautiful places in Yemen.

The L1-transfer nature of this error lies in the fact that the Arabic equivalent of most, i.e. ?akθar is never preceded by the article ?al (the), particularly in such a context, and so what the
A learner does here is just transfer this very structure from Arabic into English and hence rendering such an ungrammatical sentence.

**L2-influence:** ...*and villagers do not have such kind of busy life like cities.*

This error is of an **L2-influence** nature simply because the learner may not have acquired the English structure *such a + singular noun*. In fact, this error cannot be ascribed to Arabic simply because Arabic lacks the exact equivalent of this combination/expression.

**L1/L2:** *There comes friend to help me to choose English department.*

That this error can be ascribed to both English and Arabic is due to its L1&L2 nature. Now, consider its Arabic counterpart example *huna:k-a ʔata ʔad:id-q-un ʔiusa:ʔid-a-ńi ʔan ʔaxta:r-a qism-a ?alʔinlijz-i* (literally: there comes friend to help me to choose English department) which is absolutely grammatical in Arabic. It can also be ascribed to English simply because of its developmental nature. It resembles those committed by children acquiring English as their L1.

**Unrecognized:** *We cannot live separately from the world because we live in Middle East*

The unrecognizedness of this error lies in the fact that we cannot ascribe it either to L1 or to L2. The noun phrase *Middle East* in English requires the article *the*. Its Arabic equivalent, viz. *ʔarq ʔalʔawsaŧ* has to have the definite article *ʔal*(the) and the correct Arabic expression is *ʔaʔarq ʔalʔawsat* where *ʔa(l)* has to accompany the noun *ʔarq* (east).

### 5.3.3 Addition

Table (3) shows that **L2-influence** errors were 144, i.e. (62.34%). 39 errors, i.e. (16.88%) were caused by **L1-transfer**, 33 errors, i.e. (14.28%) were caused by **L1&L2** and 15 errors, i.e. (6.50%) were caused by **unrecognized** sources.

**Examples:**

**L1-transfer:** *The life is very nice.*

This error is purely caused by **L1-transfer**. Here, the learner transfers the Arabic structure *ʔalħaya:at-u ʔami:lat-un* (literally: the life beautiful) into English except adding the verb *is* and hence, committing such an error.

**L2-influence:** *My father came the yesterday from Saudi Arabia*

Such an error cannot be ascribed to Arabic due to the fact that the Arabic adverb of time *ʔamas-i* does not take the article *ʔal*, especially in such a context. However, if it comes with the prep *bi* (with) it can. Therefore, it is purely of **L2-influence** nature caused mainly by the confusion in the article use.

**L1/L2:** ... *and the Ahmed is my younger brother*

This error can be ascribed to **L1-transfer** based on the possibility that in Arabic we can name a person *ʔalʔahmad* (e.g. *ʔalʔahmad ʔalʔasabah*) (a name of a Kuwaiti family that rules Kuwait).
This error can also be ascribed to English on the basis of the fact that in English, plural names especially when they refer to families can take the article *the* (e.g. *the Johns, the James etc."

**Unrecognized:** ... *I think my ambition is a good

The source of this error is unrecognized because it cannot be ascribed either to Arabic or to English. It cannot be ascribed to Arabic simply because the indefinite article *a* does not exist. It cannot also be ascribed to English because adjectives in English never take articles.

**5.4 Subject-Verb Agreement**

**Table (5): Error Source of Subject-Verb Agreement Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number Agreement</th>
<th>Person Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F (%)</td>
<td>F (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1-transfer</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-influence</td>
<td></td>
<td>341 100%</td>
<td>178 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1/L2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrecognized</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
<td>341 100%</td>
<td>178 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5.4.1 Number Agreement**

Table (5) shows that 341 errors, i.e. (100%) were caused by **L2-influence**. No errors caused by **L1-transfer, L1&L2 nor unrecognized** sources were identified in number agreement category.

**Examples:**

**L2-influence:** *The number of people speaking English are large.*

Such errors as the above one cannot be ascribed to Arabic simply because Arabic SVO sentences do require any verb, particularly in SS. So such errors are caused purely by **L2-influence**. Dulay *et al.* (1982) ascribe such errors to the lack of sufficient knowledge in L2 since learners, in this stage, are still trying to build systematically a knowledge base about the L2 linguistic system.

**5.4.2 Person Agreement**

Table (4) shows that 178 errors, i.e. (100%) were caused by **L2-influence**. No errors were caused by **L1-transfer, L1&L2 nor unrecognized** sources in this subcategory.
**Examples:**

**L2-influence:** ... *and my father agree with me to travel to USA.*

Such an error can never be ascribed to L1 simply because Arabic subject-verb agreement feature, especially in SVO word order is very strong and hence, errors like these are purely L2. Researchers (e.g. James, 1998; Dulay & Burt, 1973, 1974; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Dulay et al. 1982) among others are of the view that these errors are similar to those committed by children acquiring English as their L1. Such errors have been termed by many researchers (e.g. Corder, 1981; James 1998; Johansson, 1973; Dulay et al. 1982, Moore & Stenning, 2001) among others as developmental. They are so because they reflect the developmental stages through which L2 learners proceed in learning any L2.

### 5.5 Relative Clauses

**Table (6): Error Source of Relative Clauses Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Substitution of Relative Pronoun</th>
<th>Omission of Relative Pronoun</th>
<th>Addition of Resumptive Pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F %</td>
<td>F %</td>
<td>F %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1-transfer</td>
<td></td>
<td>17 11%</td>
<td>178 72.65%</td>
<td>184 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-influence</td>
<td></td>
<td>91 59%</td>
<td>55 22.45%</td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1/L2</td>
<td></td>
<td>46 30%</td>
<td>12 4.90%</td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrecognized</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
<td>154 100%</td>
<td>245 100%</td>
<td>184 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.5.1 Substitution of Relative Pronouns

Table (6) shows that 17 errors, i.e. (11%) were caused by L1-transfer. 91 errors, i.e. (59%) were caused by L2-influence. 46 errors, i.e. (30%) were caused by L1&L2 and this category does not include unrecognized sources.

**Examples:**

**L1-transfer:** *The man which described my way in life is my father.*

The error here lies in substituting which for who which is a direct translation from Arabic where ?ala?i is used for all types of masculine nouns, animate and/or inanimate.

**L2-influence:** ... *and my friend that ambition is to be a doctor in the university.*
Here, the learner uses the relative pronoun that instead of whose. The source of such an error is L2 simply because in Arabic, the relative pronoun equivalent to whose does not exist. Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Yuan and Zhao 2005) opine that the learner in this stage does not have that much of linguistic knowledge which enables him/her to use the proper relative pronoun in the proper context.

L1/L2: ...*and this is the teacher who I like.

Here, the error consists in substituting who for whom. This error can be ascribed to L1-transfer. Its Arabic counterpart reads something like wa haḍa ?a?ustād-?a ?allādhī ?uhib-hu (literally: and this is the teacher who I like him). It can also be ascribed to L2-influence on the ground that the learner has not been yet able to differentiate between Acc(usative) and Nom(inative) Cases where who is used for Nom Case and whom is used for Acc Case in English, though recently, in modern syntax, this difference has been ruled out. Many researchers (e.g. James, 1998; Dulay et al. 1982; Dulay & Burt, 1973, 1974) describe such errors as developmental resembling those committed by children acquiring English as their L1. In addition, Arabic-speaking learners learning English including Yemenis get confused in using relative pronouns and so they try to avoid using them (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991; Yuan & Zhao, 2005).

5.5.2 Omission of Relative Pronouns

As Table (6) shows, 178 errors, i.e. (72.65%) were caused by L1-transfer. 55 errors, i.e. (22.45%) were caused by L2-influence. 12 errors, i.e. (4.89%) were ascribed to L1/L2. This category does not also include unrecognized sources.

Examples:

L1-transfer: ...*because there are many people # speak English.

The error in this example lies in deleting the relative pronoun who. This is clear when we consider its Arabic counterpart, viz. huna:k-a na:s-un kaṭḥi:r-u:n yatakalam-u:n ?al?injli:zi-a. (Literally: there are many people speak English) which is absolutely grammatical in Arabic.

L2-influence: ...*I like the united State # is a developed country.

Here, the error consists in deleting the relative pronoun which. This error cannot be ascribed to L1 because in this context in Arabic, a relative pronoun is a must. However, it can be ascribed to L2 simply because the learner is still internalizing the linguistic system of English relative pronouns. He/she has not yet had the sufficient linguistic competence in English relative pronoun system.

L1/L2: ...*many students # study at English department have ambitions.

The error here lies in deleting where which renders the sentence ungrammatical. This error can be ascribed both to L1-transfer and L2-influence as well. Thus, ascribing it to Arabic comes from its Arabic counterpart, viz. tula:b-un kaṭḥi:ru:n yadrusu:n fi qism-i ?al?injli:zi ladai-
hum tumuha:t-un which is absolutely grammatical in Arabic. It may also be ascribed to English on the basis of analogy where such expressions like many students studying at English department have ambitions where the nonfinite clause studying at English department is used as an adjectival clause postmodifying the NP many students. Thus, having this in mind, one can argue that the learner analogizes such a use and hence, committing such an error.

5.5.3 Addition of Resumptive

Table (6) shows that 184, i.e. (100%) frequent errors were caused by L1-transfer alone. There are no errors ascribable to L2influence, L1&L2and unrecognized sources. In fact, adding a resumptive pronoun is one of the very recurrent errors in Arab indulging Yemeni learners’ writing. This is manifested in our study where resumptive pronoun category scores the highest number in relative pronoun category.

Examples:

L1-transfer: ...*My father is a great man who I like him very much.

The error here lies in adding the pronoun him. The pronoun him is called a resumptive pronoun. Such errors are purely caused by L1-transfer simply because Arabic allows such resumptive pronouns but only in the object position. The addition of resumptive pronouns has been confirmed by many SLA researchers (e.g. Yuan & Zhao, 2005; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991) who have ascribed the addition of such pronouns to Arabic language where using them is allowed. In addition, Schachter (1974) stated that Arab learners of English tend to avoid using relative pronouns in their writing due to their complexity. The avoidance of using relative pronouns by his Arabic-speaking subjects was considerable.

6. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

Table (7): Summary of Sources of Syntactic Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Preps</th>
<th>VP-constructions</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>S-V Agreement</th>
<th>Rel. Clauses</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1-transfer</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>27.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-influence</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>2185</td>
<td>63.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1/L2</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>6.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrecognized</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>3429</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table (7) above, there are a total number of 3429 frequent syntactic errors committed in this study. Such errors vary in category, number, source and percentage. For instance, there are 957, i.e. (27.90%) errors committed as a result of L1-transfer, i.e. Arabic interference where the learners having Arabic as their knowledge base transfer such knowledge
into their English as a learning strategy. There are 2185, i.e. (63.73%) errors committed as a result of L2-influence, i.e. English influence where the learners having false conceptions, ignoring rule restrictions, overgeneralizing a particular rule and/or still internalizing the English linguistic system commit such errors (Richard, 1971). In addition, there are 240, i.e. (6.99%) errors whose source is L1&L2, where both L1 and L2 are the sources, however the reason. There are also 47, i.e. (1.38%) ascribable to unrecognized sources, i.e. those errors whose source cannot be identified.

L1-transfer as a source scoring (27.90%) in our study supports studies done by (Dulay & Burt, 1973, 1974; Grauberg, 1971; Flick, 1980; Dulay et al.,1982; Al-Shormanii, 2012) where L1 as a source of errors was 3%, 4.7%, 36%, 31%, 8-23%, 34.63%, respectively. The same thing can be said about other types of sources where our study supports almost all such studies with some kind of slight variation (see Dulay & Burt, 1973, 1974; Grauberg, 1971; Flick, 1980; Dulay et al.1982; Al-Shormanii, 2012). In addition, L2-influence source scoring (63.73%) of the errors supports the now widely spread belief that the majority of learner errors can under no circumstances be traced to the influence of the L1 per se as noted above. In fact, L1 interference and hence, transfer is a reality (Selinker, 1992, 1993) but it does not have that exaggerated amount. Researchers have found that even those areas where the L1 should have prevented the occurrence of errors were not always error-free (see e.g. Mitchell & Myles 1998; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Since the ultimate goal of any study on learners’ errors is to help and provide university and school teachers with significant insights and pedagogical implications about where recognized teaching is greatly needed and where more time and effort should be spent and since language is not rule-memorization but rather rule-formulation, syntactic categories should be taught inductively so as to elicit rules rather than memorizing them. In addition to that, our study helps applied linguists, curricula/syllabi designers and textbooks developers focus on the L2 syntactic materials and how they should be designed, which syntactic categories should be paid much attention to, and which should be paid less attention to. As far as Arabic-speaking learners of English are concerned, prepositions should be paid more attention to than VP-constructions and so on till reaching relative clauses.

Needless to say, recognizing and identifying a source of an error provide us with important insights on why L2 learners resort to L1 or L2 in learning an L2. By doing so, the learner is just using learning strategies Oxford (1994) which sometimes lead him/her to success and sometimes not. By resorting to L1, the learner tries to transfer his/her L1 knowledge to L2 and by resorting to L2, the learner tries to make comparisons, overgeneralize or internalize the L2 linguistic system. These are actually cognitive strategies which help us diagnose the learner’s weaknesses. If we understand this, we can exploit the psycholinguistic processes and/or strategies to help him/her overcome the dilemma he/she encounters in the learning process.

As far as prepositions are concerned, Arabic-speaking learners should be given a list of the commonly used prepositions and idiomatic prepositional phrases (James, 1998) and asked to use them in sentences of their own. Regarding articles, students should be taught much more inductively where they will actively elicit the rules of such a language use. Arabic-speaking learners should be made aware of the fact that while Arabic has two articles namely, the definite ?al (the) and zero article, though some linguists (see Fassi Fahri, 1993; Al-Shormanii (in press)
add that the –n attached to the end of indefinite Arabic nouns is the third one. English has four articles, namely, two indefinite, viz. *a*, *an*, the definite, *the* and the zero article.

Arabic-speaking learners, including Yemenis, need to learn how different kinds of English VPs are formed and how to differentiate between simple and complex VPs. Regarding subject-verb agreement, materials where person and number features are emphasized should be presented to Arab learners. However, a caution should be made here to teachers that linguistic distinctions that learners do not need to know should not be taught and similarities between English and L1 should be highlighted (Zughoul, 1979). Therefore, it is strongly recommended that using Arabic in the classroom should be minimized and that English should be taught in its own right. Arab university teachers are advised to design and prescribe remedy materials after diagnosing the difficult areas where learners face problems. Some researchers (e.g. Celce-Murcia & Hilles 1988, Harmer, 1987) have pinpointed the way such units are to be presented and practiced. For instance, Harmer (1987:10) has suggested that “…[teachers] must teach not only the form, but also one of its functions, and not only meaning but also use” (emphasis in the original). He also adds that the presentation of the grammar lesson should be clear, efficient, interesting and productive. In addition, Celce-Murcia & Hilles (1988) have proposed a technique in which “discovery” has to play the main role. In that, they have provided four steps in which such a technique is applied: (i) presentation, (ii) focused practice, (iii) communicative practice, incorporating information-gap, choice and feedback, and (iv) teacher feedback. It goes without saying that applying such techniques in the classroom will compensate the learners for the lack of exposure to English.

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Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Reduction through a Jigsaw Activity

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Abstract

Language anxiety has been frequently reported as a universal challenge in EFL contexts. Studies in EFL learning and teaching have addressed the necessity of reducing students’ anxiety in a foreign language class. This study aims to examine the anxiety levels of first-year non-English majors’ students and to investigate the effects of a Jigsaw activity on their levels of speaking anxiety as well as their opinions about the use of a Jigsaw activity. Participants included thirty first-year Chinese students from a Primary Education department. The data were gathered by means of a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the level of anxiety. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to find the effects of a Jigsaw activity on students’ speaking anxiety. The results revealed that a majority of students reported a high level of anxiety when speaking English in class. Students’ anxiety has been reduced to a low level through the use of a Jigsaw activity. In addition, students expressed positive opinions about using a Jigsaw activity in an English-speaking class. Based on these findings, some pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research are proposed.

Keywords: Foreign language speaking, anxiety, Jigsaw activity, Chinese EFL students
Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Getting students to express their ideas or to respond orally to teachers is a common problem encountered by EFL teachers in English-speaking classes. Students were found to be very anxious when responding to teachers in English. According to Liu (2006), “anxiety” is found as one of the major factors contributing to students’ reticence. However, a satisfactory exploration on how to reduce EFL students’ anxiety has yet to be conducted. This problem, therefore, has raised a red flag for foreign language learning which requires a low-anxiety environment. People tend to feel anxious when a situation is viewed as a threat which has effects on their performance. In response to the problem concerning anxiety in a Chinese college English-speaking class, a Jigsaw activity was proposed to help minimize students’ anxiety in their English classes.

Rationale

Jigsaw Activity

A Jigsaw activity is one of the cooperative learning methods. It is a group activity in which students are divided into groups, named “home” groups. Each student is assigned a specific part of a task. Then students who are assigned the same part of a task from all “home” groups meet together, thus forming an “expert” group. After sharing the information or materials about that specific part of the task with team members in the expert group, they return to their “home” group to share the materials or information and teach their home group members (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997). In the Jigsaw activity, students gain practice in self and peer teaching, so they can understand the materials at a deeper level than students who simply do it alone or listen to the teacher. During a Jigsaw activity, students get a lot of opportunities to speak the language and become more fluent in the use of the language. Each student has a chance to contribute meaningfully to a discussion, which is more difficult to achieve in large-group discussions. It encourages cooperation and active learning and promotes the value of all students' contributions. Based on what has been discussed above, the Jigsaw method seems to be an appropriate method for teaching speaking. Furthermore, Arnold (1999) says Jigsaw cooperative learning is the most widely used activity to create a real “information gap” in the classroom and encourage communication.

The Principle behind a Jigsaw Activity: Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning (CL) refers to a variety of teaching methods or activities in which students work together to learn and help their teammates learn in order to accomplish a common shared goal (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). There are five fundamental elements involved in CL: (1) Positive Interdependence, (2) Individual and Group Accountability, (3) Interpersonal and Small Group Skills, (4) Face-to-Face Interaction, and (5) Group Processing. A cooperative learning situation comprises all of these elements which distinguish it from other forms of group learning. Long and Porter (1985) demonstrated that CL methods are beneficial in EFL learning because they provide a low-anxiety environment for learners to increase their language production and heighten their self-confidence.
Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), Foreign Language Anxiety is defined as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning” (p. 128).

Learning will hardly be productive if learners are exposed to a high-anxiety learning environment. Many studies have demonstrated a negative relationship between anxiety and academic performance (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Horwitz, 2001). Moreover, Liu (2006) found that students felt the most anxious when they responded to the teacher or were singled out to speak English in class. These negative correlations illustrate that language learning and teaching calls for an anxiety-reducing method to break through the “anxiety barrier”.

From a review of research studies concerning anxiety, previous studies in this area put little emphasis on how to reduce anxiety. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the degree of anxiety experienced by first-year non-English majors and to investigate the effects of a Jigsaw activity on students’ anxiety levels and their opinions towards it. To achieve this, three research questions were posited targeting Chinese EFL learners:

(1) What is the scope of the students’ FL anxiety in an English-speaking class?
(2) Can the Jigsaw activity help reduce students’ anxiety?
(3) What are students’ opinions about using the Jigsaw activity in an English-speaking class?

Research Methodology

The research design included the participants, the instruments, the procedures of data collection and an analysis.

Participants

30 first-year students majoring in Primary Education were selected as participants based on the sample availability. They had all registered for an English-speaking class. The experiment lasted two months.

Instruments

To examine the students’ levels of speaking anxiety and the effects of a Jigsaw activity, questionnaires and a semi-structured interview were used. The details are given below.

First, Speaking Anxiety Scale (SAS): A 33-item survey, with 17 items adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) and 12 items adapted from the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 developed by McCroskey (1970). In addition, there were four other items based on the behavior and reaction of students in class. For example, “I keep silent in my English class because I am afraid of making mistake.”; “I avoid having eye-contact with teachers in my English class”; “I feel nervous even if I am well-prepared”; and “I bury my head when the teacher asks questions in my English class.” Finally,
this survey is a 33-item questionnaire designed with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’ with values 1–5.

To avoid students’ misunderstanding the English questionnaire, all the items were translated into Chinese. The internal consistency reliability of the SAS using Cronbach’s alpha was 0.91, which indicated that the questionnaire was highly reliable. The same SAS questionnaires were administered to the subjects respectively before and after the Jigsaw intervention.

The semi-structured interview: In order to obtain in-depth information about the participants’ opinions on the use of a Jigsaw activity, semi-structured interviews were carried out in Chinese with 15 students after the teaching experiment was finished. Each student interview lasted for about 20 minutes. All the interviews were audio-recorded, and later transcribed and translated.

**Data collection procedure**

The data collection procedure lasted about eight weeks. Firstly, the SAS questionnaires were administered to the 30 subjects before the Jigsaw activity was implemented. Secondly, after its implementation, the same SAS questionnaires were distributed to the same 30 subjects. Finally, the semi-structured interviews were conducted.

**Data analysis**

SPSS was employed to analyze the data to determine the students’ anxiety levels. Based on the 5-point Likert scale FLCAS, the total score of the SAS ranged from 33 to 165. The amount of anxiety can be classified into three levels: a score between 33 and 66 indicates a low level of anxiety; a score between 67 and 132 indicates a moderate level of anxiety; whereas a score between 133 and 165 indicates a high level of anxiety. The higher the total scores are, the more anxious the student is. A Paired Samples Test was conducted to test the significant differences in anxiety scores before and after the Jigsaw intervention. The interviews were transcribed and rechecked by two English teachers who have considerable experience in transcribing data in the field of language research. An analysis of the content was conducted on the qualitative data.

**Results**

The following three sections report the findings based on the research questions.

**Research question (1): What is the scope of the students’ FL anxiety in an English-speaking class?**

This section presents the anxiety levels reported by the students both before and after the use of the Jigsaw activity.

**Table 1. Comparison of anxiety levels before and after the Jigsaw activity (N=30)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety range</th>
<th>FLA Total Score</th>
<th>(before) N (%)</th>
<th>(after) N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low anxiety</td>
<td>33 – 66</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>15 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium anxiety</td>
<td>67 – 132</td>
<td>8 (26.7)</td>
<td>13 (43.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High anxiety</td>
<td>133 – 165</td>
<td>19 (63.3)</td>
<td>2 (6.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 1 shows, from a total of 30 students, only 3 students (10%) fell into the low anxiety group. 8 of them (26.7%) fell into the moderate anxiety group and more than half of them (63.3%) fell into the high anxiety group. However, after the Jigsaw activity, there were more students in the moderate and low anxiety groups, and only 2 (6.7%) students reported high level of anxiety.

**Research question (2): Can the Jigsaw activity help reduce students’ anxiety?**

A Paired Samples t test was used to test the significant differences in the range of anxiety before and after the Jigsaw activity. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. A Paired Samples t Test of Anxiety reduction before and after the Jigsaw activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Jigsaw</td>
<td>125.73</td>
<td>31.529</td>
<td>9.375</td>
<td>.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Jigsaw</td>
<td>71.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** P<0.01

As shown in Table 2, when the p-value is .000, this indicates a significant difference in students’ anxiety before and after the Jigsaw activity. In other words, students’ anxiety has been significantly reduced. From this result it can be concluded that the Jigsaw activity can help reduce students’ anxiety in English-speaking classes.

**Research question (3): What are students’ opinions about a Jigsaw activity in English-speaking classes?**

Findings gathered from a semi-structured interview on the students’ opinions concerning the use of a Jigsaw activity were categorized into three main themes. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The results of the semi-structured interview (\( N=15 \))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Students’ opinions (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Supportive learning environment</td>
<td>81% of the students indicated that the Jigsaw activity provided them with a supportive, relaxing, comfortable or less stressful learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Active learning process</td>
<td>64% of the students mentioned that the Jigsaw activity kept them moving around, thus they had a lot of fun and did not feel bored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Positive learning results</td>
<td>70% of the students commented that the Jigsaw activity helped to reduce their anxiety and increased their confidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even though most students revealed positive reactions towards the Jigsaw activity, it is interesting to note that some students expressed negative feelings about the Jigsaw activity. They stated that the Jigsaw activity made them feel more anxious, because they worried very much that they might disappoint their teammates by not performing well in the activity.

To sum up, a majority of students felt anxious before the Jigsaw implementation. However, the students’ anxiety levels were reduced after the use of the Jigsaw activity. Moreover, the students expressed positive feelings towards it.

Discussion

With regard to Research Question 1, which examines students’ anxiety level, more than half of the students reported a high level of anxiety. This result is consistent with Liu’s (2006) findings that a large number of students had feelings of anxiety when learning English. However, this finding does not support Liu and Huang’s (2011) result that the subjects in general did not feel anxious in English language classes. One likely explanation may be the difference in the learning context. For this research study, most students are from undeveloped areas where traditional ways of teaching are still the dominant teaching method. Students had not had much opportunity to practice speaking when they were in high school. As a result, their speaking proficiency tended to be low. Therefore, students’ high-level of anxiety may be attributed to the fact that lack of practice leads to low language proficiency, which in return provokes anxiety in students in speaking English, as found in Liu’s (2007) study.

Regarding Research Question 2, which examines the effects of the Jigsaw activity on the levels of the students’ anxiety, the results in Table 1 and Table 2 revealed significant differences indicating that students’ anxiety levels in general were greatly reduced after the Jigsaw activity. This finding is in line with Morgan’s (2003) study, which found that a cooperative learning environment was less stressful and could reduce learners’ anxiety. However, it is contrary to Duxbury & Tsai’s (2010) findings that language anxiety increases with the use of cooperative learning practice in the classroom. One possible explanation could be that the cooperative learning activities were not well-tailored to the students. The possible reasons for the positive effects of the Jigsaw activity on the levels of anxiety in this study can be attributed to the underlying advantages of Jigsaw activities.

Firstly, Jigsaw activities provide students with a supportive learning environment where team members help and encourage each other. For instance, one student (S16) said “I felt less pressure because I knew my teammates were always there to help me if I had some problems”. Therefore, when feeling supported by and receiving positive feedback from teammates, students tended to feel more relaxed and confident. The design of the Jigsaw activity provided group members with an equal opportunity to contribute to the group work. No one was left out. Everyone’s contribution to the group was necessary and valued. Under these conditions, group members were encouraged to help each other and to appreciate each other’s efforts so that they can reach their final shared group goal.

In addition, each member’s answer represents a collective idea of the group, no matter how good or poor the answer is (Flowerdew, 1998). For example, one student (S15) stated “The class was not as threatening as before. I did not worry about making mistakes or being laughed at by the other students. If they laughed at me, that means they laughed at my group also, not only at me, because I was part of the whole group”. Therefore, the shared responsibilities produced in the
Jigsaw activity enable individuals to be less frustrated in producing their output. Once this point is realized, learners feel safe and relaxed enough to speak without worrying about losing face or being viewed as incompetent.

Regarding Research Question 3, which is about students’ opinions toward the Jigsaw activity in the English-speaking class, most students expressed positive opinions towards the use of the Jigsaw activity. The possible explanation for this could be due to the benefits provided by the Jigsaw activities.

Firstly, Jigsaw activities provide students with a non-threatening learning environment in which they feel safe, comfortable and relaxed enough to express their ideas freely. For example, one student (S10) mentioned “…I did not feel nervous in Jigsaw activities because all my group members were so nice and friendly to me…” A supportive learning environment can expand a students’ sense of family and enhance their self-confidence, which may help them take more risks in their learning. A supportive learning environment results in students’ positive perceptions towards their learning. For example, one student (S3) said “…I felt I was a necessary part in the group. I am more motivated and can perform better if I know that my effort or work is appreciated and needed.…”

In addition, students reported they learnt more effectively when they used a Jigsaw activity. The principle of CL, i.e., face-to-face interaction, promotes peer interaction by the exchange of information and by mutual encouragement, so that the information can be processed more efficiently and effectively, thus more ideas are elicited. For example, one student (S10) said: “Jigsaw group work is a good way to boost ideas and opinions.” Furthermore, the characteristics of Jigsaw design also reduce each individual’s workload. In these circumstances, with peer interaction and the sharing of the workload, learning is likely to be more effective and productive.

**Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications**

According to the findings and discussion in the previous sections, anxiety was found to be prevalent among first-year students. They seemed to be very anxious when speaking English, even when they were properly prepared for it. Therefore, it is necessary for English teachers to find a way to help students reduce their anxiety about speaking. In this study, the Jigsaw activity proved to be an effective way to address the problem of students’ anxiety, by providing a supportive climate in the classroom. These findings show that the Jigsaw activity had a positive effect on students’ anxiety and students had positive opinions towards it.

The results of this study provide some pedagogical implications for teaching. First, it is important to foster a supportive learning environment in which students feel safe and willing to take risks, especially for learners who may have previously had negative learning experiences. Therefore, in order to make the speaking situation less anxiety-provoking, instructors should tailor classroom activities to meet students’ affective needs. Second, instructors can make students realize that in fact making mistakes is normal in speaking. If students are not afraid of making mistakes, they will not care so much about losing face. Consequently, they will feel less threatened and more confident when speaking.
Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

One limitation of this study should be noted. Due to the lack of availability of subjects, the present study was conducted with only thirty students from the Primary Education Department of a Chinese university. Therefore, the results may not be definitely generalizable to students majoring in other fields. Hence, the present findings offer a starting point for further research to continue the topic by expanding the research context and the sample to see how these findings are applicable to other learning groups. Further research is recommended in implementing the Jigsaw activity for use with other language and study skills such as reading, writing, listening or critical thinking. A longitudinal study is also highly recommended for further research to observe students’ improvement in their learning through the use of the Jigsaw activity.

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References


Three Asian Students’ Perceptions of Student-Centered Approach to Teaching in an EAP Class.

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Abstract

This paper investigates how passive learners can adapt to the novelty of innovative or student-centered approach, as opposed to teacher-centered model of teaching. This paper also examines whether or not passive learners are meta-pedagogically aware of the advantages of innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching in their learning development. Another goal of this paper is to explore the factors that can prevent passive learners from adapting immediately to innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching. This study includes classroom observations, interviews with three student participants and their teacher, and questionnaires. The results indicate that passive learners are meta-pedagogically aware of the advantages of innovative or student-centered approaches in their learning development. Passive learners can adapt to the novelty of student-centered approaches, but their adaptation occurs gradually. There are some factors that can affect passive learner’s immediate adaptation to innovative models of teaching. These factors are: students’ learning approaches, metacognitive knowledge, prior experience, cultural and educational backgrounds, inadequate knowledge of L2 linguistic resources, social and cultural uses of writing and the duration of time the students have spent in the country whose language they want to learn.

Keywords: innovative approaches, student-centered approaches, active and passive learners, meta-pedagogically aware, factors affecting immediate adaptation
Introduction

Asian students who study in Western educational institutions may have different perceptions, assumptions and habits that may not match the desired key features of learning and teaching in these institutions (Gribbs, 1992; Hu, 2002; Shamim, 1996). Gribbs (1992), Hu (2002), Lehman and Tweed (2002) argue that the emphasis of innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching involves improving students’ intellectual development, problem-solving skills, communication skills and transferable academic skills. Asian students who have been taught by didactic models of teaching may initially show bias or discomfort with any kind of teaching that challenges their desire to act as passive receivers of knowledge (Wong & Kember, 2000). Perry (1970, 1988, cited in Wong & Kember, 2000) acknowledges students’ cognitive and intellectual development with nine observed positions ranging from over-depending on the didactic model of teaching through a more realistic understanding to the ability to evolve and evaluate personal commitments.

Previous studies revealed that most students who come from the Asian Continent, especially Chinese learners, follow the Confucian or the Eastern view of learning that value “effortful learning, behavioral reform, pragmatic learning, acquisition of essential knowledge and respectful learning” (Lehman & Tweed, 2002, p. 90). The Socratic or the Western view of learning which is adopted by all the innovative or student-centered approaches, on the other hand, stresses the learners’ abilities in questioning their own and others’ beliefs, assessing others’ knowledge, implementing doubt and synthesizing the relationships between the different parts of knowledge.

Based on these two contradicting views of learning, students’ beliefs about learning can be categorized as passive or active. According to Wong and Kember (2000), students with active conceptions of learning can all be categorized as adopting a deep approach. In the deep approach students attempt to make sense of the received knowledge and this involves “thinking, seeking integration between components and between tasks and playing with ideas” (Gribbs, 1992, p.2). Students with passive conceptions of learning, however, adopt a surface approach that can enable them to be over-dependent on the delivered information in a passive learning situation like lectures.

Gribbs (1992) claims that innovative teachers, who crave adopting student-centered approaches to teaching are successful only when students are active learners rather than passive. So, students who come to the class with passive assumptions and beliefs about learning may not concur with the innovative teachers who “have their own distinctive belief systems, teaching styles, preferred language, teaching materials, and professional and personal agendas” (Rounds, 1996, p.45). According to Shamim (1996) the failure of learners to match with the teachers’ perceptions of the advantages of the innovation can lead to a conflict between the teacher’s and the learner’s goals. Researchers (Gow, Kember & Sivan, 1992 cited in Wong & Kember; Gribbes, 1992) indicate that students’ resistance to innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching can be “a dis-incentive for instructors to introduce more innovative forms of teaching” (Wong & Kember, 2000, p. 92). Gribbs (1992) and Johnson (1995) claim that though students’ resistance can be a significant effect on implementing student-centered approaches to teaching, it is not normally permanent as students may have an opportunity to adapt to more innovative forms of teaching. Wong and Kember (2000) confirmed this view when students in a reflective
writing class felt by the end of the semester that they had achieved rational progress towards adapting to this quite different form of teaching as opposed to the traditional approach.

**Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

This study aims to prove that Asian students with passive perceptions of innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching can still adapt or accommodate gradually to these approaches. In addition, this paper aims to discover if passive students with their passive attitude to innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching are meta-pedagogically (Block, 2002) aware of the importance of these approaches. So, unlike the different studies that confirm that passive students resist innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching, this paper attempts to prove the opposite. Another goal of this paper is to find the reasons or the factors that may cause passive students to initially resist active involvement in innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching.

This study will help encourage innovative or enthusiastic teachers who may hesitate in attempting curriculum innovations with passive learners. In addition, this study will attempt to adjust the negative perceptions that most Western teachers may have about the Asian students’ preferences for passive forms of learning, and their resistance to non-traditional approaches in teaching. This study will also aid teachers, who teach sustained-content approaches or communicative approaches, to know the various factors that may prevent passive learners from immediately adapting to student-centered approaches.

In this study, a qualitative method for collecting my data was chosen. In this classroom research, data were collected through various qualitative methods. In this study classroom observations, field notes, students’ worksheets and handouts, open-ended interviews with three student participants and with their teachers were used. The methods used for collecting the data for this study were varied in order to help the researcher “provide some degree of triangulation of the data” (Woods, 1996, p. 25). The triangulated data collection can also help the researcher gain better understanding of the perceptions and beliefs of the participants in the study (Block, 2000). In addition, the use of multiple ways of data collection enables the researcher to provide a rich and a thick description of the participation of the participants, the classroom events, the role of the researcher in the observation process and his or her theoretical perspective (Bachman, 2003).

**Research site and Participants**

The study was conducted at Carleton University, in a 1500 EAP class over one semester (two months). There were several participants in this study. First, myself as an observer in the process of exploring and providing an explanation for the learners’ awareness of their own learning and their desired teaching approaches. Second, the teacher of this course was another participant because she provided the researcher with insightful suggestions and ideas that helped in constructing the research question. Third, three students from Asia, but from different countries and cultural backgrounds agreed to be interviewed to show their ideas and beliefs about the nature of the teaching that they received in this particular context. These participants were given informed consent forms to sign and two of them were given pseudonymous names according to their wishes to be anonymous. The third participant asked to keep his name and agreed that his name could be used for the purpose of this study.
Data collection

In this classroom research, data were collected through various qualitative methods. In this study classroom observations, field notes, students’ worksheets and handouts, open-ended interviews with three student participants and with their teacher were used. In addition questionnaires were used (Appendix A). The used methods for collecting the data for this study were varied in order to help the researcher “provide some degree of triangulation of the data” (Woods, 1996, p. 25). The triangulated data collection can also help the researcher gain better understanding of the perceptions and beliefs of the participants in the study (Block, 2000). In addition, the use of multiple ways of data collection enables the researcher to provide a rich and a thick description of the participation of the participants, the classroom events, the role of the researcher in the observation process and his or her theoretical perspective (Bachman, 2003). The next sections will explain the implemented methods of data collection in greater detail.

Classroom Observation

1500 EAP class was observed on the 17th of January, 2006 and it consisted of students from different educational backgrounds (Japan, Thailand, Korea, China, Middle East). The researcher observed this class once a week for two months. At the beginning of the observation for this class the researcher attempted to be skillful while communicating with the students and the teacher in order to “get their approval and cooperation” since the researcher was “out there on their turf” (Rounds, 1996, p. 45). This class was observed once a week though they regularly met twice a week. This was because the researcher’s schedule conflicted with the second meeting of this class. During these observations, the researcher was able to talk to the students and to see the worksheets and the handouts of the activities they did during the class. The conducted observation helped the researcher to direct her attention towards certain behavior and attitudes on the students’ parts in perceiving the teaching, and the learning processes that needed to be investigated. Not only that, but these observations also empowered the researcher to enter the learner’s world and see the process of learning and teaching from their standpoints. Observation also helped to witness the gap or the mismatch between the teacher’s perception and the learner’s standpoint of student-centered approach to teaching. These observations helped the researcher to think of the classroom events that seemed to be peculiar from her perspective, but it may not be the same in the case of the teacher and the students alike. This again confirms that “the observer or researcher who analyzes classroom data from the outside has a valid perception, and through the analysis may see things that neither teacher nor learners perceive” (Woods, 1996, p. 17).

The interview with the three participants

The three participants who agreed to willingly share their ideas and cooperate in this study were interviewed at different periods of time during the two months. The academic development of these participants and their involvements in the classroom activities were followed during these two months. The participants were met after doing certain activities in the classroom and were asked about their assumptions and beliefs about doing these activities. The participants’ files and some of their graded written assignments that were followed. Two of the participants were interviewed together after they wrote the midterm. Interviewing the two participants simultaneously was a great experience because during the interview they reflected on each other’s responses to the interview’s questions. Sometimes one interviewee would...
propose a question to be asked to the other interviewee. The third interview was conducted with the third participant before the end of the course. During the interviews with these participants the researcher attempted to establish an informal and relaxed atmosphere, as well as a friendly and informative conversation when communicating with them.

The questions of the interview were constructed to be open-ended questions. The researcher attempted to be cautious in designing these questions, so when the participants responded to them, they would provide reliable reports of events (veridical data of the interview) (Block, 2000). Asking personal opinion of the teacher or other students, as well as other irrelevant information was avoided (symptomatic data of the interview) (Block, 2000). All the interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed for analysis afterward.

The interview with the teacher

The teacher was interviewed twice during the two months. The first time was at the beginning, before the research began, in order to know the nature of the class, the teacher’s course syllabus, and her teaching model that she adopted in teaching this course. This interview was not audio-taped because the researcher was only trying to get information to help become acclimatized to the process of observing this class. The second interview was conducted after the teacher gave the students the results of the midterm. This interview was audio-taped and then transcribed for the purpose of analysis. The used questions in both interviews with the teacher were open-ended, to guarantee that the teacher would have the freedom to give “a teacher-based answer and not an interview-based answer” (Woods, 1996, p. 40).

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used as one of the tools for collecting the data. Using questionnaires enabled the researcher to maintain triangulation and to help see the general perception of the other students in the class about the investigated topic. In writing the questions of the questionnaire the researcher tried to remember the events or the activities that students could have faced a difficulty with in understanding or grasping its role in their learning. The questions were written clearly, so students will not give unreliable answers because of the misunderstanding of the questions. In the revision process various changes to the items of the questionnaire were made. One of the changes in designing this questionnaire occurred after the researcher finished interviewing two of the participants. The interview with these two participants enabled the researcher to adjust the questions of the questionnaire in a way that would help get more accurate and reliable information from the students. The teacher also cooperated in guiding the researcher to construct certain questions in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed as a Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree, no opinion) that consisted of twenty one questions. It has been argued that Likert scales are useful for getting respondents’ views, judgments, or opinions about almost any aspect of language learning (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). Fourteen students out of fifteen students agreed willingly to fill out the questionnaire and only eleven copies of these questionnaires were received. The questions in this questionnaire were designed around surface approach to learning and deep approach to learning questions. These questions were designed in this way to see how students viewed surface approach to learning and deep approach to learning. The teacher of this 1500 EAP class focuses on a deep approach to learning in her way of teaching. The questions
that represented the surface approach to learning are 3, 5, 7, 13, and 14 (Appendix B). The questions that represented the deep approach to learning are 1, 8, and 19 (Appendix B).

Analysis and interpretations of the findings

Field notes taken during class observations and questionnaire items were analyzed and organized in summary tables. All the interviews either with the teacher or with the three participants were audio-recorded and transcribed. Then the collected information from these various methods were compared to find similar or recurring themes that had a link to my research questions. Data items that were more closely related to my research questions were selected in order to be used for analysis and discussion purposes.

The collected and the analyzed information from the teacher’s interview, the interview with the three participants, the questionnaire and the observations helped the researcher find certain patterns to answer the questions of this study. The analysis shows that in this 1500 EAP class there is a disconnection between the teacher’s belief and the students’ beliefs about the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, the analysis reveals that there are certain factors that prevent the learners from adapting or accommodating immediately to the innovative or student-centered models of teaching. In the following sections these two aforesaid points will be explained in greater detail.

A. Mismatch between the teacher’s belief and the students’ beliefs about the quality of teaching and learning in this 1500 EAP class

It can be seen from the findings, the teacher’s overall goal in this 1500 EAP class is to maintain and cultivate an innovative or student-centered role through using a sustained-content approach to teaching. She believes that using sustained-content approach to teaching will enable her to maintain students’ deep learning, intellectual development, problem-solving, and transferable academic skills. In addition, the teacher believes that by doing this she can successfully prepare students for actual academic studies that they will face in their own disciplines in university studies. She is aware that Asian students who come from different educational and cultural backgrounds may show bias or discomfort with the innovative or student-centered approach to teaching that she aims to adopt. Therefore, at the beginning of the course she gives lectures in order to prepare students to be aware of the differences between the non-traditional model and the didactic model of teaching. As the course goes on, the teacher realizes that there are some groups of students who struggle to understand, and to respond, to this kind of teaching. In contrast, there are groups of students who adjust very easily to this model of teaching.

From the interview with the three participants it can be seen that two of them Ahmed and Hu (see diagram 1, Appendix C) are passive learners because they believe that the teacher should provide them with more explanation and clarification instead of letting them be independent. The questionnaire also showed that 63% of eleven students in their responses to question (13) strongly agreed on getting more explanation and feedback on how to write an abstract, a discussion paper and a lecture summary, so they could do well in the tests. The findings of the teacher’s interview revealed that the teacher’s goal in getting students to work in groups, discuss the worksheets of the readings, and do seminar presentations was to maintain the communication skills and students’ abilities to have a better understanding of the main ideas of the readings. The findings of the interview with Ahmed and Hu who were passive learners demonstrated that they
had different perceptions of the goals of working in groups, doing seminar presentation and using the worksheets for the different readings. They believed that the purpose of working in groups was to compare their answers and the purpose of using worksheets was to help them remember the main points of the readings to be studied for the tests. This indicates that some learners in the class have passive beliefs of the teacher’s intention and expectation of classroom activities; therefore their perceptions of the goals of these activities that revolve around student-centered role and innovative way of teaching are mismatched.

The findings of the questionnaire and the interview also showed that although there was a mismatch between the teacher’s perception and the passive student’s perception of the advantageous role of the activities in the non-traditional model of teaching (student-centered approach to teaching), these passive learners were still meta-pedagogically aware of the importance of this model of teaching in their learning development (Block, 2002). The findings of the interview with Ahmed and Hu who appeared to be passive learners revealed that they were unconsciously aware of the advantageous role of this kind of teaching they received in this class. For example, Hu said in the interview discussing the benefit he gained from this class regarding learning how to do referencing:

*In China referencing things is not important…. For example when we write an idea we do not need to write the author, we never use phrasing statements. In 1300 level I consider all these as useless. But, when I came to this class I realize its importance, but I was not able to realize its importance in 1300 level and in my home country.*

Ahmed also showed the benefit that he gained from this course by the end of the interview when he said:

*There is a connection between what we are learning in this course and our disciplines. For example, when we understand deep learning and surface learning and how we should focus on deep learning in order not only to remember, but to understand, so that may affect our studies in other majors to understand, but not memorize all the information for the test.*

Antony who seemed to be an active student was also aware of the advantageous role of this model of teaching. He had a positive perception of innovative or student-centered model of teaching in this course (see diagram 1). He indicated that this course helped him improve his writing and enabled him to know, how and when, to apply deep learning and surface learning when studying.

The findings of the questionnaire revealed that students’ responses to question (8) showed that 45% agreed and 27% strongly agreed that they benefited from the learning skills and experience with the different formats of academic writing that they received in this class. In addition, students’ responses to question (1) revealed that 45% strongly agreed and 45% agreed that they liked the activities that required more thinking and more ability to synthesize information. This again confirmed the findings of the interview with Ahmed and Hu. Though these learners have passive beliefs towards student-centered approach to teaching, this dose not mean that they are not meta-pedagogically aware of the advantage of this approach.
Based on this finding, it can be argued that since passive learners are meta-pedagogically aware of the importance of student-centered approach to teaching in their learning development, these learners do not resist the idea of this kind of teaching. This finding disagrees with Shamim’s (1996) point view that passive learner’s failure to match the teacher’s perception of the advantage of the student-centered approach to teaching can make these learners resist adapting to this model of teaching. However, the findings of this study prove that though passive learners may misinterpret the teacher’s expectations and intentions of using certain activities in student-centered approach to teaching, they are meta-pedagogically aware of the importance of the kind of teaching they receive. Thus, this means that they are not resisting the novelty of student-centered approach to teaching, but they are in the process of adapting it.

B. Factors that prevent the learners from adapting or accommodating immediately to the innovative or student-centered models of teaching in this 1500 EAP class

According to Johnson (1995) passive learners may not adapt immediately to innovative or student-centered approach to teaching because these students may initially struggle to make sense of both social and cognitive aspects of classroom events. Similarly, Gribbes (1992), Wong and Kember (2000) argue that when passive learners are introduced to a new model of teaching such as the student-centered approach, they will not adapt immediately. However, they argue that these learners will gradually adapt to this form of teaching instead of resisting it entirely. The findings of the interview with the three participants revealed that these three participants showed that they faced certain problems or factors (see Table 1, Appendix C) that prevented them from the immediate adaptation or accommodation to the teacher’s model of teaching. In the following sections these factors, as they have shown in the interviews with the three participants, will be explained in greater detail.

A. Students’ learning approaches

From the interview with the three participants it appeared that Ahmed and Hu were passive learners while Antony was an active learner (diagram 1). Though Ahmed and Hu were unconsciously aware of the importance of the teacher’s approach to teaching in this course, they had a passive perception of certain activities that the teacher implemented. This was because these students were affected by the surface learning approach that they were used to in their countries. This learning approach made Ahmed, Hu and the other passive students in the class believe that more explanation, easy prompts and more examples were the correct way to have a better understanding and grade in the course. The teacher in the interview revealed she gave the students a discussion paper to write defining the deep and surface approaches to learning. She said many students wrote that memorization could help them develop a deeper understanding. It has been argued that students’ adopting surface approach to learning can make them struggle in adapting innovative or student-centered model of teaching. This is because this model of teaching challenges these students’ desire to act as passive receivers of knowledge (Wong & Kember, 2000).

a. Students’ metacognitive knowledge

The interview with Ahmed and Hu revealed that they had negative or limited beliefs about their capacity to perform certain tasks, and about the strategies that they could use to compensate for possible deficiencies. For example, Hu revealed that since he got a bad result on the midterm he would not be able to do a great job by the final exam. In addition, Hu said that he had a
feeling that he would not achieve or do very well in the final oral presentation because he faced a difficulty in explaining certain terminologies in biology to his partners in the seminar presentation. In the interview, Hu said commenting on his ability to do the final oral presentation:

……I will die if I will do the last presentation…

Similarly Ahmed revealed some negative beliefs about his capacity in performing certain tasks in the class. For example, in the interview, Ahmed explained his inadequate ability to write in an effective way as the following:

In our native language we know how to do discussion paper, summaries, and research paper, but in this academic course you should do it more proficiently, so if I compare my ability in doing this academic format with a native speaker, he will be better than me for sure.

According to research these negative misconception that these learners may have can cause them not to adopt responsible and active attitude in the approaches to learning and may lead them to have a negative attitude to autonomy (Lochart & Victori, 1995).

b. Students’ prior experience

The interview with Ahmed, Hu and Antony demonstrated that one of the difficulties that they faced in 1500 EAP class was the difference between the learning requirements in the 1300 level or the intensive ESL courses and this 1500 EAP class. Ahmed took the CAEL in order to shorten the period of his study in Carleton, so that he would not take the credit ESL courses. However, he did not pass the CAEL and he only received 50% that permitted him to jump from the intensive ESL courses to 1500 EAP class without taking 1300 EAP class. In the interview, Ahmed said to indicate the difference in the learning he received in the intensive ESL programme and in 1500 EAP class:

I am facing the big difference between the credit ESL and the intensive ESL which is everything is countable and every single mistake is countable. It was not like what we used to do in the intensive ESL courses. I did not take 1300 EAP class and the teacher supposes that I know everything to build on it….

Hu explained the difference between the kind of learning he received in 1300 level and 1500 level as the following:

The teacher thinks we have basic knowledge about the discussion paper or some analyzed things, but in 1300 level we did not learn this…….. In 1300 level I consider referencing and phrasing statements as useless….  

Antony also described that the difference in learning how to write summaries, abstracts, and how to do seminar presentation between 1300 EAP class and 1500 EAP class as the following:

Basically we learned before how to write summaries, abstracts, and how to do seminar presentation, but the way we write is simple than this course (1500 EAP). In 1300 level we were allowed to use “I” and “you”, but in 1500 level you are
not allowed to use “I” and “you” and you have to write in more formal way. This course is more in deep learning....... 

This difficulty that these three participants faced in this class confirmed Eklund-Myrskog’s (1997) (cited in Gravoso, Pasa & Mori, 2002) study that students’ prior learning experience can influence students’ ways of experiencing learning a new learning context.

D. students’ cultural and educational backgrounds

The findings of the interviews with the three participants revealed that the ways of teaching they received in their countries are not similar as it is in the Canadian learning environment (see table 1). They demonstrated that the teachers in their countries provided them with more explanation and gave them the information first, and then they studied this information to be reproduced on the day of the examination. Antony said commenting on the difference between the way of teaching in his country and in the Canadian context:

.........the way the teacher do like they give you an example to get better knowledge, so when you look at the example you will know the way how to solve it is quite different from here. We have to listen to what the teacher said and I think all the Asian countries around my country like Thailand, China, Japan..... when we come here we have problem with critical thinking like critical writing, expressing our ideas.

Ahmed and Hu also said that their educational systems in their countries are based on didactic model of teaching, and there is less concern for deep learning and critical thinking activities. So these students’ educational and cultural backgrounds influence their perceptions of student-centered models of teaching. This can cause these students to struggle to adapt to the novelty of the student-centered model of teaching as opposed to the didactic model of teaching that they were used to in their countries.

B. students’ inadequate knowledge of L2 linguistic resources, and social and cultural uses of writing in L2

The findings of the interviews with the three participants showed that one of the difficulties that was shared among these three participants in this 1500 EAP class was the weak vocabulary that they had in L2 (see Table 1). In addition, these participants revealed that they did not have the adequate knowledge to express their ideas or to define certain concepts in their own words. For example, Hu said expressing this difficulty as the following:

The presentation was difficult for me because my article was based on biology and 70% of the vocabulary I don’t know. My partners do not understand everything I said to them, so I must explain everything for them, but I cannot explain everything for them because my English level was weak....... 

Ahmed also described the same difficulty and he said in the interview:

....Basically my problem in defining concepts is based on my weak vocabulary that I have..... it is hard for me to use my own words to define and that is I think based on my weak vocabulary.
Furthermore, these participants demonstrated that when they wrote a discussion paper or a summary they did not know how much detail they should provide. They said that the teacher always commented that they did not provide clear and enough detail to the reader in their writing. This made the teacher face difficulty in understanding and reading their produced texts. Hu expressed this problem in the following quote:

*My biggest problem is writing a discussion paper because in China I do not need to provide details and they still understand what I am saying. In this course the teacher told me that when writing a research paper, we must consider the reader as a stranger, so we must write every thing.*

Antony, though he was an active learner also indicated in the interview the same difficulty:

*I still have a problem with my writing in general. This is because English is my second language; the way I write my sentences in English is affected by my first language….. it will go long sentences…… still I have grammar mistakes and the structure of my sentences is affected by the way I write in my first language.*

From the students’ responses to question (14), 45% strongly agreed and 27% agreed that they faced some problems in understanding the meaning of the words, the theme of the topics and the questions in some of the activities. This finding from the questionnaire again confirmed the difficulty that the three participants discussed in the interview. Thus, this difficulty is considered to be one of the barriers that can cause them not to adapt immediately to the novelty of student-centered approach.

**F. The duration of time the students have spent in the country whose language they want to learn**

The findings of the interview with the three participants demonstrated that the duration of time the students may spend in the country of the target language can affect their perceptions and beliefs of the Western educational system. Ahmed was in his first year in Canada and Hu was in his second year in Canada, and both of them finished their high schools in their native countries. In contrast, Antony spent three years in Canada and he finished his high school in one of the Canadian schools. Antony said commenting on the advantage of finishing his high school in Canada:

*I have been here (in Canada) for three years, so I have been getting used to these kinds of activities, but first time when I came here I faced some difficulty.*

In the interview, Antony said that he was lucky because he became comfortable with critical thinking activities when he was in the high school that he finished in Canada. He also revealed that his friends faced different problems in understanding the teacher’s prompts and the teacher’s way of teaching because most of them were either in their first or second year. He said that when he first came to Canada, he faced the same difficulties in adapting to the novelty of the Canadian educational system because it was different from the educational system he was used to in his country.
This indicates that the duration that the learners may spend in the Western countries that have educational systems based on innovative or student-centered approaches can affect students’ perceptions of these approaches to teaching. This will, in turn, influence students’ willingness to immediately adapt or adjust to these approaches to teaching.

So, these aforementioned factors that have been interpreted from the findings of this study are similar to the factors that have been acknowledged by research. This study confirms that student’s learning approach, metacognitive knowledge, prior experience, cultural and educational background, inadequate knowledge of L2 linguistic resources, social and cultural uses of writing can affect their perceptions of adapting immediately to innovative or student-centered approach to teaching. In addition, this study reveals another factor that can prevent students from adapting immediately to student-centered approach to teaching and it has not been stated in research. This factor is the duration of time the students may have spent in the country whose language they want to learn.

Limitations of the study

While the validity and reliability in the collected data were attempted through using varied methods to maintain the triangulation of these collected data, it is important to note several limitations of this study. One of these limitation is that the period of given time to complete the investigation of this study was relatively short (2 months). In the interview, the collected data were based on the interviewees’ reports of their own assumptions and experiences. While some of the interviewees gave their reports about the topic being discussed, it could be that some of these given reports were influenced by the interview context and the presence of the researcher. So, it was not guaranteed that all the collected reports from these interviewees were reliable reports of events that could maintain veridical data of the interview (Block, 2000).

Furthermore, data obtained from L2 participants may not be entirely accurate because of the limited access that these learners have to the language used in the interviews. So, the quotes in this study have not been altered or corrected in any way by the researcher. In addition, not all the students of the observed class participated in filling out the questionnaire, so the respondents could not be considered representative of the whole class.

However, the results of this study can be applicable for the area of investigation, but it cannot be generalized to other contexts due to limited sample size. Perhaps involving a large number of participants from different cultural backgrounds would provide a more complete picture of how passive students may adapt to the novelty of student-centered approaches to teaching.

Conclusion and implications

This study proves that passive learners though they may fail to match the teacher’s perception of the advantage of innovative or student-centered approaches in their learning, they are meta-pedagogically aware of the importance of these teaching approaches. This study reveals that the conflict that may occur between the teacher’s and the passive learner’s perception of the innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching does not mean that these learners resist adapting to these innovative ways of teaching. Instead, these passive learners can get used to these innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching. This study also shows
that passive learner’s adaptation or accommodation to innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching occurs gradually instead of instantly. Therefore, this study provides evidence for enthusiastic teachers not to be discouraged when attempting curriculum innovation with passive learners.

The study also reveals that there were certain factors that could affect the passive learner’s willingness to immediately adapt to the novelty of student-centered approaches to teaching. These factors were: students’ learning approaches, metacognitive knowledge, prior experience, cultural and educational backgrounds, inadequate knowledge in L2 linguistic resources, social and cultural uses of writing, and the duration of time the students have spent in the country of the target language. Teachers who aim to implement innovative or student-centered approach with passive students should realize that student’s adaptation or accommodation to these innovative approaches will not occur instantly due to these factors.

This study suggests some pedagogical implications for innovative teachers who aim to implement innovative or student-centered approaches to teaching with passive learners.

Since learner’s L2 linguistic deficiencies can affect students’ willingness to adapt to innovative approaches to teaching, it is recommended that innovative teachers should help these L2 learners with L2 linguistic deficiencies if they want them to express themselves in English. They can do this by implementing peer editing sessions in the classroom after the writing activities and by encouraging students to use computerized instructional aids outside the classroom. This study confirms that student’s metacognitive knowledge can be one of the factors that can make them have a negative attitude towards autonomy and active learning. It is recommended that teachers provide these students with extra sessions that help them modify and reconstruct possible misconceptions they may have about their own abilities. It is also recommended that there should be continuity in the designed activities and materials that students would be exposed to in all the credit ESL courses.

**About the author:**

Umama AL Kalbani holds BM in Education and MA in Applied Linguistics. The author is an English lecturer teaching English for EFL students using student-centered approaches. The author is interested in conducting research related to learner’s autonym, learning approaches; student’s learning development, curriculum development and innovation.
References:


## Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I like the activities that require more thinking and more ability in synthesizing the information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I don’t like to have the same general theme over the term which is “learning, thinking, and intelligence.” I am interested more in reading different topics that are related to my study.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I face a difficulty in defining the terms and the concepts that are related to the different reading because I am not used to this kind of learning before.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I am interested in all the activities we do in the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The only benefit I got from the worksheets of the different readings that are given to me in the class is to help me prepare for the quizzes and the tests</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I understand all the activities and the prompts the teacher gives us in the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I like to see an example of someone’s writing before I begin to write an abstract, a discussion paper, lecture summaries, and paraphrasing.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I benefit from the learning skills and the academic formats (presentation, analytical thinking, highlighting, note taking, writing commentaries, summaries and abstracts) in my own discipline and in my learning in general.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I like to work individually than to work with groups or pairs in discussing the readings in the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>When I don’t understand an activity, I see what my friend does, so I can do like him or her.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I prefer to speak in my mother tongue when I work with people who know my first language when working in groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. The readings and the articles we read in the class are easy and comprehensible.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I like to get more explanation and feedback on how to write an abstract, a discussion paper, lecture summaries, and paraphrasing, so I can do very well in the test or in the assignment.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I face some problems in understanding the meaning of the words, the theme of the topic and the questions in some of the activities because I don’t understand what I should do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I don’t always fully understand the readings in the class, so I have to read them again at home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have to understand the prompts and the questions of the activities and the readings by memorizing the concepts of the theories, so I can get a better mark.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I like the way I used to learn in my country because it did not make me get confused and I always get better marks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I enjoy doing a seminar presentation in the class because it prepares me for note taking, and listening.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The assignments and the quizzes are easy to be done because I always have a clear idea about what I have to do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I have learned and used the academic study skills (writing summaries, abstracts, commentaries, oral presentations, reports) before taking this course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I like what we learn in this course, but there are many things that we should learn and there is no enough time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B

#### Surface approach questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. I face a difficulty in defining the terms and the concepts that are related to the different reading because I am not used to this kind of learning before.</td>
<td>1 (5) 45%</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(3) 27%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The only benefit I got from the worksheets of the different readings that are given to me in the class is to help me prepare for the quizzes and the tests</td>
<td>(4) 36%</td>
<td>(3) 27%</td>
<td>(2) 18%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I like to see an example of someone’s writing before I begin to write an abstract, a discussion paper, lecture summaries, and paraphrasing.</td>
<td>(5) 45%</td>
<td>(4) 36%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I like to get more explanation and feedback on how to write an abstract, a discussion paper, lecture summaries, and paraphrasing, so I can do very well in the test or in the assignment.</td>
<td>(7) 63%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I face some problems in understanding the meaning of the words, the theme of the topic and the questions in some of the activities because I don’t understand what I should do.</td>
<td>5 45%</td>
<td>3 27%</td>
<td>4 28%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Deep approach questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like the activities that require more thinking and more ability in synthesizing the information.</td>
<td>(5) 45%</td>
<td>(5) 45%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I benefit from the learning skills and the academic formats (presentation, analytical thinking, highlighting, note taking, writing commentaries, summaries and abstracts) in my own discipline and in my learning in general.</td>
<td>3 27%</td>
<td>5 45%</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The assignments and the quizzes are easy to be done because I always have a clear idea about what I have to do.</td>
<td>1 45%</td>
<td>5 27%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix/C

The following is a diagram (1) that summarizes how the three participants (Ahmed, Hu, Antony).

1. perceive the teacher’s approach to teaching in the 1500 EAP class
2. whether they are meta-pedagogically aware of the advantage of the teacher’s approach to teaching

The teacher’s approach to teaching in the 1500 EAP class is based on sustained-content approach/student-centered approach.

Ahmed and Hu (passive learners)

1. want more explanation
2. examples before writing a discussion paper or a summary
3. more direction instead of depending on themselves

Didactic or transmissive way

Adopt surface approach to learning

Antony

Have a positive attitude towards critical thinking

Use surface approach such as memorization when it is only necessary

Adopt a deep approach to learning

This diagram is adopted from Wong and Kember’s (2000) study.
The following table (1) represents a summary of the difficulties that are shared by the three participants as it has been revealed in the interview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of the difficulties shared by the three participants that affect their perceptions and assumptions of the teacher’s goal in the designed activities in this 1500 EAP class (Table 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed, Hu and Antony revealed in the interview that they faced difficulties in this course (1500 EAP) because of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. the differences in the learning requirements between the 1300 EAP level and the 1500 EAP level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. the difference in learning and teaching between the intensive ESL courses and credit ESL courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. the difference between learning and teaching in their countries and this course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. the previous learning approach (surface) and the new learning approach (deep)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. their inadequate linguistic resources when writing or speaking in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. the effect of their first language on their writing in English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>