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Letter from the Editor

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings,

We are delighted to announce the release of our new issue AWEJ Volume 4. Number 3. We are proud to share with you that your Journal AWEJ has achieved significant support and recognition with its increased indexing and accreditation with well known high ranking universities, databases and research centers. (see this link). This is also reflected by a large number of paper submissions from different universities in Arab countries and around the world (79 papers from 31 universities). We would like to remind you all about our AWEJ operating review procedure for successful submission. Our sincere apologies to our colleagues whose reviewed papers were not published in this issue, especially those whose revised papers were resubmitted after the deadline. We ensure those authors that their papers will take priority in our next issue. Moreover the indexing of AWEJ is also growing; it is listed in The University of Arizona in United States
http://global.arizona.edu/arab-world-english-journal-awej-call-papers-december
and saarländische universitäts in Germany

Kind Regards,

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Linguistic Substitution as Verbal Dynamism

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Abstract

Linguistic substitution is one of the most prolific and widespread processes in language use. All dialects resort to it for various purposes. An Arabic cross-dialectal investigation of this phenomenon shows the versatility of the processes reflected in substitution, and brings out all the robustness of dialectal verbal dynamism. Most of the processes involved in substitution are generally a result of applications in linguistic economy.

Keywords: linguistic substitution; Arabic dialects; metonymy; lexical creation; antiphrasis.
1. Introduction

Linguistic substitution comes in many forms and uses a variety of processes. The processes mentioned in this paper are by no means exhaustive, and most have been the subject of numerous studies dating back to the antiquity. Most of these studies, whether rhetoric treatises or general descriptions of figures of speech, belong now to classical knowledge and are classified under particular traditions. In The Poetics of Aristotle (2000: ch. 21), Aristotle classifies many figures of speech but does not give the names that we now know. For example, he does not specifically use the term ‘metonymy’ but he certainly makes a reference to it (under ‘metaphor’) when he stipulates that “Metaphor is the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy”. In fact, for ancient works, it was the metaphor that symbolized and characterized all the complexities of rhetorical analysis and activity. This situation prompted Groupe mu (1970 : 117) to observe that “La rhétorique ancienne a été incapable de formuler une définition satisfaisante de la métonymie ». Furthermore, and in the French tradition, these processes are studied both in the classical Fontanier (in a contemporary edition, 1968), in a more modern compilation by Group Mu (1970), and in the works of Ricoeur (1975) and Bonhomme (1998). In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, it is not necessary to go back to the symbolic rhetoric of the Exeter Book of riddles and vernacular riddling to situate the beginnings of at least some aspects of linguistic substitution. Even then, those riddles were, in the words of Charles Kennedy (1943: 134) ‘a mosaic of the actualities of daily experience’ and thus contributed a certain verbal dynamism to linguistic interaction in England even before the Norman Conquest. More recent works, such as those of Bolinger (1980), Hughes (1988) and a host of others have defined, analyzed, and exemplified so many of the processes that enter in the various uses of language. According to Abu Libdeh (2011), the Arabic tradition in the study of figures of speech goes back even before their famous categorizations in Asrar al-Balagha by Abdul Qahir AL-Jurjani in the 11th century, but has made little progress since then. One of the shortcomings that he attributes to the old studies is their failure to recognize the social function of figures of speech and to the new studies their failure to deal with new and modern day linguistic data. Before and after Al-Jurjani, however, there were good treatises and studies on grammar, ilm al balagha (rhetoric and eloquence) and ilm al bayan, and some of these are found under Arabic rhetoric in Sloane (2001). Another accessible chronological historical account of Arabic rhetorical disciplines and speech acts is found in Hussein (2006). In fact, Hussein [2006: 25] translates ilm al bayan as figures of speech to which he devotes the whole of chapter 5 [pp.196-238] of his book. It should be noted that more modern studies of linguistic substitution and figures of speech in Arabic dialects do include good presentations such as those of Farghal (1995) who analyzes Arabic euphemism along Gricean lines. It is not possible in this short presentation to include all the buoyant contributions in this lively domain.

While most of the above mentioned studies generally deal with linguistic substitution and its processes in written language, the present study will take its examples mostly from everyday speech and from diverse sources of dialect speakers across the Arabic spectrum. This by no way means that I am avoiding the written language, to which I shall have to resort when necessary; nor does it mean that I fanatically heed Orwell’s (1946/1970) first rule of writing in his ‘Politics and the English Language’: “Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print”. 
2. Linguistic Substitution

Substitution is a process whereby a contextualized element or expression is replaced or substituted. This substitution is often resorted to for terms or expressions whose usage is considered taboo or simply unknown or ignored by the speaker. It is often chosen as a process whereby the speaker intends to replace or ‘hide’ a word or expression from the auditor. The purpose of this disguise is to keep the surrounding audience in total ignorance of the reality of the situation.

As with many other linguistic processes, substitution is created and perpetuated through the creative experiences of a few individuals or social groups. It somehow reflects creativity in linguistic intercourse that moulds and renews traditional linguistic corpus. In this respect, substitution pertains to the domains of general linguistics and stylistics.

3. Linguistic Substitution and Euphemism/metonymy

All languages need and use euphemism. Euphemism’s cultural, social and diplomatic function is to cloak and camouflage the dirty bits of straight and plain language, and to dilute and cool the heat of fiery language in international relations. It is, according to Rawson (1981:1), ‘society’s basic lingua non franca’. Metonymy, on the other hand, remains a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it bears a close association or for another of which it is an attribute. For Lakoff and Johnson (1980:39) “metonymic concepts allow us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else”. Gibbs (1999:61) goes even further when he states that “metonymy shapes the way we think and speak of ordinary events and is the basis for many symbolic comparisons in art and literature”. In dialectal daily linguistic intercourse and in most of the occurrences involving this kind of use, we notice that substitution is purely lexical. For Hughes (1988:14-15), whose work on the interaction between words and social change is a valuable reference, euphemism is “a linguistic indicator of a variety of taboos ... more revealing of certain cultural and psychological determinants than other trends”, and can be included in this category all words whose use is perceived as taboo or taboo-like, such as those for genital and sexual parts, but also those referring to social and familial organization. For example, the dialectal Arabic expressions [al-dār], [al-bayt] (metonymy of the container for the contained) and [al-‘yāl], [umm al-‘yāl], [al-horma] are used by male speakers as substitution metonymic expressions for ‘woman’ and ‘wife’. To refer to their husbands, female speakers generally resort to the expressions [mūl al-dār], [mūl al-ši], [mūl al-‘yāl] rather than the more straightforwardly classical [rāğel], or [rāğl-i] or [zūğ-i]. Female speakers in most North African Arabic dialect areas use the expression [ḥāša al-laḥya] (literally: ‘Far be it from the beard’, meaning ‘Far be it from you (the) man’). This locution is used by women when they address men on a topic that commands respect. It is well-known that in Maghribin dialects, the expression [bu – źlāgım] is closely related to Egyptian [abu – źanəb] (literally ‘that with a mustache’, and meaning a man). What is less known is the Egyptian plural [šanabat] which is used for ‘a group of men’. In this case, the terms [laḥya] ‘beard’ and [šanəb] ‘mustache’ are metonymies of the object for the person. Here, we can see that the designation of metonymic relation is fairly clear, which is not always the case in everyday speech where, as Le Guern (1973:77) remarks, “most metonymies go unnoticed in normal conditions of communication” (‘La plupart des métonymies passent inaperçues dans les conditions normales de communication’). [My translation]

In another context, euphemism is used as an ‘oblique’ technique for description and reference, whose main function is to ‘obscure’ the negative traits of the referent by substituting
more ‘positive’ ones for them to be socially acceptable. All Arabic dialects offer a feast of these oblique cases of which the most expressive ones are the Tunisian [b ẓāḥ tu] (‘he is healthy’, literally ‘he has health’) as a euphemism for ‘obese’ and the Egyptian/Sudanese [Karīm ‘ayn] (‘generous or precious eye’) as a euphemism for the term [a’war] ‘one-eyed man’ (see Guella, 2010), and the highly expressive Egyptian [bi- ‘āfya šwīya] (lit. ‘with little health’) as a euphemism for ‘poor health’ or ‘poorly’.

[bīlya] and [šaġta ] (Egypt)

Another interesting illustration of linguistic substitution involves both a double case of metonymy and euphemism. In Egypt, a young trainee in mechanics is referred to as [bīlya]. This term is a French borrowed word (‘bille’) perfectly integrated in Egyptian Arabic; this ‘bille’ is encrusted in a [rūlma], also derived from French ‘roulement’. In English terminology, the [bīlya] is in fact ‘a bearing’, a ‘roller bearing’, one of the smallest part in a car. The analysis of the expression requires two steps. First, [bīlya] may be said to be a part-whole metonymic expression for ‘car’. Second, our young trainee-mechanic is only a [bīlya], a euphemism for a simple unskilled trainee and not a professional mechanic yet. The same analysis applies to the expression [šaġta ] used for ‘a trainee-butcher’. [šaġta ], which is the ‘white skin covering part of the meat in a mutton), is a part-whole metonymic expression for ‘meat’ (and other products sold at the butcher’s), and then it is used as a euphemism for our young trainee-butcher.

[ali bāba] (Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Gulf States)

This expression is a ‘pidginized’ locution which means ‘thief’. It is mainly used within the expatriate Asian community in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, but also by some nationals and other Arab expatriates when addressing the non-Arabic speaking expatriates to refer to ‘thief’ or ‘thieves’. [ali bāba] is an invariable form which applies to the singular or plural (with both masculine and feminine). It constitutes a direct reference to the mythological character of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves story. The Arabic [al ḫarāmi] (and its plural [al ḫarāmiya]) or [al xāyən] or [al- sārəq] are simply not used by non-Arab expatriates. Here again, [ali bāba] is used as a part-whole metonymic expression and at the same time as a euphemism for ‘thief’. Another interesting feature is that the expression [ali bāba] is also used an adjective: an Egyptian taxi-driver was explaining to a Bangladeshi interested in the trade that she should beware taxi firms who impose too many drastic conditions to taxi drivers recruits, warning that there are [katīr ali bāba šarika] ‘(there are) many firms thieves’.

[al hāla] (Some parts of Algeria)

The expression [al hāla], which the author has frequently heard in the western region of Algeria, more specifically in the city of Nédroma and Tlemcen, is derived from Arabic [al- āla] (= the instrument) which refers to ‘musical instrument’. [al hāla], however, is a specific expression used for the ‘orchestra’ invited to sing in ceremonies, such as marriage ceremonies. [al hāla], in this case, is not only a part-whole metonymic expression for ‘group of musical instruments’, but also as a euphemism for ‘orchestra, group of musicians’.

[al-xasla] or [al- ġasla] (Algeria)

Dialectal Arabic has a rich vocabulary for menstruation. In North African Arabic dialects, the French expression ‘les règles’ is frequently used among female speakers to refer to menstruation, in addition to a big number of other words and expressions. The expression [al-xasla] or [al- ġasla], however, seems to be used only in the western parts of Algeria and in Morocco. It is attested by Marçais (1955: 357) in Rabat in expressions like [ma- zālet ma ġaslet]
(‘she has not reached her puberty yet’) and by Marçais & Guîga (1958-61: 2820) in the word [ğasla] (phonetic symbols as in original sources). This expression is then an old locution used by women and adolescent girls as a euphemism for menstrual discharge or cycle. [al-ğasla] or [al-ğasla] in Arabic may mean something like a ‘wash’ or a ‘cleaning’. In this sense, menstrual discharge is seen by women as a purification of their bodies of ‘bad’ blood. The idea of ‘uncleanliness’ associated with menstruation is reinforced by the euphemism [l- wsax] ‘dirt’ used to refer to it by Morocco women (cf. Fatima Sadiqi, 2003:82).

[baladiya] (Saudi Arabia)
(a) [baladiya] means ‘town hall’ and is normally a replacement form for [šu‘ūn al baladiya] (‘communal affairs and services’) that it provides, such as trash collection, water distribution, etc.

(b) The expression [baladiya] has in this case undergone a restriction in meaning and refers to ‘trash’ or useless things that should be thrown away (or in fact that should be collected by the [baladiya] services.

(c) Although the term [baladiya] is used as a euphemism for trash or something that should be thrown away, we can also say that it functions as metonymy of the part for the whole, in the sense that the actual services provided by the town hall come in the form of a big number of services of which trash collection is only one aspect.

[māḥbas], plural [māḥbās] (Syria and elsewhere)
(a) The term [māḥbas] means ‘wedding ring’ in Syrian Arabic. In some Maghribin dialects, however, the term [māḥbas] means the ‘jar’ or the ‘stool’ on which small children sit to evacuate their bowels before they reach the age when they are able to use the normal bathroom toilets. Other terms used for this kind of stool are, beside the Syrian [nūnīya], the expressive word [gollās] (<Arabic حِلَس ‘to sit’), frequently heard in the north-western part of Algeria and north-eastern areas of Morocco. The Berber term [ašquf] is also used throughout the Berber-speaking areas in the Maghreb in addition to some Arabic-speaking pockets. In other Arab countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia, the most frequent term used id [qasrīya] or [qusrīya]. All these terms for ‘stool’ carry a connotation of ‘compulsory’ or ‘constraining’ that is conveyed by the classical Arabic adjective [qasriy].

(b) Both [māḥbas] (=ring) and [māḥbas] (=stool) share the notion of being engaged, constrained or trapped in a situation. The idea of prison is reinforced by the fact when babies are done evacuating their bowels they generally shout or cry and ask for help to be relieved from the ‘stool-prison’. Likewise, wearing the [māḥbas] for a man or woman in Syria means that they now live in what Arabs call the ‘golden cage’ (الفَنْص) which is a prison albeit a golden one. To flee from this cage may turn out to be a dramatic experience.

(c) In this sense, I think it is perfectly reasonable to consider the Syrian [māḥbas] as a metonymy of the part for the whole because the ‘wedding ring’ is only one element of matrimonial union that leads to the ‘golden cage’. By contrast, the ‘stool’ [māḥbas] is a euphemism for an almost taboo-object used for an almost-taboo activity. The use of the term may be viewed as a justification of the ‘punishment’ of the culprit-user of the object, even if he/she is an irresponsible infant.
4. Linguistic substitution and antiphrasis

In the case of antiphrasis, the process of linguistic substitution consists in the expression of a sense opposite to the intended or projected sense, or even the literal one. In other words, the lexical items used in antiphrasis undergo a semantic inversion and are made to project a meaning contrary to the original or traditionally normal sense. In general, this transformation also produces an ironic or humorous effect. However, some researchers, such as Morier (1989), consider antiphrasis as synonymous of irony. The author of this paper does not entirely subscribe to this extreme view, even though it is acceptable to say that antiphrasis is one of the salient and classical processes of irony and sarcasm. Consequently, the examples illustrating this phenomenon in this paper do not exclusively reflect the dimension of irony in antiphrasis, and this is probably due to the social and cultural nature of the data (see below).

Antiphrasis has always been considered a special rhetorical trait of an ingenious or inventive group of people. I shall not be so cynical as to say that is the reason why antiphrasis occurrences are much rarer than those of, say, euphemism and metonymy. Sherin Rizk (2007:297) cites an example of ‘intonational’ antiphrasis used by Cairene University students that has a parallel in other Arabic dialects. The example, [kul sāna w-enta ãyeb] as a response to a question about the fate of the respondent’s salary occurs with the meaning of ‘it’s gone, it’s finished’. So, instead of the traditional meaning of a ‘happy new year’ projected in the ‘future’ as marked by the adjective ‘new’, the expression is used ironically to express a ‘past’ happening. In some Algerian dialects, the expression [sabāh al-xayr] is used with a special intonation to express the idea that what the listener is saying is ‘old’ and commonly known, and not ‘new’ like a ‘new’ morning. Also, the antiphrasis [bedri] ‘early’ (with a rising-falling intonation) is frequently used among Saudi and other Gulf youth to express the thought that their visitors are in fact ‘late’.

Guella (2010: 480-481) mentions some interesting examples of cross-dialectal antiphrasis. In eastern Algeria and western Tunisia, the word [bṣīr] ‘having vision’ is extensively used as an antiphrasis for ‘blind’ with no connotation of irony or sarcasm. Similarly, the expression [ṣāḥi k- al na’sān ] (lit.’ awake like someone asleep’) is used in Egypt and Sudan and should rather be considered as an oxymora because the speaker’s intention is to state only the reality of the situation, with no attempt to hide. If there is any irony, it should be produced by the ‘alliance of contradictory signifiers’.

5. Linguistic Substitution and Borrowing

This section will consider some terms or expressions which should be considered as actual borrowings. Unlike code switching instances where the lexical items and expressions retain their structure in the language of origin, lexical borrowings are completely integrated in the dialect in which they are used (Poplack, 1980; Poplack & Meechan, 1998).

- **Fort /fɔr/ (Algeria)**
  (a) The French adjective ‘fort’ (which means ‘strong’) is singular masculine. Its feminine counterpart is ‘forte’, while the plural forms are ‘forts’ and ‘fortes’ (masculine and feminine respectively). In Algerian Arabic, however, there is only one neutralized form [fort] which takes up not only all the French adjectival declensions but also its adverbial manifestation.
  (b) Thus, in Algerian Arabic, the meaning of [fort] covers not only the idea of ‘strong’, ‘excellent’, ‘beautiful’, etc., but also the adverbial ‘strongly’, etc. [matš
för] is a ‘good and thrilling football match’, whereas [yel’eb för] means ‘he plays very well’. [gāṭo för] is a ‘delicious cake’ (with the idea of ‘strongly good’=’very good), [film för] is a ‘good film’, and [šōra för] means a’ well-cooked’=’delicious’ soup’, and also in sentences like [al ‘ūrs fāt för] ‘the marriage ceremony went very well’.

(c) The conditions and variations of use of the term [för] are close to those of the expression [normal], as reported in Guella (2010), and it should be noted that this kind of occurrence and its uses seem to set a pattern in the speech of many dialects speakers in the area.

• [farāmēl] (Much of the Arab world and Gulf dialects)
This lexical borrowing is an interesting one in many ways.
(a) First, it is so perfectly adapted to the dialects of much of the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries in general that no other term or expression seems to compete with it, except the English borrowed word ‘brake’, pronounced [brīk]. Furthermore, its origin is a surprising one for this part of the world to integrate it. In fact the term [farāmēl] is derived from French ‘frein à main’, meaning ‘handbrake’. It has been introduced by people with some contact to French, most probably Syrian and Egyptian expatriate mechanics in the Gulf area.
(b) What is interesting is that the expression [farāmēl] has undergone a semantic expansion as it applies to both ‘handbrake’ and ‘footbrake’ and also to the ‘break-shoes’: that is the reason it is used in the plural, the singular form [farmēl] being sometimes used to refer to one ‘brake-shoe’ but never to the whole breaking process.
(c) The term [farāmēl] is not known and used in the North African old French colonial areas where the French terms ‘frein à pied’ (footbrake)and ‘frein à main’ (handbrake) and the expression ‘plaquettes de frein’ (brake-shoes) are normally used as borrowed items.

6. Linguistic Substitution and Lexical Creation
In this section, the first three lexical items [ḥītīst], [ḥūgra] and [ḥarrāga] are somehow linked in chronological order: the [ḥītīst] of the 1970’s defeated and stigmatized by unemployment and intimidated by the [ḥūgra] of the 1980’s were pushed in their search for a decent way out to become desperate [ḥarrāga] in the 1990’s and later. Obviously, we are talking of a progressive social phenomenon, which means that the [ḥītīst] of the 1970’s are not necessarily the same people that became the [ḥarrāga] of the 1990’s.

[ḥītīst] (Algeria)
[ḥītīst] is a fairly old expression –it goes back to the 1980’s - used in Algeria to refer to those individuals, mostly unemployed, who spend their time standing outside of their homes, with their backs to the walls of buildings. The word [ḥītīst] has its origin in the Algerian Arabic word for ‘wall’ [ḥīt]. In fact, it was those [ḥītīst] who, fed up with [ḥūgra] and [ḥaggāra] and in search of a decent way out of their miserable condition and frustrating unemployment, later came to constitute the bulk of the [ḥarrāga].

[ḥūgra] and [ḥaggāra] (Algeria)
[ḥaggāra] is the plural form of [ḥaggār]. The [ḥaggāra] practice the [ḥūgra], which is a degrading, insulting and intimidating attitude towards the common people who have no social and administrative connections to solve their daily problems. The [ḥaggāra] are generally members of the pervasive and corrupt administrative apparatus and the police and those civil servants supposedly at the service of the public.

ḥaggāra

[ḥaggāra] (Algeria)

[ḥarrāg] (plural of [ḥarrāg]) is the expression used of those individuals who try to cross illegally the borders to other countries, especially from North African countries to European borders. Originally, and literally, the word [ḥrāg] is derived from the expression [(ḥrāg al fi – rūž] (=passing or running a red light) which is a calque – in fact a phono-semantic matching with borrowing - from French ‘brûler un feu rouge’- where the [ḥrāg] part is borrowed. In the 1970’s, I used to hear this expression from students who avoided paying their bus fare and later took some pride in their act by saying: ‘[ḥrāgna]! (‘We took a free bus ride!)

ḥarrāga

[ḥarrāga] (Algeria)

The expression [beggār] (plural [beggāra]) contains the Arabic root for ‘cow’, [bagra]. Originally, the [beggār] is a trader in horses or cows, what the French call a ‘maquignon’, a term which carries a connotation of cheating and unscrupulousness. The term has acquired a semantic extension in Algeria and applies nowadays to those people who became rich and wealthy through illegal means, but who have nevertheless remained conservatively unrefined in their social manners and linguistic intercourse. The [beggār] is a lexical creation. It is the Algerian equivalent of the ‘nouveau riche’ who shows off his newly acquired fortune but without any taste and without modesty.

7. Conclusion

The main purpose of this brief paper is to show that linguistic substitution in its various forms and applications contributes a great deal to verbal and lexical creation in dialects. This verbal dynamism should in fact be viewed from the perspective of an interactive and forceful projection of the surrounding social and cultural field.

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References
Abstract
Time and the expression of time are integral features of all cultures and languages. When we learn our first language, we learn not just the language to talk about time but also how to express our perceptions of time. These perceptions are often at the subconscious level. The current paper contrasts the expression of time in both English and Arabic not just from the grammatical perspective but also from the semantic. Learners bring this intuitive understanding of the expression of time through tense and aspect from the first language (L1) and it is argued that this affects all subsequent language learning. An analysis, not just of the grammatical differences but also the meaning and functional contrasts, can help understand why our learners make the errors they do and can also inform material developers so that learner texts can take these differences and challenges into consideration.

Keywords: tense, aspect, time, temporality, contrast
**Introduction**

Time is an integral part of all human experience and as such is a universal concept. The encoding of time through language, however, is linguistically and culturally specific (Guiora, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Comrie, 1985; von Stutterheim & Klein, 1987; Al Mutawa & Kailani, 1989; Donnellan, 1991; Hinkel, 1992; Haded, 1996). We learn to encode temporal notions when we learn our first language(s). Linguistic input from the environment interacts with learners' cognitive capacities shaping the initial interpretation and encoding of temporal notions in the first language (L1). No prior linguistic associations exist between temporal expression and morphological and syntactic structures.

English and Arabic have grammatical systems for the encoding of temporal concepts (Hinkel, 1992; Haded, 1996), providing a familiar framework facilitating to some extent acquisition of the English Tense and Aspect (TA) system (Hinkel, 1992). The assumption, however, that Arabic speakers learning English as an L2 understand the notion of the grammatical expression of temporal concepts is at a very general level. Languages, though grammaticizing the expression of time, do so in different ways and may verbalize different temporal facets of a situation. The morphological encoding of past habitual situations in English, for example, focuses on past deictic location while the verb phrase in the Arabic past habitual indicates imperfectivity in the main verb and past time location in the helping verb. One language may depend on syntactic features other than verb form to communicate certain facets of temporality. The challenge for learners is, consequently, grammatical and semantic and what is needed as Svalberg (1995) points out is “a grammar awareness which systematically links meanings with their grammatical encodings, and which includes not just grammar rules but also the meaningfulness of these rules.” (p. 66)

**English Tense System**

Both TA systems are closely associated with time in language teaching involving as they do the grammaticalization of subjective, psychological time (Givon, 1982; Brown & Miller, 1986; Lewis, 1986; Nehls, 1992; and Schramm, 1996). Klein (1994) refers to tense as the “entire phenomenon” of the grammaticalization of time, a phenomenon generally articulated through the verb. Comrie (1985) defines tense as “the grammaticalized expression of location in time” (p. 9) locating “the time of a situation relative to the situation of the utterance” (p. 2). Deixis is central to tense (Comrie, 1976; Bertinetto, 1994; Schramm, 1996). Freed (1979), while viewing tense as a way of making “specific reference” to an event “in particular with respect to the time of the utterance”, also comments on tense as a way of indicating the “ordering of events”, (p. 10) suggesting two fundamental temporal functions. The first involves an event considered in terms of speaker location and the second in relation to another event. In both cases, locations involve ‘before’, ‘after’ and ‘simultaneous with’ either speaker time or narrative time.

Svalberg (1995) suggests that the fact that “there is more than one reference point in the grammar’ is ‘what is peculiar about tense in English.” (p. 69) She refers to these points as “speaker time” and “story time.” In each case, the “axis of orientation” (Bull, 1971) differs. Speaker location is the vantage point indicating a relationship of ‘at’, 'before' and 'after' the time of speaking, illustrated in Table 1 (Svalberg, 1995, p.70).

**Table 1. Reference Points for primary tense**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>have gone/</th>
<th>went</th>
<th>go</th>
<th>will go</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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The reference (R) and event (E) points coincide, precede, or follow (S) speaker location.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
R/E & \leftrightarrow & S \\
R/E/S & \rightarrow & S \\
\end{array}
\]

The narrator designates a temporal location to the story, choosing to tell the story from a selected vantage point, generally from the perspective of another event. All other narrated events maintain a relationship of 'before', 'at' and 'after' to the reference point (Svalberg, 1995, p.70).

**Table 2. Narrative time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>had gone</td>
<td>went</td>
<td>would go</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The focus is still on the relationship between two points in time, albeit separate from the time of utterance. The reference point (R) and the event point (E) in examples 1 - 3 below occur before speech time (S) while in 4 / 5, both could be simultaneous with or after speaker time. The verb forms articulate the relationship between R and E.

1. He had eaten breakfast when the bus came.

   E \leftrightarrow \ r \leftrightarrow S

   The sequence of events can be communicated equally effectively through the use of sequence indicators 'before', 'after'.

2. He ate breakfast before the bus came.

   E \leftrightarrow \ r \leftrightarrow S

   Non-finite verb forms in dependent temporal clauses exemplify secondary tense, where the time of the event depends on the finite verb in the main clause. In each of the following examples, though the relationship between the two events remains the same, the tense location differs ranging from past to present to future.

**Table 3. Reference Points for secondary tenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having finished work, Ahmed went home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Having finished work, Ahmed went home.

   E \leftrightarrow \ r \leftrightarrow S

   3a. When he had finished work, Ahmed went home.

4. Having finished work, Ahmed goes home.

   E \leftrightarrow \ r / S (contemporaneous)

   4a. When he has finished/finishes work, Ahmed goes home.

5. Having finished work, Ahmed will go home.

   5a. When he has finished/finishes work, Ahmed will go home.

   S \leftrightarrow E \leftrightarrow R

In examples 1 – 5, the essential temporal requirement is that the event in the non-finite clause should occur before the second event 'of going home'. This can be done through either of the two methods above (Murphy, 1999; Azar, 1992). The three temporal points, of speech (S), event (E) and reference (R) define the relationships inherent in tense (Reichenbach, 1947; Aqvist, 1978; Dahl, 1983; Comrie, 1985; and Hatav, 1993). Reference (R) may be where the speaker is (in which case (S) and (R) coincide), or where s/he chooses to place the story with (E) viewed in sequential relation to that reference point, before, after or at.
English Aspect System

Non-sequential relationships exploring the interaction between reference and event time fall into the category of aspect. Aspect is not deictic and functions as Maslov (1988) explains “irrespective of the moment of speech or …of the time of another action mentioned or implied.” (p. 63) Aspect defines the nature of the situation, “in terms of such things as inception, repetition, completion, duration and punctuality” (Freed, 1979, p.10). In Comrie's (1985) view, aspect is “different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation”, (p. 3) involving as Smith (1995) suggests “preliminary stages, internal stages and resultant stages.” (p. 7) The question of the relationship of the event to other identified temporal points is fundamental to aspect involving a description of the relationship between the two temporal points, reference and event.

Table 4. Reference points for aspect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Three aspects are encoded morphologically in English (Klein, 1994; Klein, 1995) and are said to make up the English grammatical aspect system. Simple aspect describes situations presented in their entirety without any focus on the internal temporal architecture of that event. The following examples contain fundamental temporal differences. However, in both cases the single events of 'goes' and 'went' are viewed in their entirety and at one level if the relationship between the events and reference points 'every day' and 'yesterday' is considered it can be represented in Figure 3.6 below. However, aspectual features at the syntactic level in example 6 include the notion of habituality; thereby changing the overall aspectual perspective, making it imperfective while 7 is perfective.

Table 5. Reference points in simple aspect

6. Ahmed goes to school every day.
7. Ahmed went to school yesterday.

| E | R |

Event included in reference time

Progressive aspect focuses on phases of an event that may be located in different time frames as illustrated in the following examples.

8. Ahmed is talking to his friends right now.
9. Ahmed was talking with his friends when the phone rang.

Table 6. Reference points in progressive aspect

| E | R |

Reference included in event time

In both 8 and 9, the reference points 'now' and 'when the phone rang' are contained in the event time.

Perfect aspect describes an event viewed as either having occurred or at least having begun before the reference time (which is also S time). If already completed, the speaker considers it as having some current relevance. This can mean that the event is still true as in 11 below or that in the speaker's perception the event, though completed, has some current relevance or on-going effect.

10. Ahmed has visited Syria four times.
11. Ahmed has lived/ been living in Sharjah for three years.
The event time precedes but also includes the reference point, from a subjective perspective in sentence 10 or objectively in sentence 11.

Table 7. Reference points in perfect aspect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event precedes but also includes reference time (fact or speaker interpretation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E &lt;-&gt; R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linguistically, aspect as a grammatical 'idea' or category has been less investigated than tense. One possible explanation could be its comparative subjectivity, as Hasegawa (1998) suggests, since aspectual concepts are far more dependent on speaker interpretation than tense. Tense is more tangible, presenting time as a “past-present-future continuum” and more readily accessible to analysis as it is independent of the “speaker's mental state.” It is also contended that aspect when marked on the verb form is a more integral part of the verb than tense as in 'I am going' where aspect is marked on the main verb 'ing' and tense on the helping verb. Siewerska (1991) explains “aspect markers occur closest to the verb nucleus followed by tense with modal operators constituting the outermost layers.” (p. 115) There are syntactic limitations on precisely what aspects of a situation can be communicated. Bache (1985, p. 66 - 67) quoting Forsyth (1970, p.353) points out that:

although aspect does basically express the speaker's subjective attitude to a given action in the real world, the choice of aspect in a context … is to a considerable extent dictated by the objective considerations of meaning, syntax and expressional emphasis…

Aspectual expression is, as Smith (1995) explains, "usually signalled morphologically; each morpheme is associated in the lexicon with a schema that gives the properties of the viewpoint." (p. 5) The linguistic and conventional constraints on the speaker in aspectual choices vary from one language to another and may not always reside in the verb or verb phrase alone (Freed, 1979; Maslov, 1985; El Hassan, 1987). According to Sapir (1921) “aspect is expressed in English by all kinds of idiomatic turns rather than by a consistently worked out set of grammatical forms”, (p. 108) and is arguably a much more complex concept semantically and syntactically than tense. It can be communicated through the inherent lexical semantics of the verb, the verb and its argument; the subject and object of verbs, adverbial time phrases and singular and plural nouns (Verkuyl, 1972; Hoepelman, 1978; Freed, 1979; Smith, 1983; Schramm, 1996) as well as verb morphology.

The fact that aspect occurs in a variety of ways outside the verb phrase cannot be ignored as such aspectual features may impact on morphological structure. Verkuyl (1993) uses the term aspectuality to “to capture the whole area covered by the two notions” (p. 11) of grammatical and lexical aspect. In his examples illustrated in 12 and 13,

12. Judith ate a sandwich yesterday.
13. Judith ate sandwiches all day yesterday.

the accomplishment situation (illustrated in verb + predicate) 'ate a sandwich' in 12 is telic with telicity indicated in the finite number of sandwiches 'a sandwich'. In 13, the activity verb 'eat' is atelic as no endpoint is indicated in the object 'sandwiches'. The difference at this level is that of lexical aspect between an activity 'eat' and an accomplishment 'eat a sandwich' and in Arabic the morphological forms of perfective (12) and imperfective (13) illustrate this aspectual difference of completed and non-completed (Bybee & Dahl, 1989). In English, however, morphological choice is affected by the boundedness indicated in 'yesterday' with verbs
in both utterances referring to actions completed prior to the time of speaking. Morphological choice in the Arabic translation of 13 indicates a certain element of speaker choice, as both imperfective verb form to indicate the non-completed nature of the situation or perfective to illustrate the prior occurrence of the situation are possible.

Arabic Tense Aspect System
The definitions of tense and aspect presented in the preceding descriptions fit the temporal functions of English verb morphology but may not categorize all Arabic temporal meanings. Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) explain:

The main problem encountered by Arab students in dealing with the English verb-system emanates from the fact that each verb-form in English (simple or expanded) expresses many different meanings, and the two systems in the two languages sometimes express the same meanings through the same forms, but at other times the area of overlap ends and each system goes its own way. (p. 157)

The two-way morphological division in Arabic is argued (Qafisheh, 1975; Haded, 1996; Versteegh, 2001) to have clear semantic functions. Suffixal forms 'al maaDii 'perfective', (Chejne, 1969; Fleisch, 1974; Comrie, 1975; Kaye, 1987; Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Holes, 1995) denote completed situations while prefixal forms 'al muDaar9 'imperfective', (Holes, 1995) describe non-completed. Some linguists (McCarus, 1976; Wright, 1981; Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ruzic, 1983) have argued that neither form denotes time deictically in the way that English does. In Mitchell & El Hassan's (1994) view Arabic verb forms, are only “tenuously concerned” (p. 8) with tense differences, the primary function of which, they argue, is essentially aspectual, showing the distinctions between situations that have been realized or carried out and those that have still to be realized. They point out “the two-tense system of the Arabic verb embodies basically a realized/unrealized distinction rather than very clear temporal differences.”(p. 8)

Traditionally, Arabic has been categorized as an aspect and not a tense language (Tritton, 1943; Haywood & Nahmad, 1965). Haded (1996) argue that categorizing Arabic as a tense or aspect language is “inconsistent and unjustifiable.” (p. 47) Brustad (2000) suggests that “the perfect (perfective) and imperfect (imperfective) represent relative past and relative non-past respectively” (p. 204) in Classical Arabic and she adds that this is true also for the various Arabic dialects. Shlonsky (1997, p.96) & Fassi Fehri (2000) conclude that Arabic verb forms have deictic potential because in the absence of all other functions “sentences with a bare …… verb have a tense component”, as illustrated in the following examples, where Arabic morphological verb forms of perfective, imperfective and future auxiliary 'sawfa' with imperfective provide deictic reference in a manner similar to that identified for English in Figure 1.

14. yadhab
aa'laa aal madrasah kul yawm
He goes 3 masc imperf to the school every day.
He goes to school every day.

15. dhahab
aa'laa aal madrasah aa'ms.
He went 3 masc perf to the school yesterday.
He went to school yesterday.

16. sawfa
vadhah
aa'laa aal madrasah bukra.
future auxiliary he goes 3 masc imperf to the school tomorrow.
He will go to school tomorrow.
Cuvalay-Haak (1997) argues that Arabic verb forms are polysemous, a view that she says "runs counter to traditionalist orientalist approaches" concluding that "a simple verb form can thus be associated with two or more operators." (p. 127) One clear tense function of Arabic perfective forms is to establish deictic location at some point in the past (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989). Once this is done, the writer/ narrator is free to encode all unbounded or habitual utterances in the imperfective form with or without 'kaan'.

Consider the following narrative on Ibn BaTuTah (Brustad (2000, p.12).

17. Kharaj Ibn BaTuTah min beladtuhu Tunjah
He went out 3 sing. masc. perf. BaTuTah from country his Tunjah
qaaSdaa aalHaj, ya9iish
setting off 3 sing. masc. active participle the Haaj, he lives 3 sing. masc. imperf.
khalal riHltuhu biin aal naas, yariHil
during journey his among the people, he travels 3 sing. masc. imperf.
m9 aal qawaafil wa yqiim fii aal jawaaiiaa wa
with the tribes and he gets up 3 sing. masc. imperf. in the wind and
yazuur aahil aal 9lm.
he visits 3 sing masc imperf family the world.
The use of the initial perfective verb establishes past time and the imperfective in subsequent verbs indicates habituality and repetition.

A primary reason for the argument of tenuous concern of form with tense is the apparent multifunctionality of both Arabic forms when compared with the English translation. The Arabic imperfective form encodes both finite and non-finite English verb forms. Fassi Fehri (2000) explains that, in tense languages, non-finite verb forms such as participles and infinitives are used to complement the finite form of the verb in the main clause, whereas in Arabic this relationship is generally encoded in the imperfective form. Consider the following utterances where Arabic imperfective translates both English participle form and infinitive.

18. jaat umuha tabkii.
She came 3 fem. perf. mother her she cries 3 fem. imperf.
She came to her mother crying.

19. yadhab aa'laa aal mgahii li'aann yashrab
He goes 3 masc imperf to the coffee shop so as he drinks 3 masc imperf.
qahwah.
coffee.
He goes to the coffee shop to drink coffee.

20. Bdaa' vagraa'.
He began 3 masc perf he reads 3 masc imperf.
He began reading

21. yakml vagraa' wa
He finishes 3 masc perf he reads 3 masc imperf and
yadhab aa'laa al biit.
he goes 3 masc. imperf. to the house.
He finishes reading and he goes home.

The main verb provides temporal location (18/ 20 in past time and 19 /21 present) while the second verb in each case establishes the events of 'crying', 'drinking' and 'reading' as non-completed, functioning as non-finite and infinitive verbs in English. In Arabic, the second verb in the verb phrase is in the imperfective form (O'Leary, 1923; Smith, 1983; Brustad, 2000).
Secondary tense, as defined in the English TA system, describes temporal sequential relationships between R and E. In Arabic, the term describes a relationship of logical sequence independent of the temporal location of the narrative. The Arabic perfective form is used in conditional and time clauses to illustrate the logical temporal relationship existing between two events. Realization of one event depends on the prior completion of another. Whether the main event refers to the past, present or future is irrelevant as Bybee & Dahl (1989), Smart (1992) and Ingham (1995) point out. Ingham explains, “The preference is for the Time or Condition clause to precede the main clause and to contain a verb in the perfective.” (p. 137)

The question of deictic anteriority to the time of utterance is not an issue as “the Time or Condition clause is unmarked for time reference” and actual time reference “must be worked out from the meaning and the context”. (Smart, 1992, p.217) In conditional clauses, the verb in the apodosis establishes the time of the event while the verb in the protasis is generally encoded as perfective. Although the circumstances referred to by the verb in the protasis may be unrealized at the time of the utterance, the condition must be met before the main event can occur. The perfective establishes a relationship of dependency between the two propositions.

22. Aadhaa wasalitu bdrii, azurukii.

*Conditional particle I arrived 1 sing perf early, I (will) visit 1 sing imperf you.*

*If I arrive early, I will visit you.*

The conditional particle 'aadhaa' reflects modality, and combined with the perfective verb in the protasis suggests certainty that the condition will be met. If the particle 'law' or the imperfective verb form (non-completion) is used in the protasis, there is no such expectation. In a similar manner, the function of the perfective in subordinate time clauses is to indicate the logical relationship that exists between the situation in the main clause and that in the subordinate time clause irrespective of tense as Comrie's (1976, p.73) example illustrates.

23. "'aaajiiki 'aadhaa Hamar aalbasr."

"I (will) come 1 sing imperf when it ripened 3 masc perf the dates."

"I shall come to you when the unripe dates ripen."

The imperfective verb ‘'aaajiiki’ has future reference while the perfective verb ‘Hamar’ establishes that the first action ‘shall come’ cannot happen until the second has been realized. It is context and not verb form that clarifies time reference in Arabic (Abdul Fattah & El Hassan, 1994; Ingham, 1995). Perfective and imperfective can refer to the past and non-past (Bybee & Dahl,1989).

**Aspect in Arabic**

It can be argued that, from the perspective of tense, English and Arabic have morphological forms indicating the sequential temporal relationship of events to the speaker. The situation in a contrastive aspectual sense is more complex. The traditional division of grammatical aspect into perfective (completed), and imperfective (non-completed) situations, (Klein, 1994) provides as Comrie (1976) explains a “genuine aspectual opposition” in Arabic, habitual – continuous 'durative – habitual'. 'do in fact join together to form a single unified concept, as is suggested by the large number of languages that have a single category to express imperfectivity as a whole, irrespective of such subdivisions as habituality and continuousness. (p. 24)

English, however as Andrews (1992) points out, has “no general form that corresponds to all imperfective situations”, (p. 286) which difference could be argued to contribute greatly to learner difficulty in differentiating between the alternatives. Kharma & Hajjaj (1989) suggest
“the categorical grammatical meanings expressed by the continuous and perfect forms in English cannot be easily associated with clear-cut expanded forms in Arabic.” (p. 157) Imperfectivity can be divided (Comrie 1976) into a “number of distinct categories” (p. 24) including the habitual and continuous, the latter being subdivided into non-progressive and progressive. One feature common to all imperfective situations is duration indicating as Comrie (1976) explains “that the given situation lasts for a certain period of time, or at least is conceived as lasting for a certain period of time.” (p. 41) In English, morphological forms (present simple and progressive forms) differentiate between some imperfective situations, while in Arabic other sentential features often perform this function. Imperfective describes a variety of situation types including timeless facts, statives, habituals and progressives, each with its own distinct temporal features though all encoded in the one single form in Arabic.

Mitchell & El-Hassan's (1994) definition of Arabic timeless situations applicable to English also explains that such situations

are characterized by a particular type of duration which differs from that (of) progressive, habitual and even stative aspect. This type of duration is unlimited, omni-temporal, appropriate to so-called general truths and scientific properties .... The validity of such expressions extends over present, past and future time. (p. 102)

The imperfective verb in Arabic to encode these timeless features does not require adverbial phrases of temporal limitation and as such these utterances are syntactically less complex than other imperfective types.

Stative situations share some of the temporal features of timeless facts. The verbs 'to be' and 'to have' are probably the most frequently used stative verbs in English and describe situations that exist unchanged over an unspecified period of time. In Arabic, a verb 'to be' though available, is not employed in non-completed stative situations. Such utterances are verbless though the verb 'to be' equivalent to 'equals' is understood (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ruzic, 1983). Brustad (2000) explains, “the absence of a tensed form indicates that the time reference is understood to be the moment of speech.” (p. 23) A stative utterance completed in the past requires the appropriate part of the past form of the verb 'to be' 'kaan' to locate the situation prior to the moment of the utterance. This form is often referred to as the only truly deictic verb form in Arabic, because its only function is to locate the event in past time. In many cases it occurs alongside the imperfective to locate habitual and progressive situations in the past. The verb 'kaan' can combine with other stative verbs in the imperfective to indicate a state that was true for a period of indefinite time in the past.

24. \(\textit{kaan} \ y\textit{Hibbuhaa}\)  
\textit{was} 3 masc perf he loves 3 masc imperf her. 
He used to love her.

The second most common stative verb in learner lexicons is ‘to have’ for the expression of possession. In Arabic, though verb forms exist, possession is generally (Haywood & Nahmad, 1965) expressed through a prepositional phrase consisting of a preposition '9ind' translated as 'to' or 'with' preceded or followed by a noun i.e. the possessor, or the preposition with an attached suffixal pronoun indicating the possessor. The word itself does not have a temporal component and if occurring alone is assumed to depict present possession.

25. \(\textit{Hamda} \ 9\textit{indhaa} \ siiaarah jadiidah}\)  
Hamda to/ with her 3 fem prep. car new. 
Hamda has a new car.
If the temporal reference is intended to illustrate a situation of possession in the past, the verb ‘kaan’ to be functions as a temporal marker.

A second preposition 'lii' followed by a pronoun representing the person who has the object or quality can also be used.

26. lii waja9 shadiid.
to me I sing. prep. pain strong.
I have a strong pain.

There are of course verbs 'to own' 'ymlik' indicating possession and declined as regular verbs.

In general, stative verbs in Arabic and English do not occur in the progressive aspect, as seen in the lack of compatibility of English stative verbs with the –ing form. In Arabic, the restrictions are syntactic rather than morphological. Stative verbs in common with other verb types are compatible with ‘maa zaal/ lissa’ equivalent to English ‘still’ as illustrated in the following example (Holes 1984, p.119).

27. huwa maa zaal b yHibbuhaa.
he still proclitic b duration he loves 3 masc imperf her 3 fem obj pronoun.
He still loves her. (proclitic 'b' in progressivity)

They do not, however, combine with the particle ‘qaa9id’ which encodes progressivity. A combination of a stative verb and qaa9id as in

28. huwa qaa9id *b yHibbuhaa
The mark of progressivity proclitic b duration he love 3 masc imperf her 3 obj fem.
is as unacceptable in Arabic as its English translation is.

28a  He *is loving her.

Inceptive phases of stative situations requiring a two verb combination in English can be communicated in Arabic through a single morphological form often referred to as the active participle (Holes, 1995; Mitchell & El Hassan, 1994; Brustad, 2000).

29. faahim
part. indicating inception into a state understood
He has begun to understand.

The function of this form when used with stative verbs is to note entry into the state. Holes (1995) explains this form as describing “the state in which the subject of the verb from which it is derived finds itself as a result of the action or event which the verb describes.” (p. 122) He also explains there is no deictic time marking in the form, any sense of temporality associated with it being interpreted through the context of situation. In English when one enters a state, entry is recorded simply through the simple present form ‘I understand'; 'I know' 'I see' whereas in Arabic, a speaker has three possible affirmative choices in answering a question such as ‘do you understand?’ S/he can use the participle as indicated above to show inception into the state as in ‘9aarif', ‘faahim' communicating the notion that 'I have entered the state of knowing or understanding'. This should not be interpreted as Noor (1996) suggests as ‘I am knowing ’ or 'I am understanding’. A second possible choice is the imperfective form ‘aa9rif' 1 sing. imperf; ‘afham' 1 sing. imperf. or the perfective form in 'aarifu' 1 sing. perf. = 'I knew' or ‘fahimtu' 1 sing. perf. 'I understood'.

All habitual and iterative situations in Arabic are viewed as imperfective (Beeston 1970) with an adverbial phrase of habituality accompanying the imperfective verb to clarify verb function.

30. Tashrib
Samiira qahwah kul yawn.
She drinks 3 **fem imperf** Samira coffee every day.  
Samira **drinks** coffee every day.

The nature of the verb, whether durative or punctual, does not affect the imperfectivity of habituals and iteratives. Past habitual events are encoded for tense and aspect. The appropriate part of the Arabic verb 'kaan' 'to be' establishes past deictic time while the imperfective form of the main verb indicates the non-realized nature of the whole series.

31.  
   **Kaanat** Samira tashrib *gahwah kul yawm*  
   *She was* Samira **she drinks 3 fem. imperf.** coffee every day  
   *al sanah al maadii.*  
   *the year the last.*  
   Samiira **drank** coffee every day last year.

Durative situations in the past with no overt boundary and repeated punctual events are encoded as imperfective. Consider the verb 'cough' in the following utterance.

32.  
   **Kaan** *ya9l Tawaal al liil.*  
   *He was 3 masc perf he coughs 3 masc imperf* all the night.  
   *He coughed* all night.

'Kaan' locates the event in the past while the imperfective verb form establishes the ongoing nature of the coughing with no clear end stated.

The meanings associated with the English expanded verb forms (progressive and Present Perfect) are articulated in Arabic in a variety of ways. The active participle (Holes, 1995; Cuvalay-Haak, 1997; Brustad, 2000), along with a multiplicity of particles, auxiliaries, adverbial phrases and other sentential elements and the two morphological forms contribute to the communication of TA features in Arabic (O'Leary, 1924; Brustad, 2000). In Arabic, both habitual and progressive situations are categorized as aspectually imperfective (Comrie, 1976) but the nature of the imperfectivity differs. In the former, each situation is complete, and forms part of a non-completed series (Meziani, 1979; Holes, 1990). Situations labelled as progressive are single incomplete events, viewed from an internal perspective and containing no reference to a boundary. Progressive perspectives on events are grammatically encoded in English, whereas in Arabic (with exceptions) they are not differentiated from other imperfective situations, as Abufara (2000) points out “there is no Arabic match for the English distinction in this aspect.” (p. 9) Both habituals and progressives are encoded as imperfective (McGuirk, 1986; Ali, 1988), and depend on the adverb or adverbial phrase for disambiguation (Abufara, 2000).

33.  
   **Yshaab** *gahawah kul yawm / thalaathah maarat fii al yawm.*  
   *He drinks 3 masc imperf* coffee every day/three times in the day.  
   *He drinks* coffee every day.

34.  
   **Yshaab**  
   *gahawah aalaan.*  
   *He drinks 3 masc imperf* coffee **now.**  
   *He is drinking* coffee **now.**

It is possible to differentiate between progressive and non-progressive situations as some Arabic dialects do. Qafisheh (1975; 1997) points out that the proclitic b- prefixed with the imperfective form of the verb is often used in Gulf dialects to indicate action in progress. (p. 5)

35.  
   **B+vatkallam**  
   **proclitic b** he talks 3 **sing. imperf**  
   *He is talking.*

In other dialects (Egyptian and Sudanese), however, proclitic 'b' indicates habituality Mitchell & El Hassan (1994).
A Case for a Contrastive Interpretation of the Expression

Many Arabic dialects indicate progressivity through the employment of the active participle 'gaa9id' of the translocative verb 'g9id'. This translates literally as 'sitting', functioning like the French 'en train' in the process (cannot combine with statives and habituals) and declined for number and person. Mitchell and El Hassan cite “colligability with aspectual elements ‘gaa9id’” (p. 91) as necessary to show that a verb can be progressive, a point made by Holes (1976) who says that the progressive aspect of non-stative verbs in Gulf Arabic and many other dialects is expressed by the imperfective form of the verb, often preceded by the particle ‘gaa9id’, belonging to a translocative group of verbs.

36. \textit{b+} \textit{yruH lii aal madrasah mashie kul yawm.}
proclitic \textit{b} he \textit{goes 3 masc imperf} to the school walking every day.

He walks to school every day.

37. \textit{Ahmed gaa9id yaqraa’ aalaan.}

Ahmed sitting \textit{3 masc active participle} he \textit{reads 3 masc imperf} now.

Ahmed is reading now.

The use of the active participle with translocative verbs can differentiate between progressive and habitual situations (Bohas et al 1990) in Arabic. Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ruzic (1983) suggest that the active participle on such verb types functions like a dynamic adjective and makes a sentence “equational rather than verbal.” (p. 615) Translocative verbs, intransitive and inherently atelic verbs of motion, are the only verbs in the non-past form that have the facility to indicate a difference between aspectually simple and progressive situations.

38. \textit{Adnan dhaahib aal sawq aalaan.}

Adnan going \textit{3 masc active part} the market now.

Adnan is going to the market now.

The same sentence can be translated using the imperfective form where the adverbial phrase 'now' or 'at the moment' clarifies temporality.

38a. \textit{Adnan ydhahib aal sawq aalaan.}

Adnan goes \textit{3 masc imperf} the market now.

Adnan is going to the market now.

The participle form, though generally translated with the English present progressive agrees in number and gender with the subject. It is more functionally adjectival than verbal, describing a state or condition that the subject is in, as pointed out by Qafisheh (1997) in the following example. (p. 1)

39. \textit{"al shaarja mizdahrah bi aal 9mal al Sinaa9iia."}

"The Shaarja \textit{3 fem active part}, flourishing with the work the industrial."

Sharjah is flourishing with branches of industry.

Clearly, it is possible to encode the temporality of progressivity; it is, however, more syntactic than morphological.

The Arabic active participle or imperfective can be used in what Holes (1990) calls “verb strings” (p. 146) to show different phases of a situation (Hunston & Francis, 1998). In English, choice of the infinitive or –ing form depends on the inherent semantics of the main verb and/or the aspectual focus of the situation corresponding to the Arabic system, where the inherent semantics of the main verb also affects the choice of imperfective or active participle. The former communicates an aspectually simple situation while the active participle indicates a situation in progress (Qafisheh, 1975). The temporal location of the utterance is encoded in the finite verb and tense does not affect the choice of form of the second which remains in the imperfective or participle.
40. kamiltu aakal aal faaTur.
I finished 1 sing perf. eating 1 sing. active part. the breakfast.
I finished eating breakfast.

The specific aspectual focus of the imperfective form is seen in the function it plays in utterances with the helping verb 'kaada' (almost) used in Arabic to show that something remains unfinished. The semantics of 'kaada' indicate lack of completion (Gully 1995), necessitating its combination with the imperfective verb form. 'Kaada' can be declined like regular verbs and its form either perfective or imperfective indicates time. This contrasts with the structure in English where the main verb form indicates time and 'almost' lack of completion as seen in the following examples.

40. yakad yaluun al Suura.
He almost 3 masc imperf he paints 3 masc imperf the picture.
He has almost painted the picture.

41. kaad yfaqad al muftah.
He almost 3 masc perf he loses 3 masc imperf the key.
He almost lost the key.

A situation is classed as aspectually perfective if it is presented as “a single unanalysable whole” (Bache, 1982; p. 60; Thompson Panos & Thomas-Ruzic, 1983). The event is presented “from the outside as a complete whole.” Siewerska (1991) explains, “reference time must coincide with the time of the whole event including its completion.” (p. 117) An event viewed perfectly is not necessarily punctual and may involve a period of time. In Arabic, the function of the perfective is to differentiate between the clearly completed and other situation types.

A situation is perfective (Beeston 1970) if an end is implied or explicitly stated. In the absence of any explicit evidence, all situations whether stative, habitual or progressive are viewed and encoded as imperfective. Boundedness can take a number of forms. Deictic reference to an event that occurred prior to the moment of speaking is bounded by tense features. Boundedness articulated through adverbial phrases indicating limits as in 'in three hours' are aspectual. Unlike English, Arabic perfective forms generally occur only when boundedness is overtly stated with explicit reference to the realized condition. Smith (1983) observes that “aspectual meanings focus on certain properties of idealized situations. In English, I have argued, aspect focuses on the endpoint properties of situations; but considerable variation exists among languages.” (p. 494) Compare verb forms and temporal notions in the following utterances.

42. He walked along the beach every day last year.
43. He walked on the beach from six to eight o'clock yesterday.

The temporality involved in both sentences is quite different. The situation in 42 continued for an indefinite period of time while that in 43 clearly spanned a period of two hours. In both utterances in English, focus is on the tense adverbial 'last year' and 'yesterday' and consequently both are encoded in the past simple verb. Now consider the same utterances in Arabic.

44. Kaan yamshii 9laa aal shaaTii kul yawn
He was 3 masc perf he walk 3 masc imperf on the beach every day
al sanah al maaDii.
the year the last.

He walked on the beach every day last year.

45. Mashii 9laa aal shaaTii min sitah aa'laa thamaantiiah aamis.
He walked 3 masc perf on the beach from six to eight yesterday.
He walked on the beach from six to eight yesterday.

There is a difference in aspectual perspective here. The first habitual event in 44 does not have an overt marker of boundedness while the second does in the time frame 'eight o'clock'. The verb combination in 44 describes both tense in 'kaan' and the aspectual nature of the habitual in the imperfective verb 'yamshii'. A time frame is involved in 45 but includes a clearly stated right boundary 'eight o'clock'. Therefore the Arabic perfective form is used.

Example in 12, 13 (based on Verkuyl, 1993) illustrated a situation where a verb and finite number predicate defined a telic situation. The indefinite plural 'sandwiches' describes a non-bounded situation while 'three' in example 47 contains inherent limits in the situation. The English verb form 'ate' in all examples focuses on the location of the situation in past time.

46. Aakalat Judith sandwiitsh.
   She ate 3 fem perf Judith a sandwich.
   Judith ate a sandwich.

47. Aakalat Judith thalaathah sandwiishat.
   She ate 3 fem perf Judith three sandwiches.
   Judith ate three sandwiches.

   She was 3 fem perf Judith she eats sandwiches all the day.
   Judith eats sandwiches all day.

In example 46 and 47, the finite nature of the situation is communicated through the definite numbers 'one' and 'three'. The morphological choice of perfective 'aakalat' 'she ate' (3 fem perf.) indicates the completed nature of the 'eating' situation. In example 48, no definite limit is set to the number of sandwiches eaten suggesting that the event could have gone on indefinitely. The verb 'kaanat' 'she was' (3 fem perf of verb 'to be') locates the event prior to the time of utterance while the imperfective verb 'eat' indicates the non-bounded-ness of the situation. The morphological form focuses on the aspectual nature of the event.

Conclusion

Each language has a limited number of verb forms available to encode several temporal notions resulting in forms that perform a variety of functions (Cuvalay-Haak, 1997). One verb form in English and/or Arabic can encode a variety of temporal as well as modal meanings. This may affect learner judgement. In addition, the presence of a number of temporal foci in an utterance may result in confusion for the learner as to which one should be morphologically encoded. Andersen (1988): 60) points out that:

some but not all verbal inflections are multifunctional in that they encode not only aspect but also tense and subject-verb agreement - the relative attention paid to any one of these categories by the learner changes over time as the learner acquires greater sophistication in the language. (p. 60)

When considering the effect of L1, one has firstly to consider how the learner views and interprets the temporality of an utterance. It is possible that the learner makes a direct interpretation of the function to form association from L1 to L2 that works in some situations. This can be seen in single realized bounded events in the past, encoded in perfective in Arabic and past simple form in English. On the other hand, the availability of a number of English forms to encode Arabic imperfective is confusing for the learner. Therefore, when considering
how to enhance the learning experience of learners, attention must be given to syntax and semantics, to form and meaning.

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References


Abstract

This project investigates translators’ end-revision process by means of think-aloud protocols. It aims to investigate translators’ revision processing patterns and maxims, particularly after their first drafts have been produced (i.e. end-revision). Data suggests that translators manage their time and efforts rather similarly by concentrating mostly on producing their first drafts. Yet, two patterns emerge after the first drafts. One group of translators is found to have a second peak in terms of their processing time and efforts, particularly after a break. The other group of translators is found to simply glance through their drafts without much processing efforts. On the one hand, translators are found to read and process their TT in its own right and handle revision problems as they go along in the drafting phase. On the other hand, they also actively search for potential problems in their TT with potential translation/revision maxims in mind in the end-revision phase. The most prominent type of revision being made is found to be at the lexical level, confirming results from previous studies on revision. In addition, translators are also found to process their drafts in longer chunks without backtracking in later phases of revision.

Keywords: Translation revision, think-aloud protocols, processing patterns, revision maxims, end-revision, cognitive translation process.
1. Introduction

Cognitively oriented research has enjoyed increasing interests in Translation Studies in recent years. Major publications include the Copenhagen Studies in Language Series (Göpferich et al., 2008; Göpferich et al., 2009; Mees et al, 2009), Translation and Cognition (Shreve & Angeline, 2010), Methods and Strategies of Process Research (Alvstad et al, 2011) and Cognitive Exploration of Translation (O’Brien, 2011). These volumes display a diversity of new approaches to the study of translation process. We are seeing studies embracing a combination of data collection methods, such as key logging software, screen recording software and eye tracking software. Such new approaches or, rather, data collection methods offer a wealth of statistical and numerical records that enable researchers to re-play translators’ real-time eye movements and/or keyboard activities on-screen. Yet, it seems that researchers using such new approaches are faced with the same old dilemmas as their predecessors in translation process research, if not even more so, in the sense that developing effective means of analysing such an abundance and variety of raw data is pivotal to the potential implications of such studies. In other words, these new approaches require systematic and robust analytical frameworks so that more reliable findings from individual studies can be yielded, compared and drawn upon for generalisation and for further hypothesis testing.

The present study represents a research project using a customary data collection method, i.e. think-aloud protocols, in translation process research. It can be seen as the second part of a previous study on translators’ perceived (self-) revision procedures and behaviours (Shih, 2006). However, in contrast to the earlier study, when translators were merely asked to report what they do or how they perceive revision, in the present study, they were also asked to translate and revise a piece of work. It is to be noted that subjects in this study were from the same cohort of translators who were interviewed in the earlier study (Shih, 2006). Twelve of them agreed to perform the translation and revision after the interviews. Thanks to this, translators’ perception of revision and their actual revision behaviours can be compared and contrasted. It is important to point out here that the present study primarily focuses on describing translators’ re-drafting revision behaviours. This is often termed “end-revision” by scholars (e.g. Alves et al, 2010; Jakobsen, 2002, p. 193; Jakobsen 2003, p. 80), which is in contrast to “on-line revision”, i.e. revision done while producing the first draft. The present study aims to investigate potential processing patterns regarding translators’ time and efforts spent in different phases of “end-revision”. This is a unique line of approach since to the best of my knowledge, there are no studies to date specifically investigating how translators manage their time and efforts in different “end-revision” phases. A second aim of the present study is to identify the types of revision changes being made or checked-for (these are termed, “revision checked-for items” in the present study) in the “end-revision” phases and how this may be linked to their revision maxims. In the following, I am going to review a number of recent studies in translation process research that address “end-revision”.

Englund Dimitrova (2005) used think-aloud protocols (TAP) and a key logging software, called ScriptLog to record evidence of her subjects’ translation process. Nine translators with various degrees of experiences were asked to think aloud while translating a short piece from Russian into Swedish using ScriptLog. The translation process was divided into three phases for investigation: the pre-writing phase, the writing phase and the post-writing phase, based on Hayes et al’s (1987) writing model.
Three of Englund Dimitrova’s main findings in the post-writing phase, i.e. the end-revision phase, are particular relevant to the present study and will be looked into in detail here. The first finding is related to “task definition” (again a term borrowed from Hayes et al’s writing model), the second is the number and types of revision actually made and the third is the relative allocation of time spent in each phase. “Task definition” indicates the goal or plan that a translator may have set in revising their translation (Englund Dimitrova 2005: 106). Her data show that subjects often make planning statements. For instance, some translators remarked that they needed a paper print-out of the TT to enable them to revise at ease. Others stressed the need to let the text rest before revising it. However, three out of the four professional translators said that they did not normally leave their draft aside before revising it (ibid: 137). This result tallies with those of Shih’s (2006) interview study where the majority of translators claimed not to be able to put their drafts away (for long). One other interesting finding is that a few of her translators had specific goals in mind in each of the sub-phases of the post-writing process. But on the whole, Englund Dimitrova concludes that a discrepancy is found between the goals or plans translators expressed in TAPs and what they actually do. This is also what the present study intends to examine, i.e. whether there is a gap between translators perceived revision maxims and their actual revision checked-for items.

In terms of what kinds of revision changes are made and the relative proportion of these revision changes, Englund Dimitrova (ibid) categorises revision changes into six types:
1) Syntactic revision: structural changes, re-shuffling word orders, etc.
2) Lexical revision: simple exchange of one word for a synonym.
3) Morphological revision: e.g. nouns are changed into verbs.
4) Content revision: additions or omission in the content but not necessarily in relation to the ST.
5) Orthographic revision: typographical or punctuation revision.
6) Other: unclear category.

Regarding the relative frequencies of these revision categories, lexical revision was found to be the most frequent category (almost 50%) among all subjects. The second most frequent category is syntactic revision. In fact, these two categories amount to almost 70% of all revision changes. However, the number of syntactic revision changes appears higher in the writing phase than the post-writing phase. This prompts Englund Dimitrova (2005) to conclude that in the writing phase, translators tend to focus more on getting the TT syntactical structures right, whereas in the post-writing phase they focus more on getting the lexical items within these syntactical structures right.

Englund Dimitrova (ibid) observes that a relatively large proportion of time was spent in the post-writing phase among all her subjects, irrespective of their years of professional experience. In fact, several of her subjects have up to five sub-phases (five drafts) in their post-writing phase. A similar finding was reported by Jääskeläinen (1999: 122) that one translator spent considerably more time on the post-writing phase. These findings serve as an inspiration for the present study, which seeks to establish what translators actually do and how they manage their time and processing efforts in their end-revision phases even though they often claim not to have much time to revise.

In Alves and Vale’s (2011) study, three sets of data were collected by means of Translog (key logging software), Camtasia (on screen recording software) and direct observation, although only the Translog data were analysed. Twelve translators were asked to translate two correlated instruction manuals. Six of them were asked to translate from English into Brazilian Portuguese and the other six from German to Brazilian Portuguese. All the translators were allowed on-line
documentation and no time limit was imposed. The study aimed to “investigate prototypical characteristics of the drafting and revision phases of the translation process” (ibid: 105), and was based on a previous study by the same researchers (Alves and Vale 2009) in which translators’ drafting and revision patterns were analysed in terms of their micro and macro translation units (TUs). The concept of micro TUs was developed primarily on the basis of one of the most prominent features of Translog data, which is the measurement of pauses between each keyboard activity. Hence, a micro TU is defined as “a translation unit [that] begins with a pause that is registered by key logging and evolves in a continuous production phase until it is interrupted by another pause.” (Alves et al 2010: 129), and “A macro TU is defined as a collection of micro TUs that comprises all the interim text productions that follow the translator’s focus on the same ST segment from the first tentative rendering to the final output that appears in the TT.” (ibid) Their 2011 paper’s main research findings are that macro TUs (MTUs) can be divided into three categories.

- MTUs containing micro units which are processed solely during the drafting phase (P1 type)
- MTUs containing micro units which are processed once in the drafting phase and finalised in the revision phase (P2 type)
- MTUs containing micro units which are processed during the drafting phase and taken up again during the revision phase (P3 type)

(Alves and Vale, 2011, p. 115) More interestingly, Alves and Vale’s analysis indicates a hierarchical structure of these three types of macro TUs in the sense that the P1 type is the most prominent and frequently occurring type, P2 the second and P3 the least. This suggests that most revision text segments (i.e. micro TUs) are handled in the on-line drafting phase rather than in the end-revision phase per se. Another very interesting finding of the study is that these twelve translators can be categorised according to four types of profiles: drafters, revisers, recursive drafters/revisers and non-recursive drafters/revisers. Drafters are translators that revise their TTs six times more in the drafting phase than in the revision phase whereas revisers are translators that revise six times more in the revision phase than in the drafting phase. Drafters/revisers are translators that have not made six times more revision either in drafting phase or in the revision phase (Alves & Vales, 2011, p. 115). It is not made clear by Alves and Vale (ibid) why “six times more” is chosen as a threshold for distinguishing these profiles; therefore it may be difficult to compare their results with other studies. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that potentially, some translators revise more in the drafting phase than in the end-revision phase and vice versa. This potentially contradicts the finding in Englund Dimitrova’s (2005) study where translators (irrespective of their experiences) were found to spend substantial amount of time in the post-writing phase. It will be interesting to find out whether this is the case in the present study.

Antunović and Pavlović’s (2011) study looked at ten student translators’ self-revision process from their L2 and their L3 respectively. Translog was used to capture their translation/revision performances. Their analysis focuses on two aspects: the distribution of their self-revision (or more precisely the amount of time spent) in each phase, and the type and quantity of self-revision both from L2 and from L3. Their findings suggest that there is considerable within-subject similarity in both of these aspects when translating from L2 and L3. In other words, the amount of time spent in each phase, i.e. pre-writing, writing and post-writing may indeed be related to individual subjects’ habitual behaviours rather than language directions. Similarly, language directions do not seem to make a significant difference in terms of what type
of revision actions these subjects take. In fact, most subjects were found to make revision changes on both the lexical and syntactical levels. This corresponds to Englund Dimitrova’s (2005) findings as discussed earlier, even though Englund Dimitrova indicated that syntactical changes were more prominent in the writing phase than in the post-writing phase. Again, it will be interesting to find out whether lexical and/syntactical changes are dominant revision changes in the present study.

2. The Study

2.1 Subject recruitment and experimental design

Twelve subjects recruited for the present study all have professional translation experience either working full-time or part-time for at least one year in Taiwan. They were asked to translate a piece of short text, which will be described in section 2.2, from English into Chinese (the subjects’ mother tongue). However, due to technical reasons (e.g. poor quality recording), only ten subjects’ protocols were transcribed and analysed. In order to obtain revision data after the first draft or run-through, subjects were asked to have a break for approximately 30 minutes after they finished producing their first drafts. This is to mimic translators’ natural working conditions as translators may have a short break after working on a piece of translation intensively. This break is crucial in the experimental design partly because of the potential fatigue the translators may experience as a result of thinking-aloud, but more importantly, this break serves as a divider between the drafting phase and the end-revision phase. This means that the experimental design imposes subjects to revise at least once in the end-revision phase even though they have the freedom to decide how many times and for how long they actually revise their translation.

2.2 The text

The experimental text translated by subjects in the present study is a short extract (approximately 180 words) from a book, called, Jacobson’s Organ. This book deals with human’s sense of smell from a semi-scientific perspective. It is chosen for two reasons. First of all, it is written in plain English for the general public. It does not contain any specialist terminology; therefore, no technical knowledge is required to understand its content. This is an important consideration since the influence of genres or topicality is not a focus of this study. In addition, the chosen extract is short to prevent subjects getting too tired in the duration of their task; yet it contains a number of parallel structures and long sentences, which potentially prompt translators to revise.

2.3 Data analysis

The raw think-aloud protocol data were analysed in three ways. First, a relative measure of time for individual translators to complete each (revision) run-through was recorded. Then, translators’ “patterns of movement” were logged and analysed. “Patterns of movement” is an innovative analytic instrument adapted from Gerloff’s (1988) study. This forms a basis for the main quantitative analysis of the present study, details of which will be offered in 2.3.1. Finally, Shih’s (2006) translators’ perceived revision checked-for items were used as a point of departure to analyse types of revision changes being made or checked-for.

2.3.1 Analytic instrument: patterns of movement

As mentioned above, Gerloff’s (1988) “patterns of movement” was adapted for use in the present study. According to Gerloff (ibid), whenever a text segment (either a ST segment or TT segment) is being verbalised by translators, it indicates that this text segment is being processed. Gerloff used continuous lines to record each of these instances of processing as they occurred in her protocol data. This means that she was able to trace where and when a text segment is being...
processed particularly intensively and also to trace where translators decide to back-track or refer to an earlier ST/TT segment.

For the purpose of the present study, several adjustments are made to Gerloff’s coding system. First of all, in Gerloff’s study, wavy lines indicated ST processing and straight lines indicated target text processing. These lines were joined together in her analysis. However, in order to measure these lines quantitatively, I used straight lines throughout my analysis but differentiated verbalisations of ST segments and TT segments in different colours. In addition to this, each line was numbered for ease of quantifying the frequency or intensity of the processing. A brief explanation of what constitutes processing is described here. This is linked to what Ericsson and Simon (1993) call “level 1 verbalisation”. According to Ericsson and Simon (ibid), level 1 verbalisations indicate information stored in the short-term memory or working memory that is in linguistic form and hence can be directly verbalised. Level 2 verbalisations indicate information stored in the short-term memory or working memory that is not in linguistic form and hence has to be encoded into linguistic forms so that they can be verbalised. In order to quantify translators’ processing efforts, I consider an occurrence of a level 1 text segment as a processing line. Table 1 provides an example of this.

**Table 1: An extract of Laurie’s 1st run-through lining patterns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw protocol data</th>
<th>• Provide the single most powerful link to our distant origins.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>這句話它要說的是 (Back translation: This sentence wants to say that)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>嗅覺讓我們和最原始的人類有了強力的連結 (Back translation: Smell makes us have a strong connection with the most primitive humans.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>所以應該是說 (Back translation: So it is supposed to say)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[嗅覺] 讓我們和最原始的人類 (Back translation: [smell] makes us with the most primitive humans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>或遠古時代的人類 (Back translation: Or humans in the ancient era.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>distant origins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding of processing lines in relation to the ST</th>
<th>. . providing the single most powerful link to our distant origins.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here, Laurie (pseudo-name) was translating the ST clause, “…, providing the single most powerful link to our distant origins.” She started by verbalising this exact ST segment. This piece of verbalisation was coded in black as a ST processing line. She then began to render this ST segment into her TT: “Smell makes us have a strong connection with the most primitive humans” (back translation). This was coded in grey as a TT processing line. All of these colour blocks are numbered for ease of quantifying them.

2.4 Findings

2.4.1 Processing patterns

In the present study, the general revision processing patterns are mainly measured through 1) the relative revision time spent on each run-through; 2) the processing lines. Results of these two measurements are provided below.

2.4.2 The revision time

Each run-through of each translator’s protocols was tape-counted (via ‘tape-counter’ function on a recorder). This means that an approximate amount of time spent on each run-through can be obtained and compared between subjects. An approximate real-time equivalent of 100 tape-counter units is about 12 minutes. Figure 1 shows the overall results of this measure.

Figure 1 Translators’ revision time in runs-through (RT)

The X axis indicates the runs-through done by each translator. The Y axis indicates the number of tape-counter units recorded in each run-through. Interesting patterns can be found in this figure. First of all, all the translators spent the longest amount of time on their first run-through. For translators who chose to have four or more runs-through, there seems to be a clearer pattern; that is, second peaks emerge in a later run-through other than the first. Crucially, all these second peaks were found to occur right after translators chose to have a break in their end-revision process. It indicates that translators tend to spend more time on revising their drafts after having a break. It is as if the run-through after the break has become another first run-through. It seems
that when translators decide to go through their drafts four times or more, they manage their time and efforts in rather similar fashion.

2.4.3 The processing lines

Figure 2 shows the total numbers of processing lines in each run-through that each translator verbalised.

**Figure 2 Translators’ processing lines in runs-through (RT)**

![Bar chart showing the distribution of each subject's runs-through](chart)

Two main features are found in terms of translators’ processing lines. One type of translators (e.g. Simon, Nida, Harry) tend to have a heavily processed first run-through and all the later runs-through are quick glances of the TT. A second type of translators (e.g. Joanne, Christine, Rosie, Laurie, May) tend to have a second peak in terms of processing lines in later runs-through. A logical reason behind these findings is that since when translators spend more time on a run-through, there are likely to be more processing lines involved in that particular run-through. However, there are exceptions. For example, in Steve’s case, the processing lines in his second and also last run-through are in fact slightly higher than those in his first run-through. Even though Steve had more processing lines in his second run-through, he spent considerably less time on it than his first run-through. This calls for a closer examination of Steve’s revision protocols, which will be offered later.

By examining within-subject processing lines, two interesting features emerge. First of all, translators tend to backtrack more frequently in earlier runs-through and less so in later ones. The overall picture actually shows that processing lines are longer and linear in later runs-through whereas in earlier runs-through, processing lines are relatively short and fragmented. The second feature of the processing line concerns the numbers of processing lines that are direct references to the ST. To take Christine as a typical example, her numbers of ST and TT processing lines are shown in table 2.
Table 2 Christine’s number of processing lines: ST vs. TT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of ST processing lines</th>
<th>Number of TT processing lines</th>
<th>Total number processing lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st run-through</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd run-through</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd run-through</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, it can be seen that there is a sharp contrast between the number of ST processing lines and the TT processing lines. This is especially evident in the 2nd run-through. In Shih’s (2006) interview study, most translators claimed that they do not usually refer back to the ST unless they find a problem in the translation while revising. This statement largely coincides with my finding here as shown in the numbers of ST processing lines in table 2. In fact, the number of ST processing lines generally diminishes in later runs-through. Again there is an exception in Steve’s case, which we will have a closer look in the following.

Table 3. Steve’s number of processing lines: ST vs. TT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of ST processing lines</th>
<th>Number of TT processing lines</th>
<th>Total number of processing lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st run-through</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd run-through</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in table 3, Steve’s second run-through has roughly similar numbers of processing lines as his first run-through. On closer inspection, Steve is found to compare every ST sentence with its corresponding TT sentence in his second run-through. It should be noted that Steve only had 2 runs-through in total. Essentially, he was comparing the entire ST with its TT in his only revision run-through. This obviously changes dynamics in terms of the number of his processing lines. This explains why, unlike other translators, the numbers of processing lines in Steve’s second run-through is actually higher than in his first run-through.

Moreover, there is yet another pattern in terms of the processing lines in each run-through; that is, the more the translator revises, the longer the processing lines become in later runs-through. It is especially evident for translators who chose to have three or more runs-through that they were able to process their TT in extended chunks without stopping or backtracking in their later runs-through. My data suggest that the more the translator revises, the more s/he is able to process the text on a more holistic and contextual level. This resembles Jones’s (2011, p. 127) findings in poetry translation where “translators’ scope of attention was widening from analytic to wholist…” towards later runs-through.

To sum up, in the present study, translators have a tendency to process their drafts more intensively in earlier runs-through than in later ones even though there are second peaks in the run-through after breaks. In other words, the intensity of processing is not necessarily found to
be exclusive to the first run-through. It is also found that ST is referred to and processed more in earlier drafts. In later drafts, translators are able to process their text more holistically and in longer chunks without backtracking to a previous TT segment or stopping to refer back to a ST segment.

2.4.4 Revision maxims

“Revision maxim” is a term adapted from Mondahl and Jensen's (1996) “translation maxim”. Revision maxims can be implicit, explicit, procedural or declarative knowledge/measure that translators adopt in their work. They are a kind of translators’ know-how, in our case, in the revision process and can either be consciously employed or talked about by translators. To make this term operational, we define it as revision checked-for items reported by translators as discussed in Shih’s (2006) interview study. These revision checked-for items are used as a basic taxonomy to code the protocol data. Before presenting the coding results, a few coding criteria should be made clear. First of all, as a rule of thumb, I code revision changes that are actually written down in the draft. This means that translators’ meta-cognitive auto-corrections that occur while reading and/or orally rendering the ST in the protocols are not included in the coding. However, when a translator checks a TT segment with clear intention of making changes but eventually decides to keep the original TT rendering, this is still counted as a revision checked-for point/item. Figure 3 shows the varieties and distribution of revision checked-for items in the protocol data.

Figure 3 Varieties and distribution of revision checked-for item

Nineteen out of the Twenty-two revision checked-for items reported by translators in Shih’s (2006) interview study can be identified in the protocol data. There are only a few exceptions, such as, ‘layout’, ‘grasping the main idea/gist’ and ‘numbers/dates’. However, this is probably due to the experimental conditions where the text being translated is relatively short with neither complicated gist to grasp nor implications for layouts or numbers and dates. Even so, there are a few newly coded items based on the protocol data. They are: ‘non-specific TT alteration’, ‘lexical choice’, ‘collocation’, and ‘comprehension’. The most prominent of
which is the category, ‘non-specific TT alteration’, which amounts to 14.5% of the total numbers of revision checked-for items in the protocol data. As the name suggests, ‘non-specific TT alteration’ indicates TT revision that is not explicitly related to a particular ST lexical item or segment. It does not have a dominant feature that makes it link to other revision items either. An example is given below.

- **他第一個植物研究對象是拉普蘭** (Back translation: His first plant studying subject is Lapland)
- **拉普蘭所有的開花植物** (Back translation: Lapland’s every flowering plant.)
- **全部的 所有的比較好聽** (Back translation: All or . . . Every sounds better.)

(Excerpt taken from Laurie’s 3rd run-through)

In this example, the translator was making a decision between ‘every’ and ‘all’. It is interesting to note that this revision change is very trivial. In fact, ‘non-specific TT alteration’ can often be characterised in terms of its triviality. Whether the translator chooses to render either ‘every’ or ‘all’, does not make much differences in term of TT quality. And, yet, this is the most frequently found checked-for items in translators’ end-revision process. In other words, our translators seem to spend substantial amount of efforts in seemingly-trivial revision changes.

‘Lexical choice’ is the second most common checked-for item in the protocol data, amounting to 9.8% of the total number of revision items. It indicates a choice between two or more lexical items that are explicitly referring back to a ST lexical segment in the protocol data. Here, explicitly referring to a ST lexical item is particularly important since this is what differentiates between ‘non-specific TT alteration’ and ‘lexical choice’. An example is given below.

- **是由心思細密的瑞典人開始** (Back translation: ..is beginning with an attentive-minded Swede.)
- **‘Tidy-minded’整齊的心思 不會吧 嚴格的心思 嚴密** (Back translation: ‘Tidy-minded’. Orderly mind. No... Strict mind. Strictly careful...)
- **心思嚴密的心思Tidy-minded’心思有條不紊** (Back translation: Strictly careful..mind. ‘Tidy-minded’. Mind that is in precise order.)
- **不對 現在是嚴密 好就這樣 心思嚴密的瑞典人開始 (lexical choice) (Back translation: No... Now it’s strictly careful. Okay. That’s it. Beginning with a strictly careful-minded Swede.)**

(Excerpt taken from Christine’s 2nd run-through)

In the example above, it is not difficult to see that Christine was pondering how to better render a particular ST lexical item, ‘tidy-minded’. This finding tallies with previous studies, (Jones, 2011; Dimitrova, 2005; Antunović & Pavlović, 2011) where the most frequently found revision checked-for items are at the lexical level. In fact, when taking into account the ‘non-specific TT alteration’, which represents trivial TT alternation and often occurs at the lexical level, the majority of end-revision changes found in the present study can be seen as lexical choices. This interesting point will be discussed further in section 3.

### 3. Discussion & Conclusion

One of the most important findings in the present study lies in translator’ revision processing patterns. First of all, it was found that the majority of translators spend the most of their time and efforts on their first run-through/draft. This tallies with previous studies on translation revision (e.g. Alves & Vale, 2011) where the drafting phase is found to be the most labour-intensive in terms of processing effort. However, in the present study, we also found that
after the first run-through, two patterns emerge. The first one involves a second peak in the run-through right after translators take their breaks. In other words, apart from the first run-through, most translators put in substantial revision efforts in the run-through after their break. The second pattern involves translators also processing their first draft most intensively, but after the initial hard work, both their time and effort spent on later runs-through diminish. In other words, these translators simply glance through the TT in later runs-through. This study demonstrates that the timing of translators’ breaks seem to have a profound effect on their overall processing efforts in end-revision. However, the question remains why most translators manage their time and effort, particularly after a break, rather similarly in end-revision. One possible reason is because after a break, translators are able to regain their concentration to process their TT more intensively. It is as if the break acts as a form of ‘cognitive refreshment’ for translators (Hansen, 2008, p. 263). This implies that it is very important for translators to have a break during their self-revision process. Yet, on the other hand, the break is also a much needed drawer-time which enables translators to defamilirise themselves from the ST so that they can come back to revise their TT more critically. It is worth mentioning here that although two types of end-revision processing patterns emerge in this study, I do not claim that they cover all the possible processing patterns. It may well be that these are two types of idiosyncratic end-revision processing profiles among many, just as previous studies (Antunović & Pavlović, 2011; Immonen, 2011) have shown that individual variations are one of the features of translators’ revision behaviours.

To consolidate my findings with previous studies, it can be said that translators’ revision processing patterns found in the present study echo some of Alves and Vale’s (2011) findings regarding the hierarchy of macro translation units (TUs), in spite of their very different data sources and analytical instruments. As a reminder, Alves and Vale’s study was based on their Translog data whereas the present study is based on my TAP data. This is because first of all Alves and Vale (ibid) find that the most frequent MTUs (P1 type) appear solely in the drafting phase. In other words, most revision changes occur in the on-line drafting phase rather than in the end-revision phase. This finding resembles that of the present study because the highest numbers of processing lines and the longest amount of time are both found in most translators’ first runs-through. In terms of translator’s revision profiles, it is difficult to compare my results with those of Alves and Vale (2011) since the present study examines various runs-through of end-revisions whereas Alves and Vale look at the revision phase as a whole. However, Alves and Vale’s findings regarding translators’ revision profile (e.g. revisers vs drafters) may help explain the two patterns I have identified in the present study. That is, apart from the first processing peak in the first run-through, some translators tend to have a second peak in a later run-through. To put it in another way, subject translators in the present study who have a second processing peak may be more of a “reviser” type. In other words, they are inclined to revise more in the end-revision phase. Subject translators that do not have second peak and often have shorter and fewer runs-through may be more of a “drafter” type and be inclined to revise more at the drafting phase.

One other finding regarding the processing patterns is that the more the translator revises, the more s/he operates on longer chunks of text. It seems that the more the translator revises, the more familiar s/he is with the TT and the less problematic the TT appears to be; hence, the more expert the translator seems to become in relation to the TT. On this note, it is very interesting to compare findings of the present study with those of professional/more-experienced translators’ behaviours. Our translators’ processing patterns in later runs-through can be seen to bear some
resemblance to those of professional or more experienced translators (Gerloff, 1988; Jääskeläinen, 1989) where they are able to process texts in longer chunks and make more holistic or textual choices in translation.

Apart from this, it is also found that in terms of ST referrals, translators tend to make fewer ST referrals in later runs-through. This finding confirms those of Shih’s (2006) study that most translators do not refer back to the ST unless it is deemed as necessary.

My findings regarding revision checked-for items / revision maxims is that translators’ revision efforts frequently linger around TT lexical choices, be they explicitly referred to a ST segment or not. This directly confirms Englund Dimitorva (2005) and Jones (2011) findings that lexical choices are one of the most prominent features in revision process. It seems that for translators a lexical item or a word is still the most basic and probably the simplest unit of text to be picked up and altered in end-revision. After all, approaching other more abstract changes at this later phase, e.g. syntactical changes, language consistency, fluency, etc, may not be very desirable since they require a lot more cognitive efforts than tackling single lexical items. Having said that, it may well be that most syntactical changes are taken care of earlier in the drafting stage (Englund Dimitrova, 2005). The fact that translators are found to spend a significant amount of time and efforts in tackling seemingly trivial lexical choices may potentially have important pedagogical implications. This is because for professional translators, what really matters is not how they can improve their TT in revision but what needs to be improved (Mossop, 2001). This is especially important when it comes to “other-revision” rather than “self-revision” (Mossop, 2001), where translators act as revisers to implement quality control procedures in large organisations (Arthern, 1983, 1987, 1991). This is because when a translator revises another translator’s work, s/he often needs to have a justifiable reason to alter the TT rather than purely based on his/her own personal preference of a trivial lexical choice. According to Séquinoit (1991, p. 86), “…the way most students seem to improve is to incorporate what is taught in class in their revision strategies…”. If this is the case and given the potential pedagogical implications of the present study, it reinforces a need to develop a systematic pedagogical plan or even curriculum (Hansen, 2008) that incorporate what is known about end-revision so that better practices can be brought into trainee translators’ translation process.

Many future research directions can be recommended from this research project. For example, different language combinations and different data collection methods can be employed in parallel to the present research project so that end-revision phenomena can be examined further. In addition, it will be very interesting to see future research projects focussing on single variables, such as ST genre (specialist text), time constraints, or even the use of translation memory tools and investigating how such variables may have an impact on translators’ end-revision processes.

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Global English and Arabic: Which is the Protagonist in a Globalized Setting?

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Abstract
Globalization, although not a new phenomenon, is certainly spreading at a faster rate than it ever did. Part of this speed at which it transpires is the role of global English as the lingua franca driving the phenomenon. In the Arab world both English and globalization are often frowned upon. Both are seen as importing western cultural values and “Americanization” in addition to interfering with the Arabic language. As many Arabs believe their Arab identity to be wrapped up in Arabic, this has cast further dispersions upon global English and its impacts. The following looks at the interplay between globalization and language, in the context of the United Arab Emirates.

KeyWords: Arabic, Arab identity, global English, globalization
Introduction: Globalization

With the current focus and deliberations regarding the phenomenon of “globalization” we often get the feeling that this is a new term, or at least what it encompasses is new or innovative. However, this is not the case and we have seen throughout history that countries have traded, crossed borders, and interacted with others for centuries (Castells, 2004; Giddens, 2000). Today we live in a world of transformations and although we may not fully understand globalization, we are certainly feeling the effects (Giddens, 2008). Originally the term globalization was about economics and world trade; however, today we are also looking at politics, societies, and cultures. Globalization is not only an economic force; it is also a cultural phenomenon. In recent years globalization has been challenging identities and cultures around the world. With the increase in migration and digital media, the former stable social constructs of culture, identity, nation, and state are all shifting (Pennycook, 2010).

Views on Globalization

Globalization as a phenomenon has its adherents and detractors. There are individuals who see globalization as harmful. Those people look at globalization as something which takes away from those who already do not have much in the world. They see it as having created a world divided between winners and losers. There are many who believe the term is equivalent to westernization, Americanization, or even MacDonaldization of the world (Zughoul, 2003). They view globalization as a rapid culturalization imported from the west through global English bringing western films, music, books, food, and continual media images. On the other side of this debate, however, are those who see globalization as also having an effect on the west (see Appadurai, 2001; Lash, 2007). There are even some who claim that globalization has “both desirable and undesirable consequences for both developed and developing societies” (Parekh, 2008, p. 183).

Najjar (2005) gives an excellent overview of how globalization is understood by Arabs in his article “The Arabs, Islam and Globalization.” Initially he points out that whether Arabs are for or against globalization, both camps are generally in agreement that globalization equals “Americanization.” Those Arabs view globalization as a means to spread American culture around the world (see also Boutaleb, 2003). On the other hand, however, Tomlinson (2003) views cultural identity as more the “product of globalization than its victim” (p. 269). Tomlinson asserts that identity is unlikely to be easily destroyed by globalization because identity is not a “fragile communal-psychic attachment,” but instead an important and concrete part of “institutionalized social life in modernity” (p. 271), and therefore not easily replaced. In fact, he believes that globalization has actually helped proliferate cultural identity. The rapid spread of globalization and today’s ease of travelling has revealed the fragile nature of people’s languages, and those who feel language ties them to their identity may feel “lost.” Many researchers point to the hybridity of cultures and identities and insist that today what we see are new combinations of languages, cultures, and identities due to the multicultural populations living in modern nation-states (Scholte, 2000; see also Block, 2007; Croucher, 2004; Maalouf, 2000).

English as a Global Language

In today’s globalized world there is one language which has come to the forefront as the lingua franca of our modern day: English. The English language brings with it not only the vocabulary of the technological and business domains, but is further loaded with pop culture and western cultural values as well. In the Arab world it is becoming clear that English is ascending in most areas of life, while Arabic is relegated to a more prosaic role. Rapid globalization in the
Arab world calls for the continued need of English in order to help Arab nations progress on a worldwide scale. The power of English continues to spread due to its seemingly symbiotic relationship with globalization. In fact, global English can be seen as one of most powerful facets of globalization. The projection of English as the world language has had a substantial effect on the languages of the world through its role as the language of international communication, media, and technology (see Phillipson & Skutnabb Kangas, 1996). In order to understand more fully the place of English’s hegemony in the world especially as the language of electronic information systems Crystal’s (1997) work, The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language, is an excellent resource.

Today there are consistent debates regarding English as a global language and its perceived threat to other languages. There are discussions about the politics of language and how English is expanding at the expense of other languages. In the Arab world particularly, English and globalization are both often seen as negative factors. English is seen as encroaching upon Arabic, while globalization is viewed as a factor which negatively impacts Arab culture, religion, and identity. These negative feelings are further complicated by the place of Arabic in the Arab world; wherein, many see Arabic as the main marker of an Arab identity. This place of Arabic as an identity indicator results from two issues. First of all, Arabic is the language of the Quran, and therefore holds an important and precious role for Arabic speakers. Additionally, the discourse of Arabic equaling identity came about in the 20th century when Arab nationalism was on the rise and Arabic was chosen as a unifying factor for the geographically diverse Arab populations.

**Arabs, Arabic and Identity**

Globalization and global English continue to be seen from a negative perspective in the Arab world due to the belief that Arabic is an identity marker of an Arab. It is in large part due to this notion that globalization and global English are so often frowned upon in the Arab world. For those Arabs who maintain and wish to hold onto the place of Arabic as the major symbol of an Arab identity, the continual spread of English in the Arab region is viewed as a “problem” which must be addressed.

In the Arabian Gulf region, for example, English has taken on a major role, often at the expense of Arabic. In the Gulf region and the United Arab Emirates specifically, there is a trend to adopt English both as a language of status and as an academic language (Harrison, Kamphuis, & Barnes, 2007). There are some who believe that the consistent focus on English as the language of technology, modernization, invention, and all that is new will eventually place Arabic in a minority role. Several scholars in the region have written about their concerns that the continual spread of English can result in a lessening of Arabic’s role in society and its permanent move to a language of the home, religion, or social studies (Al-issa, 2012; Al Jabry, 2013; Mejdell, 2008; Troudi & Jendli, 2011). Furthermore, many segments of society in the UAE are concerned with what they see as a possible loss of Arab identity due to the persistent influence of global English; this subject has been covered extensively in the media in recent years (see for example Ahmed, 2010; Al Hinai, 2012; Al Mutawa, 2008; Kakande, 2010; Lepeska, 2010). But despite the continuous calls by governmental officials and concerned citizens to maintain Arabic due to its importance in promoting an Arab identity, English continues to be used as the everyday language of the business world and often the main language of education.

Identity in the Arab world has generally been accepted as based on the Arabic language. And this is despite the fact that it did not become the core as an Arab identity marker until the 1950s with the rise of nationalism. Language is often considered part of an individual’s identity
and as May (2001) notes a person’s identity, both individual and social, is reconciled through language. He further maintains that the language one speaks is crucial to a person’s identity. In the Arab world this connection between language and identity has evolved into an indivisible partnership, which some are unwilling to let go of.

According to some Arab scholars it is language which is the most important part of a nation’s identity (Abed, 2007). He insists that Arabic is the “most distinctive and defining feature of Arab culture and society, and arguably, is the only concrete factor that gives Arabs some sense of unity and belonging to one nation” (p. 2). For many in the UAE this seems to be the case and there is concern that Arab identity is under siege due to the increasing reliance on global English as a requirement for everyday needs.

For those who believe incontrovertibly that their language represents their identity, the continual spread of global English is of great concern. The fact that English is needed and used daily in the UAE and is a language of “global dominance […] constitutes a formidable challenge to all other languages” (Mac Giolla Chriost, 2007, p. 29).

The Role of English in the UAE

As the power of English grows in the UAE, there is a resulting decline in the usage of Arabic both educationally and socially. Due to the large numbers of expatriates in the country, English has taken on the language of communication in the UAE at the expense of Arabic. Yet, despite the constant concerns over the growth and spread of English in the UAE, at this point in time each of these languages has definitively staked out a specific position. Although there continues to be concerns over the place of Arabic in the UAE, as both a language and as an identity marker, the reality is that English has made enormous inroads in the Gulf nation. Particularly in the education sector, except for the public schools, which are only open to Emirati nationals, most of the private schools either teach their entire curriculum in English, or spend hours daily on the subject. Additionally, nearly all higher education institutions are now teaching a vast array, if not the majority of their classes in English.

The UAE is an Arab nation which is looked upon as a leader in the region. Globalization has brought the Emirates and Dubai in particular, worldwide recognition and accolades in many areas, including: infrastructure, architecture, hospitality, and more. All of these factors could not have been as successful and achieved such notoriety without English. Therefore, Arabic takes a secondary role to English when it comes to those factors about the UAE which garner the most attention. In order to maintain its well-known hospitality, infrastructure, and business savvy industries, English is the language that everyone uses. There is no need for visitors or residents in the UAE to learn Arabic as English is used everywhere. Part of this may be due to the fact that the UAE is home to more expatriates than locals with UAE nationals making up less than 20 percent of the total population. In fact, the foreign workforce in the country is “estimated to be as high as 90 percent of the working population” (Al-Khouri, 2010, p. 4). Of that large population, nearly 66% speak a language other than Arabic. It therefore becomes apparent that a lingua franca is needed in order to communicate.

Globalization has set its course in the UAE. English as the global language has become the language of daily usage in the Emirates for business and education. However, despite the influx and influence of English, one cannot say that Arab identity has been lost in the UAE. The UAE is an example of how the Arab world can allow globalization to take root without trepidation. The UAE has shown that culture and identity cannot be erased by another language, or by the phenomenon of globalization. In fact, the UAE carefully maintains its traditions, balancing them with rapid modernization.
Conclusions

Those who fear a loss of Arab identity due to global English and globalization may be surprised at how well and how firmly young Arabs still cling to their identities. Certainly, they speak a lot of English and enjoy the pop culture of the west packaged in English, but for the majority, their Arab identity and roots run quite deep. No language used as a communication tool is going to take away from their own feelings about who they believe themselves to be. In fact, there have been several studies carried out in the UAE regarding young Arabs and their outlooks about their Arab identity (see Badry, 2001; Ronesi, 2011) and one carried out by this author, whose results are not yet published. All of these studies sought to understand how Arab students in the UAE perceive themselves as Arab speakers of English and as young Arabs who are surrounded by global English and all that accompanies it. The findings in these studies revealed that the students felt a strong attachment to their Arab identity and language despite their constant exposure to English, western cultural images, and the phenomenon of globalization. English and Arabic have reached a rapprochement in the UAE. In the context of globalization each language has carved out a niche and seems to know where it belongs and what purpose it serves in the day to day lives of residents of the UAE. And while the educational sphere has been largely co-opted by English, teachers must remain cognizant of that factor. Teachers must also be facilitators who help Arab students, who are surrounded by so much English, remain in touch with and continually celebrate their Arabic language, culture, and identity.

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References


Arabizi: An Analysis of the Romanization of the Arabic Script from a Sociolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract:
The purpose of this paper is to present a sociolinguistic analysis of the Romanization of the Arabic Script phenomenon better known as Arabizi. Arabizi is a widely used alternative for the Arabic script in computer-mediated contexts (CMC) and social networking sites, which has emerged as a result of the Arabic script being unsupported in technological tools and Internet resources. Arabic speakers have taken different stances to using Arabizi. In this paper, the following issues are discussed: the historical emergence of Arabizi, a thorough explanation of the script, its characters and its features, the social contexts in which users utilize it, and the different attitudes of Arabic speakers towards its use.

Keywords: Arabic Script, Arabizi, Romanization, sociolinguistics, speakers’ attitudes
Globalization has struck the world like a storm as the result of the spread of technology. During the 90s, most Arab countries, if not all, witnessed an increasing importance of the English language, which rose to dominate many technological devices and realms, such as online chats, short message service (SMS), and mobile phones (Warschauer, Said, & Zohry, 2002). During that time, non-Latin scripts were not supported on many popular devices and the only means to communicate effectively with others was through the use of the English language and/or Latin script. Arabic was not unaffected by this situation. In fact, Arabic speakers were forced to develop a means of communicating in Arabic using the Latin script. The Romanization of Arabic has become widely spread among Arab youth across many Arab countries and this use of the Latin alphabet, as opposed to the Arabic, is known as Arabizi (Bianchi, 2012; Sperrazza, 2011; Yaghan, 2008), Latinized Arabic (Aboelezz, 2009), ASCII-ization (Palfreyman & Khalil, 2003), and Arabic Chat Alphabet (ACA) (Elmahdy, Gruhn, Abdennadher, & Minker, 2011; Mostafa, 2012).

According to Yaghan (2008) and Attwa (2012), the word Arabizi originated from blending the words “Arabic” and “Inglizee” (which is the Arabic name for English). As mentioned above, this phenomenon is believed to have been developed in response to the prevalence of western technology, namely Internet Relay Chat (IRC), text messaging (SMS) and emails, all of which initially required the use of the Latin alphabet. Originally, the majority of these devices or software applications did not support Arabic script; thus, users and consumers of such products had to find a way to communicate in Arabic through the use of Latin script (the only supported keyboard layout available in the Arab world at the time) (Elmahdy et al., 2011). With that, the Arabizi form of writing was invented. Although technical devices and the Internet have since been updated to support non-Latin script, including Arabic, Arabic speakers continue to use Arabizi (Attwa, 2012) where English is seen as the dominant language of cyber space (Aboelezz, 2009). Al-Khatib and Sabbah (2008) make the following observation:

It is worth mentioning that this form of Romanized Arabic did not exist before the advent of the Internet, and it can be noticed that there is a heavy use of this new form of written communication among students to such a degree that the traditional way of writing Arabic is counted out. (p. 46)

**The Arabizi Phenomenon**

Arabizi is defined as an encoding system that uses the Latin script and Arabic numbers instead of Arabic letters. Each English letter represents an Arabic phoneme that matches it in pronunciation, whereas the Arabic numerals compensate for Arabic phonemes that are non-existent in the English language, but resemble Arabic letters and their shapes. In some cases, accent marks can also be used to refer to an Arabic phoneme along with the Arabic numerals. Bianchi (2012) adds to this definition the fact that Arabizi is mostly used in Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) contexts and refers to the Arabic numerals that are used as “arithmographemes,” while Yaghan (2008) labels this phenomenon as “slang.” The term also refers to the process of code-switching between Arabic and English during conversations or while speaking (Attwa, 2012; Sperrazza, 2011). To further explain this phenomenon, the author has taken a screen capture of a text message conversation between two Native Arabic speakers (see Figure 1).
As can be seen in Figure 1, the interlocutors use Arabizi to carry out a normal daily life conversation (talking about plans for the weekend). Both Arabic and English words are used, but all are in Latin script. The use of Arabic numerals is also evident. For example, one interlocutor uses the number 7 in place of an Arabic phoneme /ħ/ (devoiced pharyngeal fricative) in the word “Al7amdellah,” “الحمد الله” ‘Thank God’. As is apparent, the Arabic letter resembles the corresponding Arabic number as far as its appearance is concerned. In Arabizi, ten Arabic letters are replaced with Arabic numerals, and in some cases, an apostrophe is added (see Table 1). Because Arabizi is a non-standardized form of writing, Arabic speakers inconsistently use numbers instead of letters, or vice versa, and this varies according to familiarity and/or personal preference (Sperrazza, 2011).

Table 1. Arabizi Characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonetic Description</th>
<th>Arabic Letter</th>
<th>Arithmographeme</th>
<th>Romanization Possibilities</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voiced glottal stop /ʔ/</td>
<td>ʔ</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>Bala2 (disaster)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devoiced pharyngeal fricative /ħ/</td>
<td>٣</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>٣الوا/ 3الوا</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another general feature of Arabizi is apparent in the use of vowels. As indicated by Yaghan (2008), vowels are seen as optional and in some cases can be omitted according to the speakers’ background knowledge, contextual lucidity vocabulary items, and the number of characters permitted in one SMS text message. He also noted that Arabizi is highly dependent on context and, given the fact that Arabizi is mostly used in informal situations, is very similar to CMC language, which allows for the use of abbreviations. Lastly, Yaghan notes that, given that there are numerous Arabic dialects, the use of Arabizi not only varies from one Arab country to another, but will also differ from one group to another within the same country (Muhammed, Farrag, Elshamly, & Abdel-Ghaffar, 2011).

A Call for the Romanization of the Arabic Script

During the 1800s, a very extreme call for reforming the Arabic writing system through the Romanization of Arabic script was led by two directors of the Egyptian National Liberty: Wilhelm Spitta in 1880 and Karl Vollars in 1890. However, their proposal was heavily criticized and subsequently rejected (Sakkal, 2008). Then, later in the 1900s, another strong proponent for the Romanization of the Arabic script, Salama Mosa, rekindled the argument that the Latin script should be used, arguing that it is more efficient and effective than the Arabic script (as cited in Széll, 2011). The fact that he was a Coptic Christian led him to believe that Arabic was strongly associated with Islam, and this made him feel a detachment from the Arabic language. He strongly advocated for a movement that sought to convince native Arabic speakers that the Arabic language was incapable of being used in scientific progress as well as the English language, although he completely discounted the significant scientific achievements of Arabic speaking scholars and scientists that had been made during the Islamic Golden Age.

The Arabic language contains 28 phonemes with six vowels sounds (three short and three long vowels) (/a/, /i/, /u/, /aː/, /iː/, /uː/). Apart from the obvious fact that the direction of writing and reading Arabic is from right to left, one of the real complications proposed by pro-Romanization supporters of the Arabic script lies in the fact that the typology of the letters changes according to their position in the word (alone, initial, middle, final). For example, the letter (س) (seen) can be written as (سکر) (sugar) which is in the initial position, (مسمك) (musk) in
the middle position, and (ناس) (people) in the final position. Furthermore, Arabic letters have a vast number of varieties, which range from 600 to 900 forms (Muhammed et al., 2011).

Another significant issue concerns the absence of Arabic short vowels, which are known as diacritics, from most handwritten and printed Arabic texts. This can become troublesome for readers who lack the appropriate grammatical knowledge of the Arabic language. In addition, the similarities in the shapes of the letters and the need to distinguish between them using dots (e.g., ﺛ/ﺙ) are seen as another major concern of critics of the Arabic alphabet.

Taking into consideration all these issues, it is safe to say that the previous claims are extremely exaggerated. In fact, Széll (2011) points out that there has been no evidence that the Arabic language, specifically its alphabet, is more challenging for language learners of Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) than any other language. Similarly, to date, no evidence has been provided that demonstrates the effectiveness of using the Latin alphabet in transcribing Arabic letters. Hence, all efforts suggesting the Romanization of Arabic were relentlessly contested and condemned by Arab nationalists and Muslim enthusiasts (Yaghan, 2008). To them, such proposals were offensive to the Arab identity and language, especially given the fact that the writing system in question has been around for over fourteen centuries.

According to Yaghan (2008), all attempts to replace the Arabic script with the Latin alphabet failed, except in situations where the Arabic or non-Latin script was not supported or unavailable due to technical restrictions, such as on mobile phones; comprehensibility reasons, such as texts meant for non-Arabic speakers; and economical reasons, such as in the case of mobile carriers that charged more for Arabic characters than for Latin ones.

Széll (2011) states that Arabizi is the most, and probably only, successful Romanization system available to date that is widely in use in daily life interactions. However, it has a limited use in specific contexts, namely media and registers. In fact, Aboelezz (2012) argues that it is mostly spoken, not written, Arabic that has been Latinized in CMC contexts; and she clearly notes in her 2009 article that “the Arabic we write is not the same as the Arabic we speak” (p.103). Hence, it is thought to be an inadequate form of what Spitta, Vollars and Mosa proposed: a standardized written variety of a Romanized Arabic script that was suitable for all and every context (as cited in Széll, 2011).

The Utilization of Arabizi: The Appeal

As an advocate for Arabizi, Lelania Sperrazza (2009) is eager for her native Arabic Egyptian speaking students to embrace a dual cultural and linguistic identity. She states that pushing her students to become aware of their Arabizi identity has had a positive effect on their learning process, although it is unclear which language has played the most important role in their learning process. In an argument against those who resent the idea of using Arabizi, Sperrazza states the following:

[R]ather than desiring a monocultural identity for an entire lifetime,[…], I want my students to be aware that they are products of a new era, and subsequently, a new identity: one that is increasingly migratory and globalized, and one that is constantly in the process of adapting and reinventing itself. This identity, fueled by the power of an English-based technology, is the Arabizi identity. Therefore, I believe it is necessary for my students to recognize that they are members of a legitimate and valid community, which has emerged from the globalized and interdependent relationship between the East and the West. (p. N/A)

In a similar study, Muhammed et al. (2011) conducted a survey to observe Arab
Facebook users’ perceptions of the use of Arabizi. Out of 70 Native Egyptians, 60% confirmed that using Arabizi had no impact on their Arab identity, although some reported that it might have partially affected those of younger generations, as it appears to have had a negative impact on their use of the Arabic language and resulted in them becoming more westernized. As far as belonging to a speech community, Muhammed et al. report that 21% of the participants who regularly use Arabizi felt that they successfully established a bond with other users of this language system. Other respondents conveyed the urge to become “trendy” and “follow the flow” of other users, a phenomenon that Bassiouney (2009) describes as a sociolinguistic method to accustom oneself to the norms of a speech community.

According to Yaghan (2008), another reason that contributes to the Arabic youth’s use of Arabizi can be attributed to the historical precedence of English over Arabic in both the Internet domain and mobile phone industry. This may have caused Arabic speakers to think that the Arabic language is inadequate for use in the technical world and that it is not technologically friendly (Muhammed et al., 2011). Instead, some researchers see the benefit of Arab user’s ability to use code switching back and forth from Arabic to English as an opportunity for them to practice both languages and, as such, Arabizi is beneficial (Yaghan, 2008).

Several studies have also reported that Arabizi is easier and faster to use; that is, the English letters present on a mobile phone’s keyboard are fewer than the Arabic letters; therefore, it is considered to be less time-consuming to use this system (Al-Khatib & Sabbah, 2008; Attwa, 2012; Muhammed et al., 2011). Thus, as stated by Yaghan (2008), users of Arabizi believe that learning to use one language (English) is much more convenient when applied to both languages as it is far less confusing. This can also have an economic value in the sense that mobile carriers will charge less if SMS text messages contain fewer characters, which is hard for users to achieve when using Arabic letters (Al-Khatib & Sabbah, 2008; Yaghan, 2008).

Another economical benefit was identified in Aboelezz’s study (2012), which investigated the use of Arabizi in four major published magazines. According to Aboelezz, the study was motivated by the researcher noticing the conspicuous presence of Arabizi in various business and marketing instruments, such as billboards, consumer products, and in printed media (magazines). This marked the transition of Arabizi from CMC online mediums to offline means, thus moving from unregulated to regulated spaces (Sebba, 2002). It is worth mentioning that these magazines started publishing some of their content in Arabizi in the last decade due to the young staff and the fact that the publications were aimed at young readers. This suggests that Arabizi is popular and has achieved general acceptance among members of at least the younger public.

Arabizi from a Sociolinguistic Dimension

The use of Arabizi is very common among young Arabic speakers, while it is often rejected by older generations, working seniors, and people of higher class (Palfreyman, & Khalil, 2003; Muhammed et al., 2011). Therefore, within the younger generation, Arabizi is perceived to be up to date, trendy, and “cool”. The youth have established the idea that Arabic script should be confined to the use of classical Arabic, formal and religious contexts and, hence, is inappropriate for the use of slang (Yaghan, 2008; Muhammed et al., 2011).

Arabizi users have also conveyed the fact that this language system allows them to express themselves in a variety of ways that would otherwise be impossible when using Arabic script. According to Yaghan (2008), they report that Arabizi can support both uppercase and
lowercase letters. To them, the benefit of that lies in the fact that they can display a myriad of emotions that are otherwise unmanageable in classical Arabic, such as shouting and calmness. Thus, messages can be labeled as being clearer and easier to understand and convey (Muhammed et al., 2011).

In an attempt to identify the conspicuous sociolinguistics aspects of Arabizi, Al-Khatib and Sabbah (2008) conducted a survey that aimed to investigate the purposes and uses of Arabizi, along with the preferred language choice for SMS text messaging among Jordanian university students. The study included a total of 46 native Arabic-speaking university students of whom 17 were male and 29 female.

The results showed that 61% of the respondents used Arabizi, where 39% used it by word/phrase, meaning that they chose to write words and phrases in Arabizi as opposed to English vocabulary (54%) and Arabic vocabulary in Arabic letters (9%). The authors justified this finding by stating that English is the medium of instruction in the chosen universities and, as such, has become a fundamental means of communication for students in the professional field. He also noted that females (44%) have a stronger inclination than males to switch to English instead of Arabic or Arabizi for purposes such as prestige, euphemism, and as an indication of educational achievements.

Al-Khatib and Sabbah categorized the language choices based on the following social contexts or registers:

1. Socio-cultural and religious contexts: It was found that participants choose to write SMS text messages in Arabizi when discussing cultural or religious matters. In addition, they prefer to use this variety when exchanging wishes related to religious holidays and other social occasions that include engagements, weddings, and graduation. Such language choice is related to the fact that expressions related to these events are so culturally bound that it is not possible to identify an appropriate term or statement in the English language.

2. Greetings: Once again, participants’ responses recorded their use of Arabizi when greeting each other via text messages. When asked about using English vocabulary equivalents, some participants voiced the opinion that the Arabic vocabulary portrays more warmth and is more appropriate. Others explained that this choice showcased their regard for their religion and culture.

3. Quoting: It was observed that participants resorted to Arabizi when quoting someone who used the Arabic script in their text messages. There were also instances where users used Arabizi for direct and indirect quotes, and used either the Arabic script or Arabizi when quoting an Arabic proverb or a well-known maxim. This example was provided by Al-Khatib and Sabbah:

   A: الآخت الفاضلة...الرجاء إحضار كتاب صقر معك غداً [literally (virtuous sister), please bring Saqir’s book with you tomorrow]

   B: ☺this z the 1st time someone calls me “AL2O5T ALFADILAH”...☺lol. Anyway, don’t worry, I wont 4get 2 bring the book 2mr. Take care.

In another study by Bianchi (2012), who analyzed 460,220 forum posts on a Jordanian Arabic website to measure the occurrence of Arabizi and the domains in which it occurred, the following results were found as displayed in Table 2.
Table 2. Adapted from Bianchi 2012 Results (some categories omitted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Arabizi</th>
<th>Arabic Script</th>
<th>English Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Topics</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender/ Age</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Culture (Nationalistic and Religious)</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/ Friends</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/ School</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 2, overall Arabizi is the most frequently used variety of language in these posts. However, users seem to prefer to use either the Arabic script or the English language when discussing certain topics. The prevalence of Arabic script is evident in topics that relate to poetry and humor, and local culture. This suggests that these topics are best expressed in the Arabic language given the fact that they are closely related to cultural and religious topics, which are not expressed as effectively in either Arabizi or the English language.

On the contrary, topics dealing with work/school matters were mostly discussed in the English language. This can possibly be attributed to the fact that English is the medium of instruction in Jordan and the existence of jargons that have no equivalent in the Arabic language. Finally, the dominance of Arabizi can be found in topics relating to family/friends, gender/age, hobbies, and general topics. This may suggest that users prefer to utilize the informal nature of Arabizi in order to eliminate social gaps and establish intimacy with one another.

Resentment towards Arabizi: Anti-Arabizi Arguments

The relationship between the Arabic language and native Arabic speakers is very strong and closely tied with the Arab identity. Barakat (1993) gives a vivid description of the sense of nationalism Arab nationalists possess as native speakers of the Arabic language:

It has often been stated that the great majority of Arabs speak Arabic as their mother tongue and thus feel that they belong to the same nation regardless of race, religion, tribe, or region. This explains the tendency to dismiss the existing states as artificial and to call for political unity coinciding with linguistic identity. [...] There is, in fact, unanimous agreement among theoreticians of Arab nationalism on the great significance of language. (pp. 33-34)
Such a close tie has generated a severe backlash against the call for the Romanization of the Arabic language by some philosophers and Arab linguists while many people resent the use of Arabizi among native Arabic speakers. Yaghan (2008) explains that some view the Latin alphabet as representing colonial powers, ones that Arabs long resisted and fought against until the declaration of independence from the grasp of European colonialism. Others view the use of Arabizi as “culture treason” in which discarding the Arabic alphabet would symbolize letting go of the historical and cultural ties that the Arabic language represents.

Similarly, Muhammed et al. (2011) report in their findings that some speakers refuse to use Arabizi out of respect for the Arabic language as the language of Islam (namely Quran). For them, it is the Arabic language that preserves their identity as Arabs. These same respondents also explain their reason not to use Arabizi because they believe it is confusing, since it is not standardized. They believe that computer software and mobile phones now support the Arabic script and, as such, it is no longer necessary to use Arabizi.

The fact that Arabizi is mostly used in informal settings has also been cited as a strong criticism against its use. Many users argue that the use of Arabizi is inappropriate and highly offensive if used in the place of the Arabic script in some contexts such as formal social encounters and religious practices. Thus, Muhammed et al. (2011) argue that this language standard fails to provide a conclusive solution to the problems associated with the Arabic writing system.

Arabizi may also hinder the learning process of learners of Arabic as a foreign language (AFL), especially when they try to communicate with native Arabic speakers via CMC (Attwa, 2012). These learners have reported that Arabizi contributed to mistakes in their pronunciation, hinders their acquisition of the important language skills of reading and writing, creates confusion because of its inconsistent and unstructured nature, and deprives them of the opportunity to practice the Arabic script with native Arabic speakers.

Conclusion

The globalization of English-based technology has caused the present-day Arab generation to rely on the use of the Latin script as the main writing system when communicating through electronic medium. This indeed has helped with mixing Arabic and English in such a way that has given birth to the Arabizi phenomenon. As Attwa (2012) describes, Arabizi is becoming a trend that cannot be overlooked, especially in the realm of CMC. Echoing the finding of Sperrazza’s study (2011), Arabizi users should not only explore its use, but also encompass and embrace this variety. As such, it could be perceived as an important method through which Arabs can solidify and construct their identity through what Bourdieu (1977) refers to as “legitimate speakers,” without harming their Arab identity, which is potentially inextricable from the Arabic language and its use.

It is clear that the use of Arabizi has become evident in many, if not all, Arab countries and that the youth generation in particular relies upon it (Attwa, 2012). Sperrazza’s (2011) observations suggest that the use of Arabizi serves to endorse the legitimacy of Arabizi speakers, individuals who have obtained a continually expanding, very tangible cultural-linguistic platform in the community. Furthermore, Sperrazza notes that it serves to acknowledge the linguistic and cultural contributions that these individuals have made, since they are the modern creators of a “globalized world that has helped to shape them in the first place.” (p. 102)

However, teachers should take into consideration Attwa’s (2012) caution that the Arabizi phenomenon may cause confusion and even difficulty for AFL learners. Attwa also warns that
the use of such writing system could lead to the potentially undesirable phenomenon of digraphia: the use of more than one writing system for the same language. In addition, Attwa stresses that, while it is important for teachers to introduce Arabizi to AFL learners, it is not necessary for them to teach the actual writing variety itself. Finally, Attwa claims that Arabizi will eventually acquire a standardized or prestigious status among Arabs. This could be potentially detrimental, as teachers and learners of AFL would be faced with a dilemma: a writing code that learners want to learn will be in existence, but nobody will be appropriately equipped or even willing to teach it. Therefore, Széll (2011) and Attwa (2012) suggest the avoidance of using Arabizi altogether by urging language planners and CMC developers to integrate the Arabic script into platforms and systems so as to encourage the use of the Arabic keyboard as opposed to the English one.

Whether Arabizi is looked at as a positive or negative phenomenon, its use has become visible and widespread throughout many Arab countries. Based on Yaghan’s (2008) reflection that Arabizi is the most successful form of Romanization of the Arabic script up to date, in accordance with the current situation in the real world, it can be inferred that Arabizi users will continue to use this variety of Arabic, despite the fact that the Arabic script is now supported on the majority of advance mobile devices and computer software. This strong tendency to use Arabizi ensures that this variety of language will continue to be utilized by native Arabic speakers and might pave the way for its acceptance among wider social groups and ages.

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The Practice of Teaching English to Young Learners in the Palestinian Context: A Multidimensional Analysis

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Abstract
The new Palestinian Curriculum, launched in 1994, incorporates English as a foreign language as a basic component of the syllabus starting from the first grade, thus, fitting within the context of similar national and international endeavors which stress Early Start English Programs. Researchers of this paper highlight the Palestinian National Curriculum Committee's (PNCC) statement of objectives, which stresses bilingualism and intercultural communication, and take this statement as a starting point to present a comprehensive discussion of the serious obstacles encountered by Palestinian teachers as they struggle to implement an early start English syllabus. Forty Palestinian English teachers participated in the completion of a structured interview that investigated the reality of English learning in the classroom. Results of the structured interview highlight a number of challenges encountered by teachers such as large classes, insufficient number of weekly class periods, negative transfer due to the special nature of the first language (L1), lack of teacher training that specifically targets young learner (YL) teachers, as well as the noticeable marginalization of the target culture content and related skills. Such challenges obviously stand in the way of fully realizing the earlier stated curriculum objectives as outlined by the PNCC.

KeyWords: Teaching English to Young Learners, TEYL in the Arab World, Early Start English Programs, Age in EFL, Palestinian young learners of EFL
Introduction and Background

The Palestinian National Curriculum Committee decided to introduce a new Palestinian curriculum in the year 1994. The syllabus started to be implemented in reality in the fall of 2000. Under the umbrella of the new curriculum, EFL was introduced from the first grade partly out of deep belief in the importance of English as a language of wider communication. Based on the curriculum guidelines produced by the Palestinian Ministry of Education, it is believed that the new Early start English syllabus will help Palestinian learners achieve the following objectives (First Palestinian Curriculum Plan, 1998):

1. Develop their ability to communicate with the global community regarding issues of personal and national concern.
2. Gain better access to technology since English has become the main language of communication in modern technological devices and software.
3. Build stronger motivation and develop a positive attitude towards English as a language of wider communication.
4. Gain longer exposure to a foreign language that would be an asset for them as they access university education which is mainly conducted in English.
5. Gain access to the wealth of academic materials published in journals worldwide.

In addition to this general focus on English as a language of global communication, the PNCC statement of general goals for the English Language Curriculum contains three objectives that specially focus on the learning of the culture associated with this language. Specifically, the new syllabus should help the students achieve the following goals:

a. Develop intercultural understanding and appreciation.
b. Foster understanding and develop cultural sensitivity to the target language culture and other cultural backgrounds, and thereby, strengthen the learners' appreciation of their own culture.
c. Develop students' respect for others, i.e., having a sense of the worth of others, especially those with social, cultural, and family backgrounds different to their own, and by encouraging them to reject sexual, racial, and ethnic stereotypes. These general goals are translated into a number of specific objectives (see appendix A).

Despite the rosy picture these objectives reflect, teachers complain about everyday challenges they face as they try to implement the new curriculum. Teachers struggle with large classes, lack of technological devices, insufficient training as well as the dilemma of creating and maintaining motivation when the tasks used in the classrooms are traditional for the most part. Teachers in the Palestinian context also struggle with the diglossic nature of the learners' first language (Arabic) which has a colloquial form that students are exposed to from birth till school age and a standard or a high form that they start learning when they join the formal educational system in the first grade. Another serious challenge faced by Palestinian English learners is the absence of a rich cultural dimension that may help in developing a positive attitude towards the target culture and in increasing the students' integrative motivation in the long run. This absence of a strong cultural dimension stands in sharp contrast with the huge focus that culture receives in the PNCC syllabus goals as stated earlier.

Factors Involved in an Early Start Decision:
Although the issue of the optimal age for language learning has not been settled yet, the theoretical work of some researchers shows that the first grade, i.e., age 6-7 is generally a good time to start learning a foreign language (Krashen, 1973; Lenneberg, 1967; Long, 1988; Piaget, 1973; Stern, 1969). However, the decision of endorsing an early start foreign language program should not be based only on considerations of age related issues. In addition to the characteristics of the particular age group, a number of other factors come into play and influence the outcomes of early start programs. Phillipson (1992) argues that extensive research conducted on early foreign language instruction in western countries in the 1960s and 1970s shows that many conditions need to be fulfilled for any conclusions about the starting age for language learning to be valid. Early start immersion programs for instance have been reported to be highly successful in the Canadian context. Swain and Lapkin (1982) argue that the success of these programs is due to many variables including the safe position of the mother tongue, the availability of qualified bilingual teachers, and the strong societal motivation transmitted through the parents. Phillipson contrasts the success of these programs with the failure of some ESL instruction for immigrant children which generally aims at building monolingual proficiency thus ignoring the students' cultural and linguistic heritage (Shutnabb-Kangas, 1984a, 1988). One should also keep in mind that some western experiences such as that of Sweden which started a foreign language instruction program two years earlier than usual did not yield better results (Holmstrand, 1980).

Such contradictory results indicate that a host of various factors are involved in any decision to start foreign/second languages earlier in school. Phillipson (1992) suggests grouping these factors in a typology that covers sets of variables covering the organization of learning, learner-related affective factors, and linguistic, cognitive, pedagogical and social aspects in relation to both the L1 and the L2. Phillipson further argues that underdeveloped countries which have opted for an early start in foreign language instruction either as a school subject or as medium of instruction have faced disappointing results due to ignoring the host of factors involved. The practice of the early introduction of a foreign language program has resulted in reinforcing English at the expense of other languages including the mother tongue. He further argues that "[…] pupils with a solid grounding in their mother tongue or a related language, who have learnt to use this language as an instrument for analytical thought, may be better at learning English at a later stage" (p. 202-03).

A similar view to that of Phillipson is adopted by UNESCO who, on the basis of an early global survey of bilingual education and multilingualism, clearly recommends giving primary importance to the mother tongue in the early stages of schooling.

This recommendation is highly relevant in the case of the Arabic language where students find themselves face to face with a new form of their mother tongue as soon as they enter the formal educational system. Facing this new system along with the demands of a newly introduced foreign language may place a high cognitive demand on the young learners, thus, making their transition from home to school less smooth than desired by a global educational organization such as the UNESCO which tends to attach special importance to the relationship between native language, cultural heritage and the learner's identity.
On educational ground we recommend that the use of the mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible. In particular, pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue, because they understand it best and because to begin their school life in the mother tongue will make the break between home and school as small as possible" (UNESCO 1953:47).

Early start programs also entail important implications in terms of motivation and attitude which are associated with culture learning and which influence proficiency in direct and subtle ways. Researchers in the area of culture and the role that culture knowledge plays in the overall language proficiency have adopted various positions. Valdes (1990) has argued for "the inevitability of teaching and learning culture in a foreign language course". Luce and Smith (1987) have indicated that culture and communication cannot be separated because culture informs who talks to whom, about what, and how communication proceeds...Culture, in other words, is the "foundation of communication" (Samovar et al., 1981, p.24). Other researchers in the field of culture have argued that despite the fact that culture seems to override all kinds of communication, language syllabi need to incorporate an overt cultural component due to the following reasons:

1. The relationship between culture and language learning and the influence of this relationship on the nature of each is a key argument that was used in the literature to highlight the importance of culture, however assuming that whose who are learning the language in our classes are also learning the cultural knowledge and skills undermines the complexity of culture, language learning, and the communication process (Kramsch, Cain and Murphy-Lejeune, 1996)
2. Cultural elements need to be intentionally incorporated in the language syllabus in order to avoid the pitfall of stereotyping (Nemni, 1992).
3. Teachers cannot be held accountable for the cultural competence of their students unless the textbooks they teach contain an explicit cultural component in the form of content and skills.

Methodology

Population and sample

The population of this study consists of all Palestinian teachers currently teaching grades 1-4. Teachers of this early primary stage were selected because the new Palestinian curriculum is still in its trial or pilot form and feedback from teachers is essential for any future modifications. The sample of the study consisted of 40 language teachers working in Hebron District in the Palestinian West Bank.

Approximately 70% of the participating teachers teach in the city while the other 30% teach in schools located in rural areas. The majority of participants (85%) hold BA degrees from local Palestinian universities. About 10% hold Diploma (Two year community college degree) and 5% hold MAs from local Palestinian Universities.

Instruments: Participating teachers sat for a lengthy structured interview containing 17 items pertaining to the following issues:

1. Teaching learning environment: This section includes the following issues:
   a. Age related problems: this item probes the challenges involved in teaching this particular age group due to their age
b. **Nature of L1**: this tackles special problems related to the nature of L1 in this case Arabic as covered in items 4, and 5 of the questionnaire.

c. **Classroom circumstances**: this refers to the number of classes per week, number of students in the classroom, availability of resources especially audiovisual aids and technological devices – covered in question 2 and 3- (see appendix A).

d. **Suitability of the Communicative Syllabus**: this refers to the teachers' perception of the suitability of the educational bases of the communicative syllabus for the Palestinian cultural context (question. 12)

e. **Teacher Training**: this refers to the amount and type of training received by teachers of this stage – covered in question 9 (See appendix A).

f. **Long term effect**: this refers to the possible long term influence of early start in terms of attitude and motivation – covered in questions 6, 7 and 8- (see appendix A).

II. The Cultural Component: This section includes the following issues:

g. **Importance of culture learning**: this covers the teachers' perception of the general importance of culture learning (e.g. development of positive attitude and higher motivation and whether certain cultures require more attention than others in the Palestinian classroom. (questions 10, 16)

h. **Adequacy of culture information and skills**: this section covers the teachers' perception of the adequacy of culture related information and skills currently available in the syllabus (question 11)

i. **Quantity and quality of training**: this refers to the amount and nature of culture-related training received by teachers (question.14).

j. **Methods and techniques**: this refers to the methodology used in presenting cultural information and the reasons behind the avoidance of culture teaching in the language classroom (questions. 13& 15, 17)

The first five issues were selected because of the importance they are given in the literature pertaining to teaching English to young learners in other contexts reviewed in the introduction to this paper (Butler, 2009; Enever, 2009; Johnstone, 2009). The remaining four items were highlighted because of the special attention culture receives in the PNCC statement of objectives. Culture teaching is seen as an important means to enhancing motivation and promoting a positive attitude towards English and English speaking cultures as highlighted in the introduction to this paper.

Interview questions were phrased in Arabic (native language) and the participants were given the chance to write their responses in the same language (Arabic).

### Results and Discussion

The researchers noticed that teachers participating in the interview were highly motivated to communicate their perceptions and viewpoints with regard to the early start English curriculum. The researchers summarized the participants' responses towards general classroom issues under the five categories listed in a, b, c, d and e above. Additionally, special focus was laid upon perception of the importance of culture and culture learning as outlined in the issues, f, g, h and i above.

### The Teaching Learning Environment

**Age-related problems**

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By young learners the researchers mean students in the early elementary stage, particularly those in grades 1-4. The age of these students ranges from six to ten. As it has been mentioned in the introduction, prior to the year 2000, similar students would not have started learning English till they were officially in the fifth grade.

In their response to question 1 teachers focused on the problems involved in teaching this particular age group due to their special characteristics and learning style. Most teachers (75%) mentioned that the curriculum is so dense that the teacher can hardly provide additional opportunities for practice besides the content of the textbook itself. Teachers focused on the relative difficulties involved in explaining new concepts to young learners especially that these learners do not have the cognitive maturity of their older counterparts. In her analysis of the Turkish context, where teachers face analogous difficulties, Inal (2009) suggested that utilizing a multiple intelligences perspective and hands on experiences as well as using riddles, songs, games and craft activities could help young learners get engaged, thus overcoming the problems associated with boredom and distraction generally experienced in large classes.

Some participants in this study (47%) also added that they cannot send students with home assignments too often because most parents do not know English and the children themselves are too young to handle a language homework assignment on their own. From the perspective of teachers, this lack of additional practice leads to leaving the weaker or slower students behind. In their response to this question, some teachers also focused on the difficulty of doing much in a certain class period because children at this age have a "short attention span", cannot "stay focused for a lengthy time period", and they "get bored easily". Teachers face special discipline problems with young learners. Many teachers (82%) focused on the difficulty they face in trying to keep the classroom quiet. One teacher said: "I can't proceed in the material because with young learners I need to introduce the material, practice the language, teach them how to pronounce, how to hold the pencil and also I have to keep them quiet which is very difficult when you have forty students in a small classroom." Some teachers (35%) also mentioned that it is very difficult to get down to the students' level. In the words of one teacher" the kids do not understand my vocabulary, sentences or questions". Other teachers (10%) mentioned that it is difficult to convince the learners of the real value and importance of learning English in an EFL context that does not offer practical opportunities for using the language.

**L1 related problems**

In their response to questions 4 and 5 which focus on special difficulties that may be involved in teaching Palestinian students because of the nature of their L1 (Arabic), teachers focused mainly on issues related to pronunciation. Most teachers (92%) mentioned that some of the English phonemes that do not exist in Arabic such as /p/ and /v/ cannot be easily learned by young learners and that they keep mixing them with other close phonemes such as /b/ and /f/. Another problem mentioned by teachers (43%) is that of listening activities. Teachers have reported that most learners cannot understand listening assignments when played from the tape due to the special features of the speakers' accent which may be different from that of the teacher who is a nonnative speaker of the English language. Some teachers reported that they try to overcome the problem by reading the listening passage from the teacher's book. In the words of one teacher:" students cannot solve the listening questions unless I myself read the passage from the teacher's book: they say my language is easier than that of the speaker on the tape". Teachers also mentioned
that students suffer from many instances of L1 interference. Several teachers (13%) reported that when they ask students to write on the board a certain letter from the English language, learners sometimes write the Arabic version of the same letter, e.g., one student wrote ت on the board instead of "t". One should remember though that these young learners are also struggling with their native alphabet because they are learning it at the same time and the Arabic language has three graphemes for most letters, so letters assume different shapes depending on their position in the word. A letter like cihw ت corresponds to the English T has the following graphemes:

| مدرسة | سنة | فتاة | بنل | يابل | تَب |

Teachers also reported that older students, i.e., those in third and fourth grades open their books from right to left and write words from right to left in English classes and sometimes from left to right in Arabic classes.

**Classroom Circumstances**

Questions two and three covered issues related to the general classroom environment such as class size, number of students, number of class periods and availability of technological resources (see appendix B). Most teachers (98%) agreed that three classes per week are neither enough to cover the material nor do they allow for additional practice which is sometimes needed when the unit contains dense information or when some students who are characterized by slower learning rate seem to be falling behind. Almost all teachers (99%) agreed that the amount of time available does not allow for any additional practice or enrichment, an additional reason for making teachers stick to the content of the book in teaching. One teacher who has fifteen years of experience stressed the fact that he could never finish any of the textbook units on time. He always lags behind because, in his opinion, the activities seem to assume that classes contain smaller learner groups and thus, faster progression in covering the material is expected. Teachers also mentioned that students are not very efficient at this stage and a long time is wasted in getting everybody on track for any given activity, e.g., listening to tape while the books are open on the questions or going to the workbook smoothly, etc. Most participants (96%) agreed that the large number of students in the classroom (40+) creates discipline challenges for teachers. In the words of one teacher, "It is difficult to teach the students a new alphabet when I am trying to keep forty something students quiet and seated in their places especially in the first few weeks of the first grade". The large number of students does not provide them with enough opportunities to practice the language, in other words, not everybody gets the chance to talk when the class period is limited to a total of forty minutes. Enever and Moon (2009) argue that class size varies from country to another and within the country itself. Smaller class sizes (15 students) are found in the European context. In Asia and Africa the class size may rise to 50 students. These authors argue that the larger the class is the less willing teachers would be to use activity based, interactive methods, thus, compromising the ultimate level of proficiency those learners would reach in the target language.

As for the availability of technological devices and audiovisual aids, most teachers (93%) mentioned that the only audiovisual aids available are the flashcards and traditional tape recorders. Few teachers complained that even a simple piece of equipment such as a tape
The suitability of the communicative syllabus for the Palestinian educational context

Participants’ responses to question twelve reflect some of their classroom practices. Most teachers have argued that the principles of the communicative syllabus are neither adopted nor practiced in Palestinian classrooms due to the dense textbooks and other classroom circumstances. Large classes limit the students’ opportunity to participate and share in decision making. Palestinian teachers believe that it is essential for them to assume an authoritarian role in the classroom so as to maintain discipline in such large classes. They even argue that it is sometimes challenging to make the students respect each others’ opinions. Some teachers have argued that in order for the students to take part in decision making, they have to display a high level of proficiency. A weak student, in their opinion, cannot be an active participant in the educational process and he/she has to be guided by the experienced teacher.

Teacher training

The last two questions probed the issue of teacher training and whether teachers underwent special training geared towards teaching young learners. All participating teachers emphasized the fact that they did not get special training with regard to young learner issues and that all training focused on dealing with the various components of the new textbook *English for Palestine* which is currently implemented at all school levels. As for pre-service training teachers have not taken any college level methodology course that focuses on dealing with this special age group. Participants also reported that often female teachers (they usually outnumber their male counterparts) who have recently graduated from college are the ones placed as English teachers at the elementary stage at both boys and girls schools because –in the view of their supervisors- they lack the experience needed for dealing with older children and adolescents. This clearly means that aside from lacking training in teaching young learners, these new graduates lack any training related to teaching in general and are ironically placed in some of the most challenging circumstances in the system.

This situation is similar to the one described by Hill (1999) who reported that the majority of young learner teachers in the Italian context cited lack of training opportunities and little access to teaching materials and aids as the central concerns of young learner teachers. Similarly, several researchers argue that a huge gap exists between the number of qualified EFL teachers available and the growing demand for them in many countries around the world (Chodijah, 2008; Kgwadi, 2008; and Enever et al, 2008). This huge gap has lead to reliance upon newly graduates, secondary school teachers and teachers of other subjects, all of whom are not sufficiently trained to do the job of young learner teaching.

Long term effect

Most young learner teachers (97%) have agreed that learning English from an early age has a number of advantages such as providing learners with the opportunity to access the World Wide Web. Lengthy exposure to English, most of them believe, would lead to higher proficiency in English, which is the language of teaching in most disciplines at the college level. This view is consistent with the European Union policy which has mandated an Early Start for the first foreign language under the assumption that an early start would guarantee equal opportunity for all (Enever et. al, 2009). Previous results of empirical
research, however, have undermined the role an early start plays in the ultimate attainment the leaner achieves (Brustall, 1975; Harley, 1986; Singleton, 1989). Results of a similar study in the Palestinian context has clearly shown an advantage for late rather than Early starters in the areas of English reading comprehension and vocabulary achievement (Dwaik and Shehadeh, 2010). Singleton (1989) further argues that unlike natural settings school circumstances do not provide children with the amount of exposure needed for the early start advantage to appear.

After investigating some learner and classroom related variables that are believed to influence the execution of an early start program, the researchers probe in the next section a number of variables related to the teaching and perception of second language culture which is highly emphasized in the statement of curriculum goals highlighted earlier in this article.

**The Cultural Component**

**The Importance of Culture Learning**

In responding to questions ten and seventeen, 90% of the participants underscored the importance of culture learning, however upon analyzing their responses further the researchers found that their ideas fall under one of the following three categories:

1. Culture learning is essential for successful language learning and the issue of which culture to teach is irrelevant because all cultures are valuable (approximately 20% of participants)

2. Target culture learning is dangerous and it should be avoided. Attention in the classroom should be given to native culture norms and practices. Additionally, the syllabus is so dense that focus on additional issues (e.g. culture) may be time consuming (40%).

3. Some teachers focused on the value of incorporating information related to either the American culture because it is the one leading the globalization process (10%), or the British Culture because Britain is home to "authentic language use" and "representative cultural practices" (30%).

In their responses to question 17, which probes the possible influence of the students' attitude towards the target culture on their success in language acquisition, 80% argued that it would be impossible to learn a language without having a positive attitude towards the culture of its speakers. 20% of participants, however, argued that there are many examples of people who could master the target language despite their negative attitude towards its speakers. Those participants seem to believe that having a positive attitude towards the target culture entails relinquishing or looking down upon the learners' own native culture.

**The adequacy of culture related information and skills currently available in the syllabus**

In their response to question 11, one fifth (20%) of the study participants indicated that they believe that the cultural information contained in the syllabus is more than enough and that class time is barely sufficient for covering the essential elements of the syllabus. A very small percentage (3%) even believe that the English syllabus is loaded with target culture norms and skills which radically deviate from the students' Arab Islamic norms and values. On the other hand, 80% believe that the cultural information is not sufficient. They also argue that there is more focus on native culture than there is on any of the target cultures. Some teachers perceive this as a positive step taking into account the large number of students and the insufficient class periods (3-4 per week) which makes it
impossible to cover additional information pertaining to the target culture. Some teachers suggested adding other cultural elements related to social and political aspects as well as family entertainment, films and real life situations.

**Quantity and quality of culture-related training received by teachers**

Participants in the study indicated that they did not have the opportunity to participate in training workshops related to culture content and presentation methods and techniques. The workshops and training courses they have been to did not include any materials or sessions that cover this aspect. Participants who explained the reason for the lack of training programs said they have never been invited to participate in training programs that included culture teaching as a basic component. The Ministry, they indicated, is directly involved in the design and administration of in-service teacher training, a fact that reveals a huge gap between the Ministry's statement of goals and objectives on the one hand and the actual realization of these goals by teacher trainers on the other hand. This may explain why very few teachers incorporate target culture elements in classroom activities despite their deep awareness of the importance of cultural competence for the development of proficiency in the target culture.

In her exploration of the Turkish context, Inal (2009) argues that lack of training or guidance related to teaching culture has left most teachers underequipped to incorporate culture learning within the context of language learning. As for which culture to teach, participants in her study seemed to focus on native speaker cultures or the cultures of core English speaking countries such as the United States and Britain.

**Methods and techniques used in presenting cultural information and reasons behind the avoidance of culture teaching in the language classroom**

When asked about the methods and techniques used for presenting cultural information (questions 13, 15 and 17), most teachers (91%) indicated that they use the cultural concept as a point of departure for presenting related notions and functions, e.g., dinner time is used to teach the students "telling time" in the target language. Some focused on the importance of activating background knowledge and relating new information to the students' native culture by adopting a comparative approach. It was clear, however, that teachers adopt a solely informational approach to the teaching and learning of culture. Some teachers even argued that they would use the newly introduced cultural concept to solicit students' opinions about it, a practice that may result in trapping students in their own cultural norms instead of motivating them and enhancing a positive perception and attitude towards the target culture. Researchers have also noticed that pair and group work are missing in the teachers' reports about their classroom practices.

As for the reasons behind avoiding the teaching of culture, most teachers (91%) agreed that the main reason behind this avoidance is the lack of information about the target culture(s) as well as the lack of clarity as to the appropriate methodology and techniques that may be utilized. Some also argued that culture is a thorny issue especially when the target culture norms contradict those dominant in the native culture. This situation of teaching culture is very gloomy taking into account the great attention such a component receives in the general and specific objectives of the Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines. It also reminds us with the importance of teacher training in general and its critical importance when we consider the issue of culture.
Conclusion, Recommendations and Implications

Learning English at an early age in the Palestinian context entails many challenges for both teachers and students. The ambitious objectives stated by the Palestinian Curriculum Center stand in sharp contrast with the reality on the ground, a situation experienced in many other parts of the world where early start programs have been launched with some pre-planning yet with plenty of aspirations and hope. Large classes, the diglossic nature of L1, lack of appropriate and specific teacher training, and the teachers' perception of communicative language teaching and intercultural understanding are all issues that need to be further addressed by researchers and pondered upon more carefully by educators and decision makers in contexts with parallel socioeconomic and educational circumstances. Additionally, young learner teachers should be encouraged to conduct action research and other forms of teacher generated research so as to tackle specific issues in the classroom and to complement results reached by other researchers around the globe.

The researchers recommend that Ministries of Education in Palestine and in other Arab contexts conduct special training workshops for young learner teachers to ensure equipping such teachers with proper methodologies to handle this special age group in terms of the features and needs of their age, their ability to adapt to classroom circumstances and their competence in L1. Moreover classroom size and the number of English periods per week need to be re-evaluated by decision makers to make sure the reality on the ground does not hinder the achievement of the stated objectives.

Finally, Early start English programs need to undergo continuous evaluation to rephrase objectives, improve classroom practices and exchange experiences across similar contexts around the world.

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Appendix A

1. Developing a positive attitude towards the target language, and the importance of leaning it.
2. Developing empathy toward the target language.
3. Recognizing typical behaviors in common everyday situations in the target culture.
4. Recognizing cultures of the target language and their contributions to society.
5. Fostering respect for self and others and building relationships.
6. Providing opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of social and political conflicts in a variety of contexts and how to respond to them positively and creatively.
7. Develop a knowledge, appreciation and understanding of interdependence, continuity, and change in the social and cultural process as it relates to individuals, families, local communities, and other wider world.
8. Build understanding of, and sensitivity towards, own and other cultural traditions.
9. Develop an appreciation of shared and distinct characteristics of Palestinian and other cultures.
10. Encourage students to actively participate in and make recognizable and appreciable contributions in the quest to build, reinforce, and refine human civilization.

Appendix B
Interview Question
(The Teaching/Learning Environment)

Dear Participant,
The interview questions that follow have been designed by a Palestinian curriculum development team to solicit teacher feedback with regard to the teaching/learning environment(s) supporting the new curriculum. Please provide enough reasons, explanations, illustrations, and examples to make your views clear to the curriculum designers. Any responses you provide will be kept confidential and will be used anonymously for research purposes only. Your help is greatly appreciated.

I Personal Data
Gender
M                    F
Grades taught (circle all applicable) 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th
Education
Diploma          BA          MA
School location
City           Village          Ref. Camp
Years of experience
1-5          6-10          10+

II The Teaching/learning environment
1. Based on your experience as a teacher of English to young learners (grades 1-4), what are some of the problems you face when dealing with this age group (possibly as compared with older learners)?
2. Do you think classroom circumstances are conducive to teaching young learners (technology, class size, visual aids, etc.)? How important are these factors in determining the overall achievement of young learners?
3. Are three English sessions per week enough for covering the required materials? Why/why not?
4. Do Palestinian students face special difficulties in learning English because their first language is Arabic? How? Give specific examples.
5. How is the early teaching of English influencing the students' achievement in their first language (Arabic)? Remember that Arab students start learning a new form of Arabic (standard) as they enter school.
6. Does the early teaching of English provide students with better opportunities to utilize modern technology such as computers and the World Wide Web? Do you consider this to be a positive or a negative influence?
7. How is the teaching of English influencing the students' attitude towards their native language (Arabic)?
8. Do you think that early English teaching will help in increasing the students' motivation towards learning English? How?
9. Have you received any training regarding methods, techniques, principles of teaching English to young learners? If yes, give an overview of the content of these workshops or training sessions.

III The Cultural Component
10. Is it important for young learners to become familiar with the target culture(s) (the culture of English speaking countries and communities)? If so, which culture (e.g. American, British, Canadian, other...) should they be familiarized with? Why?
11. Does the syllabus contain enough information/practice regarding the target culture(s)? What aspects (social, political, family, film, entertainment, etc.) do you think should be added?
12. The communicative approach was born in a historical period (1960s) that witnessed the flourishing of democratic values in Western cultures, specifically in the American culture. Do you believe that the tenets, practices, and techniques borrowed from that framework work effectively in a more authority-oriented setting such as the Arab culture, e.g., learner-centered teaching, shared authority/decision making, role play and group work.
13. What kinds of difficulties do you face in teaching the target culture?
14. Have you participated in training workshops that deal with culture teaching? If not, please indicate reasons. If yes, give a quick overview of their content.

15. How do you introduce a concept such as "dinnertime", "coeducation," (as it shows in pictures throughout the textbooks), “Christmas”, or "circus" for instance? You can pick one of these concepts and talk about it.

16. If the students have a positive attitude towards the target culture, will they attain higher levels of proficiency in the target language? Please explain your response.

17. Previous research has shown that language teachers avoid teaching cultural items either because: 1. they think cultural information is superfluous and it can be acquired "later" after the essential grammar and vocabulary had been mastered, or 2. because they do not know enough about the target culture to be able to teach it, or 3. because culture teaching involves dealing with the students' attitudes "a somewhat threatening, hazy, and unquantifiable area" Galloway (1985). Which among these three reasons applies in your case and in the case of teachers you know? Are there other reasons?
Perspective Speaking Difficulties Faced by Omani Students: Empirical Data on Self-Perception

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Abstract
This research aims at identifying the main learning difficulties in speaking English faced by a selected cross-section of Omani EFL students. It seeks to establish student self-perception of their own difficulties based on a questionnaire survey. Three research questions were investigated: (1) what are the students’ attitudes towards speaking in English? (2) what are the most common speaking English difficulties encountered by Omani students as they perceive this? (3) are there any significant differences in such difficulties according to gender and education system? The study sample consisted of 200 students, divided into 100 male and 100 female from grades 10 and 11, Basic Education and General Education schools. A 30-item questionnaire was developed and administered. The study identified the main learning difficulties in English speaking as perceived by the students. It was found that there were no significant differences between students in their attitudes toward speaking according to their gender and education type. The data also suggested that students in general find it especially difficult to speak English. Based on this, a systematic analysis was carried out which resulted in 17 speaking sub-skills that needed to be addressed while improving this skill. Student perceptions of the most difficult sub-skills were also analysed according to gender and education type. Some key limitations of the study are broached.

Keywords: TEFL, speaking difficulties, self-perception
Introduction

It is a truism in TESOL that speaking is one of the most fundamental skills in the acquisition of English as an additional language, and in many “social ecologies of learning” (Leather, and Van Dam, 2002), it is among the weakest and most problematic skills for most students to master. As the main channel for verbal communication, all learners need this skill to successfully express their thoughts, ideas and feelings, and interact socially. In addition, the significance of speaking as an essential skill for successful acquisition of English as a second language stems from the fact that this skill is used intensively in most ESL classrooms. Teachers generally view student speaking skills as an indicator that can provide evidence for student progress in ESL learning in addition to other productive skills such as writing. Nonetheless, in many ecologies of teaching, the speaking skill is often not assessed, and students quickly recognize they will be given grades mainly on their performance in written examinations. Generally, that has also been true in Oman, despite changes in the syllabus introduced more recently.

Literature review

Despite of the fact that speaking is considered one of the most crucial language skills, many students have major problems in mastering even the basics of this important language skill. A significant percentage of learners in schools across the globe, rural and urban, face obstacles in using oral language. This can hinder their progress and exclude them gradually from the procedure of learning because they fail in fulfilling the basic requirements of successful communication during the English lessons. This is the situation across much of the Gulf region, where Oman is located, and elsewhere in Asia, such as China and rural and working-class urban India (Potts, 2011). In China, teachers report that “Mute English” is recognized as an entrenched norm (Qiang, and Wolff, 2010), and students have little practice either in speaking or listening, nor are their speaking ability seriously tested. In India, students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, especially in rural ecologies of instruction, likewise face formidable obstacles learning English, especially listening and speaking skills, as reflected in Andhra Pradesh (Yellapu, 2010). Miller (2010), commenting on China, notes a situation also found in many teaching ecologies elsewhere, including in our experience on the Gulf:

There has never been a speaking component in their exams. Rote learning is overwhelmingly the norm and in situations […], students attempt to memorize what they anticipate will be tested. This is also the case with the IELTS speaking exam.

Some educators attribute this deficiency in using oral language successfully and effectively by our students in ESL classrooms to students’ failure in acquiring the basic skills for dynamic oral communication, such as maintaining listening skills and proper usage of words (Miller, 2010). Others explain such awkward performance of oral communication by pointing to the lack of sufficient focus on developing the ways in which basic speaking strategies are taught by some teachers. This because acquisition of speaking strategies is often not formally tested, unlike other communicative strategies such as the writing strategies. In addition, some ascribe the lack of effective use of oral language in EFL classes to the shortage in some teachers' efforts to facilitate the development of students' oral language and also in providing real opportunities for students to practice and use oral language. Yellapu (2010) comments on ELT in Andhra Pradesh state in southern India and the neglect of speaking there:

The students of Andhra Pradesh have been tutored and trained well enough in reading and writing for long ages. But Listening and Speaking skills which play a
greater role in communication have been neglected and ignored. Thus our educational system lacks an important dimension. It enables the students to concentrate on reading and writing only. The final examination does also test them mainly on how good their memory is. The examinations are not language-oriented.

Another barrier is of course the weaker speaking proficiency of some teachers, who then treat English more as a passive skill for reading, some listening, and mastery of grammar, as in Thailand (Foley, 2005) much of China (Qiang, and Wolff, 2010; Miller, 2010), and across working-class and rural India (Yellapu, 2010).

Speaking is a cooperative activity which is based on the effective interaction between people and time. The effective interaction between the hearer and speaker fosters the use of some cooperative communication strategies which help both, the speaker and the hearer, to deliver and to receive the message appropriately. Such opportunities can be provided by creating a stimulating classroom environment which encourages students to speak more and provide students with a good quality of speaking tasks that give them the chance for constant practice of everyday language. In Oman, one can hear frequent complaints by parents and educators that students, after studying English for 12 years, are still unable to speak confidently.

No doubt some of this is directly associated with what Krashen (1982, 30-32) called the “affective filter,” which at the level of emotion acts as a brake on student output, making them reluctant to speak, and destroying their own self-confidence. Without some self-confidence, no student will find the courage to speak freely in a classroom, let alone with strangers on the street. Students shyer or weaker in proficiency may be reluctant to attempt to speak altogether, or interact in spoken forms with others in the classroom. Their honest hesitation or sharp desire to “save face” in many Asian and traditional cultures (Adamson, 2005) can be overcome in part by fostering a more cooperative, collaborative framework, through working in peer groups.

The current study seeks to gather empirical data on how Omani high school students actually perceive their own difficulties in learning to speak. Approaches need, we feel, to be guided by an “ecological” approach to second-language acquisition and what goes on in syllabi and classrooms, one which in research “sees the individual’s cognitive processes as inextricably interwoven with their experiences in the physical and social world” (Leather, and Van Dam, 2002, 13). Crucial, we feel, is empirical input from various “social ecologies of learning,” and especially in the Gulf teaching environments, where ELT has often neglected active speaking skills, input that reflects the “learners’ voices,” often silenced in many studies.

Research objectives

This research is aimed at investigating the speaking difficulties faced by students who study English as a foreign language as they perceive them. It offers a preliminary, small-scale empirical study that can serve as a first model for more extensive research in Oman and the region. The application of such data is to improve the speaking syllabus, in line with needs as perceived by actual learners. It also offers some relevant information about the nature of English speaking sub-skills. It is hoped that after diagnosing the main English speaking difficulties faced by EL learners, this can help decision makers to consider such difficulties in overcoming this deficiency in planning new curricula and experimenting with revised syllabi and methods. Moheidat and Baniabdelrahman (2011) stress that student input and active involvement, for example in self-assessment, is especially important for Omani English language teaching. This research seeks to provide answers to the following questions:
1. What are the students’ specific attitudes towards speaking in English?
2. What are the most common speaking difficulties faced by Omani students as they perceive them?
3. Are there any significant differences in these difficulties according to gender and education system?

Recognition of the importance of the role which effective speaking plays in enhancing English language acquisition suggests that student perception of their own difficulties needs to be empirically examined, and used as input for redesigning syllabi and experimenting with new strategies for learning. A key question is whether any of these difficulties are gendered, since this may be an important factor in learning the active communicative skills. The issue of the difficulties in speaking in English has escalated dramatically in the educational field in Oman recently, as elsewhere under the impact of communication online, social media, globalization and other factors of technological change. Yellapu (2010) calls attention to this in the southern Indian context. However, many students in our schools still struggle to learn this fundamental language skill. The present study provides fresh data on the types of difficulties students face while speaking in English in order to better address how to find the most effective solutions for such difficulties.

Methodology
The English language speaking needs here refer to the needs of the students to acquire the activities and sub-activities, skills and sub-skills which characterize the students’ use of the English language in the English language speaking tasks in Omani schools. This is passed on a cognitive framework for teaching language that is, it focuses on what the learners bring to the learning process such as prior knowledge, skills, needs, wants, and so forth (Al-Husseini, 2004). The investigation considers three different topics which are components of speaking difficulty analysis: the attitudes towards speaking English in post-basic classes, the students’ needs and difficulties they face while speaking in English and the language activities and sub-activities skills and sub-skills needed to speak in English.

Participants
A random sampling technique was used to select 200 EFL divided into four groups from grades 10 and 11 as in table 1. The random student groups were withdrawn from four different schools from AlShargyeh South in Oman. These groups were assigned as follows:
1. EFL students grade 10 basic
2. EFL students grade 10 general
3. EFL students grade 11 basic
4. EFL students grade 11 general

Table 1: The distribution of the study sample by grade, gender and educational type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 10</th>
<th>Grade 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of involving these four different sources of information is to make the data gathered more authentic, valid and relevant to the objectives of the current study. Porcher (1983) comments that it is absolutely fundamental to have a maximum number of sources of information in needs analysis. This will make it possible to have as much and varied information as possible. Although the research literature provides no specific percentage of participants that can be considered a sufficient (Al-Husseini, 2004; Shuja'a, 2004), using a relatively large number of participants is the rationale for this study.

As to the specific features or key characteristics shared of Omani EFL students, all schools adopt the same language program. In other words, they have the same course books, assessment style, resources, and so forth. The students share the same background characteristics. They are for example, Omani, boys and girl, aged between 16 to 18 years, in grades 10 and 11. They can represent the others in terms of philosophy, contents, objectives, needs, and students.

**Questionnaires**

The current study used questionnaires to collect information from students in the Omani public schools. Questionnaires are widely used in educational researches as a technique to identify attitudes and perceptions. The student survey is in Arabic for one main reason. The statements included are difficult and responding to them in English might make it more complex for students to fully grasp the intent of the survey. The questionnaires were first written in English and then translated into Arabic. Two procedures are taken to ensure the accuracy of the translation. First, the source version of the questionnaires is translated into Arabic and then the Arabic version is translated back into English by the researcher and other people who were familiar with English and Arabic. The back translation is for two purposes, to ensure that the original intent of the source questionnaire is perceived and to make a comparison between the Arabic and English versions. Necessary changes were made to the questionnaires.

The students’ questionnaires consist of three sections. Section 1 collects demographic information, where students are asked to supply information about their gender, school type, region, and class. Section 2 is related to the students’ purpose and attitudes. The participants are provided with three statements regarding their attitudes towards the current English curriculum and studying science in English. They have to choose from a three point scale (agree, neutral and disagree). Section 3 includes the difficulties of speaking in English. These data are based on self-reporting by students on the type and frequency of speaking activities, skills and sub-skills that they practice. The skills are chosen for their documented importance in the skill literature. There are 30 items representing activities, skills and sub-skills and students are asked to indicate on a scale how difficult each item is perceived to be. In developing this list, we consulted the following studies: sufficient (Al-Husseini, 2004; Shuja’a, 2004; Graves, 2000), and the experience of one of the authors (S.H.S.) in Oman as an English language regional supervisor.

**Piloting the questionnaire**

Before piloting the questionnaire, it had gone through a pre-piloting stage where it was distributed among three ELT specialists in the Ministry of Education. Their contribution was to comment on the language of the students’ questionnaire and its suitability for the language competence of grade 11 of Omani post-basic education students. They were also requested to comment on the design and its fitness. They advised to simplify the language and explain some
of the terms used in the questionnaire. The overall outcome of this pre-piloting step was more simplification of the items involved in the questionnaire. The pilot study was carried out in Al-Sharqyeh South region.

Almost 20 students were randomly selected for piloting the questionnaire from one school. Students were given the Arabic version of the questionnaire. The researcher himself administered the pilot run to the piloting sample to gather information regarding the time it took the students to complete the questions, the clarity of the instruction, the ambiguity of the questionnaire items, requirement to include new topics, and the difficulties encountered in questionnaire adaptation. The pilot questionnaires were collected back immediately. The pilot run gave the research useful hints and clues to discover loopholes and inaccuracies in the questionnaire.

Data analysis
As to the questionnaires, descriptive and inferential statistical were used to answer the research questions by implementing the SPSS software. The descriptive statistics were used to indicate the percentage and the frequency distribution of the respondents’ answers. Measures of central tendencies (mean and median) and independent sample t-test were used to analyze the data for the research questions.

Results
In what follows, the findings and the analyses are organized according to the research questions.

Students’ Attitudes towards Speaking In English
Students’ attitudes towards speaking in English, as in the first research question are analyzed using the answers means and standard deviation to find out the majority perceptions regarding this skill. In the questionnaire, students were asked to choose from a self reported three scales (1= agree; 2= neutral; 3= disagree). The findings as in Table 2 are described on a contrastive base in order to have a clearer idea of the differences between students according to gender and education type.

Table 2: Students’ attitudes towards speaking according to gender and education type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>According to Gender</th>
<th>According to Education type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is very important to improve my speaking skill.</td>
<td>Male 1.77 .703</td>
<td>Basic 1.75 .061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female 1.56 .641</td>
<td>General 1.52 .084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I face difficulties to speak English.</td>
<td>Male 1.96 .710</td>
<td>Basic 1.81 .063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female 1.85 .635</td>
<td>General 1.09 .077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t get good chances in class to practise speaking.</td>
<td>Male 1.41 .658</td>
<td>Basic 1.25 .053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female 1.08 .346</td>
<td>General 1.24 .055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A close look at Table 2 reveals that students have positive attitudes towards the current English language program in Grades 10 and 11. It was found that there are no big differences between male and female means in their attitudes toward speaking skill. Female students are very cautious about improving their English speaking skills as their mean is 1.56, which is higher than the males’ 1.77. Both genders reported that they face difficulties when trying to speak in English. The results also show that female students ($M = 1.04$) compared to male students ($1.41$)...
feel that they do not get enough chances to practice speaking in English, and are in general more concerned about their weak proficiency in speaking. This is in agreement with Tella1, Indoshi, and Othuon, (2011) who found that their secondary school students (n = 584) also had positive attitudes towards the English curriculum in Kenya.

Speaking Difficulties Faced by Omani Students

Table 2 provides a distinction between students’ perception according to their education type (basic and general). The General Education system is the former educational system in Oman that has gradually been replaced by Basic Education. It was found there are no significant differences between students’ attitudes according to their education type. A few differences were deduced between General Education students’ mean (1.09) agreeing that they face difficulties when speaking in English, whereas Basic Education students seem to be more neutral when responding to that statement.

One of the most important intentions of the present research is to provide a systematic analysis of the skills and sub-skills needed while speaking in English (the second research question). It was achieved by providing students with a list of speaking sub-skills or activities in order to indicate the ones that hinder them from speaking fluently. This can help in directing teachers’ attention to their students’ needs to help them master this skill successfully. Analysing student data based on a self-report scale (1= I don’t face difficulty, 2= difficult and 3 = very difficult), the findings show that students faced difficulties doing some activities. Table 3 orders all the activities included in the questionnaire from the least difficult sub-skills to the most difficult. The statements are ordered in a descending order based on the mean values. Statements whose means are (2.00) and above are the difficult activities students face while speaking

Table 3: Speaking difficult according to students' perception.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q8</td>
<td>Express likes and dislikes.</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q1</td>
<td>Give personal information.</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q7</td>
<td>Compare between two things.</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q6</td>
<td>Describe pictures.</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q2</td>
<td>Describe people, animals and places.</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q5</td>
<td>Give directions.</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q20</td>
<td>Ignore being worry about committing mistakes.</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>.731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q4</td>
<td>Respond to questions.</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q21</td>
<td>Develop appropriate singular and plural verbs.</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q30</td>
<td>Feel confident while speaking.</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q23</td>
<td>Talk about past events.</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>.724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q13</td>
<td>Express agreements and disagreements.</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q24</td>
<td>Talk about future.</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q17</td>
<td>Summarize information I have read about.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q29</td>
<td>Use the appropriate pronoun in English.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q9</td>
<td>Justify my choices.</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q22</td>
<td>Clarify my message to be obvious.</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q26</td>
<td>Use the appropriate words.</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>1.567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q10</td>
<td>Express my opinion.</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q14</td>
<td>Talk about my feelings. (happiness, anger)</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q27</td>
<td>Translate some ideas from Arabic to English.</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.657</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perspective Speaking Difficulties
Al-Saadi, Tonawanik & Al Harthy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Gender differences</th>
<th>Education type differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q19 Confront others.</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>.680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q28 Use the right intonation, patterns in the second language.</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q18 Link the topic I am speaking about to my previous knowledge.</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q25 Use the right tense.</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>.697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q12 Make suggestions.</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q11 Give advice</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q15 Convince others about my opinion.</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q16 Support my speech with examples.</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q3 State simple facts. (scientific facts )</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>.681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Independent Samples t-Test results
Discussion

The findings of the present study support the study hypothesis that there are no markedly significant differences between students in their perception of the speaking skill difficulty according to gender or school type. Both genders agreed that they face difficulties while doing any speaking tasks. It was also found that female respondents tend to have more a positive attitude toward the importance of improving this skill and also want more options during English classes to improve their speaking competency. This may be attributed to a tendency among female students to care more than males about their study progress.

No significant differences were found in relation to the educational system (basic or general), so according to the limited sample of this study, students in both systems generally have the same attitudes regarding speaking difficulties. This can be attributed to the fact that although the educational change happening in Oman tackled all different subjects, the English language shows no clear differences in the student perceptions of their language difficulties.

The findings also provide systematic analysis of the skills and sub-skills needed to improve speaking skills in English by identifying the most difficult sub-skills according to student perception of needs. Table 8 includes all the skills and sub-skills needed to be addressed in any course designed to master these skill successfully as students investigated perceive them.

Table 5: Skills and the sub-skills students need while speaking in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summarize information they have read about.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the appropriate pronoun in English.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justify their choices.</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify their message to be obvious.</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the appropriate words.</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express opinion.</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about feelings. (happiness, anger)</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translate some ideas from Arabic to English.</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confront others.</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the right intonation, patterns in the second language.</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link the topic they are speaking about to their previous knowledge.</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the right tense.</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make suggestions.</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give advice</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convince others about their opinion.</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support their speech with examples.</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State simple facts. (scientific facts)</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above skills are out of a total of 30 “I can” sub-skills presented to students to choose from. This finding is helpful to direct attention and teachers and syllabus designers to the most important and needed skills students feel they need to master during any speaking sections.

Table 6: Statements with gender differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q1</td>
<td>Give personal information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q2</td>
<td>Describe people, animals and places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q4</td>
<td>Respond to questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q6</td>
<td>Describe pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q8</td>
<td>Express likes and dislikes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q17</td>
<td>Summarize information I have read about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q18</td>
<td>Link the topic I am speaking about to my previous knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q25</td>
<td>Use the right tense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q26</td>
<td>Use the appropriate words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q27</td>
<td>Translate some ideas from Arabic to English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q30</td>
<td>Develop appropriate singular and plural verbs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Studying the differences between the two genders in term of the needed skills, Table 6 shows the statements that have significant differences between male and female in their perceptions of speaking difficulties because their significant level is less than .05.

Table 7: Statements with educational type differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q1</td>
<td>Give personal information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q5</td>
<td>Give directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q6</td>
<td>Describe pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q14</td>
<td>Talk about my feelings. (happiness, anger)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings included in Table 4 demonstrate that students in both education type (basic and general) face the same problems, so there are no significant differences between the two education types. The statements in Table 7 are the only ones which represent slight differences between the two systems, though it is difficult to generalize based on these data.

Conclusion

The study was carried out in only two grade levels in four schools in the rural environment of AlSharqyeh South in Oman. These students may represent a particular social and socioeconomic background. That needs further empirical research. Do students from other more rural and perhaps traditional social ecologies of learning Leather, and Van Dam, (2002) in Oman have different attitudes toward English, especially the speaking skill? How proficient are the teachers in speaking, and how did this affect the teaching situation? How many opportunities do students have to speak English with tourists and others outside the school? If extremely limited, this is an
important factor in motivation that should be taken into account. Do these pupils have ex-pat “native speaker” teachers in any of the schools? In some countries, like Thailand, such international teachers are becoming quite common in many secondary schools, even in smaller cities. Should the Omani government be considering a program that would bring more such teachers into the basic schools at secondary level? This study has not looked at that question. Krashen (1997, 46-47) stresses that extensive reading is a key way to overcome the lack of teachers with good speaking proficiency in school classrooms in many countries. He also recommends “narrow listening” of recorded mini-lectures and discussions using native speakers as a “low-tech, inexpensive way to obtain comprehensible input” and “an easy way to get to know speakers of other languages” (p. 18).

How much free voluntary and extensive reading do students do? Krashen (1997, 40-46,47) has argued that this is the single most important component even in learning to speak. Are these students being encouraged by their teachers to engage in more extensive reading and free voluntary reading Krashen (1997, 26-35), and do they have access to materials for this purpose? Do students have access to easier reading material in large amounts (graded and levelled readers, for example) in their schools, or available at bookstores in their city. Can they afford such storybooks in English? What are the career objectives of students, which may be crystallizing and play a role in motivation toward learning English, especially speaking skills? Some who may want to work in tourism or the hotel industry will be more motivated to learn to speak than others. The study has not looked at that. What is the role of “affective filters” (Krashen, 1982 30-32) in shaping student “shyness” and reluctance to speak despite their interest to do so? The study has not explored this.

Some of the above aspects can be brought into a further follow-up study and similar research elsewhere in Omani learning ecologies for English. Important is to see how specific strategies connected with more communicative teaching as introduced by the Ministry in 2006-2007 have impacted on the teaching of the speaking skill and its sub-skills. What does in fact work? And can student perception studies such as these provide input which can then be tested, and student response to these changes elicited? Are there significant gender differences that can be focused on in further research? This is an important question across the entire Arabian Gulf region, where their construction of female identity is distinctive and influenced by cultural factors of some significance.

The Voice of America Special English site provides a storehouse of texts for easier reading and listening at low-intermediate level. One hypothesis is that extensive work with Special English can definitely improve speaking proficiency and listening skills (Templer, 2008). That needs to be tested in the Omani context of learning, perhaps looking at a number of the sub-skills determined here as significant for students by their own perception.

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References
Evaluative Clues in Academic English

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Abstract
The centrality of evaluation has been investigated mainly in genre studies, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and text linguistics as, for example, in: Aijmer (2005), Mauranen (2004), Stubbs (2001), and Swales (2004). The present study focuses on evaluation, in particular Research-Oriented Evaluation as defined by Thetela (1997). The methodology is primary a corpus-based approach. Data for the present investigation are drawn from a corpus of 1,035 research article abstracts (about 200,000 words) from two disciplines in two scientific international journals: The International Journal of Primatology (hereafter IJP) and Mathematics and Computers in Simulation (hereafter MCS). The present paper has attempted through a collocational analysis to investigate the linguistic resources of a precise type of evaluation which occurs with specific words, defined in this study as ‘research process words’. Results of the present analysis support the hypothesis that evaluation is genre specific and embodies interactions between writers and readers, regardless of the discipline. Precise lexical choices and words appear to be more frequent than others. However, textual analysis and identification of evaluation pose serious problems to the methodological approach, especially with the application of computer-assisted analytic techniques in academic arguments.

Keywords: Corpus-based studies, Text analysis, Corpus Assisted discourse studies, Evaluation, Genre analysis.
Introduction

Evaluative lexis studies

The rhetorical phenomenon of evaluation has been defined in various ways, simply Evaluation (Hunston and Thompson 2000), Appraisal (Martin 2000), Stance (Biber and Finegan 1989, Hyland 1999) and Interpersonal Metadiscourse (Crismore 1989, Hyland 2000).

The present research paper aims at providing an account of evaluation in research article abstracts, following Hunston and Thompson terminology, combining corpus analysis with discourse analysis, trying to integrate a corpus-based research with a manual text analysis. It, therefore, includes quantitative calculations of the distribution of evaluation, and qualitative comments on their discourse functions.

The starting point for this study is a simple consideration about genre, that is, research article abstract is an evaluative genre per definition (cf. Bhatia 1993 and Swales 1990). As Mauranen (2004, p. 207) quoting Hyland suggests: “[...] evaluation is an interesting phenomenon, being a central aspect of what academics do. We do not get published if we only present results, we also have to evaluate”. Nevertheless, not all disciplines are evaluative in the same way; science is claimed to be objective and especially mathematics is the most objective subject according to Bazerman (1988). However, Hunston (1993, 1994) has demonstrated how experimental research papers are fully evaluative. She claims that academic and scientific writing work in the value system of ‘good research’, which means that even if the markers of attitudinal lexis (attributes such as good and successful) are missing, the writers’ attitudes to the value of their research are clear, the intent is to present something positive and successful to their discourse community.

In academic writing, particularly in science, knowledge claims are built; in such context the central function of evaluation is to assess the degree of certainty that can be attached to each part of the knowledge claims. Researchers as well as scientists are expected to convey their findings with an high degree of certainty. In experimental research article the phenomenon of evaluation, as suggested by Hunston, is quite predictable because only specific features (e.g. experimental method, the author’s results and conclusions) can be evaluated and only in a certain way in terms of goal achievement or non-achievement. Something that is good helps to achieve a goal, while something that is bad prevents the achievement of a precise goal. Generally, evaluation is triggered by a term but it does refer to another one. There is a distinction between the evaluated entity and the ascribed value that is, as suggested by Tethela (1997), between Research-Oriented Evaluation (ROE) and Topic-Oriented Evaluation (TOE). In detail, when we encounter the pattern: ‘X [the research] is seen [by the writer/s] as Y’ this is ROE. The difference between TOE and ROE can be sketched out as ‘the writer observing the world’ versus ‘the writer observing the research’. In the latter, the writer interacts with his/her discourse community by reporting his/her research or experiment. On the contrary, in the former the researcher observes the real world, and his/her point of view, even if evaluative, cannot affect the real world. This feature implies that ROE engages the writer and the reader on an exchange and negotiation of perspectives, while in TOE the writer reports the ‘real word’ without building up justifications or interpretations. This distinction can be noticed in the following two excerpts from the International Journal of Primatology:
1. I provide the first comprehensive data on the composition and mineral content. (5_IJP)
2. Adaptive advantages of killing plausibly include eliminating resource competitors of females, and sexual selection on males. (2_IJP).

In the former excerpt an aspect of the research process is evaluated, an example of ROE, while, in the latter the ‘static’ aspect (the topic) is evaluated, a clear example of TOE. In the present investigation, the focus is on ROE rather than on TOE. Hunston, (1993, p. 58) defines evaluation “as anything which indicates the writer’s attitude to the value of an entity in the text”. This assessment does not refer to a ‘personal’ value system but rather to an established or institutional value system. In particular, in scientific writing what counts is the ‘evaluation of value’ which denotes quality on the good/bad scale (Hunston 1993, p. 60). “Research articles often posit hypotheses whose value is then evaluated according to whether the hypotheses are supported or not” (Hunston 1993, p. 63). The evaluation of value usually takes place through lexis expressing accuracy, consistency, verity, simplicity, usefulness, reliability or importance, which renders the other language items traditionally regarded as evaluative redundant. In scientific writing the expression of value is often inexplicit however we can perceive the good or bad as depending on the goal of the activity. As already mentioned, something that helps the researcher to achieve a goal is good, while something that prevents or hinders the achievement of a precise goal is bad.

In the present investigation, the focus is on evaluative lexis related to aspects of the research process and emphasis is on evaluation of value.

**Corpus Linguistics studies**

In the present investigation, corpus methodology is used to analyse the data, concordances and collocational tools are used to provide semantic profiles of specific words highlighting connotational differences, and textual analysis is used to identify how evaluation is introduced in the vicinity of specific words. Hence, the hypothesis to test is whether evaluated entities in research article abstracts collocate with precise terms or group of terms.

With regard to the methodology is concerned, the present study can be defined as a corpus-based study with the purposes of verifying some discourse characteristic of evaluation in a specific genre. Corpus Linguistics investigations, as Tognini-Bonelli (2001) suggests, can be performed according to a corpus-based or a corpus-driven approach. In a corpus-driven approach specific evidence is provided by the corpus itself, the methodological path can be described as ‘observation leads to hypothesis leads to generalisation leads to unification in theoretical statement’ (Tognini-Bonelli 2001, p. 85).

On the other hand, features of a corpus-based approach are concerned with the researcher testing a theory or having compiled corpora for the purposes of verifying some discourse characteristic in a body of data that allows quantitative generalizations to be made.

However, to conduct a significant corpus-based analysis of a discourse strategy, such as evaluation, it is necessary that the corpus takes into account not only frequent occurrences but the entire texts or longer stretches of texts, because evaluation shows ‘context-dependent polysemous functionality’ (cf. White 2001, p. 18). To perform a correct evaluative analysis, a wider context must consequently be included. The context in which words are inevitably attested, represents examples of a particular linguistic phenomenon and suggests discourse-linguistic perspectives.

Starting elements in the present analysis are words or as Sinclair (2004) suggests lexical items. It is not always possible to tell whether a lexical item is evaluated as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ without going back to the original text. Thus collecting instances of the same word,
phrase or construction for the purposes of quantifying its frequency can cause a misinterpretation
of the data and the risk of treating as equivalent instances lexical items that, in fact, have quite
different and perhaps opposite evaluative values in different discourse contexts. For instance, in
mathematics, the term *optimization* refers to the study of problems in which one seeks to
minimize or maximize a real function by precise operations. There is no evaluative meaning
implied. On the contrary, in a general context, *optimization* is semantically similar to
*improvement*.

Thus, it is often necessary to refer to the text itself to see how the citations fit into the
writer’s wider rhetorical purposes (Hunston and Thompson 2000). Evaluation is not only a
lexical phenomenon but it is built in the text and builds the text as a means of cohesion, it is a
multifunctional phenomenon because it can be used simultaneously to express the writer’s
opinion, to construct relations between the writer and the reader, and to organize the text
(Hunston and Thompson 2000 and Thompson and Ye 1991). Amongst several corpus-based
investigations of evaluation, the analysis performed by Hunston (2004) appears to be particularly
suitable for the present study. She has investigated evaluation in texts from two perspectives: the
text and the corpus. She aims at exploring the possibilities and limits of corpus studies stressing
that findings from lexically oriented studies of text cannot be readily processed automatically in
a corpus analysis of language use. She starts from the main assumption concerning some explicit
form of evaluation, derived from corpus-based dictionaries, grammars and books of information
about particular corpora, and then she proceeds to the description and interpretation of corpus
evidence. Her conclusion is that “reliable automatic identification and quantification can be
carried out on only a limited set of realizations of evaluation” (Hunston 2004, p. 186). Methods
that are common to corpus-based studies are the comparison of frequencies, and the analysis of
the syntagmatic environment of key words. The basic software tool used to highlight typical
collocational and syntactic patterns is the concordance programmes.

In the present investigation, the corpus-based approach is integrated with a discourse
analysis perspective, however the qualitative methods of discourse analysis or textual analysis
for investigating the rhetorical phenomenon of evaluation are obviously at odds with the
quantitative methodology of Corpus Linguistics, which is best suited to describing the
collocational and syntactic patterns of a given lexical item. If corpus methods are to be employed
in textual study, first it is necessary to decide which aspects of the discourse analysis approach
can be best served by corpus analysis, and secondly to find a point or points of entry into the
data.

In a few words, in the present research paper, the rhetorical aspect under investigation is
evaluation and specific words are the point of entry. The corpus has been collected with a
preliminary purpose in mind and it represents a specific snapshot of language through time. Data
are concerned with scientific language in the genre of research article abstracts.

**Data**
The corpus is made up of 1,035 research article abstracts from two international scientific
journals: 360 texts from *The International Journal of Primatology* (IJP) and 675 from
*Mathematics and Computers in Simulation* (MCS). The time span taken into consideration is
from 2000 to 2005 and there are about 200,000 words.

The two journals are from scientific fields rather different. IJP brings together laboratory
and field studies related to anatomy, ethology, cognition, ecology, conservation, genetics,
evolution, and physiology in primates. MCS publishes articles on specific applications of
modelling and simulation in science and engineering, with relevant applied mathematics, the
general philosophy of systems simulation, and their impact on disciplinary and interdisciplinary research

As the American National Standard for Writing Abstracts - ANSI Z239.14-1997 - suggests: “an abstract is an abbreviated, accurate representation of the contents of a document, preferably prepared by its author(s) for publication with it”. In the present investigation, an abstract consists of:

- Title;
- Text of the research article abstract;
- Keywords.

Information about authors and their institutions have been deleted because not considered relevant for the purpose of the present study.

**Abstracts and Move structure**

Every abstract is organised in moves as suggested by Swales (1990). “A move is evidence of a peculiarity in a precise part of the text”. (Author 2008, p. 19). In investigating the textual structure of research articles, Swales came up with the **Introduction, Method, Research and Discussion — IMRD — structure.** He claims that all the research papers are organized to this well-defined scheme. However, theory is often quite distant from reality.

In the *International Journal of Primatology* it is specified that length of abstracts has to be less or equal to 250-words with 4-5 keywords. On the other hand, no specific details and quite vague suggestions are provided about the abstracts’ structure in the journal *Mathematics and Computers in Simulation*. However, in both cases these norms do not provide sufficient help for writing abstracts, as a result, most of the time, abstracts are not well structured.

Dos Santos integrates Swales’ IMRD structure with further details; the **move** is still the unit of analysis “a move has to be considered as a genre stage which has a particular, minor communicative purpose to fulfil, which in turn serves the major communicative purpose of the genre”. (Dos Santos 1996, p. 485). Dos Santos, in his analysis, came up with five moves:

- Move 1— **situating the research**;
- Move 2 – **presenting the research**;
- Move 3 – **describing the methodology**;
- Move 4 – **summarizing the results**;
- Move 5 – **discussing the results**.

Each move, usually, has some submoves (dos Santos1996: 485). Important submoves within the Move 1 are: **Stating current knowledge** and **Citing previous research** and/or **Extended previous research** and/or **Stating a problem**. On the other hand, in Move 2 there are submoves such as **Indicating main features** and/or **Indicating main purpose** and/or **Hypothesis raising**. Last in Move 5 there are two submoves **Drawing conclusions** and/or **Giving recommendations**.

Reading a sample of abstracts from the two disciplines suggests that IJP focuses on the topic and on the actor of the research study considering them as relevant for filling the gap in knowledge, while MCS papers are structured quite evenly according to the IMRD structure of the research study. In the IJP corpus, the average length in words is between 200 and 250 words but there are extreme cases like abstract number 47_IJP that has 377 words and abstract number 3_IJP that has 88 words. These two borderline cases show that even though norms about layout exist these are not observed verbatim. In the MCS corpus average length is lower, about 150 words with a minimum of 49 words in 520_MCS and a maximum length of 266 words in...
Both abstracts in IJP and in MCS can be defined as informative abstracts. Informative abstracts provide information about the body of the study, the key facts and the conclusions.

MCS abstracts focus, due to the topic itself, more on the methodology, for instance, on how precise algorithms are applied to different mathematical analysis. Sometimes results are not mentioned because a precise methodology in use is the result of the research study itself. On the other hand, IJP abstracts cover up various topics, in a certain way, IJP is similar to the soft science of the humanities. Mayr (2004) distinguishes two aspects of biology: functional biology that relies on experimental approaches of the hard science and asks how something happens, and evolutionary biology that is driven by asking why and uses methodologies familiar to the humanities like historical narratives and comparison, for instance in anatomy and genomics (studying similarities). The International Journal of Primatology shifts focus from the methodology, in social learning studies, to relevant results in molecular biology studies. Social learning findings deal more with animal behaviour rather than with number or other more ‘numerical’ results. On the other hand, molecular biology studies provides more countable results dealing with numbers and DNA distribution.

Methodology

The methodology used for the present analysis consists of two phases: collocational and evaluation analysis. The main aim is to investigate the collocational behaviour, words which typically co-occur with some other particular words, defined later in this section, as ‘research process words’, analysis/es, data, evidence/s, finding/s, investigation/s, method/s, methodology/ies, paper/s, procedure/s, research/es, result/s, study/ies, and theory/ies. The analysis of collocational patterns in both corpora is performed in the present study by means of WordsmithTools 4 (Scott, 2004).

However, before running concordances on these words, it is necessary to define how research process words have been chosen. The crucial issue we have to face is to find a different way to select those stretches of text that, in research article abstracts, represent different aspects of the research process. Abstracts are usually organised according to the IMRD structure, where terms like data, finding/s, method/s, etc. appear to be quite recurrent because of the nature of the text itself. These words belong to the concept of process in Hallidayan terms (cf. Halliday 1994, p. 109) especially the material ‘process of doing’, although the logical elements: actor, process and goal are, in a certain way, present altogether just in the words themselves. To be more precise, in the Hallidayan example the lion caught the tourist, the lion is the actor, caught is the process and the tourist is the goal. Words like analysis, data, method etc. have always the same actor (the researcher) and encapsulate the action. As a matter of fact, according to Author (2010, p. 27)

In a study the research process implies that the researcher analyses and investigates data (that have been previously collected) by a viable method for a specific purpose. Then, s/he will obtain evidences and findings that make up a theory that, eventually, will allow the researcher to write significant results in a paper. Accordingly, these words can be defined as research process words (here after RPWs) because they emphasize the research process aspect in the text of the research article abstracts.

Intuition leads me to think that investigating the collocates of these terms may help to understand which words occur more frequently when research-oriented evaluation (Thetela 1997) is identified.
WordSmithTools has been used to investigate how words are used in the two corpora, because words enter into meaningful relations with other words around them. This software is an integrated suite of programs for looking at how words behave in texts; it has several tools, however in the present analysis important functions are WordList and Concord. WordList creates word lists, ordering them by frequency and alphabetically. Concord locates all references to any given word or phrase within a corpus, showing them in standard concordance lines with the search word centred and a variable amount of context at either side.

Analysing concordance data is the most detailed part of the corpus study. Tognini-Bonelli (2001, p. 3) suggests “[a] corpus, examined at first in KIWIC format [...]”, is read vertically, scanning for the repeated patterns present in the co-text of the node”. The ‘node word’ or keyword is displayed in the centre with a small amount of context on each side.

In the present study, since a rhetorical phenomenon is investigated, it has appeared more reasonable to take into account a context longer than the usual five words to the right and to the left — +5L or +5R — the usual standard for length of citation, as suggested by Sinclair (2004, p. 141). As a word or a phrase is studied it appears evident that more context is needed. As a matter of fact, sometimes longer stretches of text are analysed and even the whole abstract has been taken into account in order to fully understand the phenomenon of evaluation. Since the present research paper investigates the use of specific nouns, concordance lines are first sorted by words on the left and then are analysed. Therefore focus is on modifiers and verbs.

The methodology here applied is corpus-based. Part of this methodology is automatic because the computer carries out a relatively simple matching and counting exercise and shows a list of recurrent structures. However, it may omit some information. Therefore alongside with the automatic aspect of frequency of co-occurrence generated by computer software alone there is the need of a complementary methodology performed by the human researcher, that is the interpretation of the data the ‘reading concordances’ procedure (cf. Sinclair 2003). Sometimes eliciting response from the corpus and incorporate them into the paradigmatic description appear to be uncertain. Introspection plays a pivotal role for the interpretation of textual evidence, for the analysis of collocation results and for the identification of lexical relations.

After running concordances, and careful reading stretches of texts to understand whether or not ROE is realized, the investigation proceeds with collocation analysis in those fragments of texts where only ROE is present either as implied or clearly expressed. The main purpose of the investigation is to find recurrent pattern for each RPWs and to verify whether or not all the investigated words share common patterns. In detail, recurrent verbs, adjectives or any relevant grammatical structures, such as negative or modalized constructions are investigated if they appear with a certain recursiveness.

More excerpts provide more complex structure and pattern to look at, and another important criterion for the analysis is the ‘semantic preference’ as defined by Sinclair (2003, p. 178) “sometimes in the structure of a phrase there is a clear preference for words of particular meaning”. This implies that in concordance lines, words or phrases that are semantically similar will be observed closely. The focus is on repeated events rather than on single occurrences, because as Sinclair (1996, p. 78) suggests: “[...] unique one-off events are necessarily ignored but they cannot be evaluated in the absence of an interpretative framework provided by repeated events”. Language patterns usually are taken into consideration if they occur at least twice. When a reliable description of regularities is assembled then it is possible to build up generalization and read those against former theories.
As already mentioned, the starting point of the analysis is the investigation of specific lexical items and then the analysis goes to the environment of the items themselves, the pattern where the item appears to be. In this way, excerpts are grouped first according to evaluation, either positive or negative; then semantic preference controls the collocational and colligational pattern, and finally extracts are grouped on the basis of grammatical construction. For instance, if we refer again to the excerpt number 1 in the file 5_IJP: “I provide the first comprehensive data on the composition and mineral content”. In this extract, the lexical item that presents the research process aspect is data, positive evaluation is construed by the positive adjectives first and comprehensive, ultimately these adjectives will be present in some other excerpts in the corpus referred to other research process words.

Findings and Discussions
After analysing the RPWs and having performed collocational analysis, generalisations have to be cautious due to the limited size of both corpora and also to the limited number of raw frequencies in each corpus (Table 1.).

Table 1. RPWs frequency in MCS and in IJP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Process Words</th>
<th>IJP Freq.</th>
<th>MCS Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyses</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>522</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodologies</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Researches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collocates that express ROE and co-occur with the RPWs are both adjectives and verbs. Amongst the former there are new, first, important, efficient, accurate supportive, and effective, while among the latter verbs are show, provide, support, and to be consistent with. Herein some excerpts show these co-occurrences. As a general rule of layout, in all the extracts reported, the RPWs and the evaluated entity are in bold face while the evaluative attribution is underlined; file number and acronym of the journal are between brackets:

2. **Results** of the different analyses are mutually supportive and provided useful information for monitoring bodily condition and diseases. (313_IJP).

3. Numerical results illustrate the usefulness of these new figures of merit. (662_MCS).

4. Our data provide the first detailed information on the endocrine characterization of the ovarian cycle in Pygathrix nemaeus and suggest that social changes have […] However, because of relatively small sample size, particularly concerning the latter finding, more data are needed to confirm these results. (261_IJP).

5. The largest number of recorded observations are in the foraging context, wherein contrary to expectations, there is no evidence for female chimpanzees exhibiting more innovation than males. The study is the first extensive investigation of behavioral innovation in primates and provides evidence that much individual variation in the propensity to innovate can be explained in terms of sex, age, and social rank. (87_IJP).

6. In addition, based on analysis and insight into the correlations between dimensions of the Halton sequence, we illustrate why our algorithm is efficient for breaking these correlations. (63_MCS).

7. And we thus proposed an efficient analysis algorithm for analyzing the stability. The effectiveness of the proposed method is illustrated by the numerical examples. (286_MCS).

8. Our analysis and numerical experiments show that the proposed schemes are stable and produce highly accurate solutions. (474_MCS).

In excerpts number 2 and 3 the ‘key’ adjective, in terms of evaluation, is useful, something that is useful in a research study is positively evaluated by the researcher himself. In fragments number 4 and 5 in the phrases the first detailed and the first extensive the adjective first triggers positive evaluation; the identification of evaluation in text depends on the way in which information is presented, first could serve as an example of textual organising device as well as evaluative device.

In excerpts number 6 and 7 evaluative keywords are the verb illustrate and the adjective efficient. In fragment number 8 the whole sentence numerical experiments show that the proposed schemes are stable and produce highly accurate solutions provides positive evaluation in a rather cumulative way, by means of key evaluative lexical items such as show, stable and highly accurate. Thompson and Ye (1991, p. 367) considers evaluation as a often cumulative rather than clearly signalled strategy.

A sentence like ‘results of the different analyses are mutually supportive and provided useful information’ or the adjectival construction ‘stable and highly accurate solutions’ appear to be quite familiar expressions of the academic jargon to researchers, this is the way evaluation is accomplished in the academic context, the less noticeable evaluation is, the more likely it is to manipulate the reader. In a genre, like research article abstracts where authors literally have to promote themselves in order to get published, implicit evaluation is more likely to appear.

Although it is not possible to present many quantitative data in a sufficiently economical form here, some interesting observations may be drawn. For example, the lemma FINDING
(both singular and plural word form of the noun) barely shows evaluation in both corpora (table 2) probably because stating clearly positive opinions about the results of a research study is not very appropriate in terms of scientific accuracy and objectivity. However, when the plural word form of the lemma FINDING is evaluated, it is mostly evaluated in a positive way in the IJP corpus. It usually co-occurs with our and the verbs confirm and corroborate, that have a positive semantic prosody. Furthermore, positive evaluation is construed in the recurrent pattern to be consistent with. On the other hand, negative evaluation is construed, when findings is premodified by these or our and followed by verbs such as obligate, contrast or fail, that have a negative semantic prosody. Apparently in the IJP corpus, finding is always a noun and when the lemma is positively evaluated it co-occurs with three positive adjectives: first, extensive and further.

On the other hand, in the MCS corpus the singular word form finding is positively evaluated but there are very few examples and no recurrent patterns. While the plural form of the lemma, shows positive evaluation and co-occurs with the expression are consistent with and the adjective excellent.

Albeit, the limited size of both corpora, it is interesting to notice ROE occurence in the IJP and in the MCS corpus and to draw some observations.

Table 2. RPWs ROE in MCS and in IJP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RPWs</th>
<th>IJP ROE</th>
<th>MCS ROE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>3 (2+, 1-)</td>
<td>25 (24+, 1-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyses</td>
<td>4 (3+, 1-)</td>
<td>2+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>27 (15+, 12-)</td>
<td>11 (9+, 2-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>25 (14+, 11-)</td>
<td>12 (10+, 2-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>15 (12+, 3-)</td>
<td>4+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigations</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>5 (4+, 1-)</td>
<td>47+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>28+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>7+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodologies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>24+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>9+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>8+</td>
<td>11 (8+, 3-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>12 (9+, 3-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>49 (46+, 3-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>9 (8+, 1-)</td>
<td>12 (10+, 1-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies</td>
<td>11 (7+, 4-)</td>
<td>4+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>7 (5+, 2-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above shows raw data of the occurrences of ROE for each research process word in the IJP and in the MCS corpus. The symbol + and – stands for positive and negative evaluation. At first glance, MCS corpus shows more evaluation related to RPWs than the IJP corpus. In the MCS corpus results and method carry more ROE while data and evidence carry more ROE in the IJP corpus. The value of ROE in the MCS corpus goes from absence to a maximum of 49, while the value of ROE in the IJP corpus goes from absence to a maximum of 27. However, since the two corpora are different in size, occurrences need to be normalised. Having done this, the following figures clearly show the trend of ROE in percentage in both corpora:

**Figure 1. ROE distribution of singular RPWs**

**Figure 2. ROE distribution of plural RPWs**
Quite surprisingly, ROE, appears more often in the MCS corpus, the journal concerning with mathematics rather than in the IJP corpus, despite Bazerman’s (1988) claim about mathematics as the perfect model for scientific writing thanks to its clarity and preciseness in comparison with all other disciplines.

However, if we focus on the RPWs: data, investigation, method, methodology, paper, procedure and theory these words show more ROE in the IJP corpus in comparison with the MCS corpus. The total list of the research process words count 25 words, however, in case of three words (procedures, researches and theories) there is no evaluation in neither of the two corpora. Therefore, in IJP only 7 words carry more ROE.

A possible explanation for this result may be drawn, because in reading several abstracts from the two different disciplines, some preliminary hypotheses have been formulated. In detail, the extent to which evaluation is present in the texts examined, seems to depend on the nature of the topic under discussion. Therefore, difference between the two sets of journals is crucial, as already noticed in the data section. Despite the observation that IJP being more similar to the soft science is more evaluative than hard science of the MCS corpus, the maximum frequency of ROE per word is still present in the MCS corpus, for the words: evidences, findings, methodologies and papers.

Referring to the move structures of both corpora, in particular to the IMRD structure, apparently, IJP focuses on method, and method and results coincide most of the time.

On the contrary, in MCS the language is very concise the 2 submoves indicating main feature and indicating main purpose of the study (cf. dos Santos’ moves) are often not clearly stated. MCS abstracts focus on describing the methodology and discussing the results moves. In the IJP corpus, the RPWs investigation, method, methodology, and, procedure are more evaluated in comparison with MCS and it is worth noticing that all these words are in the singular form. However, the plural form methodologies is definitely more evaluated and in the MCS corpus.

As previously noticed in the Introduction section, in general, in a research study the ‘method’ belongs to the ‘process aspect’ while the ‘result, paper and, data’ highlight more the ‘product aspect’ of the study. Intuitively evaluation is expected to be more present in the ‘method’.

Another possible factor about the evaluative trend suggested by Thompson (personal conversation) is what it might be called the ‘applicability’ of the disciplines: with Primatology, there is application to the concrete world of primates; but with Mathematics (especially with pure maths rather than applied) the focus is more exclusively on theoretical research issues. For example, a ‘problem’ in Primatology might concern either how to measure primate populations (ROE) or disappearing natural resources for the primates (TOE), whereas in Maths the ‘problems’ are likely to be how to calculate a particular value or how to solve an equation (ROE).

In the MCS corpus, authors evaluate their methodologies on the basis of the novelty and its originality. In addition, they evaluate their methodologies on the extent to which they influence the course of science and the development of the disciplines of science. All authors are united in their emphasis on exploring common methodological concerns and providing a critical evaluation of central ideas from a methodological perspective.

In mathematics what counts are numbers and results are numbers, not surprisingly the word results in the MCS corpus is premodified most of the time by the adjective numerical. In addition, the average length of MCS abstracts is definitively shorter than IJP abstracts, therefore
authors need a device to draw readers’ attention to the entire research paper, and eventually this device is provided by using evaluative lexis in texts with a smaller quantity of words.

Researchers evaluate their contribution of the various methods as central in the debates and in theory building, they evaluate their findings through research, development, and demonstration, and present their results to their discourse community through international journals and conferences.

Conclusion
In this research paper, the characteristics of scientific abstracts, have been explored on lexical and discourse levels, main focus has been on microstructure of text and macrostructure of value. The present study has attempted to answer the following research question: ‘What are the signals of (ROE) in research article abstracts?’ More specifically, the hypothesis to test has been whether evaluated entities in a specific genre ‘collocate’ with specific terms or group of terms.

It has emerged that some words and verbs are very likely to appear in the vicinity of the RPWs in order to build cohesion in research article abstracts. Recurrent terms related to evaluative lexis fall under the category of ‘Significance’, ‘Newness’, and ‘Usefulness’. Results suggest that, in ROE, virtually all values and their realizations can be covered by the three categories, summed up, for instance, in three recurrent adjectives like: significant, useful and new.

Writing within a scientific genre implies respecting clear and hidden rules. Abstracts are written in a peculiar evaluative way, it is sufficient to acknowledge that the layout and style of an abstract identifies it as belonging to the area of ‘real science’ and, therefore, worthy of serious consideration by scientists; it also establishes the criteria by which the text will be evaluated, by implying other relevant goals, such, as accuracy.

As Hunston (1983, 1993, and 1994) suggests the author presents him/herself as a researcher working towards the achievement of specific goals. The events in the research process are viewed in this light. Evaluation in a specific genre, like in research article abstracts, has a specific trend, peculiarities of this tendency can be noticed in the move structure of the abstract itself. As a matter of fact, evaluation is very likely to appear in discussing the results, situating the research, and in describing the methodology (dos Santos1996). It is also very likely as Swales (1990) suggests that in writing the text the scientist hopes to achieve other goals, such as acceptance by the scientific community. These goals are not stated in the text, but the more admissible of them may be deduced as they are necessary for the interpretation of certain parts of the text.

Once evaluation has been identified in a move it is widely expected to appear in the rest of the text as well, according to a cumulative phenomenon.

However, any corpus data is only representative of itself and not of the entire universe of study. Nevertheless, the analysis of a corpus, if assembled with a certain ratio, tends to strongly indicate certain trends in a specific variety of English. Representativeness is a thorny issue in corpus linguistics in any case, and it might be more important to linguistic analysis to know the corpus that is used very well, and to interpret the results accordingly (cf. Mahlberg 2005).

Having suggested another way of looking at research-oriented evaluation and how it works in text, it is worth looking at the implications of this study.

The analysis carried out in the present research paper has raised issues from the pedagogical point of view, that have some relevance to the field of English for Academic Purpose — EAP.
First, as Thetela (1997) suggests it is essential in the reading of an academic paper to understand the content but also the angle from which the writer wants that content to be interpreted and judged by his/her reader whether s/he is a newbie or a well-established member of the related discourse community.

The EAP trainer may help learners recognizing the evaluative aspect in a specific genre, it may result useful to provide students with a pre-set of expressions and sentences like: numerous studies have debated, this paper presents, the purpose of the present study, new evidence is emerging to question this image or few data exist regarding; because value judgements in academic writing are basically constrained. This awareness can be further reinforced by helping students in their reading to identify and separate the different moves of a research article abstract. By giving readers an accurate picture of how information is typically organized in research paper abstracts in biology and mathematics, it is also conveyed a more precise critical reading where, for instance, a researcher may be interested in one aspect of research instead of another (e.g. conclusions or methodology). Once students are able to separate the topic of the paper, from the findings and the purpose of the study, the next step is to use this competence to improve their own skills in writing a well-structured abstract and make them going beyond with their perspective research studies.

Computer-assisted analysis of texts and corpora can provide new understanding of form-meaning relations. Corpus data can ideally help us understand conventionalised and original phenomena which contribute to systematic variation within and across texts and discourses in given socio-cultural contexts and through time. I would certainly wish to promote the need to incorporate corpus-based studies into instructional materials, otherwise prescriptions run the risk of becoming obsolete, and students do not have the chance to learn real language in use. This is inspired by Sinclair’s dictum (Sinclair 1987, p. xv) that “usage cannot be invented, it can only be described” which supports the deliberate and programmatic substitution of invented data for observed data, and of the scientist’s own intuition for the reports of informants.

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References


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i Specific details about the structure are at the following URL:


iii The IJP corpus has 85,577 tokens, while the MCS corpus has 98,181.
Factors Impacting EFL Teaching: An Exploratory Study in the Saudi Arabian Context

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Abstract

This paper explored factors which influenced EFL teaching in the Saudi context, and identified various teaching techniques employed by qualified teachers to handle those factors. The research utilised semi-structured interviews to elicit qualitative data from five purposefully chosen EFL teachers. The participants shared their experiences and ideas about factors that influenced the pedagogical process in a positive or a negative way. The findings of the study highlighted that EFL teaching is challenged by three major factors comprising social, cultural, and religious sensitivities; lack of learners’ motivation; and unfavourable institutional policies and procedures, thereof. However, with keen awareness of Saudi culture, thorough understanding of the learners’ needs, and professional competence, the unfavourable effects of these factors might be neutralized or minimised. The present study attempted to offer considerable insights to course designers, teacher trainers, policy makers, and prospective EFL teachers working in Saudi Arabia and raise the consciousness of TESOL community at large about the issues broached in its contents.

Keywords: Teachers’ Self-efficacy; EFL teaching; Classroom challenges; Saudi EFL context
1. Introduction

Teaching, in general, is an arduous profession always seeking professionals ‘who understand’ the niceties and nuances of pedagogy (Shulman, 1986, p. 4). However, English language teaching is a more painstaking vocation demanding ‘a high degree of professional consciousness that is informed by relevant specialist knowledge and explicit values’ (Leung, 2009, p. 55). With the global acceptance of English as an international language and its implementation as a compulsory academic subject in all the gulf countries, Saudi Arabia has granted a privileged status to English language teaching in educational institutions across the country. Hence, on one hand, the English language teachers working in the Kingdom are assailed by multiple challenges of this highly professional discipline (TESOL, 2003); on the other hand, it has opened a vista of research opportunities for researchers and policy makers in the fields of TESOL/EFL.

EFL teaching in the Gulf States in general and Saudi Arabia in particular has attracted researchers to probe into issues predominantly linked to classroom instructions, learners’ performances and teacher development. In this regard, Saudi Ministry of education has generously invested in EFL teaching and learning to improve learners’ proficiency and enhance teachers’ pedagogical skills. Nonetheless, it experiences tardy progress particularly at university level where compulsory Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) is run for new students (Liton, 2012). Rehman & Alhaisoni (2013) have also highlighted the tremendous efforts made by various educational bodies to ameliorate EFL teaching standards and student achievement, however, the situation of teaching English in Saudi Arabia has been far from being satisfactory. Teaching in Saudi Arabia is believed to be a challenging phenomenon, specifically for non-Arab EFL teachers. Despite holding significant teaching qualifications and experience, EFL teachers occasionally feel unequipped to handle certain pedagogical and socio-cultural issues which crop up during the teaching and learning process. In this way, the crucial role of the socio-cultural context determines the teacher-learner relationship and the success of pedagogical process (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). In an EFL classroom, teacher, learner and the course book may share three different social and cultural backgrounds. In such a scenario, teachers have to interact with learners in a wider social context (Hall, 2011), catering to the needs of individuals and making local and immediate decisions acceptable to learners (Johnston, 2003). However, teaching materials or textbooks being used in Arab countries hardly reflect the learners’ cultures (Shehdeh, 2010), and thus, non-Arab EFL teachers, who lack cultural awareness end up facing unexpected and provocative situations in the classrooms. These teachers, lacking cultural awareness, also experience immense difficulty in modification and customisation of the teaching materials in accordance with the learners’ needs, curriculum objectives and lesson aims.

Apart from the various social factors, the attitude and response of learners in language and skills acquisition becomes a significant problem. The negative attitude of Arab learners towards English language limits their chances to interact in English and to achieve communicative competence (Shehdeh, 2010). Consequently, EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia usually find unmotivated and uncooperative learners in their classrooms who lack exposure to L2 and speak very little English (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Most of the studies conducted in Saudi context focus on learners’ issues and put the blame on the learners for their low achievement in learning English (Liton, 2012). However, a study by Khan (2011) presents a different but convincing view, and holds the teachers in Saudi Arabia responsible for their language teaching related problems. He points out that teachers’ challenges mainly emerge as a result of their irrelevant teaching qualification, lack of training as EFL teachers, inexperience as
bilingual teachers (in Arabic context), misperception of Arab culture, and dearth of awareness of the learners’ needs. Notwithstanding his clear stance on this issue, he neither discusses any impact of these challenges on teachers’ classroom performance nor does he suggest any way forward to cope with such challenges. Therefore, to raise our consciousness on these issues and their impact on EFL teaching in the Saudi context, research at hand elicits answers to the following two research questions:

1) What are the factors which impact EFL teaching in the Saudi context? What are teachers’ perceptions about these factors?
2) What efforts do these teachers make to minimise the impact of factors which negatively influence the teaching and learning process?

These questions will explore factors which either make EFL teaching challenging or facilitate instruction in the Saudi context. Moreover, they will identify different teaching techniques employed by the teachers to effectively address those factors. In our view, it is important for the EFL teachers to have awareness of their teaching context and its challenges in order to develop their own repertoire of teaching strategies for improving their professional practice. This study will be of help to the curriculum designers, teacher trainers and policy makers on existing teaching constraints faced by the EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. What is more, it will raise pedagogical awareness by helping less experienced teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, and informing prospective teachers to consider these factors and develop skills for adaptability accordingly.

2. Literature Review

This section of the paper reviews key factors which could have meaningful impact on EFL teaching. In the first place, a concise review of the literature is presented that demonstrates the influence of socio-cultural factors on language classrooms. Secondly, the factors which involve teachers and their classroom challenges are highlighted, and next the factors regarding the learners’ motivation are addressed. In the end, the impact of teachers’ self-efficacy on their EFL teaching is surveyed.

2.1 Sociocultural Factors Impacting EFL Instruction

The educational process in any context is considered as a set of conventions and an exchange of information between teachers and learners; and these conventions are made by social and cultural norms within that particular context. The crucial role of the social context indicates that “…classroom is a socially defined reality and is therefore influenced by the belief systems and behavioural norms of the society of which it is part” (Tudor, 2001, p. 35). These social and behavioural norms are indicative of classroom’s unique complexities. For instance, the beliefs and expectations of parents, institutional managers and policy makers, and the relationships between the participants in the classroom are all determined by the sociocultural norms of a particular context which influence the classroom environment, and make it more complex and diverse.

Sociocultural context plays a pivotal role in the development of learners’ L2 as it influences teaching practices, classroom environment and learners’ progress. Language cannot be restricted to any periphery of the classroom because learning occurs through social interaction within specific contexts (Fagan, 2008). Stern (1983) notes that for language teaching ’society and culture are more than background and even more than context’, what happens in a language classroom is inseparable from its sociocultural context (cited in Hall, 2011, p. 200). Since language teaching is tied to its social context, teaching and learning cannot take place in a
classroom which is removed from the experiences and personal engagements of learners outside the classroom (Candlin & Mercer, 2001). Hence, the wider context of life outside the classroom has a significant impact on what takes place in these interactions between learners and teachers, and among learners. It is also believed that many learners do not learn languages in classrooms: in fact, they learn them more or less well or badly, on the street, in the community, and in the workplace, however, such opportunities are rarely found in the Saudi context (Khan, 2011). Consequently, the teachers have to plan classroom activities with an authentic language touch, reflecting Saudi cultural attributes. It is a prerequisite in the Saudi context as EFL curriculums lack certain features of local culture and are not well coordinated to the sociocultural spirit of the target language (Liton, 2012). Hence, it is of great importance to bridge the gaps, and strengthen the cultural ties between the learners’ L1 and L2 to achieve the desired pedagogical goals.

Socially diverse and pedagogically complex in nature, the L2 classroom is a place where the ‘local’ and ‘global’ come together. In Saudi Arabia, teachers often experience the interference of social taboos in their classrooms. To avoid frustration and drastic consequences, non-Arab teachers in general and Western teachers in particular refrain from discussing religion, politics and opposite gender in classrooms. Li (1994, p. 24) gives two reasons for the cross-cultural frustration among the Chinese EFL teachers: first, they fail to understand each other’s culture and educational philosophies; second, they expect complete accommodation from the other party. Similarly, Yeh (2010) notes discrepancies across various cultures and concludes that teaching cannot be excluded from the social contexts and the implementation of new approaches must require modifications according to social and cultural demands.

From sociocultural perspective, language teachers teaching in unfamiliar contexts need to acquire the appropriate contextual knowledge which will develop not only their teaching skills but also the norms of practice expected of them in an educational institution, both inside and outside the classroom (Richards, 2010). Thus, teaching involves understanding the dynamics and relationships within the classroom and the rules and behaviours specific to a particular setting.

2.2 Factors Involving Teachers and Their Classroom Challenges

In addition to the social and cultural factors in language teaching, there is another set of challenges encountered by the EFL teachers, which has a direct impact on classroom learning and teaching. These challenges include limited instruction time, large class sizes, mixed ability classes and various development needs, high expectations from students and parents, lack of resources, inappropriate textbook material, students low proficiency, odd contact hours, and lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments (Chen & Goh, 2011; Drew, Oostdam & Toorenburg et al., 2007; Li 1998; Peng, 2007; Wu, 2001; Yeh, 2010; Yu, 2001; Zheng & Davison, 2008). Shehdeh (2010) on the other hand notes lack of authentic environment, irrelevant teaching materials, and lack of professional training as challenges confronting teachers in Arab countries. Owing to these challenges, teachers may not succeed in providing learners’ with favourable learning environment and achieving curriculum objectives by implementing the prescribed syllabus.

In EFL classrooms, teaching practices are influenced by restrictions imposed by institutional authorities. Teachers are not autonomous to pick and choose their teaching methods. In fact, they are bound by social conventions, learners’ expectations and school and ministry’s policies about how to teach and what methodology to follow (Hall 2011, p. 116). For these reasons, they constantly switch between pedagogically and socially oriented behaviours and try to meet the learning and social needs of the learners. Thus, EFL teachers imparting various skills find it quite challenging to choose the right method that would suit the learners’ needs and their
learning style. Like Saudi Arabia, other EFL contexts also demand teachers to adopt communicative methodology. However, EFL teachers in the Arab world often employ traditional methodologies. Shehdeh (2010) and Rehman & Alhaisoni (2013) call them inadequate teaching methodologies which are mainly teacher-centred. In the Saudi context, teachers’ prefer to adopt traditional methods and find the application of communicative methodologies difficult due to various socio-cultural and institutional constraints (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). However, EFL teachers in Asian context are often encouraged to incorporate communicative elements into their teaching, which poses specific challenges to the EFL teachers such as the differences in the values, beliefs and cultural norms in the east and the west (Mak, 2011). In most cases, teaching materials are imported from English speaking countries which have no relevance to the local contexts and thus, are difficult to implement. According to Savignon (2007), this approach requires appropriate selection of materials and profound analysis of the tasks to match the teaching goals and contextual demands.

2.3 Factor of EFL Learners’ Motivation

In EFL classrooms, dealing efficiently with learners is one of the core factors which challenge teachers’ skills and abilities. Learners, who show no interest in classroom activities, usually underperform and underachieve. Such learners often lack motivation and resist classroom participation. It is argued that EFL teachers, particularly Western teachers often ascribe learners’ achievements or disappointments to the presence or absence of motivation (Hall, 2011; Li, 1994; Yeh, 2010). Dornyei (2001) considers it the most complex issue that challenges the language teachers. Less motivated learners avoid participation in classroom activities, cheat more creatively than they learn, expect answers from the teachers and use go-betweens to confront their teachers (Li, 1994). Liton (2012) finds that Saudi EFL classes suffer from sheer lack of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Similarly, Shehdeh (2010) states that in Arab countries, teachers face serious issues with learners’ aptitude, initial preparedness and motivation. They often complain regarding the low proficiency of their students and claim that the students are not interested in learning English.

However, for some scholars underachievement on part of the learners is caused either by a mismatch between learning and teaching styles or a gap between pedagogical plan and learning procedures (Allwright, 1984; Jing, 2005). Another reason could be the learners’ lack of exposure to L2 which is commonly found in the Arab world (Shehdeh, 2010). Lack of exposure can affect learners’ language proficiency, and they may resist active participation (Shamin, 1996; Yeh, 2010). In a nutshell, the EFL learners’ lack of motivation poses a serious challenge to teachers who aim at developing learners’ interests in language learning, conducting interactive classes and achieving their lessons’ aims. Indeed, uncommunicative and uncooperative learners will not help the teachers to fulfil their teaching goals.

Motivated learners take the responsibility of their own learning. Their positive attitude towards the target language helps them become more autonomous (Holec, 1981). Furthermore, their autonomy enhances the diversity and individuality of a language classroom. However, autonomy is a culturally specific Western concept that is inappropriate in non-Western settings (Little, 1999). Hence, teachers might experience difficulty in sharing decision making and pedagogic responsibility with learners, which may run counter to their pedagogic beliefs, professional training and established classroom practices.

2.4 Factors Involving Teachers’ Self-efficacy

EFL classroom is the manifestation of teachers’ skills and expertise demonstrated in their handling of various issues. Richards (2010) has highlighted the significance of some core
dimensions of teachers’ skills and expertise which include; language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, learner-focussed teaching, and professionalism. EFL teachers in any context require these skills to make their efforts worthwhile and exert their effectiveness in EFL classrooms.

Teachers with positive attitude towards teaching often strive for better performances. Their beliefs and perceptions about their teaching skills have a strong impact on their teaching effectiveness (Knoblauch & Woolfolk, 2008). According to Wheatley (2002), teachers’ effectiveness, which helps them influence student learning outcomes, is called ‘teachers’ efficacy’. Heigaard, Giske & Sundsli (2012) define teachers’ self-efficacy as teacher’s beliefs about if and how they organise and execute courses of actions and successfully implement a particular task/activity in a specific context. In this study, we have used the term teachers’ self-efficacy to refer to the teachers’ individual beliefs about their abilities to perform particular teaching tasks and achieve specific results (Dellinger et al. 2008; Pajares 1996).

Findings suggest that teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs have considerable influence on instructional practices and classroom behaviour as well as on learners’ achievement and motivation (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk,). It is believed that teachers with high self-efficacy beliefs manage negative experiences better than teachers with low self-efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, highly self-efficacious teachers are more sensitive to learners’ needs, they teach enthusiastically (Allinder, 1994), and work efficiently with unruly learners (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). On the contrary, less self-efficacious teachers owing to lack of confidence hesitate to take necessary and decisive actions, and it negatively impacts their cognitive functioning as practitioners (Shawer, 2012).

The broad literature review for the present study has highlighted the key factors which could influence ESL/EFL teaching for a better or worse learning and teaching process. We have presented four major themes in this literature review, which provide an initial conceptual framework for the study.

3. The Study Design

3.1 Context of the Study

With the emergence of English as a global Lingua Franca, it has acquired the status of a mandatory foreign language in Saudi educational domain. The new Saudi education policy has enforced English as a medium of instruction for all science departments in the national universities. In order to meet the policy objective, all the universities have established new departments, centres or institutes to run a Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) focusing on EFL. The current study is conducted in the English Language Institute (ELI) of a Saudi university. The ELI runs the PYP catering to the English language learning needs of about 6000-7000 students each year. The faculty of the ELI comprises around 200 language teachers from 25 different countries with various L1 backgrounds. The ELI provides intensive instruction of English as a Foreign Language to Foundation Year students in order to enhance their English language skills and facilitate their academic progress.

The PYP consists of four modules with seven weeks each. In each module, a level-based student textbook and workbook are covered following a weekly pacing guide. Ahead of enrollment in the PYP, students have to take the Oxford Placement Test designed by the University of Oxford following the Common European Framework (CEF), which helps stream the students into suitable levels starting from Beginner (A0) to Pre-Intermediate (B1). After
successful completion of a module, students are promoted to next level. The ELI has adopted the New Headway Plus (Special Edition) as main syllabus resource for the past two years now.

3.2 Methodology

The current exploratory study, situated in interpretive paradigm, yields a research design which is emergent, qualitative and focused on the subjective realities of the participants. It explores the perceptions, experiences, and multiple socially constructed realities of EFL teachers in a Saudi university. Marshall & Rossmans (1999, p. 57) have also underscored that "for a study focusing on individual lived experiences, the researcher could argue that one cannot understand human actions without understanding the meaning that participants attribute to these actions, their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive worlds". Therefore, employing the interpretive approach enabled us to interact with the participants in their workplace and discover their views about the research phenomenon.

This inquiry has grown out of our years of personal experience as non-Arab EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Over the years, we have observed enormous challenges encountered by non-Arab teachers which triggered our interest in this area of research. Our role in this study served as investigators and participant observers, as explained by Borg and Gall (1983) that “by being actively involved in the situation that the researcher is observing, the researcher often gains insights and develops interpersonal relationships that are virtually impossible to achieve through any other method” (p. 26).

3.3 Method of Data Collection

In order to gain fuller understanding of the target phenomenon, the study utilised qualitative techniques for data collection (Jupp, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers’ perception of those factors which impact their classroom instruction. Qualitative interview is “a uniquely sensitive and powerful method for capturing the lived experiences and lived meanings of the subjects’ everyday world” (Kvale, 2007, p. 11). Scott and Usher (2006, p. 147) also highlight that “the core issue for researchers who use interviews in qualitative research is to seek in-depth understandings about the experiences of individuals and groups, commonly drawing from a small sample of people, selected purposively. Such types of interviews are called semi-structured.”

We have used semi-structured interviews for two reasons: Firstly, its flexible structure gives the interviewees more freedom to express their viewpoint (Flick, 2002), secondly, it allows the researcher and the interviewer to develop unexpected themes and issues which emerge during the conversation (Cohen et al., 2007; Mason, 2002). For the interviews of our study, open-ended questions and probes were mainly written in the light of the literature reviewed on the topic. We also drew on our personal experience and observation of the phenomena being researched.

The interviews were conducted in English language. Since all the five interviewees had solid English academic background, they eloquently expressed themselves in English which allowed us to easily understand and transcribe their viewpoints. Each interview took approximately sixty to eighty minutes. All the five interviews were audio recorded and transcribed word for word. For each interview, a separate MS-Word file was created with the pseudonyms of the interviewees.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analysed inductively using the interpretive phenomenological analysis approach (Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2011). We developed a framework by repeatedly reading through the interview transcripts to make sense of the interviewees’ viewpoints and establish patterns. “Reading, reading, and rereading through the data, once more, forces the researcher to
become intimately familiar with those data”. (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 158) On first reading, we highlighted important relevant information which could inform the research questions. An iterative and inductive approach was followed throughout the analysis process. The data were manually coded which rendered a large number of codes and categories. Later, the codes were condensed into 38 loose categories (see appendix 1). Initial categories were derived from the reviewed literature that recognised challenges such as limited instruction time, students’ lack of motivation for developing communicative skills, lack of English proficiency, lack of teaching resources, and lack of authentic materials (Li, 1998; Peng, 2007; Wu, 2001; Yu, 2001; Zheng & Davison, 2008). We deliberated at length to ensure that the coding categories were data-led rather than predetermined or constrained by previous research (Dornyei, 2007). The outcome of this data analysis exercise conferred in-depth understanding of the data on us, which facilitated the process of further condensing of the categories. Finally, these categories were collapsed under 4 main themes and 14 subthemes. These four major themes effectively covered the categories that freshly emerged from the data as well as some of those derived from the reviewed literature. The categories that fitted well with the data were retained, for instance, learners’ lack of motivation. The categories that seemed superfluous or redundant were dropped, for example, large classes and teachers’ low efficacy. Some of the new categories that came to surface included ‘absenteeism’ and ‘classroom observation’. These categories were re-examined, interpreted, and further conceptualized in the discussion in the light of research questions.

3.5 Participants

There were five participants in this study who were interviewed at separate timings suiting their schedules. The selected participants were all English language instructors at English Language Institute of a Saudi Arabian University from English and non-English speaking countries.

We used *Purposive Sampling* strategy for the current study in order to access qualified teachers with recognised teaching qualifications (e.g. CELTA, PGCert TESOL, TESOL/TEFL diploma, MA TEFL/TESL/TESOL/Applied Linguistics) (Patton, 2002). The participants had a minimum 5 years of language teaching experience in the Saudi EFL context. Purposive sampling paved way for seeking in-depth information from those experienced teachers who were in a strong position to divulge it (Cohen et al., 2007).

*Figure 1. Teachers’ Details*
3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is a crucial consideration in any type of educational research. We considered all the essential ethical conventions in the process of data collection. First, the completed ‘Certificate of ethical research approval’ request form was submitted to the Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee for permission to start data collection. Then, we sought permission of the Vice Dean (Research) of the ELI to carry out our project on the site. Afterwards, the rationale behind the research and its expected benefits were shared with the participants. While obtaining their informed consent to participate, they were communicated their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Moreover, the anonymity and confidentiality of their views were guaranteed along with the choice to use pseudonyms for privacy purposes (Neuman, 2006).

3.7 Limitations of the Study

The current research study has certain limitations. Firstly, it was conducted with male teachers: The perceptions of female teachers regarding the factors impacting their EFL teaching might have been different which could have enhanced the data. However, due to social restrictions, female participation was not possible in our study. Secondly, only qualitative interviews were utilized for data collection: A combination of interviews and observation could have enriched the data.

4. Findings and Discussions

The factors explored as a result of semi-structured interviews are divided into four major categories, followed by various data led sub-categories. Three of the four main categories highlight factors having negative impact on classroom teaching whereas fourth category which is ‘teachers’ competence’ mainly encompasses positive factors with regard to the teachers’ ability, skills, and classroom performance. To establish validity and reliability of the findings as well as give greater visibility to the data, chunks of the teachers’ responses are quoted and contextualized in the findings and discussion.

Figure 2. Factors impacting EFL teaching
4.1 Social, Cultural and Religious Sensitivities

4.1.1 The Conservative and Religious Nature of Saudi Society

Language classroom is considered a socially defined reality which is influenced by the belief systems and behavioural norms of the society (Tudor, 2001). These beliefs and behavioural norms affect classroom practices, especially when teachers are unaware of the learners’ social, cultural and religious sensitivities. In Saudi Arabia, EFL learners with religious and conservative bent of mind not only influence teachers’ choice of teaching material but overall classroom environment. Therefore, it becomes essential for the teachers to understand the teaching/learning context and know how to effectively deal with social, cultural and religious factors (Murphy-O’Dwyer, 1996). All the five interviewees mentioned the conservative and orthodox nature of the Saudi society which certainly affects their efficacy in the classrooms.

In Saudi Arabia, there are cultural and social issues that certainly affect our classroom teaching. We’ll have to be well aware of its social, cultural and religious norms. For example, religion is very sensitive here in Saudi Arabia. You shouldn’t devise activities that contradict their social and cultural norms and must take them into consideration while planning a lesson (Fahad).

However, the participants in this study seemed fully cognizant of the students’ sensitivities and know how to dilute their unfavourable impact on EFL teaching in the classrooms.

I am aware of the cultural sensitivities. Moreover, I always try to connect every classroom activity to the culture to make it familiar and more understandable to the students (Khan).

4.1.2 Discouraging Societal Behaviour towards Education

The teachers’ experience and their background knowledge of the culture usually help them overcome sociocultural challenges in pedagogy (Khan, 2011); however, they could do little about the negative attitude of the society towards modern English education. Similar to the findings by Nishino (2012), teachers in this study have highlighted the socio-educational and psychological conditions of the Saudi society.

Psyche is what creates a very distinctive set of an educational environment. From a psychological view, the actual value they are putting on education is minimal. I never received parents asking about the progress of their kids or expressing their expectations of the child (Lakshman).

The above quote reflects the situation of parental role in education in Saudi society. Learning environment and family background both contribute to the success of learning process. However, in Saudi Arabia, majority of the people are not well educated, and parents lack interest in giving good education to their children (Khan, 2012). Thus, lack of parental support is on the basic reasons and a demoralizing factor in language teaching.

4.2 Learners’ Negative Attitude towards English Language Learning

4.2.1 Lack of Motivation

Ellis (1997) believes that motivated individuals, who integrate both linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes of the learning experience, will attain a higher degree of L2 proficiency. Learners’ lack of motivation leads to various other factors which cause teachers’ frustration and impede classroom teaching. As seen in the literature, learners’ motivation is ‘the most complex and challenging issue facing teachers today’ (Scheidecker & Freeman, 1999, p. 116). Similar to the findings by Liton (2012), teachers believe that learners’ lack of motivation is the crux of the problems which influences teachers’ performances and learners’ outcomes. However, they make
a conscious effort to reduce its negative impact by developing rapport with their learners, bringing variety to their classrooms and providing them with a friendly classroom environment.

I believe, for me the biggest challenge in Saudi context is learners’ motivation. It’s a real challenge for me to motivate my students, so whatever I do, the key question I ask myself, will this motivate the students, I make a lesson plan, I make an activity, multiple choice questions, anything I do, the thing in my mind, driving it all, will this motivate the class (Mark).

Interviewees have evinced their disappointment about the learners’ lack of interest in English language which ‘poses significant number of challenges for the teachers’ (Lakshman). They don’t have the reading habits. They lack interest in learning English (Mark).

4.2.2 Learners’ Preferences and Goals

More than clear majority of Saudi EFL learners’ attitude towards exams and assessments is primarily grade-driven. Their ultimate learning goal is to achieve good grades and certificates, and they divert all their energies for this purpose with little attention on real learning and academic growth.

Grades are the prime motives behind coming to the class (Khan). Students expect to get 10 out of 10 in all the exams. They don’t care about their natural ability and performance but they keep an eye on these grades (Star).

These findings confirm Shehdeh’s (2010) assertion that Arab learners lack motivation and have a poor attitude towards English language. They are also in line with Candlin & Mercer’s (2001: 18) claims that learners’ preferences, beliefs and educational attainment influence their classroom performances. Since English language is not required for most of the tasks they perform outside the classrooms, their main objective remains to achieve certificates and get promoted. Consequently, the teachers’ job turns out to be more challenging. They are forced to think out of the box, vary their lessons and create learners’ interest in the lessons.

I use different activities for different purposes. In all my classes I let the learners do activities individually, in pairs and in groups. My every lesson has Lead-in, for motivating and engaging the students. I always make the theme relevant to their understanding. Visual scaffolding, audios, posters, photos, games, role plays and dialogues help me personalizing the tasks (Star).

The above quotation affirms the teachers’ proactive attempt to provide learners with authentic and dynamic learning environment. It shows their strong drive for giving interactive and learner-centred lessons. Also, teachers’ use of various activities, strategies and techniques ensure lively classroom atmosphere where learners find themselves engaged in meaningful tasks. Despite the challenging EFL context of Saudi Arabia, the teachers endeavour to get their students involved in communicative activities and encourage them to speak with and listen to other learners.

4.2.3 The Phenomenon of Repeaters

Above all, the factor of ‘repeaters’ poses enormous challenge to the teachers. They believe that learners who have failed and repeated the same level more than 2 or 3 times have no motivation to learn English, but to get promoted without any academic performance.

Teaching repeaters is just like banging your head against the wall. There is hardly any suitable methodology for such learners (Fahad).

Such students are found almost in every class, and teachers have to deal with them in a very efficient manner enabling them to learn and pass the exams. They need a lot of attention and encouragement.

You have to be strict with the repeaters but the thing is that it’s a challenge (Mark).
4.2.4 Absenteeism and Its Toll

Among other unseen factors that negatively influence classroom practices in the Saudi context, ‘absenteeism’ is a big problem experienced by the teachers. Lacking any teeth or autonomy in this regard, they feel helpless and frustrated.

We start teaching in week one, students don’t show up. They start coming to classes in week two and three or week four. The teacher is not that powerful to force them to stay in the class. He has to start covering the course next day, no matter how stressful it is for the teacher or students (Khan).

Absenteeism shrinks learners’ chances of getting exposure to English language through classroom environment, which ultimately affects their proficiency. Research shows that poor language proficiency of EFL learners is due to their lack of exposure to L2 ((Matsuda & Gobel, 2004, cited in Amengual-Pizarro, 2007; Yeh, 2010; Shehdeh, 2010). Likewise, data supports the findings of Chen & Goh (2011) that teachers find it hard to prepare activities and apply them successfully due to the learners’ limited vocabulary and poor grammar. In our context, this problem arises due to poor attendance of the students.

They don’t have background knowledge of some very common things, so while activating their prior knowledge or developing schemata, I really face a challenge because they lack in the basic vocabulary, they lack in the basic structure, they don’t know what to say, how to say and when to say (Star).

English is not a dominant language. Learning English doesn’t have practical benefits.

People have limited exposure through the lenses of TV, music and movies (Lakshman).

This commonly observed problem in EFL contexts has been tackled by teachers in different manners. Generally, similar types of strategies are employed to deal with repeaters and low proficiency learners. Although, teachers try to avoid the use of learners’ L1, but to avert communication breakdown with lower level learners, L1 comes into play.

I use Arabic when there is a complete breakdown of communication especially with the lower levels. I believe if a student gets an equivalent of an English word or concept in Arabic, it’s a pleasurable activity for him. Moreover, the use of some Arabic takes the strangeness of the new word away (Khan).

4.3 Institutional Policies and Procedures

4.3.1 Attendance Policy

Teachers have to comply with the institutional procedures and policies. Institutional pressures may force them to adopt practices that contradict their cognitions, beliefs and established practices (Almarza, 1996). They are not completely free to pick and choose how they teach; they are bound by social convention, learners’ expectations and school and ministry’s policies (Hall, 2011, p. 116). Similarly, participants in this study highlighted various policies which affect their classroom teaching in one way or another. For instance, the attendance policy is heavily criticised by the teachers which is never modified. Some teachers believe that no such policy has ever existed. Nonetheless, they are bound to stick to the pacing guide and cover the prescribed syllabus in a limited time period, even if more than half of the class is absent.

If a student is absent for more than 18 or 20 hours, he is not supposed to take the exam and repeat the course. However, that’s always not the reality. In some cases a student...
can take the exam and get promoted to the next level even if he exceeds the absence limit. Students take advantage of this leniency (Khan).

The above quote indicates loopholes in the system of the ELI which students exploit to their benefit.

4.3.2 Modular System vs Semester System

Another intriguing factor that impacts classroom teaching is the modular system adopted by the ELI. The brief time frame of a module which is 6-7 weeks creates inevitable hurdles for teachers to achieve curriculum objectives, to teach the prescribed syllabus, to develop rapport with learners and to assess the learners’ progress. The challenge of limited instruction time is also found by Chen & Goh (2011) and Yeh (2010) in other EFL contexts.

Actually, I kind of prefer the semester system. I prefer it in a sense that you are with the same teacher. In module, you change the teacher. Then you change the book also. In semester you have only one book. In two modules you have two books. You’re not acquiring the skills. Education is about learning the skills, learning one skill and then another. So you can’t really master one book in such a short time. You don’t have that much time to build the relationship with learners too (Mark).

If they (students) don’t show up during the first week, then suddenly in week 2 an email may pop in a night before, saying, can you just cram and squeeze those week 1 objectives into week 2? (Star)

Teachers find themselves in testing situation here. The modular pattern is an idea that contradicts their pedagogical beliefs; however, skills like adoptability and flexibility earn them some success.

Being a qualified and skilled teacher, I have to adopt and adapt in modular system and I have to increase pair work, increase group work so I can assess them quickly and also assess my own teaching (Lakshman).

4.3.3 The Element of Threat in Classroom Observations

Teachers do not consider the environment of the ELI congenial for the expatriate teachers. They perceive the role of the Professional Development Unit (PDU) quite hostile towards expat teachers, especially in classroom observations. Teachers believe that observations (formal/informal), which are mostly conducted by unqualified and untrained observers, are mainly meant to ‘hire and fire’. The element of threat remains on top of the teachers’ heads that leads to teacher burnout and demotivation.

When the observation begins a cold shiver runs down everybody’s spine (Khan). Prima facie, this is quite a dissuading and discouraging aspect of the ELI, wherein, teachers experience a continuous stress throughout the academic year. In addition, unannounced visits by the officials to classes further pressurize the teachers who are subject to a lurking job uncertainty. Moreover, lack of autonomy and sense of insecurity affect teachers’ performances who fail to utilize their teaching abilities with desired freedom.

4.3.4 Lack of Authentic Environment and Resources

Teachers also consider the unauthentic environment of the institute an obstacle in their classroom teaching. Candlin & Mercer (2001) believe that learners’ experiences and their personal engagements outside the classroom in EFL contexts have a strong impact on classroom teaching and learning. Since, English is not a local medium of communication in Saudi Arabia (Khan, 2011), students do not practice it outside the classroom, and thus fail to achieve the linguistic competence. For Hall (2011), “the school, institution or educational system provides the immediate environment for the language classroom”. The lack of authentic environment
affects learners’ language proficiency, a problem commonly seen across the Arab world (Shehdeh, 2012).

Outside the classroom, students don’t practice English language not even in school or university and use their first language, Arabic. So EFL context is very limited in Saudi Arabia (Lakshman).

The participants also specify other influencing factors caused by institutional policies such as lack of resources, lack of authentic materials, and irrelevant textbook materials which support the findings of studies by Chen & Goh (2011), Yeh (2010), Li (1998), Peng (2007), Wu (2001), Yu (2001), and Zheng & Davison (2008). Nonetheless, large classes with learners of various needs are issues seen in the literature, but not expressed by the teachers in this study. It may be due to the fact that students, based on Oxford placement test, are streamed into appropriate levels at the start of the academic year. Also, the classroom strength is restricted to 25 students which is considered manageable strength.

I feel frustrated when I see the material is not relevant, i.e like that Big Ben example. I mean why this material is here? I try to relate, like if Michal Jackson is there with Mohammad Abdu, Meradona with Yasir Qahtani, something like that. I try to make them relevant to the students. I make my own stuff, i.e. how to get a job, Saudi mountain climbing in America etc. (Star).

4.3.5 Odd Contact Hours

Contact hours or class timings also affect teaching practices (Drew et al., 2007). Class duration of 80 minutes per lesson is seen a problem by the teachers. Teachers believe that normal classroom duration should be 50 minutes to avoid learners’ fatigue. Moreover, 18 hours language classes per week with odd and unfriendly class timings may not support the learners’ mood and preferences. For example, the classes that begins at 2:30pm and finish at 4:00pm are not endorsed by the teachers.

The students feel very much demotivated as they are forced or coerced to attend the 18 hours of language classes per week (Khan).

Classes starting at 2:30pm, I would prefer them to be a bit earlier, because students in the morning are more motivated and active, they are more energetic, in the evening they are all sleepy. 50 minutes class is good enough for language teaching (Mark).

4.4 Teachers’ Competence

4.4.1 Professional Knowledge of Teachers

Findings reveal strong indicators of teachers’ classroom practices, reflecting their accurate observation and good understanding of the teaching context that shape their classroom behaviour and goal setting (Chen & Goh, 2011). Drew et al. (2007) believe that teachers’ knowledge and competence have a definite impact on classroom practices. Similarly, participants in this study believe that teaching qualifications earned them self-confidence and enabled them to experiment new things in classrooms in order to achieve their teaching objectives. Unlike studies by Liu (2007) and Li (1998) which reflect EFL teachers’ own language proficiency and inadequate pedagogical knowledge (Chen & Goh, 2011) as sources of problem, the participants of our study are well proficient in English and possess up-to-date knowledge of language teaching and the origins of their problems lie elsewhere. These findings also support the core dimensions of teachers’ skills and expertise suggested by Richards (2010).
I have an absolute belief in my knowledge and experience. I have full command of the language. I always plan my lesson. While planning the lesson, I keep in mind the students’ level, their culture, time slot, their needs and lesson objectives (Lakshman). I don’t find my pedagogical knowledge inadequate to teach my learners (Star).

4.4.2 Teachers’ Effectiveness

Previous studies indicate that teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs affect their instructional behaviours in various ways including the effort they put in teaching and the goals they set up for themselves and for their students (Chacon, 2005; Knoblauch & Woolfolk, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2001). In this study, teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs and their positive image of themselves enable them to deliberate on the lower level learners’ needs, repeaters’ expectations, and unmotivated learners’ goals. Only highly self-efficacious teachers can accept the challenge of teaching such ‘difficult to teach’ learners.

In addition, their beliefs and perceptions about their teaching skills have a strong impact on their teaching effectiveness (Knoblauch & Woolfolk, 2008) which are indicated through their will to adopt and overcome ineluctable classroom challenges. For example, other studies by Schutz (2001, cited in Nishino, 2012) and Ehrman (1996 cited in Jing 2005) show that mismatch between teachers’ teaching style and learners’ learning style might cause frustration to EFL teachers, and the choice of methodology may also affect EFL teaching (Drew et al., 2007). However, such concerns were not conveyed by qualified and competent teachers participated in this study.

Being a professional teacher, I’m not influenced negatively by the students’ practices. There is not much mismatch between my teaching style and learners learning style because in week one I try to research different inventory methods to get to know students learning style. For example I try to know whether the students learn individually much better, in groups or in pairs and secondly, I try to know whether students feel much more comfortable with the grammar lesson, reading or listening lesson, then I try to design my activities that go with the students interest and learning style (Fahad).

4.4.3 Prerequisite Qualifications of Teachers

It is generally considered that teacher training courses, workshops and seminars help teachers to upgrade their teaching knowledge, enhance their teaching skills and keep them abreast of latest developments in ELT. The findings of the current study contradict Khan’s (2011) stance that in the Saudi context “the background and training do not contribute much, but a well-equipped teacher may minimise the learning difficulties”. Khan (2011) further contends that courses like CELTA, DELTA, TESOL, EFL, ESL, ESP, B.Ed., M. Ed etc. are generally found less effective because these do not match the needs of the local teachers and specific classroom situations. However, the participants’ views in the context of this research were found in favour of these teaching qualifications, i.e. CELTA/DELTA or MA TESOL, which they considered pivotal in their effective teaching to Arab students.

I would suggest that CELTA is the key to tackle the classroom dilemmas. I use CELTA techniques for students of all levels and the outcome is brilliant (Mark).

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, some recommendations can be put forward to EFL teachers, policy makers, administrators, course designers, and teacher-trainers working in the present research context.
5.1 Social, Cultural and Religious Sensitivities

- To understand the social, cultural and religious norms of the Saudi society and avoid cultural-shocks or frustration, EFL teachers new to Saudi context should be given orientation sessions. Also, they should be provided with a booklet outlining and explaining social demands, institutional procedures and learners’ expectations.

- Course designers should make teaching materials culturally relevant, however, authentic in nature.

5.2 Learners’ Negative Attitude towards English Language Learning

- Experienced teachers should provide support to novices in their efforts to teach lower level learners, repeaters or unmotivated students. They should be of great help in lesson planning, customising the materials and devising culturally appropriate classroom activities to minimize or neutralize the effect of learners’ negative attitude.

- To create an authentic learning environment, language labs, libraries and discussion clubs should be set up to encourage learners’ active participation. The issues of lack of resources at the ELI should be resolved with the establishment of a well-stocked teacher resource centre.

5.3 Institutional Policies and Procedures

- The ELI should come up with a realistic and practical attendance policy. Teachers should be given the mandate to implement the policy and achieve the desired outcomes.

- Teachers’ evaluation system needs to be overhauled and the threat element in classroom observation has to be removed. Moreover, well-trained, professional, qualified, and impartial observers should run the professional development unit with the objective to improve the teaching standards at the ELI.

5.4 Teachers’ Competence

- No one can deny that EFL learners have the right to be taught by qualified and trained teachers, and the field language teaching is a professional discipline that requires specialized training’ (TESOL, 2003). Therefore, a stricter teacher selection procedure should be adopted to hire well-qualified and competent teachers in order to raise the teaching standards and student achievement.

- The teacher-trainers, who are usually alien to the place they go for training the local teachers, should consider the classroom realities and adapt their courses according to the teachers’ actual needs and demands.

6. Conclusion

The present study is an attempt to raise consciousness about the factors affecting EFL teaching at a Saudi university. We believe that teachers in EFL countries such as Saudi Arabia face many obstacles in their bid to effectively teach EFL learners. The first research question was informed that classroom teaching is impacted by various factors which encompass social, cultural and religious sensitivities, lack of learners’ motivation, and effete institutional policies and procedures. The findings informing the second research question have revealed that the teachers’ ability to deal with these factors is developed through proper qualification and training. Despite the fact that the factors discussed in above sections which hinder classroom teaching and retard teaching and learning outcomes, teachers in this study seemed competent in coping with them. They expressed confidence in their teaching skills, excellent language proficiency, background knowledge and experience of Saudi context, and in their adaptability to meet the
learners’ and administrators’ expectations. However, some factors were beyond their control, which negatively influenced their teaching in the EFL classrooms. Notwithstanding the limitations and caveats, we believe that our study contributes to the relevant literature by raising teachers’ awareness of the challenges in Saudi context. It provides a detailed insight into factors which either negatively or positively influence classroom teaching. However, more research of this kind may further enlighten teachers working in Saudi Arabia, neighbouring Gulf countries and elsewhere.

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(Appendix 1)

**Codes, Categories and Themes**
A Study of Electronic Plagiarism Detection as a Tool for Learning Summary Writing

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Abstract
The aim of this study was to explore summary writing processes of sixty Taiwanese freshmen that enrolled in an EFL reading and writing courses. This study examined the difference of participants’ summarized texts and original source texts. The design of the study had one group with traditional writing instruction and the other with plagiarism detection software in writing instruction environment. Within eighteen weeks, the students read and summarized reading materials what they learned. Teacher and peers’ feedbacks were given in two different writing instruction settings. A pretest–posttest experimental design was implemented. Instruments of the study included students’ perception questionnaires and reflective journals of using plagiarism detection software. The results indicated that students’ summary writing tasks did not show significant differences between original source texts and summarized texts after both groups received summary writing instruction. On the other hand, students commented positively that the use of Turnitin facilitated them to understand their errors from teachers’ and peers’ feedback. The implications of the intervention that used plagiarism detection software in L2 writing class were demonstrated.

Keywords: plagiarism detection software; summary writing; paraphrasing; feedback; Turnitin
Introduction

In the language learning process, summary writing is examined by student’s comprehending main ideas and supporting ideas. Many scholars suggest that summary writing indeed help students’ vocabulary knowledge, enhance their critical thinking abilities and reading comprehension (Hidi & Anderson, 1986; Taylor & Beach, 1984). The purpose of writing a summary is that writers convey the main ideas explicitly and clearly for readers (Hidi & Anderson, 1986).

Summary writing provides students with practical experience in searching for meaning and communicating that meaning. However, surveys of academic writing tasks in university surroundings with English instruction show that students tend to draw from source texts when they write homework (Carson, 2001). Therefore, it is important to instruct summary writing skills when students learn to write academic writing (B. Kim, 2001; Langan, 1993). In the second language-learning context, students may have difficulty of dealing with complexities of recognition, schemata, metacognition, and other mental processes when they compose a summary.

The second issue of plagiarism has attracted considerable attention in university level in the recent years. Plagiarism is a concern that “students taking the words of others and passing them off as their own in their coursework assignments” (Hayes & Jintrona, 2005). Students are not aware of the seriousness of plagiarism and teachers do not announce or remind students’ academic misconduct. Even though plagiarism can be nothing, to a few words, to an entire article, for students, plagiarism is regarded as violations of intellectual property rights. There is growing concern among researchers and teachers regarding the effect of plagiarism (Larkham & Manns, 2002). Much research has been conducted to determine the extent of the problem (Walker, 2010; Williams, 2008). In addition, how teachers measure students’ plagiarism has been addressed in the recent years. Many studies focused on student self-reporting examination of their own plagiarizing behavior to evaluate (Brown, 1995; Rakovski & Levy, 2007). Still, there has been much debate that using self-reporting is problematic (Park, 2003; Scanlon & Neumann, 2002).

Despite of the challenging nature of measuring students’ plagiarism, current research on plagiarism has been embarked on plagiarism detection tools (Larkham & Manns, 2002; Royce, 2003). Many high schools and universities are using detection tool to prevent students’ plagiarism. The Turnitin online plagiarism detection software is prevalent with educators and teachers (Rolfe, 2011; Stapleton, 2012; Youmans, 2011). However, the relevant empirical data in second language (L2) research on plagiarism on an academic writing is scarce. It can only be guessed that L2 students lack of enough instruction and practice when they compose a summary. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the effects of plagiarism detection tool on summary writing performance. More specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:
1. What are the differences between original source texts and summarized texts after L2 writers receive summary writing instruction?
2. What are students’ perceptions of using the electronic plagiarism software, Turnitin?

Literature Review

The nature of summary

There are a variety of definitions of summary (Glendinning & Holmstrom, 1992; Langan, 1993; Whol, 1978). Langan defines a summary as “the reduction of a large amount of
information to its most important points.” Glendinning and Holmstrom (1992) also define summary as “identifying what is important in a text depends on a good sampling but it also depends on knowing what to look for the clues which help us to identify the important points and to separate them form the less important details.” Those definitions of summary conclude that summary writers have to omit some details, or at least write it more concisely. In other words, the various definitions suggest that a summary is a brief statement that condenses that information and reflects the central ideas of the discourse (Johnson, 1983).

According to Anderson and Hidi (1986), summary writing is different from other composing tasks. A summary writer should have already planned and generated the main ideas and related details, whereas other composing tasks consider content, structure, core ideas and related details and the use of transitional words. Moreover, Anderson and Hidi also proposed the processes of summary writing. The first process is selection process that learners have to decide what information to delete or keep when they are asked to give a summary. The second process is reduction process that learners have to use general ideas to substitute the details when they are asked to give a summary. Also, learners have to write a summary in their own words and ensure not to interpret inappropriately.

**Summary writing strategies**

Other scholars have different rules or strategies regarding summary writing. Kintch and van Dijk (1978) argue that deletion, generation, and construction are the three basic operations of summary writing. Johnson (1983) proposed six rules of summary writing: (1) comprehending individual propositions; (2) establishing connections between propositions; (3) identifying the constituent structure of a story; (4) remembering the information in a story; (5) selecting the information to be demonstrated in a summary; (6) being concise and coherent. Coffman (1994) focuses three strategies when writing a summary: reproduction, transformation and intrusion. He defines a reproduction that writers paraphrase a unit of original source content. A transformation is that writers combine different major content units from the original source content in the summary. An intrusion is a notion that readers’ schema play an important role when they write a summary. In summary, these definitions of summary draw the same conclusions that readers have to select the important information, delete unimportant information, and then condense all major content units. Finally, readers have to integrate and organize these ideas and then write a summary in their own words.

**Studies of Summary Writing**

Summary writing is regarded as a measure of reading comprehension (Carrell, 1990; A. M. Johns, 1986). Many teachers and scholars believe that summary writing is helpful for learners in terms of improving reading and writing abilities in L1 area (Garner, 1982; Taylor, 1984; Kennedy, 1985). In the past decade, summary writing research in the second language learning has indicated that writing a summary indeed improved learners’ reading comprehension. (S. A. Kim, 2001; Lin & Hsu, 2005; Tien, 2004; Vongpumivitch, 2007).

Kim (2001) investigates 70 Korean EFL students' summary writing skills. They write two expository text without training of summary writing. The results show that text difficulty affects students’ writing behavior. Besides, students use more selection and transformation rules. Finally, the findings indicate that these Korean EFL college students do not employ appropriate writing summary skills and they need more training about summarization skills.

In a recent study, Keck (2006) examine the use of paraphrase in summary writing between L1 and L2 academic writers. This study analyzes two groups of students’ use of paraphrasing strategies in the summary tasks and the results show that L1 writers tend to copy
the original texts. In addition, L2 writers do not use more paraphrasing strategies than L1 writers. Keck assumes that L2 writers lack sufficient language proficiency to produce a summary. The results confirm some scholars’ findings that learners’ linguistic competence is a crucial factor when employing paraphrase strategy use in writing a summary. (A. Johns & Mayes, 1990; Shi, 2004)

**Plagiarism Detection**

With the emergence of plagiarism detection software such as PlagiServe, Moss, and Turnitin, teachers can detect students’ plagiarized tasks easier. Many schools employ the popular plagiarism detection software platform - Turnitin. Studies on Turnitin have been growing recently (Bretag & Mahmud, 2009; Ledwith & Risquez, 2008; Rolfe, 2011). Some scholars point out that using Turnitin to check students’ plagiarized sentences does improve their writing when they revise it (Ledwith & Risquez, 2008; Rolfe, 2011), whereas others argue that students’ writing quality do not improve when using Turnitin as a learning tool (Biggam & McCann, 2010; Walker, 2010).

Despite a controversy of using Turnitin in class, teachers and researchers can use this software to facilitate students’ writing skills and help them to become more aware of plagiarism. This empirical study is more concerned about how teachers can implement Turnitin as a tool for teaching and giving feedbacks.

**Method**

This study was designed by using Turnitin as the primer-researching tool. During the summering writing learning process, college students were given proper assistance and feedback promptly. Through the research procedure, researchers wanted to discover and discuss the cognitive and behavioral performance that consists with the students’ summary writing processes. Our goal of this study was to improve students’ summary writing ability in order to have realistic practice in academic writing ethics. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the differences between original source texts and summarized texts after L2 writers receive summary writing instruction?
2. What are students’ perceptions of using the electronic plagiarism software, Turnitin?

**Participants**

Participants were selected from one freshman English writing course of a private university in southern Taiwan. Their ages were between 18 and 20 year old. Participants studied English for at least eight years. This particular course was a required one for freshman with three credit hours per week. The course was divided into two groups. One of these groups was the experimental group. Participants in this group were given Turnitin as a summary writing environment. The other group was the control group that proceeds with traditional class lecture without using Turnitin. Thirty students were in each group and a total of sixty students participated this study. Most participants did not have summary writing training experience in their high school English classes.

**Reading Materials**

There were twenty articles used for reading materials. Those articles were selected from reading comprehension textbooks, “Reading Keys 3”. There were eight reading themes with ten articles, which were four to six hundred words in length. They were appropriate reading materials for intermediate readers such as participants in our study. The content of those articles were authentic with different topics such as “Life with Internet,” “Reading to People,” “A mysterious World,” and “Playing with nature.” Those reading material could provide with
students different writing styles and further understanding with the authors’ presentation to their thoughts. To sum up, topics, content, and length of the selected articles suitable with freshman students’ English capability. Therefore, in the research design, both experimental and control group were using articles from this textbook for a whole academic year.

**Summary Writing Strategies**

While teaching summary writing during the semesters, students had to study writing strategies. Researchers generalized the development of those strategies by students as the follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Reading strategies</th>
<th>Summary writing strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>Use quotation marks to cite another’s verbatim and cite the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorough rewriting</td>
<td>Paraphrase the source text by using one’s words to express the ideas of another’s work and cite the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reordering</td>
<td>Paraphrase by reordering words or phrases of source text and cite the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using synonyms</td>
<td>Paraphrase by substituting synonyms for words of source texts and cite the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inserting</td>
<td>Paraphrase by inserting words or phrases of source texts and cite the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deleting</td>
<td>Paraphrase by deleting words from source texts and cite the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic change</td>
<td>Paraphrase by changing the syntax of the source texts, verbatim, and cite the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combing</td>
<td>Paraphrase by combing sentences from different source texts, verbatim, and the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy verbatim</td>
<td>Copy, verbatim, from source texts and cite the source</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Campbell, 1990; Keck, 2006; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2004

**“Turnitin” anti-plagiarism online system**

Participants of the experimental group were given “Turnitin” accounts for submitting their writings to the system in order to determine the extent of plagiarizing the original text. Barrie established “Turnitin.com” and developed the online anti-plagiarism system in 1990 by applying studies of development of brain waves from neuroscience. Once the teacher applied students’ writings into the system, the comparison of originality and links to the source can be done by one click.

**Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was adapted from Betts, Bostock, Elder, and Trueman (2012) and modified by the researcher that given to participants to investigate their recognition on plagiarism and attitudes on summary writing editing procedures. The questionnaire was divided into two sections accordingly.

**Research Design**

This study was consisted with one experimental group and another control group. These two groups were treated differently during the span of our research according to their learning methods. The whole process was for at least three months.

The experimental group received traditional summary writing instructions in classrooms, as well as using Turnitin to facilitate students’ summary writing and the teacher’s feedback. Multimedia language learning laboratories with Windows XP based personal computers were utilized for using Turnitin. It was one student per seat so students can receive the teacher’s feedback individually.

On the other hand, the control group received only traditional summary writing instructions and activities. The teacher gave paper-based feedback alone with students’ summary writings plus face-to-face feedbacks.
Research Procedure

Both experimental and control group received the same reading material and training; however, the summary writing instructions were different. Both groups were given summary writing pre-test.

The experimental group went to multimedia language learning laboratories and used Turnitin for summary writing activities for six times. Participants in this group received traditional summary writing instructions for 12 weeks and wrote summaries for six times. In addition to the feedbacks in Turnitin, the teacher met students and gave feedbacks in person one time for the last writing, which was treated as the post-test.

At the same time, the control group completed the pretest summary writing, but participants did not use Turnitin activities. Participants in this group also received a face-to-face meeting with the teacher and the teacher gave feedbacks to participants.

Through the procedures of this research, the researcher was able to determine if Turnitin was helpful to participants after all these activities such as less word-by-word copying and more strategy usage to improve their summary writing capability. The post-test was given in a different article then the pre-test. The main reason for that was to reduce the practice effects.

Data analysis

There were five components of this study and each component is designed for different learning process.

Pre-test and post-test of summary writing

This part of data was analyzed by using Turnitin anti-plagiarism system to detect the percentage of copying between pre-test and post-test. According to the result, the researcher could decide the cut-off point, 30 percent, and discussed students’ extent of plagiarism (Rolfe, 2011).

Reflective journal

Reflective journals from participants and the teacher were analyzed by using qualitative methods. There were suggested questions for participants to reflect. In this way, the fracturing of text data and the relationship between patterns was constructed and given new meanings. This transformation process was often an abstraction one (Liu, 2006). The suggested questions are as follows:

1. What do you plan ahead in doing your summary writing activity?
2. What kind of difficulties do you have while you are doing summary writing activity?
3. How would you evaluate your learning progress?
4. How would you motivate yourself to make progress?
5. What enabled you gain most from doing summary writing activity?
6. What would you do differently if you have more time?
7. Using open-ended question to ask students: On the left side of the paper, the students could write down: What I learned? On the right side of the paper, students could write down: How I learned it?

For the interview questionnaire, students are suggested for the following questions that are modified from Rolfe (2011).

1. How was your experience of using Turnitin / summary writing instruction?
2. Was there enough training?
3. Did you look at the originality report / original summary writing assignment?
4. Did it help you improve your work?
5. Did you change your work after seeing the report?
6. Are academic offences a problem at university?
7. Is the university procedure clear?
8. Should all work be submitted to Turnitin to deter plagiarism?

Summary writing strategies usage

By analyzing which strategy was most frequently used, data was evaluated by the researcher. The evaluation of the summary writing used worksheet as the standard. The researcher worked with other co-researchers to complete this task. As described in the literature section, replacing segmentation and unimportant information with condensed, complete, consistent, accurate, and untestable content were the strategies that participants use.

Questionnaire

Two of the research groups were given this questionnaire for investigating if there any participants’ attitude difference on plagiarism before and after the summary writing procedure. Data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussion

1. What are the differences between original source texts and summarized texts after they received summary writing instruction?

For two group students submitted during the teaching semester, the amount of text Turnitin identified as being similar ranged from 0 to 92 per cent. In the beginning of the conducting this research, two group of students’ first summary writing (pre-test) revealed 0%. (See Table 2). There were no instances of matching text identified in the similarity reports in experimental and control groups. The results showed false-positive detections of potentially plagiarized material an average of 0 percent of pretest. One possible cause for this incident is that the software may misidentify material. From the instructor’s observation, it was difficult for two groups of students who wrote excellent summary writing tasks before receiving the instruction.

In the end of semester, two groups of students were asked to read the same article and write a summary. Control groups (M=39.8%) performed better than experimental group (M=26.2%). As for the experimental group, despite the use of Turnitin, it still showed the high rate of plagiarism. It was assumed that experimental group using Turnitin had no positive impact on their writing performance. The findings of this research do not support the perspective that Turnitin is not a very practical detection plagiarism tool. Further, there were a number of false identified where students wrote a common phrase or keywords included appropriately referenced quotes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. What are students’ perceptions of using Turnitin?

The students’ experiences of using Turnitin were evaluated through a questionnaire, to which 30 students responded (see Table 2).
Table 3. Number of positive and negative student responses regarding the use of Turnitin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Positive response</th>
<th>Negative response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I found Turnitin very easy to use</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the benefits of using Turnitin</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that Turnitin is very effective in detecting plagiarism.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnitin is a very effective way of submitting and correcting assignment.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Turnitin made me much of aware of plagiarism.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Turnitin made me feel satisfied that the anonymity of the peer assessment process would be assured.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Turnitin was better than correcting paper versions of assignments.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Turnitin GradeMark (teacher’s feedback) was easy to understand my errors.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Turnitin GradeMark (teacher’s feedback) was helpful to me.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Turnitin Grade Mark (rubric) was helpful to make my writing better.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive response in the number of students answering agree or strongly agree; negative response is the number answering neutral, disagree or strongly disagree.

The students found using Turnitin to be a special and positive experience. The majority agreed that Turnitin was a useful platform. Moreover, they thought that their summary tasks to gain teachers’ feedback did really improve their writing. However, some students complained its inconvenience. Students suggested that the speed of Turnitin was slow and the technical problem of getting access was annoying. The following excerpts were students’ positive and negative feedbacks when using Turnitin.

Positive Feedback

One is I can understand what percentage I write like the original text. (AB22)
I can check how similar my summary is with the original text. I can check my grade online. (AB12).
Turnitin is useful and using the GradeMark is easy to understand (AB10).
I realized that I should pay more attention in the sentence and grammar (AB18).

Negative Feedback

Loading is a little slow. Sometimes it can’t open (AB28).
Get on Turnitin website is slow from school (AB12).
When I use Turnitin to finish my homework, I can’t count the words of my summary (A09).
Sometimes the words are too small (AB11).

When asked about using Turnitin more detailed, students suggested that teacher’s feedback is necessary. Here are some excerpts from students’ comments:
I can check my mistake on my summary (AB02).
It can let me edit summary immediately after getting the feedback (AB13).
I think we should practice more by using Turnitin (AB29).
The system operates to divide the ability into many pieces which make students feel easy to overcome their problems (AB09).

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Overall, the findings confirmed that students became more aware of plagiarism in their subsequent writing tasks (Walker, 2010). First, students evaluated summary writing experience in using Turnitin positively. For example, the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that using Turnitin helped them to correct assignments. Students elaborated that using Turnitin could review each other’s writing task in peer reviewing process. Some students referred that anonymity was great because they were embarrassed to show their tasks in front of their classmates. Second, students commented that the use of Turnitin helped them to understand their errors via teachers’ feedback, corrections, and rubric. The finding confirmed that teachers or tutors should help students to interpret the reports generated by Turnitin (Betts et al., 2012). It was useless for teachers to ask students to view their originality report in Turnitin.

Conclusion

The results of this research indicated that students’ summary writing tasks did not show significant differences between original source texts and summarized texts after they received summary writing instruction. More specifically, no instances of matching text identified in the similarity reports in both experimental and control groups. Teachers should caution the high false-positive detection rate; therefore, training or workshop is essential for teachers to avoid making negative assumptions from students’ plagiarized tasks. It is suggested that teachers could not rely on the percentage number in the similarity and they should review and interpret the results for the intentional cases of plagiarism. Wasley (2008) reported that “if preventing cheating depends on faculty keeping up with technology… we lose.” Turnitin could serve a tool and would not substitute for human communication and engagement.

The data from students’ questionnaire and reflective journal provided a richer understanding that students evaluated summary writing experience in using Turnitin positively. Also, students commented that the use of Turnitin facilitated them to understand their errors from teachers’ and peers’ feedback.

In conclusion, the findings were encouraging for teachers to use Turnitin as a means of communication between participants in the process of summary writing activities. The awareness of plagiarism was increasing among students; however, the plagiarism did not decrease after they receive the summary writing instructions by using Turnitin. It is suggested that students still needed to learn more about academic writing skills such as citation, referencing, and paraphrasing.

Future research is required to bring students’ writing skill to proper level before proceeding summary activities. When using Turnitin, teachers and students need to be trained for interpreting the similarity reports’ scores in a meaningful way. In addition, the future studies need to pay more attention on the design of intervention with the use of Turnitin. The plagiarism detection tool cannot be employed solely for evaluating students’ summary writing performance.

About the author
Dr. Chia-Pei Wu is an assistant professor of Applied English Department at I-Shou University. She has taught reading, business English and academic writing in Taiwan. Her major research interests include academic writing, computer-assisted language learning and reading instruction.

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The Effect of Using E-mail on Developing EFL Writing Skills for Secondary Stage Students at the Experimental Schools

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Abstract
The present study aimed at investigating the effect of using e-mail on developing EFL writing skills among first year experimental secondary school students. The study followed a pretest-posttest experimental-control group design. The study sample consisted of 60 students from Fakus Experimental Secondary School and was divided into two groups: 30 students for the experimental group and 30 students for the control group. For identifying the most important EFL writing skills required for first year experimental secondary school students, a writing skills list were developed. Then, a pre-post e-mail-writing skills test, free-writing test and a rubric for scoring the tests was developed. Students in both the experimental and control group were pre-tested using the e-mail-writing skills test and the free-writing test. Then, students of the experimental group were taught through the program of e-mail and writing and students of the control group were taught in the traditional method. Finally, students in both groups were post-tested using the same instruments. The study showed that; first, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-test of e-mail-writing skills test and the post-test of free-writing. Second, there was statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-post e-mail writing skills test and the pre-post free-writing test of the experimental group at 0.05 in favor of the post-tests. This difference can be attributed to using e-mail. Hence, it was concluded that the program of e-mail and writing proved to be highly effective in developing first year secondary school students' EFL writing skills.

Keywords: E-mail, Writing, EFL
Introduction

Writing is one of the fundamental skills in learning English language. Brown (2001) considered writing in L2 from the perspective of teaching writing as one of the four skill areas. According to Bello (1997), learning to write in English as a second language allows learners to put their thoughts on paper, see their ideas in print, and share them with others. El-Shafie (2006) stated that writing is the most difficult skill of all the language skills taught to EFL students. Students cannot develop their ideas when asked to write simple or compound sentences, and certain types of grammar mistakes dominate their writings (e.g., sentence structure, conjunctions, tenses, adverbs, adjectives, voice, prepositions, word-order, spelling, paragraph development, vocabulary choice, and punctuation). In addition, their sentences are almost Arabic structures literally translated. Their writing is unsatisfactory and poor and they are unable to express themselves in writing appropriately and correctly.

To solve most of the problems and the difficulties EFL students encounter in writing, the focus of research on writing has moved to the process approach. The social orientation of this approach is visible, the writer-text-reader interaction, purpose, audience and intention are all important in the production of discourse while the functional dimension of communication is reinforced (White and Arndt 1991, Raimes 1991). The process approach focuses on the steps involved in creating a piece of work. It allows for the fact that no text can be perfect, but that a writer will get closer to perfection by producing, reflecting on, discussing and reworking successive drafts of a text (Nunan, 1999).

With the introduction of technology and using computer in all fields such as Industry, business, education, politics and technology, electronic mail is quickly taking the place of voice, paper, and fax communication. Employers will require this vital skill for their employees of today and tomorrow (Belisle, 1996). E-mail has many benefits in teaching English such as:

Firstly, it extends language learning time and place as one can communicate with others in the foreign language at any place outside the classroom and spend more time in reading and composing in the foreign language communicative context. This provides the class time (Rankin, 1997).

Secondly, it provides a context for real-world communication and authentic interaction by connecting FL speakers outside the classroom with other speakers in communicative situations (Schwienkorst, 1998; Warschaur, 1995).

Thirdly, it expands topics beyond classroom-based ones, and these may be additional topics beside the classroom topics.

Fourthly, it promotes student-centered language learning as the learners can choose the topic and change the direction of the discussion (Patrikis, 995).

Fifthly, it encourages equal opportunities of participation (Beauvois, 1995; Gonzalez-Bueno, 1998; Warschauer, 1995).

Sixthly, it connects speakers quickly and cheaply as students communicate with native speakers without the high cost of traveling abroad (Hedderich, 1997).
Seventhly, E-mail is concerned with the clear and unambiguous transmission of messages, and stresses a two-way communication channel. The computer and e-mail mode assume the existence of a dynamic system in which an individual and instantaneous feedback provide specific and relevant feedback. The system can affect and alter the learning behavior of the student. Speed, power and flexibility of the computer and e-mail can effectively facilitate second language writing (Chapelle, 1990). In EFL writing classes, e-mail is a very useful and powerful vehicle for teaching. It enables the teacher to monitor the process of the students' writings to save class time for the teacher's assignments and comments (Belisle, 1996).

Eighthly, e-mail supplies opportunities for independent learning which is essential for L2 writing. The use of e-mail involves a wide range of skills including knowing how to use personal computer, knowing how to navigate through the immense resource that is often called cyberspace, and becoming familiar with the special register of e-mail communication. Mastering these skills can empower students to use e-mail and other types of telecommunications for the rest of their lives. E-mail allows students to communicate easily with hundreds of students. It can provide information, contact, and stimulation, supplying the teacher with more effective and enjoyable teaching situations.

Ninthly, another teacher-advantage of using e-mail is the ability to monitor the individual or group writing electronically. Processing from the brainstorming phase to the final draft as teachers may receive dozens of papers and assignments from their students which they can organize electronically by student name, by date received or by project name. These categories make it easier for the teacher to see the process, which his students are using during their writing for future analysis' and grading (Belisle, 1996).

Many scholars proved that e-mail is useful in developing English writing skills and the following are some of them: Alias & Hussin (2002) examined to what extent web-based activities such as searching for information, exchanging of messages via e-mail and participating in discussion groups are helpful to learners in their writing process. The study was conducted at one of the private institutions of higher learning, involved 20 students in a writing course. The findings indicated that the students perceived the three activities as beneficial to them in writing. While some websites (85%), created for ESL/EFL learners were perceived to be especially useful in providing knowledge and drills on the usage of the language, e-mail (95%) was perceived to have helped them, especially, in gathering ideas, peer editing and revising (90%) Class discussion group was considered helpful in the composing process, and working together in a group (80%) was seen as helpful. In addition, forum discussions allowed students to contribute ideas. The results also showed changes in the students' attitude and motivation levels.

Emily (2006) presented a longitudinal case study of a Taiwanese graduate student's e-mail practice in English during her studies at a U. S. university for two and a half years. Using a critical discourse analysis approach, the study revealed the complexity of an L2 learner evolving e-mail practice and struggled for appropriateness, particularly in her e-mail communication with professors. Her development of e-mail literacy was discussed in relation to her evolving
understanding of the e-mail medium, changing performance of student identity, increasing knowledge of student – professor interaction and realization of culture – specific politeness.

**Context of the problem**

Previous research on writing in Egyptian secondary schools reveals the persistence of actual problems in teaching and learning writing for both teachers and students:

Abdu (1993) confirmed the persistence of actual problems in teaching and learning writing for teachers and students. Teachers frequently complain of the big workload of students' poor writings, which they have to correct. As far as students are concerned, they mostly prefer the teacher to assign other types of written work, i.e., comprehension, grammar and vocabulary exercises, and view composition writing as a kind of punishment. They hardly have any organized and disciplined instruction in writing. Writing is included as part of the prescribed textbook content, usually as a summary of a given text, giving a very limited chance for students to exploit their own linguistic resources and ideas. This denies students the chance to experience real writing.

Helal (2003) indicated that first year secondary school students have weaknesses in the organization skills of the paragraph on their writing or the opportunity to revise their piece of writing. The usual practice is to correct the grammatical errors. If teachers give feedback, it focuses mainly on spelling and grammatical errors, being satisfied with marking in red these errors in students' written pieces. In addition, the teacher is the sole audience for students' writings.

Regarding the difficulties students face when writing, most teachers confirmed that when they assign a topic for writing, they do not know what to write about, some of these students write down only the title; others write meaningless pieces: its meaning is unclear. Teachers guess the meaning rather than understand it, they cannot link sentences in a coherent whole, nor can they express their thoughts in a lucid and organized way. Moreover, students exhibited a limited writing vocabulary, over-concentration on mechanics and inadequate writing skills (Helal, 2003). The EFL teachers need to step out the restricted and traditional role, which has been to evaluate the learner's first draft as if it were the final product. They should assume the role of a consultant facilitating the learner's step-by-step creation of the text (Helal, 2003).

Previous researchers proved that EFL students face some writing problems, those problems might hinder their ability to express themselves freely, as they are not interested in the topic that the teacher asks them to write about (Aly, 2001). They cannot link sentences into a coherent paragraph, nor can they express their thought in a lucid and organized way.

Abdel-Hack (2002) and El-Shafie (2006) stated that writing is the most difficult skill of all the language skills taught to EFL students and some sort of punishment for students. Students cannot develop their ideas when asked to write simple or compound sentences, and certain types of grammar mistakes dominate their writings (e.g. sentence structure, conjunctions, tenses, adverbs, adjectives, voice, prepositions, word-order, spelling, paragraph development, vocabulary choice, and punctuation). In addition, their sentences are almost Arabic structures.
literally translated. Their writing is unsatisfactory and poor and they are unable to express themselves in writing appropriately and correctly.

Developing writing skill is especially important for English language students at the secondary stage. The secondary stage is a stage of consolidation, supporting and reinforcing English language basics previously learnt by students during the preparatory stage (Abdel-Razek, 2006). It is also a stage of expansion and preparation for the university. Thus, mastering writing skills during the secondary stage helps students’ progress in their university studies (El-Shafie, 2006). A student is expected at the end of the secondary stage to be able to express himself or herself freely and to write a guided composition. However, El-Shafie (2006) and Abdel-Razek (2006) revealed that students finish the secondary stage without acquiring the skills required for writing in English. They cannot write a complete correct paragraph if they are asked to do.

Dwidar (2000) indicated that first year secondary school teachers regard correcting students’ EFL writing as a tedious and unrewarding work. The way they use for responding to students’ writings rarely seems to achieve any improvement in subsequent work and developing their EFL writing skills. Students are seldom given feedback on their writing in English language, or the opportunity to revise their pieces of writing. The usual practice is to correct the grammatical errors.

Teachers have a tendency to correct student’s writing, so that the student’s voice is lost, and comments show a product-centered rather than process-centered approach to writing, which discounts the role of rhetorical invention (Bellah, 2000). Although responding to students' writing is a main factor, which affects the improvement of composition writing, the techniques that are used in our secondary schools are still not adequate to achieve this improvement (Dwidar, 2000). On investigating, the responses of 50 EFL teachers on a questionnaire, Elkoumy (1991) mentioned that the majority (90%) reported that their students never benefit from corrections or comments and those errors are repeated whatever effort exerted to correct them.

Research identified some other reasons for the problems of lack of EFL writing skills. These reasons can be summarized in the following points:

1- Devoting less time to teaching writing rather than reading, speaking and listening, as many teachers regard writing as a secondary, solitary, non-interactive, less crucial and time consuming activity (Abdel-Gawad, 2003).

2- Students feel uncomfortable when having to write on topics chosen by the teacher, boring topics that they do not know well. These topics are selected without clear specific objectives in mind for each topic, some of them are not clearly worded, are not related to students' life, and do not elicit varied kind of writing (Madylus, 2002). Thus, students misunderstand these topics and spend most of their time analyzing and thinking about them rather writing (El-Koumy, 1991)

3- Systematic and planned writing courses, which take into account students' actual level of proficiency, interests and future needs, are almost non-existent. Writing exercises in the workbook do not focus exactly on the development of all composition skills, since these exercises do not deal with such skills as spelling, punctuation, capitalization and organization (El-Koumy, 1991).
4-Large numbered classes that make it difficult for students and the teacher to communicate effectively in an authentic way (Bown, 2002).

5- Insufficient teaching strategies followed by English language teachers in teaching composition (Aly, 2001), and the absence of motivating pre-writing activities that can enable learners to collect enough ideas and information necessary for writing or the lack of due time and attention devoted to developing writing skill and its different sub-skills (Helal, 2003).

6- Teachers who lack sufficient training in the teaching of writing process often use past ineffective practices, and use the traditional approach for teaching writing which view writing as just asking students to write sentences using vocabulary and punctuation marks correctly (Madylus, 2002).

Thus, a need for a program for incorporating all these factors appeared. Hence, e-mail writing may provide a useful framework for constructing this program and consequently overcoming the problem of lack of EFL writing skills. Nevertheless, the present study aims at investigating the effect of using e-mail on developing writing skills for the first year experimental secondary stage students.

**The procedures**

As the aim of this study was using e-mail to develop some EFL writing skills and e-mail was used as a tool beside the students' English curriculum of Move Ahead Plus of the Advanced Level of first year experimental secondary stage students, this study went as follows:

At the beginning of the first term of the school year 2007/2008, 60 students (two classes) were selected from first year experimental secondary school students at Fakus Experimental Language Secondary School. Then, students were divided into two groups: an experimental group (n=30) and a control group (n=30). In the first meeting at the beginning of the first term of the school year 2007-2008, the e-mail –writing skills test and the free-writing test were administered to the students of the experimental and control groups on 17 September 2007. Then the researcher designed her e-mail writing program in which she adopted the stages of Willis's task cycle (1998) of task-based approach and Mansor's framework (2007) of teaching e-mail through the process approach to incorporate process writing approach and collaborative learning via e-mail to her program as follows:

**Table 1. The framework of the e-mail writing program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Genre (argumentative, narrative, descriptive etc.)</th>
<th>Writing Process Activity</th>
<th>Approach (pair work or group work)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stages</td>
<td>Task Stages</td>
<td>Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-writing</td>
<td>Pre-task</td>
<td>Main ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drafting</td>
<td>task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table (1) shows the framework of the e-mail writing program in which the researcher adopted Mansor's framework for incorporating process-writing approach and collaborative learning (pair work) via e-mail with Willis's framework of task-based approach.

**The following are the steps of the framework of the e-mail writing program:**

1. The teacher sends the students an e-mail message to write an essay or a composition about your home city as an example. Pupils in pairs generate their ideas using the activities of pre-writing such as brainstorming, free writing, word mapping, interviewing, cubing, sunshine, looping, Wh questions and fantasizing mediating mind transportation, discuss this via e-mail, and send a Cc message to their teacher (pre-task stage).

2. Drafting: in which the teacher sends a message via e-mail asking her students to write the first draft by organizing their ideas, writing the topic sentence, exchanging them via e-mail and send a Cc copy to the teacher.

3. Sharing and responding to writing (planning): in which the researcher sends her students another message via e-mail asking them to develop a paragraph, which should include a topic sentence. She asks each student to discuss with her partner how to develop one complete paragraph as an example for her partner to view.

4. Revising (report): in which the researcher sends her students another message via e-mail asking them to write their essays or compositions individually, revise them and e-mail them to her and to their partners.

5. Editing (analysis): in which the researcher attaches an evaluation checklist for her students to complete when they evaluate their partners' drafts. Then she asks them to submit it to her when they complete the evaluation of the essays or compositions and the checklist.

6. Publishing (practice): in which the researcher sends a final message to her students via e-mail asking them to give final comments either positive or negative on their partners' essays or compositions and finally to submit their final essays or compositions to her to publish them.

In the program, the control group was taught by the class teacher using the traditional method, and the experimental group was taught by the present study researcher using e-mail writing program. The application of the program lasted for six weeks (from 17 September 2007
to 29th of October) at a rate of six sessions a week. After finishing teaching the program, the e-mail writing and the free-writing post-tests were administered to the experimental and control groups on 31st of October 2007.

**The results:**

_The present study showed the following results:_

1-The first hypothesis in the present study was that:" There is statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the post-test of the e-mail-writing skills test in favor of the experimental group."

For testing this hypothesis, the mean scores of the experimental and control group students in the post-test of e-mail writing skills test were compared and t-value for independent groups was calculated as indicated by table (2).

**Table 2: Results of the t-test of the post-test of the experimental and control groups in e-mail-writing skills test.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>df.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75.83</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>28.30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28.87</td>
<td>7.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious from table (2) that there is statistically significant difference at 0.05(one-tailed) between the mean scores of the experimental group(X1=75.83) and the control group(X2=28.87) in the post-test of e-mail writing skills test in favor of the experimental group as indicated by T-value(28.30). This difference may be attributed to the effect of the experimental treatment exemplified in the e-mail writing program the experimental group received.

2-The second hypothesis in the present study was that:" There is statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the post-test of the free-writing test in the writing evaluation and e-mail exchange in favor of the experimental group".

For testing this hypothesis, the mean scores of the experimental and control group students in the post-test of the free writing in writing evaluation were compared and t-value for independent samples was calculated as indicated by table (3).

**Table 3: Results of the t-test of the post-test of the experimental and control groups in free-writing test in writing evaluation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>df.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>111.07</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>33.87</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42.50</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (3) shows that there is statistically significant difference at 0.05 between the mean scores of the experimental group(X1=111.07) and the control group(X2=42.50) in the post-test of the free-writing test in favor of the experimental group as indicated by T-value(33.87). This
difference may be attributed to the effect of the experimental treatment exemplified in the e-mail writing program the experimental group received.

3-The third hypothesis in the present study was that: "There is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group in overall EFL e-mail writing skills test in favor of the post-test".

For testing this hypothesis, the mean scores of the experimental group students in the pre-test and post-test of overall e-mail writing skills test were compared and t-value for paired samples was calculated as illustrated in table(4).

**Table 4. Results of the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group in overall e-mail-writing skills test.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>df.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27.70</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>23.95</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75.83</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (4) indicates that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test(X1=27.70) of the experimental group and the post-test (X2=75.83) in favor of the post-test as indicated by t-value (=23.95) which proved to be statistically significant at 0.05 (one-tailed). This difference between the pre-test and post-test can be attributed to the use of e-mail writing program.

4-The fourth hypothesis in the present study was that: "There is statistically significant difference between scores of the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group in the free-writing test in favor of the post-test".

For testing this hypothesis, the mean scores of the experimental group students in the pre-test and the post-test of the free-writing test in writing evaluation were compared and t-value for paired samples was calculated as illustrated in table (5).

**Table 5. Results of the t-test of the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group in overall free-writing test in writing evaluation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>df.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43.20</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>46.32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>111.07</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table(5) indicates that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test(X1= 43.20   ) and the post-test (X2= 111.07   ) of the experimental group students in overall free-writing test in favor of the post-test, hence, such difference may be due to e-mail writing program.

2-The mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-test and the post-test of the free writing in e-mail exchange were compared and t-value for paired samples was calculated as indicated in table (6).
Table 6. Results of the t-test of the pre-test and the post-test of free writing of the experimental group in e-mail exchange.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>df.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35.10</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>38.86</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>89.93</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (6) shows that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test (X1=35.10) and the post-test (X2=89.93) of the experimental group students in overall free writing test in e-mail exchange as indicated by t-value (=38.86) which is statistically significant at 0.05 (one-tailed). This difference is in favor of the post-test; hence, such difference may be due to e-mail-writing program.

Discussion:

More essentially, the results revealed that e-mail writing program proved effective in developing the experimental group students' writing skills: sentence construction, organizing text and paragraphing and register/style. This result is consistent with many previous studies which found that e-mail writing proved to be effective in developing students' ability to write, communicate and express what they want to say in writing such as the studies of: Goodwin (1993), Gonzales-Bueno (1998), Liaw (1998), Grosz-Gluckman (1997), Miyao (1996), Wang (1996) and Li (1998).

Thus, in the light of the findings of the present study, the present study researcher could say that the program implemented through the present study was effective and accounted for:

1-The significant difference between the experimental and the control group students' mean scores in the post-tests of e-mail-writing skills and free-writing in favor of the experimental group in as shown by figures (1), (2) and (3).

Figure 1. The mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the post-test of e-mail writing skills test.
2- The significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students in the pre-test and the post-test in favor of the post-test in overall free writing, each writing sub-skill and e-mail- writing skills test. It can be said that after the implementation of the program, the experimental group students demonstrated clear progress in writing performance as shown by figures (4), (5) and (6).
Figure 4. The mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group in the EFL free-writing test

Figure 5. The mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test of free writing of the experimental group in e-mail exchange

Figure 6. The mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group in writing sub-skills
There are some factors that might have helped the experimental group students' progress in EFL writing skills, e-mail-writing skills test and the free-writing test. Some of these factors may stem from the nature of the program such as:

1-Using peer editing helps students to correct each other's mistakes by exchanging their writings via e-mail. This technique develops students' abilities and confidence as writers.

2-Using pre-writing techniques, which are stimulus for students to generate their ideas such as:
   * Free writing in which students write rapidly about anything that comes to their minds for a limited time without stopping and without worrying about grammar, grades, logic or complete sentences.
   * Brainstorming in which students write down everything that comes into their minds and develop the most powerful and interesting ideas.
   * Clustering in which students write one idea or a word in the center of the page, make associations that come to their minds, pick the cluster that are most interesting to them and freely write for more ideas.
   * Wh-Questions in which students have ideas about a subject by asking and answering questions.
   * Keeping journals in which students keep an attractive journal in which they write every night in details for ten or fifteen minutes what really got to them.

3-Throughout writing process, pre-writing, writing, editing and revising, the teacher encourages students' efforts and monitors their progress. With direction, students are also capable of monitoring their own work and that of their specific times for students to receive further instruction, and feedback as a part of the composing process.

4-Allocating more time for writing as one of the four language skills. As indicated in the timetable of the program, 10 percent of instructional time is devoted to writing and this indicates that writing is an important skill which worthy more attention.

5-Using the process writing approach which helps students to focus on meaning rather than form, passing through different stages such as: generating ideas, drafting, revising/editing, rewriting and word processing which help students to write in a recursive process and correct errors in the final stages of writing.

6-Using e-mail as one of the most up-to-date technological techniques in teaching writing with its speed, asynchronous nature, student-centered, variability and real world communication which builds students' confidence to communicate and exchange their writings.

7-Using task-based approach which is the base of the communicative approach. This approach enables students to work in an interactive environment with its six steps: pre-task, task, planning, report, analysis and practice in which the teacher introduces the topic and gives students clear instructions on what they will do at the task stage, and then students complete the task in groups or pairs. After that, students prepare a short report or draft to tell the class what happened during the task. Next students read the written report and the teacher sets some language-focused tasks based on the text students read. Finally, the teacher selects language areas to practice based on the needs of the students and the task and report phases.
Having students write more than one draft on the same topic focusing at first on meaning rather than form in the light of the process writing and the free—writing approaches proved to be an effective factor in giving students the opportunity to revise their writing and hence achieving progress in EFL writing skill.

9-Using the collaborative technique and pair work, proved to be vital in exchanging e-mail and editing their peer's writings. This technique improved the students' amount and the quality of their writing.

10-The change in teachers 'role from an evaluator and a grader to a mentor and a guide throughout the program made the progress of teaching writing a student- centered process and lessened students' apprehension from grading their writing. In conclusion, helping students overcome the blocks that hinder their writing using the e-mail writing program improved their performance and made students aware of the benefits of writing in English language in communicating with others.

11-Using free writing technique, which helps students to write about topics of their choice, this provides them with the opportunity to write about a content that is already accessible to them.

12-Building the program on the constructivist theory, which is based on making learning to be student-centered, collaborative, sociable and realistic.

13-Providing students with an audience such as the teacher, their peers or global audience across e-mail. This enables them to write what they really think and provide constructive criticism.

14-Providing a different environment for students to write in (an electronic, an interactive and a constructive environment) which is different from the traditional atmosphere in class).

Hence, it can be concluded that e-mail can provide a useful framework for developing first year secondary school students' EFL writing skills.

Conclusion:
Research studies proved that Internet-based resources have an impact on language instruction. One of these resources, e-mail, is an effective learning tool through which language learners use multimedia and computer- generated web- based instructional activities Gonzales-Bueno (1998), Liaw (1998), Grosz-Gluckman (1997), Miyao (1996), Wang (1996) and Li (1998). Several implications could be drawn from the results of this study:

1-The use of e-mail in the EFL writing instruction could improve EFL learners' writing skills.

2-EFL/ ESL teachers could use e-mail to encourage their students to write and to develop their writing sub-skills.

3-EFL/ ESL Teachers can integrate e-mail and process writing approach into teaching writing skill.

About the author:
Mervat Abd Elfatah Ali Said Ahmed has finished her Ph.D. She is now a lecturer of English at Oklt Al Snoon College of Science and Arts at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia. She teaches graduate and undergraduate courses about the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading...
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References:
The Effect of Using E-mail on Developing EFL Writing Skills

Ahmed


Involving Students in Individual and Group Presentation Assessment

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Abstract
This research describes individual & group presentation assessment, and compares teacher, self and peer assessment (TA), (SA) & (PA) to see student involvement. The project was carried out at UAE University (UAEU) and investigated three related research questions. The first research question looked at the differences in students’ individual article presentation grades and compared (TA), (SA) & (PA) and showed that the (SA) grade was higher than the (PA) & (TA) grades. The second considered students’ individual article presentations & compared them to the individual within the group performance which showed that all individual within the group assessment grades were higher. This indicated that students tended to be more critical of themselves and others they assessed like the teacher. The final research question viewed only (TA) and found that students got higher grades when doing group presentations. In order to explore these questions, the project considered two TSL 421 Continuing Professional Development Practicum classes (fall 2010 & fall 2011), with a total of 31 students giving individual article presentations & 30 students giving group presentations. The IBM SPSS statistics program was used to enter the data and carry out the analysis. Specific assessment criteria were used and the (TA), (SA), (PA) assessment means were calculated, compared, and analyzed in a simplified way and results were noted and shared with the students. The results of the project show the importance of involving students in the presentation assessment process and that students tend to get higher grades when working together in groups. The purpose of this study was to involve students in self and peer assessment to establish life-long learners who are independent and are able to recognize and apply the assessment principles used by teachers. Students’ assessment varied considerably.

Key Words: individual & group presentations- teacher assessment-student-self &- peer-assessment
Introduction
Assessment is important because it provides students and teachers with feedback. Bailey introduces ‘Self-assessment in language learning’ by stating that, “One of the intriguing questions about self-assessment is the extent to which learners can accurately judge their own language abilities.” (Bailey, 1998, p. 229). “Peer assessments give students some idea of how other students perceive their language performance-providing an external, yet relatively unthreatening, perspective.” (Brown, 1998, p.54). Thus, it may be important to refer to authentic/self-& peer-assessment too.

Historical Overview
Although alternative assessment was generally used for students with special needs, it may also provide different approaches to assessing learners’ academic achievement. The term authentic assessment is used to describe the various forms of assessments that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally relevant classroom activities (O’Malley, 1996). Self-assessment provides students the opportunity to reflect objectively on their own accomplishments and learning when given the opportunity. Students become more reflective as they learn how to look at themselves and their work in a more productive and critical way.

The focus is to have a student-centered classroom. Self-assessment also provides students the opportunity to understand the grading process. Students may eliminate the controversy regarding subjective grading and gain ownership in their learning process. They can even make their own choices, choose their own learning activities, and plan the time they need to achieve their goals. When students are involved in self-assessment they are better able to work with other students, exchange ideas, get assistance when needed, and be more involved in cooperative and collaborative language learning activities. As these students go about learning, they begin to construct meaning, revise their understandings and share meanings with others. Self-regulated learners monitor their own performance and evaluate their progress and accomplishments (Paris & Ayers, 1994).

As with other techniques, the use of self-assessment may not be so successful, depending on the circumstances under which it is used and the assessment instruments used. Based on a review of sixteen self-assessment studies, Blanche and Merino (1989) identified five factors that can threaten the validity of self-assessment methods, cited in (Cohen, 1994, p. 199):

1. Learners' lack of training in how to perform the types of self-assessment that are asked of them
2. A lack of common criteria for learners self-ratings and for teacher interpretations of these ratings
3. A conflict between the cultural backgrounds of the learners and the culture on which the self-assessment tasks are based
4. Any inabilities that the learners may have in monitoring their behavior (i.e., learners may not be able to report on what is subconscious behavior for them)
5. The intervening effects of subjective influences (past academic record, career aspirations, or expectations of others)

(Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot, 2002); cited in (Butt, 2010: 81-82), refer to some strategies which can promote self-assessment:

1. Clarify the assessment criteria for students
2. Clarify the learning objectives for students
3. Establish some key self-assessment questions
4. Support the act of self-assessment
5. Model examples of assessed work
6. Facilitate discussion about assessment

Peer assessment may apply the same principles as self-assessment (Butt, 2010). Students can start to reflect on their own work (SA), then go on to reflect on the work of others (PA) or can start with (PA). Students can also be asked to rate themselves (SA) and others (PA) in individual and in group presentations. (Underhill, 1987) in (O’Malley, 1996, p. 69) “suggests that peer-assessment is an authentic assessment approach because peers are asked to rate the effectiveness of communication by others.” Yet students need to be trained, as in this project, to assess others as fairly as possible using specific criteria with a rating scale. To overcome the students’ reluctance to do so, we need to provide students with numerous opportunities to assess not only themselves, but also others. Some students tend to be too harsh when assessing others and their (PA) at times can be as accurate and reliable as the (TA).

When students make an oral presentation, they need to be given enough time to prepare what they are going to say. If teachers want oral presentations to be successful, they need to find tasks, too, for the students who are listening and not only for those presenting (Harmer, 2012). This is another reason why (SA) and (PA) are used. Yet, it is difficult to assess a student’s ability to speak fluently, accurately and appropriately for two reasons: One reason is that unlike the other three skills, speaking can only normally be tested in individual (or, occasionally, pair-or-small group) interaction. Thus it takes a long time to test the whole class, and it is expensive to pay the testers. The other problem is reliable assessment because there cannot possibly be just ‘one right answer’ so there is no objective or computer-based grading (Ur, 2012).

Finally, self-assessment is a key tool that provides students with the possibilities for reflection, redirection and reassertion of their learning efforts. They then become more empowered and independent evaluators of their own future learning and progress. In this research project, which involves three related questions, we will be referring to various forms of alternative assessment like authentic assessment, self & peer assessment, and presentation assessment (individual & group) which are consistent with classroom goals & instruction.

Research Questions
1- Are there differences in the grades (TA), (SA) & (PA) that teachers, students and peers give to individual article presentations?
2- Are there differences in the grades given to individuals for their presentations within their groups compared to their solo article presentations?
3- Are students’ final grades higher when giving individual article presentations or when giving group presentations with other students based on (TA)?

Research Project
Setting and Instructional Context Promoting Effective Learning and Assessment
The whole project was carried out at UAE University, in the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, in the Department of Linguistics where the focus was on involving students in presentations. Many students need to learn how to use their spoken English not only for informal interaction, but also for formal presentations (Ur, 2012).
Long presentations usually last 15 minutes or more and these presentations need to be based on a clear structure with an introduction which tells the audience about the purpose of the presentation; the main body, with clearly ordered sections that include explanations and examples and an ending, which summarizes and draws conclusions and makes recommendations (Ur, 2012).

This project not only investigates the teacher’s assessment (TA) of the students in individual presentations, but also looks at students’ self-assessment (SA) and extends the investigation to include peer-assessment (PA) to determine the usefulness of having all three components. This will make the students more aware of their own learning and acknowledge them as partners in the teaching and learning process. Also, the researcher looks at the means of students’ self & peer-assessment and how reliable they are when compared to the teacher’s assessment of students’ performance in group presentations. The hypothesis is, therefore, one of correlation between: (TA), (SA), and (PA). Finally, the researcher compares grades the same students received from their teacher (TA) in their individual article & group presentations to investigate students’ performance when working individually and in groups to see which presentation is more productive.

**Participants**

The project focused on fourth year-female students taking the Continuing Professional Development Practicum Course (PD Practicum) in the Linguistics Department. This course was offered as a thematic application course and it facilitate students’ integration into the professional field of TESOL. Students learn how they can continue to develop their teaching skills once they have graduated and entered the field. Students taking the course were from the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, at UAE University from different departments but mainly from the Applied Linguistics Program, General Linguistics Program, Translation Department, the English Literature Department and the Social Work Department. They were involved in attending conferences, PD sessions, reading research articles & carrying out their own research studies.

This project focused on three related research questions and investigated two classes: with a total of 31 students giving their individual presentations & 30 students giving their group presentations. Below, there are a few examples of the research topics explored by the students doing their Group presentations:

1. Allowing minimal use of L1 in learning L2
2. Vocabulary retention
3. How to motivate students to read for pleasure
4. The attitude of UAEU students toward verbal and non-verbal communication in learning

The above topics were chosen and investigated by the UAEU students themselves.

**Method: Treatment and procedure**

Students taking the Continuing Professional Development Course were asked to choose articles in well-known journals and give individual presentations to share their studies with others in class by providing summaries and reflections. First, students were asked to choose the most recent articles with research studies consisting of participants and results to help them get ready to do their own group research studies together afterwards. Secondly, students were asked to form their own groups, allocate tasks, & give their group presentations. Afterwards, they were informed about how to form groups and divide tasks as well. They were also told they would earn the following: different individual within the group grades, based on each student’s actual performance, and one same group grade to show how they were assessed as a group. The
final overall group grade would be the total (student’s individual grade within the group + the same group grade given to all students within the group and the total would be divided by two. This was emphasized to show students that they had to work together and not only focus on their separate performance. Students were given the specific criteria for assessment (see criteria below). The criteria were defined and explained to the students in class using a power point presentation & students got a copy of the criteria too after discussing everything in class. Students were informed and trained on how to evaluate and assess themselves and their peers. First, students were told that the purpose of the assessment was not to criticize their peers or give unearned marks, but it was to help each other improve and learn the main principles of assessment. Students were told clearly how each item was rated and assessed based on specific guidelines whether they were giving their own presentations, or assessing others who were presenting. They were shown how to calculate the scores and write comments to justify their assessment too.

Students were then scheduled to give their individual article presentations first. After completing their individual presentations and getting feedback on their performance, i.e. (TA), (SA), & (PA), they proceeded to work together on their group research. Then, they were evaluated on their group presentations based on specific criteria as seen below (McCormack & Slaght, 2005, p. 60):

**Individual & Group Presentation Assessment Criteria.**

The teacher used the following criteria which were presented and explained to students before starting their presentations. These were used for teacher-assessment (TA), student, self-assessment (SA) & peer-assessment (PA):

(a) Delivery:
- Pronunciation hardly interferes with comprehension.
- Volume and speed are appropriate.
- Rhythm and intonation are varied and appropriate.
- Good eye contact.

(b) Language:
- Clear evidence of ability to express complex ideas, using a wide range of appropriate vocabulary.
- Cohesive devices, where used, contribute to fluency.
- High degree of grammatical accuracy.

(c) Organization:
- Strong introduction, with clear outline.
- Logical ordering of main points.
- Effective conclusion & final wrap-up.

(d) Content:
- Content is appropriate and relevant.
- Topic is explored in sufficient depth.

(e) Evidence of Preparation:
- Evidence of thorough familiarity with topic.
- Fluent delivery, with skillful use of notes.
- Deals well with questions.
- Uses PowerPoint/OHTs, & hand-outs
Students were also given various ideas for group presentations and assessing groups to better form groups and assess group presentations. Today, group-based learning is used in various forms of teaching and changes the dynamics of the classroom. We find that it promotes students’ self-esteem and allows students more time to talk. It also motivates students more by providing a risk-free environment for language practice (Richards, 2011). Groups need to divide the labor because the difficulty comes when students are asked questions at the end and nobody expects an instant answer in a presentation (Blass, 2009).

**Data collection**

Data were collected after each individual and group presentation. Students and teachers completed the self and teacher assessment grade sheets consisting of a four-point rating scale with 5 areas with a total of 20 points. Students were informed that the overall group grade consisted of both their individual participation which differed based on their solo performance + the performance of their group which was the same for all students. This was emphasized to show students that they needed to work cooperatively & collaboratively with the members of their group (see appendix A). The researcher then calculated the teacher, self & peer assessment grades which were accumulated on a single spread sheet (see appendix B). The students were asked to rate their own performance (SA) and that of their peers (PA) on each area based on the criteria (Delivery-Language-Organization-Content- & Evidence of Preparation).

**Results and Analysis**

The IBM SPSS statistics program was employed to enter the data and carry out the analysis. Specific assessment criteria were used and the (TA), (SA), (PA) assessment means were calculated, compared, and analyzed in a simplified way and results were noted and shared with the students. Individual class assessments and combined overall assessment data were calculated.

**Research Q #1: Individual Article Presentations: teacher-self-peer-assessment**

(TA) vs. (SA), and (PA): Table 1 shows the results of these correlations for the means. The (SA) overall mean is slightly higher than any of the other means (16.84) which is very logical. This is understandable because students tend to assess themselves higher. The (SA) standard deviation (1.57) is higher than that of the (PA) (.84) & (TA) (1.17). Please see Table #1 below:

**Table 1. Individual Article Presentations: teacher-self-peer-assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Article Presentation</td>
<td>16.4516</td>
<td>16.8448</td>
<td>16.3871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>N=31</td>
<td>N=29</td>
<td>N=31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.17157</td>
<td>1.57607</td>
<td>.84370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>19.50</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Individual Article Presentations: teacher-self-peer-assessment

Research Q #2: Individual [Article] vs. Individual within Group Grade:

When comparing the individual article presentation means to the individual within the group means, we find that all individual within the group means (TA) (18.13), (SA) (17.58), and (PA) (17.42) are higher than the individual article presentation means (TA) (16.45), (SA) (16.84), & (PA) (16.38) which indicates that students tend to get higher grades when working within the group (see Table #2 & Figures,2, 3, & 4) which show that students working in groups get higher grades.

Table 2. Individual [Article] vs. Individual within Group Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Statistics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEACHER_ [TA]</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL ARTICLE PRESENTATION</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16.4516</td>
<td>1.17157</td>
<td>.21042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE GROUP PRESENTATION</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18.1333</td>
<td>.87033</td>
<td>.15890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF_ [SA]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL ARTICLE PRESENTATION</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16.8448</td>
<td>1.57607</td>
<td>.29267</td>
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<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE GROUP PRESENTATION</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17.5833</td>
<td>1.87581</td>
<td>.34248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEER_ [PA]</td>
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<td>.15153</td>
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<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE GROUP PRESENTATION</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17.4233</td>
<td>.52698</td>
<td>.09621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. Individual [Article] vs. Individual within Group Means (TA)

Figure 3. Individual [Article] vs. Individual within Group Means (SA)

Figure 4. Individual [Article] vs. Individual within Group Means (PA)
Research Q #3: Final Student Individual Article Presentation vs. Final Overall Group Presentation Means [TA]

This research question is very important because it considers the (TA) only which looks at the individual article presentation means & the final overall group grade means (individual within the group + the same separate group). This was not included in the first two research questions. This question looks at the ((TA) only to determine whether or not there is an actual difference between the students’ performance when giving individual article presentations & overall group presentations. Again final individual article mean (16.45) is lower than the group mean (18.20). This indicates that students get higher grades when working in groups. This may be due to the fact that students benefit from each other when working collaboratively/cooperatively and gain more experience.

Table 3. Final Student Individual Article Presentation vs. Final Overall Group Presentation Means [TA]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>TEACHER [TA]</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FINAL OVERALL GROUP PRESENTATION</td>
<td>18.2250</td>
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<td>.65439</td>
<td>17.00</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL ARTICLE PRESENTATION</td>
<td>16.5333</td>
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<td>1.09807</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Final Student Individual Article Presentation vs. Final Overall Group Presentation Means [TA]

Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

The purpose of this study was to involve students in self and peer assessment to establish life-long learners who are independent and are able to recognize and apply the assessment principles used by teachers. Students’ assessment varied considerably. Some students gave consistently high ratings while others gave consistently low ratings. This may have been due to some students’ lack of experience in judging themselves and others as the previous literature indicated (Blanche & Merino, 1989) cited in (Cohen, 1994, p. 199). To deal with this problem,
students were asked to justify the reasons for their assessment. In other cases, some other students tended to rate themselves lower than the (TA). In this study, the results confirmed the tendency for students to under-rate themselves and others and gave the impression that they were justifying everything to take the same role as the teacher.

Individual work provides students the opportunity to work at their own pace based on their own proficiency level and interest. With individual work there are fewer discipline problems because there is less social interaction (Richards, 2011). Students sometimes prefer to work alone because they cannot rely on others or because they just cannot meet others to work together, so they need to be given the opportunity to work on their papers individually. Some students encounter difficulties even working alone, so it is important to give them time to process information and do an independent search.

(SA) does not appear to be a very reliable indicator when compared to (TA) ratings, as is seen in the literature. If we look at the Standard deviations (SDs), we can see that they tend to be higher when looking at (SA) i.e. 1.87 (individual within group) & 1.57 (individual article) which indicates that students tend to assess themselves differently and their grades are more spread out & dispersed. On the other hand, the standard deviations (SDs) for (TA) i.e. .870 individual within group) & 1.171 (individual article) & (PA) i.e. .526 (individual within group ) & .843 (individual article) tend to be lower, indicating less dispersion which indicates that the teacher and peers tended to judge other students more objectively. Here in this study, involving students in the assessment process made learners better able to judge their own & other’s performance.

Again, we see that most learners tend to be more critical of themselves and others than when their teachers assess them. Here the (TA) ratings were higher than the (PA) too. This indicates that they believe that (SA) & (PA) ratings may correlate weakly with (TA) when separate, but may correlate highly with (TA) when united.

Working together in groups can be a valuable resource for students in class and even after they graduate and get jobs because it helps in promoting their responsibilities. Helping students identify strategies as seen in the literature, see (Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot, 2002), cited in (Butt, 2010, pp. 81-82), can help prevent problems at later stages. In this research project, we have seen how group presentations have more advantages than disadvantages when done correctly. Meeting with students to facilitate matters gives them the opportunity to ask questions and be independent and come up with new ideas.

Yes, learners may provide some incorrect input when interacting freely with each other in groups or pair activities. Yet, the benefits of pair and group work far outweigh the disadvantages, especially if there are well designed tasks (Lightbown, 2013). When students look at other students’ work, they tend to re-evaluate and assess their own work again and gain insights which help them to improve their own work and look at it with a more critical eye.

**Conclusion**

This research paper looks at individual presentations and compares scores of student self-assessment, peer-assessment, and teacher-assessment to get students involved in the assessment process. It also looks at Individual roles in group presentations and assessment. Finally, it looks at final individual article & final overall group presentations & teacher scores (TA) to see if students work better alone or in groups. Criteria for assessment & guidelines have been presented to teachers to facilitate doing such presentations in other teachers’ classrooms. The results show the relevance to the classroom setting. The project is significant because it shows that students and teachers can be partners in the assessment/learning process because they learn
how to work individually as well as together in groups as united teams. In addition, the project indicates the benefits of having self and peer-assessment and shows the effect on students’ subsequent developments, their awareness and motivation. “Using both types of assessment has the advantage of providing two types of information to the students and the teacher: the students’ view of themselves and the way their classmates perceive their language performance.” (Brown, 1998, p. 55). It is also worth mentioning that when students work in groups as a team, they have shared interests in the outcome and this has been seen in the project when all students received the same group grade. Regardless of the type of assessment, students have had the opportunity to have a voice and have developed as critical, independent thinkers who are capable of dividing labor and making decisions that matter. Yet, students still need further training to become more aware of how to assess themselves and their peers. More future research may provide further possibilities to help students gain additional knowledge, skills, and an understanding of the assessment process.

We want to emphasize that students need to have a voice in their assessment in order to accept responsibility for their actions and productivity whether they are presenting as individuals or as groups and whether they are assessing themselves or others. Yes, we want to emphasize that involving students in the assessment process greatly matters today. Self-assessment & peer-assessment challenge, motivate, and place the responsibility where it belongs - with the students.

About the Author:
Sally Youssef Mohamed Ali earned her Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from Georgetown University and has been teaching English since 1977. She has been a teacher, teacher trainer, curriculum developer and presenter. Dr. Ali is presently an Assistant Professor in the Applied Linguistics Department at UAE University

References


**Appendix A: Teacher-Self-&-Peer Group Grade Sheet.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group#</th>
<th>Students Name</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Individual Grade</th>
<th>Average Individual group grade</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>OUT OF 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix B: Calculating the Teacher-Self-&-Peer-Assessment Grades**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ID#</th>
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<th>9</th>
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Blending Teaching in English Language Large Classes

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Sudan

Abstract
The paper is based on action research carried out in the University of Khartoum. The research was conducted among second year students at the Faculty of Science studying English for Science as university requirement for 2 hours a week for 15 weeks. The main aim of the research was to discover students' motivation in large classes towards the use of the online tools in learning English language and to discover ways to increase time of exposure to English language. Online tools such as Yahoo Groups and Wikis were introduced with face to face instruction to increase contact time of the students. Blending computer mediated teaching with traditional methods were the main features of the action research. Different tools were used to investigate the learning outcome and students reactions toward the use of a blended teaching. Results showed positive attitudes of students towards the use of blended teaching and use of online tools in learning English.

Key words: action research, large classes, blended teaching, online tools, exposure to English
Introduction
In the year 1990 the Sudanese government announced what later came to be known as the “Revolution of Higher Education”. Some of the main features of this revolution were the opening of new universities, Arabic becoming the medium of instruction instead of English and the increase in number of students’ intake. As Arabic became the language of instruction English language became a university requirement, a subject to be taught in two hours per week in most universities for one or two semesters. In General Education English language standards deteriorated with emigration of qualified teachers, change of curriculum, closing down of teacher training institutes, cancellation of all extensive reading from the curricula and among other factors. Thus students entered institutions of higher education from the General Education with low proficiency levels in English language. This situation coupled with the phenomena of large classes in universities and limited time allocated to the teaching of English; universities graduated students with levels as low A2 instead of the C2 back in the 80s.

In 2002 oil was discovered in the country and this lead to an influx of foreign investments. There was a greater need for higher English language proficiency levels among graduates of Sudanese universities. In 2005 the “Comprehensive Peace Treaty” was signed between the South and the North ending forty years of civil war in the southern part of Sudan. One of the main articles in the treaty was the language article that stated that English and Arabic are the two official languages of civil service and higher education. Later on English language became the official language of the southern part of the country.

In spite of all these factors, the situation of English language in higher education remained the same, a mere subject to be taught at first and second levels. No new policies were taken to improve the situation and to meet the growing need of the stakeholders for graduates with higher proficiency levels of English. English language was still taught as a university requirement in large classes. Teachers left with only limited time to complete the syllabus were only lecturing not teaching.

At the University of Khartoum, English language was taught as a specialization in the departments of English at the Faculties of Arts and Education. It was also taught at another department of English language in the Administration for University Requirements (AUR) as a university requirement in 18 different faculties around the university four campuses. As a university requirement English language was taught in first and second levels with a total of 2 hours per week for 45 weeks. The students study a general English course in level 1 and an ESP course according to their specialization in level 2. The students entering university would have studied English language for 4 years in the primary school and 3 years in the secondary school. The teaching at those two levels was totally grammar based aiming only to make students pass their exams. Thus students were entering university as ‘false beginners’ with very poor communication skills.

Large Classes at University of Khartoum

During the Hornby School on 'Teaching English in Large Classes' in Ethiopia participants from seven different countries in Africa were asked to define a large class. Although the participants could not reach an agreement on a definition of a large class there was an agreement that a class of more than 40 or 50 students is a large class (Shamin, 2006). Perceptions of class size were subjective and also depend on a number of variables. Among these variables was the time allocated for the teaching of English language. In the University of Khartoum where Arabic
Blending Teaching in English Language Large Classes

Nur

was the medium of instruction and English was still taught as a university requirement, classes sometimes exceeded more than 200 students. Classes were not equipped with any resources for English language teaching. As teachers were moving around teaching in the different faculties at different geographical locations it was very difficult for them to carry even a recorder for some of the listening activities. Classes in some faculties exceeded 300 students. The situation was depressing for teachers with no support from the administration of the faculties and the university.

Although the teaching environment was totally depressing for teachers, students were not so much negative about learning English in large classes. Motivation ran very high among the students learning English. In a study conducted in 2008, the subjects of the study were students studying English language as a university requirement who showed a high level of motivation (Nur & Al Sabah, 2008). The figure below shows some of the results of the study:

**Figure 1. Do you need English?**

![Bar chart showing responses to the question: Do you need English?](source)

Source: (Nur & Al Sabah, 2008)

The sample of the study population showed a very high level of motivation as it was clear from their responses that they knew that English language is very important in their future lives. In another question, students were asked about the problems facing them when learning English, they gave the following response:

**Figure 2. Problems facing students when learning English language as university requirement.**

![Bar chart showing various problems faced by students](source)

Source: (Nur & Al Sabah, 2008)
Students were able to judge exactly the problems facing them when learning English. They rated the absences of activities and audio-visual aids as the highest problems facing when learning English. Limited time allocated to English came third followed by large classes and books not available.

Classroom Action Research

With no administrative support teachers were left on their own to try to find ways to improve their teaching in large classes. Building on previous studies the department took the decision to implement Classroom Action Research (CAR) as a way to discover what works best in a particular class as the teachers were teaching in different faculties. Factors such as class size, content specialization of the students, level of administrative support from the different faculties and student demographics played a role in the extend students improved in English. Classroom Action Research was chosen as it is a systematic inquiry with the goal of informing practice in a particular situation. CAR is a way for instructors to discover what works best in their own classroom situation, thus allowing informed decisions about teaching.

CAR integrates the two faculty roles of teaching and scholarship and is one form of the scholarship of teaching and learning (Cross & Steadman, 1996). The criteria for choosing CAR as a way to discover what works best for a class was based on Hopkins (1985) advice on teacher research when he advocates the development of teacher's professional expertise and judgment. He provides a basis for the selection of classroom research by teachers:

* the teacher's primary role is to teach and any research project must not interfere with or disrupt this commitment;
* the method of data collection should not be too demanding on the teacher's time;
* the methodology used must be reliable enough to allow teachers to formulate hypotheses confidently and develop strategies applicable to the classroom situation;
* the teacher should be committed to the research problem under study;
* teachers must follow ethical procedures when carrying out research; and
* classroom research where possible should adopt a perspective where all members of a school community build and share a common vision.

Hopkins advice was very much appropriate to the situation of English language teaching as a requirement in the University of Khartoum. Teachers were different from their colleagues in other English departments they had the primary role of teaching and were not given the time to do research. They did not have enough time to do full research projects as most of them were teaching in two or three different faculties within separate campuses. Some of the teachers were really committed to make change in their teaching and so CAR was the obvious decision for them. The need is not only to look at solutions to the problems of teaching and learning in large classes but to develop contextually appropriate methodology for large class teaching (Holliday, 1994).

Blended Teaching

In the academic year 2008/2009, a decision was taken to use computer assisted language activities in the faculties where the students and teachers had access to computers. But as motivation ran high in some of the other faculties which were poorly equipped with computers a decision was taken to carry out action research and investigate if introducing blended teaching
Blending teaching in English language large classes would make a change in the learning outcomes of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course taught to second year students at the Faculty of Science. The total number of the students in the class was 245 students, they had 2 hours per week for 15 weeks. The time allocated for English language was very limited and was not enough for all students to participate in class and there were no equipment to practice listening. Blended learning seemed as a good action plan to increase contact hours of English language teaching and allow students to practice listening.

Blended teaching was a mixing of different learning environments. The phrase has many specific meanings based upon the context in which it is used. A blended teaching approach can combine face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction. Integration of online activities seemed a very realistic option to increase contact hours and make the students more involved in the learning process. Two online platforms were established, a classroom Yahoo Group (Figure 3) and a Wiki (Figure 4).

**Figure 3. English for Science (class Yahoo Group)**

![Figure 3. English for Science (class Yahoo Group)](image)

**Figure 4. Teaching in Sudan (class Wiki)**

![Figure 4. Teaching in Sudan (class Wiki)](image)
In the 2 hours face to face instruction was carried on, but a lot of activities were designed to be carried online. This combination is believed to have achieved the following objectives:

* Increased contact hours outside the classroom as this was seen by the students as one of the problems hindering their learning of English language (Figure 2).
* Raised motivation level by introducing extra activities as the lack of activities was seen as a problem by the students when learning English language (Figure 2).
* Led students to be more responsible for their own learning which led to greater learner autonomy.
* Optimized learning by providing different learning styles in a large class.

The design was that 60% of the course was carried in the classroom (face to face instruction) and 40% was asynchronous self-paced activities. The students were divided in groups of 3 or 4 and were given code names. The aims behind dividing the students into groups of 3 or 4 was as follows;

* More computer literate students will be able to help the less literate students.
* More interactions were visible within the small groups in comparison to the large class.
* Students were actively learning from each other as learning was becoming a social activity.

**E-learning Framework**

In designing the course Badrul Khan’s (2009) blended e-learning framework, referred to as Khan’s *Octagonal Framework* was adapted. The Octagonal Framework enables one to select appropriate ingredients. The framework serves as a guide to plan, develop, deliver, manage, and evaluate blended learning programs.

**Figure 5. Khan Octagonal Framework**
The framework is made of eight dimensions: institutional, pedagogical, technological, interface design, evaluation, management, resource support, and ethical. These dimensions organize thinking and help the designer in creating a meaningful learning environment.

a. Institutional: In the institutional dimension issues concerning organizational, administrative, academic affairs, and student services were addressed.

b. Pedagogical: In the pedagogical dimension three areas were integrated, content, learners needs, and objectives.

c. Technological: In the technological dimension the online tools or online platforms were chosen and designed with the specific content. Yahoo Groups and a Wiki were chosen as the suitable learning management systems.

d. Interface design: In this dimension interface has to be sophisticated enough to integrate the different elements of the blend (face to face instruction and online activities). This will enable the students to use each delivery type and switch between the different types. The interface was important to make students assimilate the two elements of the blended course.

e. Evaluation: the evaluation dimension compromised two tools, an end of term test and a questionnaire. The test was to evaluate the learning performance of each students, and the questionnaire to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning program as a whole.

f. Management: In this dimension all the logistics of the course were put under consideration. Problems like groups not working together smoothly were managed and office hours were allocated to solve login and technical problems.

g. Resource support: Resources were made available for students and office hours were specific. Extra resources were provided for students with a faster pace.

h. Ethical: The Ethical dimension identifies the ethical issues that need to be addressed when developing a blended learning program. Issues such as equal opportunity, cultural diversity were addressed. One of the main aspects which were addressed here was the ‘digital divide’ between students coming from urban and rural areas, rich and poor, male and female.

Evaluation Tools

To evaluate the learning outcome of introducing blended teaching in a large class for the purpose of extending the time allocated for English language for second year students at the Faculty of Science three tools were used, an end of term test and a questionnaire, and samples of students writing. The test was a pre-requisite to the end of the course but also it was used to investigate if the results of the test showed any improvement when compared to earlier tests taken by the students. The questionnaire was designed to investigate the students’ attitude towards the blended course. The results of this classroom action research were used by the teacher to develop new techniques for teaching large classes.

On comparing the test results with last year results there was an increase in the ratio of pass by 30%. The test counted for 60% of the total mark of 100%. Other activities counted for 30% and attendance for 10%.

Writing skills was one of the skills where students showed great improvement. Students were writing and sending emails to each other and to their teachers. This was not a happening before blending online tools in their course. The students never used English to communicate with each other or with their teacher. One of the student wrote the following email at the end of the semester:
Dear Madam
First we want to thank u for giving us this chance to get through
this new way to learn about English language which called CALL (I
guess) , really we luv it like crazy cuz the way we learning English
language since day one is BORING and make us sick in addition to that
they just teaching us the same staff from the 4th grade till the
graduation year from high school ,so this new way of learning is just
FABULOUS .
Secondly we want to show you that we r fan of u and the way u
treat and teach us cuz u make us feel like we r respectable trustable
people.
Finally we want to say good bye and best wishes 4 u and us in the
examination (by the way we r so sorry we know that we should send this
message with the home work earlier than that but really we were confuse
& in attention with the examination also u know that to be online and
generally using internet is kind of hard and not
available ..so SORRY) and best wishes have nice time till the next
semester.
Your faithfully student group 38a f⁴

Although accuracy was still not well improved and students made mistakes in grammar,
register and vocabulary but the students showed improvement in their fluency. This was
important as student no longer feared expressing themselves in English.
The questionnaire had 6 closed ended questions and 2 open ended questions. The
results of questions 1 to 5 were analyzed to show the following:

Table 1. Questions 1-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Did you have an email before the course?</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Did you benefit from using the Internet in your study?</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you prefer to use the internet in learning English?</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Do you prefer to work in groups?</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Was using the internet in learning English language difficult?</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of question 1 showed clearly that the majority of the students did not have an
e-mail address before the course and this laid implications on another course taught at the
computer department to the same group of students. Complaints were growing at the time that
the course taught at the computer department was more of a theoretical type than a practical one.
Students were being taught theories rather than practical uses of the Internet. Questions 2 and 3
were to investigate if the students did learn by using the Internet and would like to continue to
learn English language in the future using the same type of delivery mode. The students’
response to those questions were 73% and 79% consecutively. Students did learn and want to
continue learning using the Internet. As many complains were raised about working in groups as
some of students relied on their fellow students to do all the activities, a question was designed to
investigate if the students wanted to work in groups, 64% of the students were positive about
working in groups while 36% preferred to work alone. 60% of the students found that using the
Internet in learning English was not difficult while 40% found it difficult. Interviewing a sample of those who found it difficult, they gave four main reasons:

- Lack of prior knowledge in using computers.
- Low proficiency level in English.
- Fear from using the Internet in learning.
- Lack of access to computers 24/7.

Question 6 was designed to investigate the infrastructure available for the use of computer mediated teaching. Students were asked on how they accessed the Internet. Their answers were as follow:

**Table 2. Question 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Network</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Cafe</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could not access internet</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students response was a surprise to the teacher as it was the believe that students will access the Internet mostly through Internet cafes. The students discovered throughout the university campus Internet rooms free for students in certain time of a day or they used the university Wi-Fi and were able to use these facilities to access the Internet to do the online activities.

Questions 7 and 8 were open ended questions as to give the students the chance to say their opinions regarding the course. In questions 7, students were asked what were the problems facing them when using the Internet to learn English language. Their response ranged mainly in the following areas:

- Using the Internet.
- Navigating the web
- No money to use Internet Cafes.
- Instructions not clear.
- No time.

In question 8, students were asked to give their comments on the course or suggestion for future courses. Their response could be summarized as follow:

- Provide more training in navigation of the Internet.
- Open more computer labs in the campus.
- Continue using the Internet in learning.
- Teach other languages.

From all the above responses it was clear that the students were mostly positive for the use of blended courses in learning English language.

**Conclusion**

At the end of the course and after analyzing the data gathered in in the questionnaire it was clear that using online activities as a way to widen the exposure time in which the students had in the face to face instruction was successful. Problems have emerged such as that some students preferred not to work in groups and lack of knowledge in using the Internet prior to the
course. Also it became clear that instruction for online activities has to be designed in a way different from those of face to face. Some of the instructions for the online activities were not clear. Students continued emailing the teacher at the end of the course showing their appreciation and it was noted that the students were more confident to write longer texts than at the beginning of the course.

Learning in large classes does take place with the use of the right use of instructional methods. Using online tools for teaching raised motivation of the students to learn English. Blending teaching provided a variety of teaching techniques that suited the different learning styles in the class. Students were able to work on their pace and learn to edit and proof read their work. Limited time allocated to the teaching of English was overcome by introducing a Yahoo Group and a Wiki, students working hours extended from 2 to 6 hours per week. Blended teaching proved to be very suitable and rewarding experience for the teacher and students alike.

About the Author:  
Hala Nur is an assistant professor at the University of Khartoum. She has got PhD in literature and has been teaching English language and literature since 1988. Hala has been the head of the Department of English Language at the Administration for University Requirements and currently she is the founder and director of the English Language Institute at the University of Khartoum.

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Technology in Education: Problem or Solution?

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Abstract
The fact is technology is changing the way we teach and the way our students learn. Teachers complain that the students neither read enough nor write properly; rather, we have to admit that students read different texts (Chat, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) and write a different language (SMS, chatting, etc.). However, can text messages replace textbooks? Can ipads replace notepads? Teachers also say that students do not concentrate in class or have a short attention span because they are engrossed in their mobile phones, PCs, Ipads and other digital devices; but is this the whole truth? Does technology enhance education and supplement students with relevant and accessible information or does it prevent them from focusing on the subject at hand? To answer some of these questions we will use a random sampling from two courses given at Notre Dame University-Louaize, (NDU). The first is a Public Speaking course for Freshman students, and the second, an Introduction to Psychology, a General Education Requirement (GER) offered to Sophomore, Junior and Senior years. The method used for the research is therefore qualitative based on case studies.

Keywords: technology, education, critical thinking, research, electronic devices
Introduction
At Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU), a private university in Lebanon, we tell our students to turn off their mobile phones and keep them out of sight during class. It is a rule printed in their syllabus (Appendix 1). It may be time to rethink and qualify this statement. Why not allow students to use their technical devices during class to search for specific information or look up the meaning of a word, in other words, to use their mobiles when instructed by their teachers. Of course, sending text messages or chatting with their friends is not part of the deal, so, how is a teacher to check? If students are engaged, and participating in class, we have to assume that they are using their smart phones for a good reason. They can also use them for photocopying notes, and marking their calendars for due dates, homework, etc.

Electronic devices of the 21st century allow us access to more information. This means extending learning outside school hours as in distance learning, spell check, accessing online libraries for research, various projects, and other class related activities. So, more information is available but that could possibly lead to a decline in depth or lack of analysis. Teachers may be accommodating their students’ short attention span by shortening their lessons. They feel that the students need to be entertained. Students are easily bored, distracted, they need to be constantly stimulated; but could this be their way of processing information?

Undeniably, technology plays a significant role in education be it in supplementing research or offering quick answers gathered with a few keystrokes from Wikipedia or Google or Utube. But, can technology replace teachers? Teachers ask the right questions, and steer students in the right direction, when students show little or no patience if they have to think and find answers on their own. Being used to watching TV, playing video games, and other constant stimulation, they are not interested in listening to a lecture; a boring alternative. Is it enough that students access information from online sources? What about critical thinking, analyzing, and assessing the information? For a teacher, technology may be a problem, but also a solution. It is easier to engage the students and involve them when instructed to look up the meaning of a word or find some information on a particular subject. Is it not time teachers became more flexible and dynamic, more active, more creative? Why not assign readings using e-books and online games to increase the students’ learning skills? Indeed, why not use technology to motivate, engage, accelerate learning, and increase productivity. How can technology support and enhance teaching and learning?

Problem: Students are busy “playing” with their devices during class instead of paying attention to the lecture and explanations.
Solution: The effective use of technology in the classroom can solve the problem of lack of motivation and lack of interaction and create a more productive classroom environment.
Objectives: Allow the use of technological devices, for example, smart phones, to supplement and enhance learning. Rather than prohibiting its use, integrating technology in class will engage the students and motivate them to participate in the lesson and class work.
Purpose: the purpose of this study is to determine whether technology is a problem or a solution. That is to say, is technology helping to motivate the students and engage them in the lesson or is it hindering them from concentrating on the subject at hand.
Significance: the significance of the study lies in the fact that technology “works”. Students like to learn while “playing”; they like to be involved rather than passive attendants.
Limitation: the limitation of the study is that it is based on two classes, namely a Freshman language/English course, and a Sophomore content/psychology course, conducted at NDU. A private Lebanese university where English is the language of instruction. 50 students were
involved in the case studies; the Questionnaire was filled out during class time in the presence of the professor, and is subjective.

**Review of literature**

There is mixed evidence as to whether it is better to use technology as a replacement or as a supplement to classroom curricula. To be effective, the technology must be fully integrated into lesson plans and teachers must be trained sufficiently (Mahajan, 2012). There is a widespread belief among teachers that the constant use of technology is not allowing students to focus. They seem to have shorter attention spans and the constant stimulation is hampering their concentration. Instructors have to work harder to hold their students’ attention. Others say that technology can be a useful educational tool (Technology is Changing How Students Learn, 2012).

At universities today, chalk and blackboards have long been replaced by LCD projectors, PowerPoint, Smartboard, and Blackboard. Students use their electronic devices, smart phones, mobile apps, and tablet computing for their school and university projects. “Electronic whiteboards allow instructors to write on a monitor in digital ink.” (Inoue, 2006) The touch screen has replaced the pen and paper and game-based learning reflects skills such as, “collaboration, problem-solving, communication, critical thinking, and digital literacy.” (Inoue, 2006) Technical devices are appealing to students, intriguing and fun.

Today, technology and diversity in education present new challenges for both student and teacher. Educators must integrate technology in diverse learning environments. According to Inoue (2006), technology is a vast and still untapped resource for content delivery, research, and class work preparation in higher education. As electronic tools are increasing, professors need to be flexible in integrating technology into pedagogy; they must apply computer-based learning to different students with different learning styles. There are however some negative outcomes for students from immersion of technology in higher education, such as a probable decline in literary reading, some social isolation and possibly Internet addiction (Inoue, 2006). Instructors nowadays may face stress in attempting to integrate online learning environments in their classrooms for students with different backgrounds, academic levels, and learning styles. Although some traditional instructors are reluctant to use technology, they do realize that it supplements teaching and enhances learning. Thus, there are both benefits and worries in using technology as a pedagogical tool (Inoue, 2006).

Technology has transformed traditional teaching in that the teacher is not the sole disseminator of information. Students can use technology in research, for instance, or to learn the definition of words. It provides sources of information and knowledge. From the professor’s point of view, technology can help assess the students’ learning. (The Teacher’s Guide to Successful Technology Integration…) Moreover, traditional teaching does not work for all students who prefer to interact with their high-tech devices in order to learn.

Why are students fascinated with the Internet and computers? Actually, this is a sign of the times we all live in. Teachers and students alike are mystified by technology’s endless possibilities. Thus it is to the teacher’s advantage to make use of technology to help students exceed their expectations. The importance of technology is that, if used correctly, it can enhance the students learning. Hunter, 2011)

According to Larry Cuban, (2012), technology will motivate students to work harder, to gain more knowledge and skills, and be more engaged. Being more engaged, students will achieve higher grades, which in turn will increase their motivation to learn. Thus technology
should be a normal part of the learning process. It closes the gap between education and the real world (Cuban, School Reform and Classroom Practice).

On the other hand, traditional instructors may think that it is “easier” to integrate technology into the classroom, while in reality it is more intricate than one would think. Still, instructors are rapidly integrating technical literacy in today’s curriculum (Barron, Kemper, Harmes, and Kalaydjian, 2003, in Straub, 2009). Like any other technology, the Internet is a tool that teachers can use whenever needed. Sometimes information can only be passed on through books and lectures, and sometimes integrating the Internet is suitable. Melissa Kelly in her article Issues with Integrating Technology in the Classroom, writes that while technology can be very helpful in the classroom, it can also be a waste if not used properly. Of course the quality of information on the Internet is not always guaranteed. It is possible to run a biased or inaccurate website. The teachers’ role is to evaluate web sources, when they assign homework or research projects. Computer-based technologies in particular constitute interesting additions. Over the past decade, teaching with computer-based technology has become the norm. This recent trend has led to a number of problems, such as “cyber plagiarism,” and cheating (Ibid). Today’s university student has a computer or tablet used as a notebook, an important and expected learning tool. Email and the Web are not innovations; rather they have become basic tools in education. While some instructors hesitate to use “more complex computer-based activities or other teaching innovations, such as active learning techniques” (Becker and Watts, 1996; Becker 2004 in Goffe, 2005) students consider PCs and digital tools to be part of their university experience. Students are increasingly ready to embrace computer technology and prefer to use the Internet in their assignments (Levin and Arafeh, 2002 in Goffe, 2005). Instructors agree that several questions arise from this widespread use of technology in universities 1). Is there evidence that computer use improves teaching? 2) How does the use of technology affect student performance?

Research shows that the Internet has a positive influence on learning, and that using the Web helped students understand the concepts. Studies show that even instructors who are reluctant to utilize technology use “some type of computer technology in their teaching. They also spend more time preparing exams and less time grading them because of online grading systems” (Goffe, 2005). Online courses are becoming more fashionable; but the question remains, is it the technology that matters in online courses or the use of active learning and sound teaching techniques? In addition, what does the future hold for teaching technology? It seems logical to assume that technological advancements will continue to emerge. Online videos and conferences, and other online communications will prevail. Online office hours will be next (Goffe, 2005).

In addition to using technology to communicate with people from a distance, teachers now use LCD projectors and PowerPoint instead of handouts, chalk, and blackboards. Technology has changed the way we teach and the way our students learn; wireless handheld devices, tablets and PCs are here to stay. On the down side, although computer-based learning environments (CBLEs) are becoming more prevalent in the classroom, research has demonstrated that some students have difficulties learning with these environments. (Moss, 2009) So, how effective is technology as a learning tool?
Methodology
To study the use of technology in the classroom, we involved two classes at NDU, namely ENL 111 A, Public Speaking for Freshman, and PSL 201 A, Introduction to Psychology. The data was obtained in Spring 2013 at NDU.
As mentioned before, the objective of this study is to determine whether including technology in classes is helping or hindering students’ learning. Is technology in the classroom a problem or a solution?
The population consists of 50 students from the two classes mentioned above. Most of the students are Lebanese, between the ages of 19 and 24. The Public Speaking course is offered to freshman students and Introduction to Psychology is a General Education Requirement (GER) for students in Sophomore, Junior and Senior years.
This research is based on a survey (in the form of a questionnaire) in addition to regular class observations. An analysis of the results will follow. A total of 50 questionnaires were filled out. We will examine each class separately and draw conclusions based on both.
Twenty students in ENL 111 A, Public Speaking for Freshman, and thirty students in PSL 201 A, Introduction to Psychology, filled out the questionnaire (Appendix 2). The students were told that the survey was part of a research project and was to be filled anonymously to preserve confidentiality.

Case Study 1
ENL 111 A - Public Speaking for Freshman
Twenty students are enrolled in this course, 6 males and 14 females under 20 years old, and one 21-year-old student. According to the descriptive information in the questionnaire, all 20 students own mobile phones, 17 own PCs and 12 own tablets.

Results

Question 4
What is your opinion on the mobile phone policy at NDU (as stated in the syllabus)?
Seventeen, or 85% of students agree that the policy is “fair” because mobiles are “distracting” and “disrupt attention.”
Five out of the 17 students said that although they agree, mobiles should be allowed in case of emergencies.
Two students said they should be allowed for research in class if needed: one student wrote that they should be allowed if kept on silent and used “to help with work, without talking on it”, and the other student added that mobiles “should be kept on silent, but not out of sight!”
One student did not reply.

Question 5
Do you prefer to have access to the Internet, on your mobile phone, PC or tablet in class? Why?
Sixteen students, or 80% said yes, for information and research.
Three, or 15% wrote mobiles are easier and faster than the Internet.
One student said no, “I don’t need it in class.”

Question 6
To record any information in class, do you prefer to use a technological device? Why?
Eight students, or 40% said no, they prefer to write, not use tablet or PC.
Eleven students, or 55% said yes, they prefer to use electronic devices instead of writing by hand.
One was neutral, “It doesn’t matter.”

Case Study 2
PSL 201 A Introduction to Psychology
Thirty-one students are enrolled in this course. One student was not available to fill out the questionnaire. Eighteen Sophomore, nine Junior, and three Senior, a total of 30 students, filled out the Questionnaire. Twenty-four students are 20 years old, and six are over 20, between 21 and 24. They were 19 females and 11 males, mostly Lebanese, with various majors from all Faculties: Journalism, Business and Finance, Architecture, Psychology, Advertising and Marketing, English, Radio and TV.

Results
According to the questionnaire, all 30 students own mobile phones, 28 of them own PCs and 19 own a tablet that they bring to university.

Question 4
What is your opinion on the mobile phone policy at NDU (as stated in the syllabus)?
Sixteen out of 30 students agree with the policy, i.e. 53% agree
Thirteen students, or 43% disagree because, “they are mature enough, and responsible, and should be allowed to decide for themselves.”
One student has no comment
Most of the students agree that the mobile should be silent but available for emergencies, families, and work

Question 5
Do you prefer to have access to the Internet, on your mobile phone, PC or tablet in class? Why?
Twenty-four students, or 80%, agreed they prefer to access the Internet
Five students, or 16.6% disagreed
One said, “The teacher, not the students should use it.”

Question 6
To record any information in class, do you prefer to use a technological device? Why?
Sixteen students, or 53%, wrote yes, it is easier than pen and paper
Thirteen students, or 43% wrote no, writing is faster and helps us to study and memorize better
One student wrote, “Does not matter.”

Conclusion
Based on both class results, we can state that students prefer to integrate technology in class in order to be more stimulated, to participate in research or projects, follow-up activities, to understand words, and look for information. It is logical to conclude then that technology adds involvement in class. Technology provides an entertaining element that makes lecturing less boring for students. However, almost 50% of the students prefer to write notes by hand to facilitate studying and memorization. According to the students, when it comes to taking notes, they prefer a more traditional approach to understand, and study.
Almost all Freshman (85%) students prefer to use their mobiles in class, while 10% disagree, and 5% are neutral. 80% like to use the Internet, 15 prefer the mobile phone, and 5% are
not interested. Regarding technical devices, only 40% prefer to use high-tech devices to take notes, while 55% prefer to write by hand, and 5% are indifferent.

The Sophomore students are divided in half, that is, 53% of them like to use their mobiles in class, 43 disagree, and 4% are neutral. 80% like to use the Internet, 17% prefer mobile phones, and 3% say that it is the teacher who should use technology not the student. Regarding technology or traditional hand writing, 53% prefer to use high-tech devices for note-taking, and 43% prefer hand writing. 3% are indifferent. The results are found in Appendix 3, showing each class separately and combined.

In the past, education simply meant face-to-face lectures, reading books or handouts, and completing assignments. Today education has a new meaning. Computers have become an essential part of every classroom and instructors are using DVDs, videos, power point presentations to give students a clearer picture of what they are explaining (How important is technology in education, 2012). Although to use or not to use and how much to use technology is still a debate among educators, there is no doubt that technology has the potential to improve education in terms of engaging students, demonstrating concepts, doing projects or research, and assessing progress (Kessler, 2010, 8 ways technology can improve education). When instructors feel they have to perform a song and dance to capture their students’ attention, there is no doubt that technology is one way of holding the students’ attention. The goal is to know how much technology to use. Growing accustomed to getting quick answers with a few keystrokes, students have to learn to take their time to think and analyze. They have to remember to reflect and come up with their own opinions. It is not enough for students to rely on finding a quick answer or definition of a word or concept; they need to learn how to assess and synthesize the information they get online; they need to develop their critical thinking and creativity.

In summary, technology is an instructional system, a useful resource, a tool to enhance the learning process. When used properly, it can be powerful in engaging and challenging students (How important is technology to education, 2012). In the quest for more learner participation, instructors may decide to change their styles to be more entertaining and to shorten their lectures to fit their students’ attention span; but, are we doing them a favor as a result? Technology can be “as much a solution as a problem” (Technology is changing how students learn, 2012), and the positive aspects of technology as an educational tool outweigh the negatives. Educators can engage students through power point and video presentations and coach them on how to work through challenging projects and assignments. The use of technology in more interactive and dynamic teaching environments is beneficial. However, in addition to technological literacy, students must acquire new skills.

About the Author:
Dr. Amal Malek is an Associate Professor at Notre Dame University-Louaize, in Lebanon. She teaches English Communication Skills, Education, and Psychology. She has published various articles in several refereed journals. Her publications include a book on return migration, Returning Home: A Post War Lebanese Phenomenon, and three anthologies of French poetry.
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Appendix 1.

ENL 111 A Syllabus – (3.0); 3 cr.
Amal Malek, Associate Professor           MWF 9-10
MWF 12-1 or by appointment

Course Description
ENL 111 is designed for Freshman students to assist them in developing their public speaking skills. The main purpose of this course is to familiarize students with the basics of public speaking through the analysis of the audience. In-class activities include model speeches for analysis and speech presentations. Students are expected to work individually and in groups, and to deliver speeches for various purposes and occasions.

2. Student Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, and as a result of the activities and study in this course, the students should be able to accomplish the following:
- To analyze their audience needs, values, and opinions as a primary point for planning their speech
- To overcome their apprehension and confidently deliver their speech
- To generate main ideas, gather supporting materials, organize, and deliver their speech
- To use sound reasoning
- To choose effective words
- To adequately develop and use visual aids
- To become better listeners
- To arouse audience interest and enhance audience understanding
- To give speeches that are appropriate for the occasion
- To present informative and persuasive speeches
- To participate in class discussions
- To effectively use body language and voice when delivering a speech

3. Teaching Methodology and Techniques
This course involves in-class discussions of the material assigned. Students are required to read the material prior to class discussions and to engage actively in these discussions. In-class exercises and home assignments will reinforce the theories and concepts explained and discussed in class.

9. Course Policies
There are no make-ups for missed tests or for the final examination. Failure to sit for a scheduled test and/or final exam will result in an F on the test/exam. A student may be excused in exceptional cases and upon the discretion of the English, Translation, and Education Department, and only if the student presents a valid documented excuse (from the SAO in case of illness) to the chairperson of the department within 72 hours of the scheduled exam date.

While understanding that we all are busy with school, work, and family, your decision to register for this course is an indication that you have made it a high priority. Thus, extensions of assignment due dates are given only in extreme situations (death of a close family member, hospitalization, etc.) and require documentation on your part. Otherwise, due dates are fixed and non-negotiable. All assignments should be submitted on or before the assigned due date. Assignments past the due date will not be accepted for full credit. Examples of unreasonable extensions for an assignment include frequent computer malfunctions, outside class-work, or job responsibilities that inhibit meeting the required deadlines. If you anticipate missing a deadline on an assignment, you should send an e-mail to your instructor before the deadline. Unexcused
assignments submitted after the due date may be returned ungraded or assigned a lower evaluation. Whether an extension is allowed will be at the instructor's discretion.

Assignments: All work must be typewritten (unless otherwise specified) and submitted in a professional manner. The instructor reserves the right to return, for resubmission, any work that is not neat, legibly, and professionally submitted.

Mobile phones should be turned off and out of sight (i.e. not face-up on the desk but preferably inside purses, backpacks, briefcases, etc. or face down on the desk). Phones may not be answered.

Students must attend class with the required material (i.e. original textbook, notebook, pens, etc.). Once in class, students are expected to remain in class for the entire period.

English must be the only language spoken in class at all times.

Special needs: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation due to a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss those specific needs.

Students must check their NDU email daily as this is the means used by the instructor to communicate. Students will receive notice via NDU email when the instructor posts announcements on the course's Blackboard.

Appendix 2
This questionnaire is conducted as part of a research project. Please complete it if you are a full-time student at NDU. Your name is optional. Please be as honest as possible.

A. Descriptive information
   1. Grade level: Freshman-----Sophomore-----Junior-----Senior-----
      Sex: Male-----Female-----
      Age: 20 or younger-----
           21-24----
           25 or older----
   2. Do you own any technological device: Check as many as applicable
      Mobile phone----
      Computer-----
      Tablet-----
   3. Do you have a declared major: Yes-----No-----
      What is your major:---------------------------

B. Opinions
   4. What is your opinion on the mobile phone policy at NDU (as stated in the syllabus)
   5. Do you prefer to have access to the Internet, on your cell phone, PC or tablet, in class? Why?
   6. To record any information in class, do you prefer to use a technological device? Why?

Thank you for your help. Please return this survey to Dr. Amal Malek, Associate Professor.
## Appendix 3

### Summary of Results, Technology in Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Q4 Mobile phone policy</th>
<th>Q5 Internet, mobile phone, PC or tablet</th>
<th>Q6 Tech device or handwriting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENL111 20 students</td>
<td>17 Agree 85%</td>
<td>16 Internet 80%</td>
<td>8 Tech device 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Disagree 10%</td>
<td>3 Cell phone 15%</td>
<td>11 Handwriting 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Neutral 5%</td>
<td>1 None 5%</td>
<td>1 Indifferent 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSL 201 30 students</td>
<td>16 Agree 53%</td>
<td>24 Internet 80%</td>
<td>16 Tech device 53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 Disagree 43%</td>
<td>5 Cell phone 17%</td>
<td>13 Handwriting 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Neutral 4%</td>
<td>3 Teacher not student should use</td>
<td>1 Indifferent 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENL111 &amp; PSL 201 50 students</td>
<td>33 Agree 66%</td>
<td>40 Internet 80%</td>
<td>24 Tech device 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 Disagree 30%</td>
<td>8 Cell phone 16%</td>
<td>24 Handwriting 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Neutral 4%</td>
<td>2 Teacher not student should use</td>
<td>2 Indifferent 4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Media for Language Teachers’ Development

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&
University of Hawaii, USA

Abstract
This paper discusses the use of online social media tools for language teachers’ professional development. The paper highlights the importance of the free social media tools for language professionals’ development by presenting some of the influential social media tools that can be utilized by language teachers to develop their careers by creating communities of practices. First, the paper provides an overview of language teachers’ development. Then, it highlights some of the key factors and methods for language teachers’ development. Finally, it presents the social media as a creative and effective solution for professional development in the language teaching field.

Keywords: Social Media, Professional Development, Teachers’ Education, Technology
Introduction
Education is a lifelong process. It is an ongoing process whose end is difficult to draw. The field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is consistently changing. Without strategies and resources to develop their skills and update their knowledge, ESL teachers might be outdated about the latest effective methods, strategies, skills, materials and theories in their field. There is no doubt about the importance of ESL teachers’ education for pre-service and in-service teachers (Burns & Richards, 2009; Crookes, 2003; Howard & Brown, 1997; Richards & Nunan, 1990; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Tedick, 2005). Second language teachers’ education helps the in-service language teachers to cope with the current issues in their fields. In addition, it prepares the language pre-service teachers to the field of teaching and learning languages.

Excellent ESL teacher education programs prepare highly-qualified ESL teachers for the field. Around the world, language schools try to hire the language teachers who come from well-known language teaching preparation programs that have good reputations and a high quality of education. Burns and Richards (2009) stress that “there is consequently increasing demand worldwide for competent English teachers and for more effective approaches to their preparation and professional development” (p. 1). Excellent language teacher preparation programs introduce to the world well-qualified teachers who know about the theories and the practices in the field of language teaching and learning. As a result, they know how to teach their students the language in effective ways that meet the students’ needs and achieve the curriculum objectives.

In addition, the importance of language teachers’ education cannot be ignored for the in-service language teachers. The need for the ongoing education comes from that fact that the language-teaching field is updated consistently, and new topics and approaches come to surface. Richards and Farrell (2005) state that “opportunities for in-service training are crucial to the long-term development of teachers as well as for the long-term success of the programs in which they work” (p. 1). The learning environment is not stable. In few years, there are new students, new materials, new school policies, and new language research. This requires from the language teachers to be updated and be able to cope with the changes in their teaching environments.

Scope of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE)

It might be difficult to define the boarders of the second language teachers’ education. It is tricky to draw the scope of the field of SLTE. Freeman (2009) stresses that “defining the scope of any activity - from parenting, to musicianship, to language teacher education - is a tricky undertaking” (p. 17). The reason is that “scope is often a largely de facto notion defined implicitly in the doing of a particular activity” (Freeman, 2009, p. 17). In SLTE, there are different disciplines that are associated with second language teachers’ educations such as applied linguistics, psychology, cultural anthropology, technology, theoretical linguistics and education. These disciplines have their own theories that might be integrated in the SLTE implicitly. This comes from the nature of the field of language education as a new discipline. According to Burns and Richards,

“The field of TESOL is relatively new and, in the form that we know it today, dates from the 1960s. The origins of specific approaches to teacher training began with short training programs and certificates dating from this period, designed to give prospective teachers the practical classroom skills needed to teach new methods” (2009, p. 2).
As a new field, SLTE needs to be based on new theories and methods in other fields, for example, the audio-lingual method based on the theory of behaviorism in the field of psychology.

Another issue that is difficult to identify is categorizing SLTE into two categories: the initial teacher education (ITE) and the in-service teacher education (INSET). Putting SLTE into two categories is blurry and confused. Hubbard and Levy (2006) illustrate, “it is worth noting that in practice, the pre-service/in-service distinction may be blurry. Pre-service and in-service teachers may be combined in a single class, particularly in the online setting” (p. 13). We can see from the aforementioned quote how technology influences categorizing the field of SLTE into two broad categories. SLTE also encompasses “a wide range of second language contexts, national and international contexts, and instructional and institutional setting” (Tedick, 2005, p. preface). It ranges from English as a second language to English as a foreign language, from bilingual education to language immersion education, from pre-k-12 education to college education.

Factors in SLTE

There are many factors that play significant roles in SLTE. These different players shape the field of SLTE. For example, we can see technology as an important player in SLTE nowadays. Hubbard and Levy (2006), and Reinders (2009) state that technology reshapes the language classrooms practices these days. Language education programs need to prepare the language teachers to utilize the technology in their language classrooms. It can be difficult to avoid the use of technology in language teaching classrooms since that technology becomes a part of our daily life. Many language schools and published language materials require the use of technology to deliver the lessons.

Further, we can identify another factor affecting SLTE: teachers’ identity. Teachers’ identity plays an important role in SLTE (Miller, 2009). Kanno and Stuart (2011) clarify “the idea that identity formation is central to L2 teacher development has major implications in terms of what fundamental questions we should ask in L2 teacher education” (p. 49). Language preparation programs help the pre-service language teachers to formulate their new identities as language teachers. It is a major change in their life to establish a new identity. Language teachers act in the language classrooms based on how they identify themselves.

An additional important factor in SLTE is the culture and the context. Language teachers need to be aware of their students’ cultures and their own culture that they bring to the language classrooms (Sowden, 2007). Language teachers need to understand their students’ culture so they can avoid the culture conflicts with the target language. Teachers might learn about their students’ culture by asking the students, reading online materials about the culture, and asking their colleagues who have long experience teaching in the context. SLTE programs need to include the social and the cultural position of the language and its impact on the lives of both teachers and students (Franson & Holliday 2009). We cannot separate the culture from the teaching environment. The list of the factors is long and includes teachers’ experiences, teachers’ attitudes, and teachers’ native language. The above-mentioned examples are incorporated since they play significant roles in SLTE to give the readers an idea about how different factors shape the field of SLTE.

Methods in SLTE

There are different ways to provide an education for the ESL teachers. In this section, I will illustrate some of these effective methods for SLTE. Joining a SLTE program is the first step to getting education and knowing more about language teaching and learning. SLTE
programs provide the teachers with different kinds of certificates such as a Master Degree (MA), a Bachelor Degree (BA) and Graduate Certificate. During the program, the teachers explore different areas in the second language studies such as the methods of teaching, language teaching materials, language acquisition, and language and society. Joining such programs is helpful for both the initial language teachers who want to join the field and the in-service teachers who want to promote their status, update their knowledge, and get better jobs. Language teaching preparation programs help the teachers to have more theoretical knowledge about teaching (Wyatt, 2010). They learn about the history of the field language teaching and the current status of the field.

Another method is attending workshops. In workshops, language teachers are trained in using new teaching methods and dealing with new issues in their field. Workshops are usually conducted by experts in the field of SLTE. Many language experts offer workshops in their specialties such as language testing, language teaching methods, and course designs. In addition, some language materials publishers conduct workshops in their new language materials to show how language teachers can use them in their classrooms. Another method of development is attending language conferences. Language teachers might develop their careers by attending presentations and workshops at the language conferences. There are different conferences that concentrate on language teaching and learning such as the TESOL Conference and the AAAL Conference. In these conferences, the teachers know what other language teachers use in their classrooms and the current research trends in language teaching and learning.

Language teachers might join specific language organizations to extend their academic networks where they can make new academic friends. Those friends help them to find answers to their questions and solutions to their problems in the classroom. Organizations usually have specific groups of interests such as a group that concentrates on technology, a group that concentrates on assessment, and a group that concentrates on materials. Language teachers can be members of these specific groups of interests to strengthen their knowledge about a specific area in second language studies such as teaching writing, teaching pronunciation and teaching children. Another significant way to be updated with the latest in the field of language teaching and learning is the use of reading materials such as books and journals. Language teachers can develop their careers and be updated with the latest issues in their field by subscribing to language teaching journals such as TESOL Quarterly, the Asian EFL Journal, and Language Learning and Technology. Reading the latest articles and books in the field of language studies keep the teachers updated about the latest issues and theories in their area. Those language journals are usually peer reviewed, and the experts in the field edit them.

Another method for language professional development is reflection. In her study, Best (2011) has found that reflection is an effective method for in-service language teachers to develop their teaching skills. Reflection helps teachers to know their own teaching practices in the classrooms. Teachers might not be aware of these practices unless they reflect on them. SLTE research confirms that, “an effective teacher is a reflective teacher” (Brandt, 2008, p. 42). Reflection helps the teachers to learn and develop their skills within the context they teach. It shows the teachers their strengths and weaknesses. Another method to get SLTE is the collaborative learning with the other language teachers. Johnston (2009) illustrates, “collaborative teacher development (CTD) is an increasingly common kind of teacher development found in a wide range of language teaching contexts” (p. 241). Collaborative teacher development helps the language teachers to exchange ideas, thoughts and suggestions. It
is an investigation into teaching and learning in their contexts. Teachers solve their problems together and understand the contexts where they teach from different teachers’ perspectives.

Observation is another effective method for professional development. Observation is necessary for the teacher training (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Maingay, 1988; Wallace, 1991). It helps the pre-served teachers to have an image about the learning environment they will encounter after their training programs. It prepares them for the work. By going to real language classrooms, pre-service teachers have access to their future teaching environment. In addition, observation is necessary for in-service language teachers because the learning environments are changing consistently. Teachers might invite their colleagues to come and observe their classes and point out how the teacher conducts the class. They might also go to their colleagues’ classrooms and observe how they teach their classes. This will give the teacher ideas about the methods that they use in their classrooms.

Social Media

Social media allow people to create exchange, share, comment, and modify contents in different forms. Kaplan and Haenlein define the social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (2010, P.61). It is the connection in the cyberspace. Through social media, Internet users can exchanges the contents with others. It becomes fact that the social media becomes a part of our daily life. For example, The YouTube official website, http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics, states that 500 years of YouTube video are watched every day on Facebook, and over 700 YouTube videos are shared on Twitter each minute. 100 million people take a social action on YouTube (likes, shares, comments, etc) every week. The Facebook official website http://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts states that there are one billion monthly active users as of October 2012. There is no doubt that “social media are Web 2.0 applications that have the potential to increase interactions among individuals through creating and sharing” (Joosten, 2012, p. 8).

The use of social media tools in language education is important because it creates a community for language teachers. The difference between social media as professional development tools and other professional development tools is that social media gives the teachers a community to participate with. The US Department of Education stresses that teachers should not only be connected to resources but they should have communities of practice that provide career-long personal learning opportunities for educators within and across schools, pre-service preparation and in-service education institutions, and professional organizations. (Office of Educational Technology, 2010 http://www.ed.gov/technology/netp-2010/executive-summary). Communities of practice are “groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise” (Wenger & Snyder, 2000, p. 139). The social media tools help the language teachers to stay connected with their peers around the world and updated about their fields. Moreover, these online buttons give the language teachers the chance to help others in their fields, find solutions to their problems and improve their teaching language careers.

Examples of Social Media

The following social tools are selected to show the language teachers another way of professional development. These social tools will build the ESL teachers professional network for free. The tools will introduce them to active ESL professions and organizations where they will be updated with the latest development in their careers wherever they are. They are easy to
use and commonly used by ESL allies. They are accessible and do not require lots of works and efforts from busy ESL teachers. They can be used by both initial teachers and in-service teachers. The basic requirement is access to the Internet.

1- Facebook Pages

Facebook page is a public profile for organizations, companies, schools and celebrities. The Facebook page has fans instead of friends. Fans are the people who like the Facebook page. The Facebook page keeps the fans updated with the latest news of the organization. The updates appear on the page and the fans’ personal news feeds. In addition, the fans can be updated via SMS and RSS. You need a Facebook account to use this tool ‘Facebook pages’. You need to LIKE the page by pressing the button “Like” at the top of the page. After that you will be updated with the information posted in that page. The information will show on your in your account. Facebook pages are effective tools to be updated and developed in the field. By becoming a fan of some language oriented Facebook pages, language teachers can have access to the latest posts in that Facebook pages. Many language programs, language materials publishers, language organizations have Facebook pages. In their facebook pages, they share their news and their latest products.

Examples of Facebook Pages

1- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Inc. Facebook Page
Link: https://www.facebook.com/tesol.assn
2- American TESOL Institute Facebook Page:
Link: https://www.facebook.com/pages/American-TESOL-Institute/40054405592
3- Free Technology for Teachers Facebook Page:
Link: https://www.facebook.com/FreeTech4Teachers

2- Facebook Groups

A Facebook group is a type of online social community where Facebook members can share and discuss relevant topics. There are three types of Facebook groups: A- Secret: only members can see the group and what members post in the group space. B- Closed: anyone can see the group, but the group members only can see the posts. C- Open: anyone can see the group and what the group members post. In addition, the group has email where all the group members can be notified even they are off Facebook. Language teachers might join Facebook groups that are dedicated to language teaching and learning. In these Facebook groups, the teachers share ideas, news and online resources about language teaching and learning. Language teachers can find these Facebook groups by typing language teaching key words in the research box and limit the results to groups.

Examples of language Facebook Groups

1- Applied Linguistics and Language Learning & Teaching Facebook Group
Link: https://www.facebook.com/groups/applinguistics/
2- EUROCALL Facebook Group
Link: https://www.facebook.com/groups/255577856335/
3- English Language Teaching Reforms (ELTR) Facebook Group
Link: https://www.facebook.com/groups/186045292528/

3- Twitter

Language teachers can use Twitter for professional development too. In their Twitter accounts, they can follow famous language programs, language education well-known scholars, and language publishers. For example, there are Twitter accounts for TESOL Arabia, TESOL Korea, TESOL France, Oxford University Press, TESOL International Association, and Stephen
Krashen. They tweet their latest news, publications, thoughts, ideas and resources. Language teachers can find these accounts by typing language teaching and learning key words such as applied linguistics, language teaching methods, language materials, and language theories at the research box in the twitter websites.

4- YouTube

YouTube is a very attractive social medium that contributes to the global education (Bonk, 2009). It is increasingly being used by educators to teach English language (Duffy, 2008). YouTube allows its users to share large videos in high quality for free. It offers fast and fun access to language and culture-based videos and instruction from all over the globe “Terantino, 2011). We can see that YouTube is making new demands on learning that are changing the learning ecology (Kwan et al, 2008). YouTube has a special section for education where educators can post their videos. Every year, YouTube official website WWW.YouTube.com shares astonishing statistics about the use of the YouTube worldwide. According to the press link http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics, YouTube is localized in 43 countries and across 60 languages; YouTube has more than 1 trillion views or around 140 views for every person on Earth. These statistics show the influence of YouTube on sharing information and knowledge with other people.

Examples of YouTube Accounts
1- TESOL webinars by the American TESOL Institute
Link: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6AD53A6A65AB8A54
2- Teacher Development in English Language Teaching by Oxford University Press
Link: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2193A8A6FB66E2E2
3- Teaching Tips by the British Council
Link: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL17B8E2A8B6003A38

5- SlideShare

SlideShare is a website that hosts people documents in slide formats. It accepts the following formats: PowerPoint, Keynote, OpenOffice and PDF. It was launched on October 4, 2008. Users of SlideShare can rate, comment on and share their documents with others. According to SlideShare official Website http://www.slideshare.net/about, SlideShare was voted amongst by the World's top tools for education & e-learning. SlideShare is the world's largest community for sharing presentations. With 60 million monthly visitors and 130 million pageviews, it is amongst the most visited 200 websites in the world. Besides presentations, SlideShare also supports documents, PDFs, videos and webinars. Language teachers can have access to other language related presentations. By joining SlideShae, they can follow and keep updated with the latest presentations about language teaching and learning that are shared in SlideShare.

Examples of SlideShare Presentations
1= Best Practices for Teaching English to Young Learners by Joan Shin
Link: http://www.slideshare.net/VenTESOL/teaching-english-to-young-learners-by-joan-shin
SlideShare Account Holder is Venezuela TESOL
Workshop offered to English Language teachers in Venezuela as part of the Methodology of the ELT Tour 2011-2 organized by VenTESOL and sponsored by the US Embassy
2= TESOL International Association
Link: http://www.slideshare.net/TesolAssn
SlideShare account Holder is TESOL International Association
3= Creative Teaching
Link: http://www.slideshare.net/TESOLChile
SlideShare account holder is TESOL Chile
4= English classroom
Link: http://www.slideshare.net/englishinthebox
SlideShare account holder is English Classroom in Thailand
5= E-teaching.org
Link: http://www.slideshare.net/eteaching
SlideShare account holder is E-teaching.org

6- LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social networking website for people in professional occupations. It is founded in December 2002 and launched on May 5, 2003. It is mainly used for professional networking. As of June 2012, LinkedIn reports more than 175 million registered users in more than 200 countries and territories. As of September 30, 2012, LinkedIn operates the world’s largest professional network on the Internet with more than 187 million members in over 200 countries and territories. Language teachers can use this social media tools to connect with other language professionals around the globe as we can see in the following examples. There are different language related groups in Linkedin. Joining these groups helps the teachers to find answers to their questions, read others ideas and suggestions and help other teachers to find solutions to their language teaching problems.

Examples of Groups in Linkedin:
1= TESOL Association in Linkedin
Link: http://www.linkedin.com/groups/TESOL-International-Association-3733067?trk=myg_ugrp_ovr
2= TESOL Arabia Group in Linkedin
Link: http://www.linkedin.com/groups/TESOL-Arabia-3776048?trk=myg_ugrp_ovr
3= Applied Linguistics Group in Linkedin
Link: http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Applied-Linguistics-1356867?trk=myg_ugrp_ovr
4= EUROCALL Group in Linkedin
Link: http://www.linkedin.com/groups/EUROCALL-710067?trk=myg_ugrp_ovr
5= ELT Professionals Around The World group in Linkedin
Link: http://www.linkedin.com/groups/ELT-Professionals-Around-World-3460329?trk=myg_ugrp_ovr

7- Academia.edu

Academia.edu is a platform for academics to share research papers. The company's mission is to accelerate the world's research. According to the official website http://www.academia.edu/about, Academics use Academia.edu to share their research, monitor deep analytics around the impact of their research, and track the research of academics they follow. 4,028,088 academics have signed up to Academia.edu, adding 1,631,776 papers and 857,013 research interests. Academia.edu attracts over 5 million unique visitors a month. Language teachers can follow the work of famous language researchers and know about their latest research as we can see in the following examples.

Examples of categories to find on academia.edu
1= People: Ahmar Mahboob http://usyd.academia.edu/AhmarMahboob
2= Papers: Languages and Linguistics
http://www.academia.edu/Documents/in/Languages_and_Linguistics
3= Journals: Language and Linguistics
http://journals.academia.edu/in/Languages_and_Linguistics
8- **StumbleUpon**

StumbleUpon is a discovery engine (a form of web search engine) that finds and recommends web content to its users. Its features allow users to discover and rate Web pages, photos, and videos that are personalized to their tastes and interests using peer-sourcing and social-networking principles. Language teachers can use this tool to have recommended online contents that are based on their interests.

**Interests Examples:** Applied Linguistics, Language Teaching and Learning, TESOL, EFL, ESL, TOEFL, Computer Assisted Language Learning.

The Profile will have different sections based on your interests:
- Likes Section
- List Section
- Comments Section
- History Section
- Following Section
- Followers Section
- Interests Section
- Channels Section

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper reconsiders the use of social media for language professional development purposes due to the popularity and effectiveness of social media to communicate with professions around the globe. It provides the social media as communities of practice. Social media meets what the US Department of Education (Office of Educational Technology, 2010 [http://www.ed.gov/technology/netp-2010/executive-summary](http://www.ed.gov/technology/netp-2010/executive-summary)) stresses that teachers should not only be connected to resources but they should have communities of practice that provide career-long personal learning opportunities for educators within and across schools, pre-service preparation and in-service education institutions, and professional organizations.

However, we should be aware of the fact that it is not necessary that what you will see in these social networks is relevant to your particular interests. Sometimes, the members of the social network post topics that might not necessary be relevant to the field of language teaching and learning. For example, some members post about their products to market. Another point is the quality of the post. Sometimes, the members might post about English websites or tips that are not necessary to be proven scientifically as effective in language teaching and learning. Further research need to be conducted to analyze the contents that are posted in these social network language related sections.

**About the Author:**

Munassir Alhamami received his B.A in English from King Khalid University (Saudi Arabia) and his M.A from Trinity Western University (Canada). Currently, he is instructor at King Khalid University (on study leave) and PhD student at University of Hawaii (USA). His main academic interest is applied linguistics & technology.

**References**


Guidelines for Culturally Competent ESL Teachers

Gina Zanolini Morrison
Wilkes University, USA

Abstract
The typical ESL classroom is a dynamic place full of energy, exploration, and experimentation. Teaching ESL is an exciting and rewarding career, mostly because of the students themselves, who bring a wealth of knowledge to the learning environment. Managing the cross-cultural interactions can be a challenge for the teacher, however, who may become overwhelmed by having to cope with the various cultural behaviors and values contained in one classroom. A few practical guidelines can help guide teachers through the process of developing rapport with all ESL students by avoiding cross-cultural mistakes. This list of fifteen Dos and Don’ts, developed by an ESL teacher and teacher-trainer over many years in the United States, is appropriate for use by pre-service teachers, teachers in the field, educational policy-makers, and administrators who serve second language learners.

Keywords: Cultural competence, ESL teacher training, ESOL, TESOL, English as a Second Language
Introduction
The classroom where students learn English as a Second Language is a very special place. It has a rich culture of its own that, when well managed, makes it a unique and welcoming place: a safe haven where students of all backgrounds can feel free to try out their new language without fear or shame. Involvement and active engagement are necessary to promote student learning (Wilson, 2004), and this is especially the case for second language learners. In order to for that involvement and engagement to develop, however, there must be respect and trust between teacher and students. Managing the lively dynamics and the rich diversity of the ESL classroom is a challenge more easily met when the ESL teacher establishes good rapport with each and every student. To that end, paying close attention to students’ feelings is a skill that successful ESL teachers master quickly, usually with positive results.

According to the “affective filter” hypothesis of second language acquisition (Krashen, 1981), students use their emotions to sort out what they learn. Indeed, affect plays a pivotal role in motivation in all types of learning. When students are actively engaged in cooperative or interactive learning experiences, such as those that are usually found in the ESL classroom, their chances for success increase (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). “By anticipating and attending to the social forces that occur in the classroom, faculty better foster student learning and help students achieve their educational goals” (Hirschy & Wilson, 2002, p. 97). Language learning occurs best in a context that provides “opportunities for meaningful interaction with others in the target language” (Walqui, 2000, p. 3). It is vitally important for culturally competent teachers to pay close attention to students’ feelings and comfort levels when they are learning a second language, since the better they feel about the learning environment, the faster they will master the target language.

Therefore, it is the ESL teacher’s responsibility to create a classroom atmosphere wherein students feel comfortable, secure, accepted and validated. Only then can the well-trained ESL teacher’s instructional strategies find fertile ground.

The following list is offered as a simple guide for new teachers and administrators, or a reminder for experienced ones, to assist them in their efforts to build rapport with second language learners by avoiding cross-cultural mistakes. These fifteen tips are organized around three key points that remind professionals of the importance of keeping the students’ needs at the center of ESL instruction:

\[ E = \text{Empower your students with respect.} \]
1. Learn your students’ names.
2. Maintain high expectations for all students.
3. Be a good listener.
4. Look out for the quiet one.
5. Be sensitive in dual-language situations, and don’t yell!

\[ S = \text{See yourself as a student advocate.} \]
6. Recognize the individual within the culture: avoid stereotyping.
7. Never make someone the spokesperson for his/her group.
8. Be open about differences, but don’t pry.
9. Learn the politically correct language, being especially careful when using humor.

\[ L = \text{Learn to broaden your own horizons.} \]
10. Never ignore, excuse, or dismiss a racial incident.
11. Speak out and share your knowledge.
12. Become the expert on your students.
13. Get to know the major holidays that are not celebrated by the majority.
15. Trust your instincts to guide you.

Fifteen Guidelines for Cross-Cultural Competence

_E = Empower your students with respect._

1. Learn your students’ names. Practice as much as you must, but do take the time to learn the proper pronunciation of names.

As basic as this rule may seem, many teachers do not follow it. Far too often, teachers who cannot pronounce a student’s name on the first try simply give up and assign an Anglicized nickname for that student. This is not done in the interest of the student as much as it is done for the convenience of the teacher. One Malaysian girl named Puteri, for example, was quickly nicknamed “Patty” by her ESL teacher. To the Malaysian student, whose name means “princess,” her nickname sounded like the Malay word _padi_, meaning rice grain—a far cry from her parents’ original intention.

A name is an important part of a person's identity, and teachers who assign their students nicknames because of pronunciation difficulties are not showing respect for the meaning or the history behind the name. Culturally competent teachers will learn the student’s name instead.

2. Maintain high expectations for all students.

Students in the second-language classroom are motivated and resourceful learners who show a willingness to master a new language and succeed in a new culture. These students bring special skills to their new classrooms and communities, along with hope, hard work, perseverance, and resilience (Cohen, 1990; Lopez, 2001; Topolnicki, 1995). They should not be undermined with pity or sympathy simply because they have not yet mastered their target language.

Sometimes, teachers and advocates who deal with English language learners foster dependence while trying to be helpful. It is true that some cultures value autonomy less than others (Yang, 2003), but being able to cope autonomously in a new culture is a skill that every second language learner should master to some degree.

One Ethiopian high school student grew very dependent on his ESL teacher, a helpful and kind-hearted person. Over several months, the ESL teacher became concerned that this student was far too dependent on her, asking for her intervention and help regarding small matters that she knew he was perfectly capable of handling himself, such as scheduling appointments with his advisor and choosing classes. Finally, the ESL teacher decided to discuss the issue of his lack of progress in autonomy. When the teacher explained her concern, the student was genuinely surprised, responding, “But I did not want to offend you, since you seem to enjoy doing these things for me!”

While it is important to be helpful and empathetic to second language learners, teachers must never forget that the first and most important goal of teaching: to get to the point where students no longer need their teacher. Maintaining high expectations for all students is a trait of teachers who strive to empower their students.

3. Be a good listener. Accept, reflect, and validate feelings, even though you might not share them. Often, it is the ESL teacher with whom the second language learner will bond. True, second language learners do go through a “silent period” (Fassinger, 1995) in which they...
develop the receptive language skills (listening and reading) over the productive language skills (speaking and writing). But a teacher must be ready to listen, when the “silent period” is over.

One adult English language learner from Gambia was experiencing a difficult adjustment to the United States in many areas of his life, and his English grades reflected it. Sensing a problem, his ESL teacher made an appointment with the student to see if he could uncover the problem. The meeting between these two men started off well. Rapport was quickly established and the Gambian student felt safe enough to disclose the crux of his problems: his two wives were constantly quarreling, making it impossible for him to find any peace, let alone study time, in his personal life!

This disclosure caught the ESL teacher off-guard. As an American man only recently married himself, he found it unthinkable to be married to two women at the same time, a practice strictly forbidden in his own culture. Nothing in his Christian upbringing gave him a foundation for empathizing with the student’s point of view, and he certainly had no advice to offer. However, while listening to the student speak of his troubles, the American teacher sensed what a great relief it was for the student to be able to speak about this at last. The teacher realized what an honor it was that this student had trusted him enough to share his problem with him, and he tried his best to be a non-judgmental listener. He made honest comments that reflected the message and validated the student’s point of view, such as, “That must be very difficult for all of you.” At no time did he patronize the student; rather, he simply listened patiently while the student unburdened himself, and he concluded the meeting with a promise of confidentiality.

In such a diverse classroom, teachers will inevitably encounter beliefs and practices with which he or she disagrees. At these times, teachers need only ask themselves this question: Since my main goal is to assist the student in learning a new language and culture, how much does it really matter what I think? If it doesn’t matter very much, just listen.

4. Look out for the quiet one; don’t force the individual who is “different” from the group to join in, but don’t allow her/him to get lost in the shuffle.

Often, ESL teachers allow the shy or quiet students in their classes to become non-participants in the classroom out of misplaced sensitivity to their situation. Of course, every second language learner will transition through a “silent period” in which information is taken in—but it is not a passive stage. Rather, it is a stage of quiet internal activity that is part of the continuum of learning a language. It is the teacher’s responsibility to encourage these students to participate fully in class activities, coaxing them to stretch beyond their comfort level, rather than allowing them to totally withdraw.

As a young ESL teacher in the 1980s, this author had many students from Southeast Asia who had entered the United States with refugee status. Struck by the many stories of personal trauma she had heard, and wanting to be respectful of their adjustment process, she was at first hesitant to force the more reluctant students to join in the classroom activities. One particular young man—a quiet, brooding Cambodian who sat in the corner of the class up with his shoulder up against the side chalkboard—would not speak or write for several weeks. He would not answer when called upon and would not join in the choral reading sessions; however, he never came late to class. After a month of his silent resistance, the teacher decided that the time had come to coax him out of his shell.

One day, during an activity in which students were busy writing their sentences on the chalkboard, she approached this silent student and explained that it was time for him to put a sentence on the board, too. He shook his head “no.” Determined, she quietly handed him the piece of chalk and said, “Just write something on the board. Each student must try. You too.”
Finally, the young man took the piece of chalk from her and, immediately, scratched it against the chalkboard near his seat. Seeing that small gesture and watching him join the other students at the front of the classroom to write his sentence, the teacher realized that he had never written on a blackboard before! This small act—putting chalk to board—was the key that unlocked the language for him. After that day, he became an enthusiastic participant in class activities, a quick learner known and respected by the other students for his English mastery and sense of humor. In fact, he would often arrive early to write the date on the chalkboard or draw a picture with a message in English.

Indeed, students do need time to adjust to their new life and new language. But teachers must maintain high expectations for their second language learners; to lower expectations out of pity or sympathy is to cheat them of the full educational experience.

5. Be sensitive in dual-language situations; don’t yell when speaking to a foreign-born person!

Teachers and administrators will often find themselves in meetings and conferences that include second language learners and their parents, other teachers, caseworkers, and interpreters. This is a complex situation that should be navigated carefully. Far too often, a well-meaning native English speaker will begin to speak loudly to the non-English speaker, as if shouting will get the message across better! Shouting only offends the listener, whereas slowing down speech, shortening sentences, and speaking with clarity will help intelligibility. Professionals who are experienced with this situation understand that a polite tone and appropriate eye-to-eye contact go much farther than shouting, and they will model this communication style for the others at the meeting.

Dual-language situations also require sensitivity when interpreters are not readily available. It is a good rule-of-thumb to avoid using children as the interpreters for their parents, as it places both the parents and the students in an awkward situation and compromises the integrity of the communications. A Pakistani student, now grown, tells of such a meeting that his teacher had called with his mother to discuss his refusal to hand in homework on time. The teacher made the mistake of using the young student as the interpreter. Whenever the teacher told the student, “Please tell your mother that I am concerned about your homework being late,” the student said, in Urdu, “My teacher called you here today to tell you what a serious and capable student I am.” Needless to say, the mother was surprised to see the low grade on his report card a few weeks later, and the teacher learned a valuable lesson about how to handle dual-language situations.

S = See yourself as a student advocate.

6. Recognize the individual within the culture: Avoid stereotyping. It is imperative for the ESL teacher to remember that no one is the stereotype of his or her culture. Each student is an individual; therefore, be cautious about making assumptions.

Of course, seasoned teachers use their knowledge of other cultures to “read” their students, but they do so with the understanding that there are many differences in the ways that cultural influences manifest themselves, especially when the individual student is learning amongst people who do not share the same culture. When in doubt, ask.

A case in point can be found in the author’s well-meaning attempt to welcome the parents of her Cuban student to her local U.S. community. Meeting the parents at a community gathering, and eager to make a good impression, she attempted to establish rapport by striking up a conversation with them in Spanish. Assuming they were Roman Catholic, as most Cubans are,
she asked the family if they had yet found a church to join. To her surprise, they told her they were Jewish! Reminded of her own rule about stereotyping, she made a mental note to send them the list of synagogues in the community.

7. *Never make someone the spokesperson for his/her group.* Individuals within groups vary on opinions, mannerisms, customs, political views, language and religion. Unfortunately, many people do not recognize the inner-group diversity, particularly among members of minority groups. It is overwhelming and frustrating to be placed in a position of having to speak for your entire social or cultural group.

International students report that, sadly, even their college professors still single them out in the classroom. One young Indian woman, an MBA student, was attending a lecture on outsourcing and the impact it was having on American economics. “And can you share the Indian point of view on outsourcing?” the professor asked. Being the only foreign student in the class, and knowing the negative reactions of many Americans to outsourcing, she was very embarrassed to be put on the spot in that manner. Yet, because of her respect for teachers, she did not dare to let the question go unanswered. “I am sure I cannot speak for all of India, and I have not yet formed my own opinion on the matter. But I hope to be more informed after listening to your lecture.” The professor hesitated and then moved on to the next topic. However, it left the class wondering why she had skirted the issue, and it left the student feeling alienated from her peers.

Culturally competent teachers realize that the individual student should never be asked to represent his or her entire race, nation, gender, or linguistic group. Respect for the individuality of the student and diversity of any group will prohibit teachers from asking their students to be the spokespersons for their entire group.

8. *Be open about differences; don’t ignore them. Encourage dialogue, but don’t pry.*

Don’t ignore the obvious. If you see a young English language learner in your class with a head covering, you would probably be safe in assuming that she is Muslim. Although American public school teachers are prohibited from asking about a student’s religion, you might want to ask her, privately, if she has any special religious needs. This student might, for example, need help identifying non-halal items on the school cafeteria menu. If so, take a red pen and check near those items that contain pork. Or, she might need a clean, private place to pray. If so, find such a spot. These small gestures often make a big positive change in the student’s life.

A word of caution, however: conversations about individual differences should always be held in private settings, where it is psychologically safe for potentially sensitive topics to be discussed. In this way, students do not risk losing face in front of their peers should the communication become awkward or embarrassing. The author of this paper had made it a standard practice to spend some time speaking privately with every student every few days—at least once a week. These informal, private conferences were built into the last ten minutes of class time, while students completed their classroom assignments independently. Students were called up to the desk in rotation, bringing their class work with them. During these short talks, the teacher would ask if the student had any questions about the assignments—or any other matter. While some of these short conversations focused on grammar and vocabulary, or a confusing idiom that the student was too shy to bring up in front of the general class, just as often the topic involved issues outside of class, such as a miscommunication with a friend or a failed exam. For this reason, a good rule of thumb is to end these private conversations with this
question: *Is there anything else you would like to ask?* The answers to that question will amaze the teacher and give the student a chance to be heard!

9. **Be tactful and careful with language.** Learn the politically correct language, being especially careful when using humor. Avoid culturally explosive words and steer clear of risky terminology laden with sensitive meanings. Never tell ethnic or sexual jokes, and speak out if someone else does.

Students regard their teachers, especially ESL teachers, as their role models. What they hear in class will be tested outside of class; therefore, culturally competent teachers use socially accepted terminology. Derogatory names have no place in the ESL classroom and should be avoided. Likewise, humor should be handled with care.

Anyone involved with regular cross-cultural interactions knows that humor often simply does not translate. What is funny in one culture is not necessarily funny in another. Therefore, ESL teachers should be very careful to choose light humor during instruction, making no one person the object of jokes. Also, when listening to students’ attempts at humor, it is best to remember the differing roles that gender, race and ethnicity play in every culture, rather than judging the student’s humor from the teacher’s cultural perspective.

Furthermore, what is politically incorrect in one culture might be perfectly acceptable in another. In western cultures such as the United States, sensitivity to sexism and racial intolerance has led to lawsuits and litigation; as a result, it is becoming rare to hear such humor expressed openly. In many multicultural societies of the east, such as Malaysia and Singapore, however, jokes about ethnicity and sex roles are often heard. Teasing comments seem to be taken with good humor, and many relationships appear to not only withstand the strain of joking, many of them seem to solidify because of it. Nevertheless, humor can be a very touchy subject. In light of this, teachers should refrain from off-color jokes, particularly ethnic or sexual jokes. Furthermore, it is the duty of the ESL teacher to advise their students, with as much grace as possible, that certain jokes and words will only bring trouble.

10. **Never ignore, excuse, or dismiss a racial incident.** Report, refer, or get help to handle it.

People come with diverse backgrounds and personal histories that frame their current experiences and sensitize them to certain situations. It is particularly difficult for privileged people to understand what it is like *not* to have the privileges that they enjoy (McIntosh, 1995) and to understand current experiences through their frames of reference. A wise teacher will never trivialize any matter that is important to a student, even though it may appear insignificant to the teacher.

One example of a situation that might have easily slipped “under the radar” can be found in a college dormitory. A student affairs professional noticed the word “chinks” scrawled across the door of a room that she knew to be the room of two young women who were Chinese students. She mentioned this to the resident advisor on that hall, who admitted seeing the graffiti but had assumed it was no more than a harmless prank. But the student affairs staff felt otherwise and scheduled a meeting with the two Chinese women to investigate the matter.

At first, the Chinese students were hesitant to complain, when brought into the meeting. They admitted seeing the graffiti on their door, but said they did not know what it meant. The student affairs staff explained that it was a derogatory word for Asian people; therefore, she was wondering if that was an indication of any other things that had been going on in the dorm.
Then, the Chinese women explained that there had been a few things happening, but that they did not want to cause any trouble as foreigners in a strange land. They had been experiencing harassment by a young white man on that wing, who would phone them and knock on their door at all hours to wake them up. They suspected that he had written the message on the door, and that he was the one who had scattered also trash in front of it. The student affairs staff explained that it was not necessary to endure these insults, and that she would have the graffiti removed immediately. Furthermore, she asked their permission to bring the matter to the Resident Life Director, so that he might do a proper investigation, as this type of behavior was in strict violation of the university’s code of conduct. Finally, they agreed and the matter was taken to the disciplinary board. In this case, the young man in question, a freshman, not only received a sanction from the university, but he also requested a chance to apologize to both women. Had the student affairs professional not realized that graffiti often signifies a deeper issue, the harassment might have continued. Luckily, the appropriate steps were taken to handle the matter, while including the students themselves in the process.

11. Speak out and share your knowledge. New ESL teachers are usually amazed at how much they are sought after by their peers, administrators, and community members for information and knowledge about the cultures of their second-language learners. ESL teachers are regarded as resources. Embrace that role in your stance as an advocate, and learn to speak out on behalf of your students.

Before taking any action or advocacy, however, it is best to keep in mind that in order for teachers to find their own voices as advocates, they must first learn to listen to the voices of their students. When confronted with a problem or issue, the teacher should involve the student as much as possible in the decision. Getting the student’s buy-in or permission to address the issue is the best practice before going to the appropriate resource person or authority figure—respecting their decisions whenever possible.

Every time students find themselves in need of help or advocacy, they come from a position of diminished power. Informing them of options, discussing those options with them, and including them as the primary voice in the decision-making process will empower them to take charge of their lives, with the help of a trusted advocate, such as the ESL teacher.

L = Learn to broaden your own horizons

12. Become the expert on your students.

Not only should the ESL teacher get to know students as individuals, but also the culture, customs, and political situations of their students’ homelands. Politics and economics are major reasons for the global shifts that are apparent in every level of society today. Teachers and administrators must educate themselves about the reasons that ESL students have come into their schools.

In the years following the U.S.-Viet Nam conflict, American ESL classrooms saw an influx of Southeast Asian students from Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos. At first, these students were grouped together under one misleading label: Indochinese. Being neither Indian nor Chinese, although influenced to varying degrees by their past connections to those cultures, the students who came to the U.S. from these countries were mistakenly thought to be of one monolithic culture, and they were often treated without regard to the vast cultural, linguistic, and religious differences among them.
One small school had so many Cambodian and Vietnamese students that they formed two opposing soccer teams! The administration began to understand the depth of the cultural differences after learning that these two teams refused to merge into one team. Finally, in those pre-internet days, teachers were able to educate themselves and their administrators about the cultural characteristics of each group and the school was able to understand and cope with the many issues that arise when children of political enemies are seated side by side in the classroom.

Eventually, the students grew to accept that they were now in a new land where the past conflicts did not carry as much weight as before, and the teams merged with the school’s soccer team. Many lasting cross-cultural friendships also developed. Often, with the passage of time and with the help of educated professionals, a bridge of understanding can be built between previous enemies. Certainly, it is the ESL teacher’s responsibility to take the lead in that process.

13. Get to know the major holidays that are not celebrated by the majority of students in your institution. Consider these holidays when planning your tests and classroom activities. Realize that they are significant times for your students, evoking strong emotions or memories, and that they may have obligations to meet or traditions to carry out during these times.

For example, Tet, or Vietnamese Lunar New Year, is a special occasion surrounded by ritual and tradition. It does not always fall on the same date; rather, it varies each year, arriving sometime in late January or early February. A novice American ESL teacher with many Vietnamese students in her classes began to notice a change in her students upon returning to school after the long Christmas break: they appeared depressed and lethargic. Although she did know that Tet was coming, she was not really informed about the holiday traditions associated with it. She mistakenly equated Tet to her own New Year, one simple day of partying with family and friends. She did not realize that in Viet Nam Tet was a holiday consisting of many days shopping and preparation, visiting and traveling, enjoying special meals with extended family members, and symbolic gift giving. These newly arrived students were not simply remembering a one-day party; they were longing to be involved in the same series of meaningful activities that had shaped their personal histories.

A culturally competent teacher will not only mark important dates on the calendar, he or she will get to know the customs and traditions associated with it. An excellent teacher will incorporate content about the holiday into class lessons, giving the students themselves opportunities to share their background with others.

14. Be mindful of the dietary restrictions of various religious groups.

Students of all kinds enjoy participating in school parties, cultural holidays, and special occasions. Awkward situations surrounding food and diet, particularly on special occasions and holidays, stifle interpersonal rapport among students and diminish their chances from learning from each other. It is a simple thing to find out the dietary restrictions of any cultural group or religion. In addition, it is the responsibility of any teacher who wishes to be culturally competent.

One young ESL teacher in the United States, for example, was unaware of the fact that she had scheduled her Halloween party during the month of Ramadan. Having lived in a predominantly Christian society all her life, she was only vaguely familiar with Muslim customs. Her Muslim English language learners, middle school students trying as best they could to fit into their new culture, never explained to her that they were not allowed to eat the cupcakes and candy that this well-meaning teacher had brought into school. They simply sat quietly while...
their classmates enjoyed the holiday party, their smiling but steadfast refusal to participate in fun activities dampening the joy for everyone. The result was a tangible divide between the Muslims and the non-Muslims in this young teacher’s class—a tension that might easily have been avoided with some pro-active research on her part.

15. Trust your instincts to guide you in your cross-cultural interactions. And remember: mistakes happen. Apologize when you make a mistake; forgive yourself and others when mistakes occur.

Like students, teachers also have an “affective filter” that can be used for learning. In the case of ESL teachers, it is a very important tool that you can use in connecting to your students. Allow your intuition to alert you to those issues that lack clarity or relevance in your own culture, but which you feel are relevant with your students. Effective teachers develop a “sixth sense” that transcends the constraints of language.

It is only natural to expect that all teachers will make plenty of mistakes navigating among the many different languages, cultures, and expectations that confront them in the classroom. When confronted with the fact that a mistake has been made, a sincere but professional apology does wonders to restore a relationship. Students easily forgive and forget a teacher’s mistake when it is understood that the teacher meant well. Then, teachers need to take their own advice and simply “turn the page.” Teachers are human beings engaged in an intimate learning journey with their students, and human beings make mistakes. ESL students understand that better than anyone.

Conclusion
Keeping a few practical guidelines in mind can help teachers negotiate the process of developing rapport with all ESL students by avoiding cross-cultural mistakes. A learning environment in which cultural differences are examined, explored and respected allows language to emerge in a safe and comfortable setting.

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References


From the ‘Folder’ Approach to the Model Approach: Students Managing Their Writing Errors

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Abstract:
This paper examines the process related to student management of writing errors. In this context, a teacher/professor and peers provide a student with written corrections to amend a paper or information to revise a paper. The paper is divided into four distinct parts: Part one, the introduction, explains the background of a problem that is being addressed, as well as the current assessment and outcomes that are anticipated pertaining to the research that will be conducted. Part two is The Current Method Approach. This method focuses on the current method being utilized and also includes a SWOT assessment of that model. Part three is the Future State Approach which previews a revised model approach and details how the transition to this approach could be made possible. There is also a brief review of other educational sector approaches included in this section for comparative analysis purposes. The Conclusion, part four, gives a summary of the key points and describes any knowledge that has been gained from the revised model approach. This approach can be used for all composition classes, secondary, ESL/EFL, as well as university.

Keywords: Writing/Composition, Learning and Teaching Methodology, New Learning and Teaching Models.
Introduction:
Composition teachers and professors provide comments for their students’ academic papers through reviews, editing, and revisions. During this process, it has been observed that many students enrolled in composition classes make repetitive errors and often create additional work for the teacher/professor, as well as themselves. The problem is largely based on the fact that students do not retain the essays that have been corrected in order to learn from their mistakes and gain important lessons from the corrective process. The current model used in essay correction involves process improvement and transformation. Most students now have access to relatively sophisticated computer technology and are quite capable of learning the details of various hardware and software applications in order to make a quicker transition through the correction process. An improvement on the current model would alleviate the burden of multiple corrections, while also assisting the student with ways to improve the process that would provide beneficial to every person involved in the correction process. This paper attempts to examine the current model and determine ways that this model may be improved upon for future state consideration. The improved model would relieve the burden of repeated corrections, while also educating the student on process improvements that would be of benefit to all involved in the correction cycle.

Literature Review:
There is a large literature base to explore this subject matter. Tice (2001) published a reflective paper with the goal of exploring the process of the classroom and focusing on the interaction between the student and teacher. It concentrates on the work environment from a teacher’s perspective, the teacher-student relationship while in this work environment and a diary of events that is actually recorded by a teacher. Because this paper is written from the front-end perspective of the teacher, it gives meaningful insight into the hardship most teachers face on a daily basis when attempting to undertake the manual revision process with students because of the detail involved. There was also a paper written describing the feedback process from Teacher to Student in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language. It provided a more in depth view about how students record and interpret the information obtained from instructor feedback (Williams, 2003). This paper could be considered a great tool in gathering information about students who struggle with writing in the beginning stages because the language is new to them; therefore, they will have many challenges and face several adaptations, all of which will be part of the revision process.

A strategy paper was published that focused more on the analysis component of the problem statement. The consideration is made towards the root cause analysis of writing issues, identification of the issues, and how students may begin making the appropriate corrections. The approach of this paper is from a strategic perspective (Intervention Central, 2011). An early assessment indicates that there are critical gaps in the current literature review. There are few texts or papers that deal directly with method or systems solutions for students to work specifically with recording and processing teacher comments. There are software solutions such as the use of OneNote by Microsoft Office Suite, but little has been done to address other issues relative to this problem (Intervention Central, 2011).

The Current Method Approach:
This approach is based upon the student maintaining a simple folder which is continuously updated with every instance of feedback that is given by either a teacher or peer.
The process works basically by having the teacher revise the paper in question or providing the student with feedback via comments about how to best proceed with corrections. The student then records this feedback directly on the folder. The folder is composed of drafts and revisions listed/written on the outside front and a list of ideas and subjects to write about on the inside of the front cover. It also contains a list of problematic areas for students concerning their papers on the inside of the back cover and a list of their various writing strengths on the outside of the back cover.

The student retains the folder at all times so it will provide an up-to-date record of events when needed. Once the paper in question is complete, the student can archive it for future reference but continue to use the folder in his/her composition class throughout the semester, as well as in future composition classes. A new folder is/can then be created for the use of subsequent papers. This manual method has proved to be sufficient for the students’ needs; however, with the innovations in technology there could be a much more streamlined process that would save time and increase the knowledge acquired by each student through the process of editing and revisions.

**SWOT on Current Model Approach:**

There are several strengths in the SWOT diagram. It is simple in its design and the concept is quite feasible to implement. There is a way to prevent loss of the papers because of the hard folder content. The current model approach has the capability to capture all of the data from teacher and peer-reviews; it also has the capability to archive the final product and makes it easier to create a new folder.

Weaknesses to the current model approach are present alongside the strengths, albeit in a downsized form. There is a reliance of manual processes and, thus an increased risk of error. Also, paper analyses must be performed manually. This does not facilitate the learning process. It follows more of a cyclical approach rather than an interactive approach and there is the potential for the loss of a folder with no back-up system.

The SWOT offers opportunities such as the introduction of improved technology and the creation of multiple record capabilities. Both of these opportunities would be significant to a student in regards to the potential for capturing information and having the ability to archive that information for months or years until the student has a need to access it at a later date. Also, the creation of additional writing capabilities and the ability to provide a set of aids for offering new writing styles on the desktop would provide the student with enhanced methods to add flair to his or her writing style and increase the vocabulary usage in the various writings. This would further help with the acquisition of student vocabulary. There is also a more interactive model with the current model system and a reduction in the reliance on manual operations. On the opposite spectrum, there are threats to the system such as extra costs involved in the implementation of a new system. Also, ensuring student access to laptops and computer workspaces can be threatening when considering the current model approach. Lastly, in order for this to be effective, there must be maintenance in the integrity of the system and this would be the student’s responsibility.
Building Business Process Improvement

In order to achieve the required system, there should be a three stage approach. Stage 1 examines the current model in place. Stage 2 builds the concept for the future state requirement of the model required. This leaves a gap analysis between that of the current to the future state (Stage 3) and is often referred to as the transition steps.

The Future State (Model) Approach:

The future state model is based upon automation of the current model and streamlining the processes in order to create a more efficient workflow. The concept is based on three different entry points, as based upon Microsoft Office software, in accordance with cost and level of complexity required. The process model, as illustrated below, eliminates much of the paper flow in favor of a more dynamic and interactive model concept.

In this model, the student would submit the paper to his/her teacher as an electronic document and the teacher would review the paper. The editing process would be performed by utilising the revision application located within Microsoft Word. This is operated from a Windows 7 environment and is supported by Microsoft Office software. The student would receive the corrected version of his document for capture and information storage.
The three types of database solutions that are feasible in this situation are offered below. They are listed with relative cost and need.

a. **Simplest Low Entry model**: This is essentially the use of the One Note application in the Microsoft Office Suite. The One Note application is capable of storing files and information such as text files (which would be an alternative to the Microsoft Office word processing files), graphics, and simple notes. The information is quite easily arranged by categorizing based on the type of information and may be personalized based on the student’s individualized preference.

b. **Medium Entry model**: This model would require the use of an access database, which comes as a standard feature with a professional version of Microsoft Office. The tables in this access database are cable of being structured to capture the information provided by the teacher such as comments, documents, and revisions. It may be filed and updated accordingly.

c. **Advanced User model**: This involves the use of a Microsoft add on called SharePoint and is more expensive than the basic Office version. A feature of this application is the ability to have a true relational database concept in real time environment where there is the ability to also interact with others as well. In this particular model, a student could theoretically perform any kind of manipulation with the information as long as he has access to the data. While this is a high-end system and not likely feasible for this particular project, it is important to note the versatility that today’s modern technology grants an individual as long as he or she understands how to utilize it.

In this model, the student is the administrator of the database and has the sole decision as to who is granted access to his documents. S/he is responsible for the maintenance of the database and keeping records updated in a timely fashion. The student is also responsible for the integrity of the database and ensuring that appropriate back-ups of the data are maintained at frequent intervals. There will be a certain amount of training required to ensure the student is capable of using this system, as applicable to the medium and advanced levels. The student will also have the ability to print his/her own reports that can either be hard copies or electronic copies of the data set required by the teacher. The system also supports a desktop environment, email and diary via Outlook, a database application for storage and retention of data, print facility, access and system control features, flexibility in the design and recording of information, archiving, and retrieval and storage of electronic data sets.

Advantages to this model are that it is an electronic solution and thus eliminates the need for paperwork unless so desired by the teacher. Also, the system is more secure with an increase in the amount of checks and balances to ensure the prevention of data loss. There is an interactive solution to ensure a faster turnaround time and a more streamlined approach to the editing process. It also optimises the time that a teacher or student requires to edit, review, or correct the information and complete the entire procedure. The various weaknesses in this model are that initial investment is required to buy the hardware and software, training is required to adequately train everyone on the operation, there could be a need for technical support in the initial setup process, and it requires a large commitment by the student for database maintenance.

**The Relational Database Concept:**

A relational model has three components: They consist of a collection of objects or relations, as well as the operators that have the ability to act on those objects or relations. The
third component consists of the data integrity methods and is important to the overall model’s implementation. A relational database management system (RDMS) may be defined as:

all data is stored in Relations which (to the user) are tables with rows and columns. Each table is composed of records (called Tuples) and each record is identified by a field (attribute) containing a unique value. Every table shares, at least, one field with another table in ‘one to one,’ ‘one to many,’ or ‘many to many’ relationships (Business Dictionary, 2010).

A network database is one where data elements are connected to one another through a series of links and this particular concept is best illustrated through an Entity Relationship (E-R) diagram. It describes the various relationships between the data. One is able to visualise, through the model, a complete representation of the networked data. Yet, another adaptation is the hierarchical concept. This is essentially a construct based upon a Parent-Child relationship model. This particular concept could be analogous to a department store as far as capabilities are concerned. For example, in a retail store setting, there may be a Furnishings Department. This may be split into three subordinate areas such as Home Furnishings, Office Furnishings, and Domestic Appliances. These, in turn, may have additional lines of responsibility; hence, one has a hierarchy of data being performed.

Managing the Transition:

The transition phase is nothing more than a conversion from a basic manual system to an updated electronic version of that same system with new features. The implementation steps may be followed in what is known as a ‘waterfall approach’ in the systems development lifecycle. The steps are explained below:

1. All system specification must be completed and agreed upon by the vested parties and stakeholders.
2. All training must be performed per standard requirements to ensure capable operators.
3. The development of a prototype must be successful to begin the testing phase of the project:
   a. All hardware and software needed for the transition process must be acquired through lease or purchase.
   b. All technical configuration steps must be completed to ensure the most seamless transition.
   c. Workflow routines must be established to ensure increased productivity.
   d. New or modified roles and responsibilities must be established and agreed upon before further implementation is undertaken.
   e. Testing of the entire system must be completed before a live run may be performed.
   f. A live run of the system must be performed to determine if there are errors or glitches in the system.
   g. Any errors detected must be handled before the transition to this system is completed and the system is completely put into place.
   h. The system is finally ready to ‘go live’.
4. Once the system is in an operational environment, the following three components must be periodically assessed to ensure continued success of the system.
   1. Technical support through Microsoft (for software components)
   2. Hardware Support (through hardware vendors)
3. Database Maintenance (this is the responsibility of the student)

**Examination of other Concepts in the Education Sector:**

Research indicates that most teachers are still hesitant about the incorporation of such a modern system because they are comfortable with the current process of editing and have little control over the students in terms of how they use, assimilate, or retain the feedback provided from the teacher and other peer reviewers. There seems to be some reluctance to facilitate change despite the fact that many students own and operate laptop computers. In this regard, there is a missed opportunity to further educate the students on the applied use of their computers and increase their technological awareness.

Some teachers are experimenting with student self-assessment programs and helping reduce the administrative burden in the review correction and editing process. This has certain advantages in terms of increasing the self-awareness of students and making them become more responsible for the overall quality of their work. Making this transition, however, can prove very difficult for the teachers as the rules have to be clearly set out and the parameters must be well defined. This changing role for the teacher can also become a problem in itself. There is the danger of being diverted to other educational tasks and becoming removed from an important part of the student’s educational process (Rolheiser, 2011).

Certain schools are increasing their collaboration with students in order to get the students more fully integrated into process of record keeping and general administration. This allows the student an opportunity to have a great amount of personal integration with the school computer network. In this role, the school takes over the administrative function of the database and the student is responsible for populating the information required. This is essentially a spin on the student centric model. The key is that the burden of responsibility for student record maintenance is placed upon the school administration system. While students would be expected to comply with the instructions provided, the control would be exercised by school system administrators. This may place an additional cost burden on schools that they cannot afford (Vecchioli, 1999).

When speaking about the subject of an Access database, one must consider several advantages to a team approach versus an individual approach. These advantages would be the ability to delegate one’s duties as they deem fit and to divide the various tasks into smaller areas to offer a more detailed approach. Another advantage is the ability to have expertise on the subject. This would be extremely beneficial for a large scale project in order to decrease the amount of time needed and increase the productivity to complete the project before the predetermined due date (Goedert, 2011).

When speaking in terms of database construction, the size of a team will have differences dependent on the size and complexity of the project that is currently being undertaken. If there is a large scale system being constructed, the team will consist of various functional specialists that will have the responsibility of covering the landscape and overlooking the supervision of the design and database development. Conversely, a small scale system will only require a small team of a few people. It has been found that the optimal team size for database and software development is between 3 and 5 people in order to provide the most accurate and timely results (Putnam, 2011).
Conclusion:
There is certainly a need to examine the process of marking student papers to assist busy teachers with the reviews and edits that must be made. Equally, this needs to be captured in a more efficient manner for the student to both assimilate the knowledge and make process improvement steps from the learning experience. In many regards, this is based upon improving the student – teacher interaction and relationship. The need for manually editing academic writings is equally an out-of-date concept, and teachers should be educating the students on gaining productivity from their laptop computers as opposed to that of social networking, word processing, and e-mailing. Hence, there exists an opportunity to not only streamline the work process, but also to educate the student on more advanced aspects of computer technology. This creates an equal opportunity for teachers to become more versed in computer hardware and software applications and make the productivity gains that benefit both the teacher and the school.

The system presented in this paper takes the concepts of a manual model and streamlines the business processes in order to make a more efficient computer interactive model using the concepts of relational data base technology. With the use of standard office applications such as Microsoft Office, it has been made easier for both the student and teacher in terms of automating what might otherwise be a complicated work process. Any system, however, requires both the discipline and commitment of those who choose to utilise its capabilities. In the student centric model, the student assumes the responsibility of maintaining and updating the database while retaining the referential data integrity. The key to any successful model is to properly train students and teachers in the same manner so that they will have the ability to understand every process and utilise the applications for the specific needs of the class. This will help improve overall writing skills, streamline the amount of productivity, and decrease the workload for teachers.

About the Author:
Dr. Ronnie Goodwin is an Assistant Professor in the English Language and Linguistics Department and is interim Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Science at Gulf University for Science & Technology (GUST). Dr. Goodwin specializes in teaching Business Writing, English Composition, and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to college-level, high school, and adult learners. He is experienced in teaching intensive English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. Dr. Goodwin’s research interests are in Writing/Composition, Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, ESL/EFL skill areas and Cross-cultural studies.

References


The Effect of "WhatsApp" Electronic Dialogue Journaling on Improving Writing Vocabulary Word Choice and Voice of EFL Undergraduate Saudi Students

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Abstract
Electronic journaling is a new tool for writing skill improvement. The current study attempts to determine whether WhatsApp electronic journaling as a new application in smart phones has a significant effect on writing vocabulary word choice and voice of undergraduate Saudi students. In this quantitative, quasi-experimental study, data are gathered using a pretest-posttest design using a sample of 30 EFL undergraduate female students in Languages and Translation College at Allmam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia. A rubric is used to score a writing sample from each student before and after treatment, and significance is measured using Kruskal-Wallis, Friedman, and the Wilcoxon tests. In this action research, Saudi undergraduate English students are required to post their reflective comments on different topics to their group which was created through WhatsApp. The students react well to the discussions through their dialogue journaling. They treat it as if it were play rather than class work; however, at the end of the experiment, the students know more about the writing processes of one another and their use of words is improved. This sense of enjoyment allows for the students to use WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling as a tool for learning. Results indicate a significant difference between the overall writing scores of the pretest and posttest of the students that journaled. In addition, examination of individual item scores reveals that there are statistically significant improvements in vocabulary word choice and voice as two critically important writing factors. The study can raise a positive social change by helping teachers understand the prospective benefits of WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling to improve the vocabulary word choice and voice writing skills of their students.

Keywords: WhatsApp, journaling, EFL Saudi students, improving, writing, voice, choice
Introduction

Writing is a complex activity, and as students enter the workforce, they will be asked to convey ideas and information in a clear manner. This increase in writing importance as well as the eventual writing skill development will allow the students to graduate with a skill that will benefit them for life (Alber-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007).

It is difficult to teach writing without using direct instruction (Walker, Shippen, Alberto, Houchins, & Cihak, 2005). Even with direct instruction, writing requires that students draw on many skills at the same time. The student must write, think and compose, all the while using proper grammar and spelling (Kieft, Rijlaarsdam, Galbraith, & van den Bergh, 2007). Some students are successful writers while others struggle with the written word (Penrod, 2007).

Journaling, using a pencil and paper, has been an approach used by teachers to allow students a place for reflection in order to improve their writing (Dyment & O’Connell, 2008). Many teachers use paper and pencil journaling in their classroom (Dunlap, 2006). This traditional journaling technique includes giving the students a topic and allowing 5 to 10 minutes to write on the topic.

As the Internet has grown, students have access to resources through email and other communications tools like social network sites and apps for smart phones (Fogg, 2010). With the commercial advent of the Internet and new generation of cell phones in the late 2000’s, technologies such as BBM BlackBerry Messages and WhatsApp messages have achieved increasing prevalence in societies. These types of messaging technologies are widely used among undergraduate students today (Lenhart, 2007).

What Is a Dialogue Journal?

A dialogue journal is a written conversation in which a student and teacher communicate on a regular basis. Students write as much as they choose and the teacher writes back responding to students' questions and comments, introducing new topics, or asking questions (Dunlap, 2006). The teacher is actively participating in the interchange, rather than an evaluator who corrects or comments on the student's writing. The first documented use of dialogue journals was with sixth grade students, both native and nonnative English speakers, in California (Peyton & Staton, 1993).

What is WhatsApp?

WhatsApp is an application available on the new generation of smart phones like IPhone, Android, Blackberry and Nokia mobile phones that allows users to send text messages to each other for free. Users are not charged for a text sent through WhatsApp. This is because WhatsApp sends messages through an internet data connection. WhatsApp supports many different message types, from simple text to pictures to audio files and videos.

Academic Effects of WhatsApp Messaging

While most educationalists recognize that WhatsApp messages are widely used by undergraduate students in Saudi Arabia, there seem to be two distinct opinions of its effect on student academics. There are those who see the use of so-called "Internet English" as a breakdown of the English language; some teachers see the creeping abbreviations as part of a continuing assault of technology on formal written English. Conversely, there are those who regard this same "Internet English" not only as an example of how language is constantly...
developing and changing, but also as a type of literacy in and of itself, which can be capitalized on to engage students in more traditional learning.

Some educators take electronic messaging usage as a more positive trend, and revel in how comfortable today's students are with writing, and how much easier it is for them to get words on a page (or, more often, screen). Barbara Bass, director of the Maryland Writing Project, points out "For a while, people were not writing anything. Now, people are actually seeing words on phone screens. And that's good" (Helderman, 2003). Linhart (2007) stated that instant messaging and e-mail are creating a new generation of teenage writers, accustomed to translating their every thought and feeling into words. They write more than any generation has since the days when telephone calls were rare.

Other educators even see the pervasiveness of the frequently-changing electronic messages terminology as an opportunity to teach students about language evolution. Erika Karres, a teacher educator, "shows students how English has evolved since Shakespeare's time" (Lee, 2002).

WhatsApp Messaging and Writing

One of the most interesting things about WhatsApp messaging and other popular technologies (text messaging, video games, etc.) is that they are potential learning tools. They can be bound by educationalists to help students learn school-related content, as is shown by teachers who "encourage students to use messaging shorthand to spark their thinking processes" (Lee, 2002).

With this said, students have trouble seeing the distinction between formal and informal writing, and consequently use informal message abbreviations in more formal writing situations (Brown-Owens, Eason, & Lader, 2003). However, this problem is not unsolvable; students can be taught both to understand what constitutes correct language, and also to know when different types of language are appropriate to use (Helderman, 2003.)

Joylyn Hannahs, an English teacher, told her students that "if they turned in papers written like mobile messages, their grades would suffer" (Helderman, 2003.) Her threat worked. Students no longer make those same mistakes, indicating that students can learn the appropriateness of language in different situations. Some educators believe that this type of language misuse is the fault of the students. Obviously there are cases where this is true, as well as cases where it is not. However, regardless of the situation, teachers can work to ensure that students develop a sense of audience when writing.

To tie the advantage of adapting literacy education to the reality that electronic messaging is the dominant mode of written communication in the lives of many undergraduate students, educationalists can incorporate writing and electronic journals as they may improve students’ writing skills (Raab, 2007). Teachers realize that when students are excited about their writing, they take more care with the final product (Rowen, 2005). New communicative applications such as WhatsApp should not be used just for the sake of wasting time and chatting. There has to be a goal that the teacher is trying to reach. It may help students in improving their writing products in a delightful way.

Problem Statement

Educators have started to notice the new technologies and explore their effects on student behavior and performance. While there is supporting evidence to suggest that these technologies have a large influence on the social development of adolescents, an even more pertinent issue for
classroom teachers is what effects these technologies have on the academic development of young people (Fogg, 2010). As the researcher is a university professor at one Saudi universities, she noticed that more and more undergraduate students are using smart phones and WhatsApp applications in their writings in Saudi Arabia. The researcher felt that there was a need for a study on the effects of WhatsApp electronic journaling on students’ writing achievement to find out if it would improve the writing skills of undergraduate students in Saudi Arabia. In this research, the researcher examined how EFL undergraduate Saudi students' use of WhatsApp technical applications in English dialogue journals improves their writing vocabulary, word choice and voice.

Literature Review

This review of literature begins with a short history of writing and journaling, and their impact on the writing process. It will continue with the review of the theoretical framework of Siemens’s (2005) connectivism and research on electronic journaling as a tool that may help students become better writers.

Journaling has been used in different formats since the Greek and Roman rhetorical education (Autrey, 1987). Rohman (1965) published and recommended journaling as a tool for the prewriting process. Rohman found that students found the journal the most useful of any tools that were allowed. He gave the students the choice of keeping a journal, practicing mediation, or composing an analogy. Journaling was viewed as successful because the students were pleased that the journal helped them to develop voice.

Before the advent of computers and typewriters, handwriting was the only way to communicate with the written word. The options are different now than when writing was first taught. Both journaling and sending messages through emails or mobile devices are used to communicate with the written word. As people become skilled at word processing, handwriting is devolving out of the picture. The use of computers is slowly replacing writing as the main mode of communications (Ardilla, 2004). Online bulletin boards and chat rooms, email, text messages, and chatting apps are all means of composing and communicating written messages while on a computer and smart phone rather than using pencil and paper. This allows people to compose and also to participate as an audience.

Yancey (2009) stated that the 21st century will be known as a new era in writing where people who compose are not necessarily taught through formal instruction, but rather they will use a process called co-apprenticeship in which the students write authentic texts and are evaluated by peers rather than instructors. This is the essence of WhatsApp electronic journaling. According to the Lenhart report on the Internet and Teens (2007), teenagers appreciate the ability to revise and edit more easily on a computer and a smart phone than with paper and pencil, but they see no correlation between using a computer or a smart phone and the quality of their composition writing. This is the concern of the educators who are encouraging the use of technology in their students' learning. It is essential to care about quality as well as quantity in the written pieces.

According to Solomon and Schrum (2007), smart phones allow for a dialogue between reader and writer. They also encourage a community to be built between the readers and the writer. WhatsApp journaling is a way to communicate to an authentic audience. Furthermore, as students are journaling, they learn from writing about issues as well as from the people who respond to their messages. WhatsApp provides a fresh insight that will help to foster knowledge and information sharing.
Dearstyne (2011) indicated that smartphone applications can spark creativity as they appeal to the next generation. In addition, WhatsApp can be useful for communicating. It is a community building tool for students who might be physically isolated for some other reason.

Yancey (2009) suggested the study of writing needs to be restored in three steps. First, teachers should use newer technologies to increase writing skills. The second step is to design a new model for a writing curriculum. The last step includes creating new models for teaching that allow the students to communicate using all available technologies both inside and outside the traditional classroom. This is the essence of teaching development either in writing or other language skills. Lenhart (2007) proposed that journaling is a culminating activity after reading or making a decision about any topic. He said that the process reflects lifelong learning and that electronic journaling reflects the way that people who are not in school learn.

Ramaswami (2009) conducted a study to see if electronic journaling could improve writing skills as a result of writing more frequently. Using five teachers, the study looked at technology and its effect on student achievement. The students used the electronic journal while working to elaborate the arguments for the paper. The results showed that the students who used electronic journaling felt better about their writing and 74% of the students believed that journaling helped them to articulate their ideas better.

Working with community college students and faculty, Glass and Spiegelman (2010) created a phone course group that allowed the students to converse via telephone with one another as well as the instructors. The course group that they established allowed the students to become experts in one aspect of the course. The group was used at one point to generate a spontaneous discussion. Using the phone group allowed the students a place to communicate with each other in a place other than the classroom. After observing the students for an entire year it was found that students preferred the phone course group to individual discussions mostly because of the communications aspect of the course group. The researchers found that the phone course group allowed the students to be more actively involved in the learning process.

In a case study, Siemens (2009) found that students who were journaling in English felt more confident using the language in writing. Using a pilot study approach, the 16 students enrolled in intermediate college-level English participated in two different electronic journals, a personal one, and a community one. The community journal was led by the instructor for 3 weeks and then the students took turns leading the discussion. Data from this survey confirmed the writers find communicating through cyberspace more motivating than traditional writing with paper and a pencil. The number of words that the students wrote was higher than what was required of them. The students commented that the stress was less when writing in an electronic journal than in a traditional writing assignment.

In an English classroom, Kajder and Bull (2004), worked with a teacher who decided to use electronic journaling in her classroom as a personal journal for students. Students wrote more in the electronic journal than they wrote when they used a paper and pencil journal. They enjoyed the speed and ease of typing.

**Theoretical Base**

Siemens (2006) is the author of a learning theory called connectivism. According to Siemens, when students use digital tools to connect, students are able to “reflect on dialogue about, and internalize content in order to learn.” This connection helped students develop the ability to create new knowledge at any point in time. Technology allowed for students to connect
to each other. On the other hand, journals were not used for connecting in the same pattern although Siemens did highlight the ability to organize knowledge as a characteristic of connectivism. Using a journal to reflect, internalize, and process knowledge allowed the student to progress to the personalization stage in the Knowledge Flow Cycle (Siemens, 2006). Journaling, as a method of writing, allowed different means of connecting which allowed the students to collaborate and learn from each other. Learning and knowledge are related to the connections between people with digital resources (Siemens, 2009).

Connectivism is the theory that acknowledges that learning is no longer an individual activity, but rather a process that allows for students to flourish in the digital era (Siemens, 2005). Siemens (2009) also offers that the capacity to connect to others and form networks will become more important as the influx of information continues to increase.

Methodology

This study was conducted in the Translation and Languages College in a female branch of an Islamic University with a population of more than 2000 students in the capital city of Saudi Arabia. English undergraduate students are studying writing skills in the eight levels of their study at university. They started at a basic writing level and proceed to writing a research paper. The Faculty uses high quality writing textbooks from Oxford University Press (Oshima, Alice et al., Writing Academic English 4th ed. Longman, 2006). At the time of the study, there were twenty English Ph.D and MA holders comprising the faculty who taught writing skills in the college. Students were divided into ten different writing sections with each class having approximately 30 students each.

In this quantitative, quasi-experimental study, one English writing class (level five) was chosen randomly to electronically journal daily for a six-week period of time for a total of 30 entries using the WhatsApp application. The researcher did not give any feedback on the journaling. The study was quantitative because the scores of the students on the rubric that was used to score their writing were compared. It was quasi-experimental because a computer assigned the students, but they are all English undergraduate students, so placement was not entirely random. Pretest and posttest measures of scores on writing topics were collected and assessed by two English teachers that do not teach these undergraduate English students, using a rubric developed by Read Write Think and the National Council of Teachers of English. A writing topic was assigned to the students on the first day of the study. This topic was scored using the rubric. At the end of six weeks, the students wrote again using another writing topic (See appendix A) and it was scored using the same rubric by the same two teachers. The rubric contained the categories organization, content vocabulary/word choice, voice, sentence fluency, and conventions (mechanics). The researcher modified it to measure the vocabulary word choice and voice only(See appendix B). The scores of the two evaluators were used as a benchmark for the final writing assessment. Additionally, each section of the rubric was scored separately so that the researcher could determine if any of the writing skills had improved. The scores and the data from the rubric allowed the researcher to determine whether or not the scores had improved since the students began WhatsApp journaling using a Wilcoxon test and a Friedman’s test comparing mean ranks.

Since the study included groups that were nonequivalent, the use of a pretest and a posttest made the quasi-experimental approach valid. Using both a beginning test and an ending test allowed the researcher to look at the difference in scores based on each individual (Gribbons & Herman, 1997).
**Instrumentation and Materials**

Two writing tests were used in the study: a pretest and a posttest. They were designed by the researcher. The rubric that was used and modified was developed by the National Council of the Teachers of English. The students who were journaling used the WhatsApp application which was downloaded for free to their smart phones.

**Reliability and Validity**

Since two teachers assessed the writing prompts, a Pearson Correlation coefficient testing for inter-rater reliability was used to assess the consistency of the scores of the two assessors.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

On the first day of the study, the students spent 45 minutes responding to a writing prompt. The researcher coded the papers based on which class they were in. This group of papers was given to two teachers to score using the rubric. During each school day thereafter for six weeks, the students journaled using WhatsApp to respond to a daily prompt. No feedback was provided on the journals until after the study was complete. On the final day of the study, the students spent 45 minutes to respond to a second writing prompt.

The research question was scored using a writing rubric that has six different scale criteria including: does not meet that receives a score of 1, partially meets that receives a score of 2, does not fully meet that receives a score of 3, meets that receives a score of 4, more than meets that receives a score of 5, and exceeds that receives a score of 6. These scores were added so that there was a potential total score of 36 on the rubric. These scores were analyzed using a Kruskal Wallis test. The two different categories scored on the rubric were compared using a Friedman’s analysis of mean ranks and a Wilcoxon test on vocabulary word choice and voice. Each of these skills was given a score of 1 to 6 depending on how well the students performed on each one.

**Research Question**

The current research attempted to answer the following question: For students that use WhatsApp electronic journaling, is there a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on the development of two specific writing skills: vocabulary word choice and voice? To answer this question, a Friedman’s test of mean ranks and a Wilcoxon nonparametric test on the posttest scores were computed using SPSS, v. 13. In addition, the mean scores of the rubric were compared.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study was to discover the effect of WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling on writing development in order to determine whether this activity should be recommended to English language instructors and learners as an activity that improves writing skills as marked in a rubric specifically scoring for vocabulary word choice and voice.

**Operational Definitions**

Journaling: The act of a written conversation in which a student and teacher communicate regularly (daily, weekly, etc., depending on the educational setting) over a semester, school year, or course (Cisero, 2006).

Reflection: The act of thinking about a concept to better understand that concept (Dunlap, 2006).

Writing prompt: A specific topic assigned for students to write about (Pike-Baky, 2005).

WhatsApp: A proprietary, cross-platform instant messaging application for smart phones. In addition to text messaging, users can send each other images, video, and audio media messages.
The client software is available for: Android; BlackBerry OS, iOS; Series 40, Symbian (S60); and, Windows Phone.
Web 2.0: A term referring to a group of applications that can be used by accessing the Internet and allowing the user to read content as well as produce or reply to the content.

Assumptions
It is assumed that the writing English teachers followed the curriculum laid out by the English department. It is also assumed that the students were able to write a five paragraph persuasive essay at the time of the study. It is assumed that the classes had access to smart mobile phones to update their journals via the WhatsApp application.

Limitations
The limitations of the study include the selection of the writing prompt topics, since some topics were easier for students to write about. There were only two writing prompts with only six weeks of journaling between them. Another limitation was that the study was conducted with only one section of 30 female students as an experimental group with no control group. An additional boundary was the running of the study in the second semester of 2013 in one university in Saudi Arabia with undergraduate female students.

Significance of the Study
This study brings to light the use of smart mobile phones and applications on these phones such as WhatsApp for tasks like journaling and their effect on writing skills development in an educational setting. The study looks specifically at female Saudi undergraduate English students. It also looks at writing skills as evidenced by a modified rubric including vocabulary word choice and voice. This is significant because it informs teachers about the use of these tools in education. Teachers have long been using journaling as a tool in writing skill development (Dunlap, 2006). With the addition of the new technical generation of smart mobile phones, teachers need to be informed about the possible uses of these tools in the classroom. If it is found that journaling has a positive effect on the development of particular writing skills, then the addition of this activity will help students to improve their writing abilities.

This study may have an effect on social change by helping university EFL instructors increase the writing skills of their students. Even more, university instructors need to know if certain writing skills can be enhanced by using WhatsApp electronic journals for undergraduate students.

Results
The purpose of this study was to discover the effect of WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling on writing development as marked in a rubric specifically scoring vocabulary word choice and voice.
Thirty students were given a pretest writing assessment and then were given writing prompts every day for six weeks for a total of 30 prompts. At the end of the six-week period, the students were given a posttest writing assessment. The pre-test and post-test topics are similar in terms of level of difficulty and interest. These two writing assessments were coded and then scored by assessors.
A pretest posttest design was chosen because it gave a beginning score for each student and a score after the treatment was completed so that these scores were analyzed. The students responded to a writing prompt by writing an essay that was considered a pretest. After 6 weeks of WhatsApp journaling, the students responded again to a second writing prompt that was considered the posttest. Each assessor was asked to score essays that were not a part of the study in order to check for interrater reliability. Cronbach’s Alpha, based on standardized items, allowed for a reliability score of .89. According to Santos (1999), a figure of .70 or above is considered reliable. Therefore, the scorers were deemed reliable.

In regards to the research question, the Friedman test revealed that the mean of the vocabulary choice section reached 2.59 in the journalers’ group. The Wilcoxon test revealed that voice improved significantly (p = .030). This improvement could signal teachers to allow those students who are having a problem with vocabulary word choice and/or voice in their writing to use WhatsApp journaling. The results signify that writing in a journal for an extended period of time may foster growth in these writing skills.

The study reveals that WhatsApp electronic journaling shows a significant improvement of writing skills, especially concerning the voice and vocabulary word choice.

**Discussion**

When looking at the treatment of WhatsApp electronic journaling, the mean ranks of the posttest scores show journalers to have a higher mean score than the pretest. This indicated that WhatsApp electronic journaling showed significant improvement towards writing, suggesting the task would be a good option to improve writing scores. Since only 22% of undergraduate university students write at or above the proficient level (Magrath, 2003), the results of this study are important to helping university English instructors find methods to assist students in improving writing skills that are needed later on in life. This would indicate that teachers need to use any means available to develop this skill. Since journaling is a viable method, teachers should use this method to help improve writing skills that will help the students as they get a job.

Since WhatsApp electronic journaling is an online activity and there is a possibility of a public audience in the group, it was proposed by the connectivism theory that the students may be concerned with the possibility of people being able to view their finished product (Seimens, 2006) and consequently might write more productively for an audience. Journaling was a factor in improving writing scores in a research study conducted by Ramaswami (2009). In addition, a class electronic journal in a college classroom was a factor in allowing students to communicate to each other outside of the normal classroom (Glass & Spiegelman, 2008).

Kajder and Bull (2004) researched an undergraduate class and found that students wrote more when they were using a computer for their electronic journaling instead of a paper and pencil journal. The sample group used the WhatsApp electronic journaling to write responses in this study showed a significant improvement in their writing skills.

Journaling has been considered to be a tried and true method for helping students to develop their voice (Rohman, 1965). Hubbs and Brand (2005) found that students moved toward a level of contemplation with journaling. This was reliable with the results of this study since voice was one of the two writing traits that showed significant improvement for journalers. To sum up, this research allows the university EFL instructor of writing to understand the implications of using WhatsApp electronic journals as a tool to teach writing. In addition, the research revealed that voice and vocabulary word choice can be improved with the addition of WhatsApp electronic journaling.
Teachers should know that this method can help students to develop writing skills. In addition, if a teacher is trying to encourage students to develop their own voice or improve their word choice in their writing, this study models an effective method.

Conclusion

Journaling has been a tool that has been used to teach writing. WhatsAapp electronic journaling is a newer tool, but nonetheless it is a valuable tool for teachers to use with their students. This study provides data showing that student’s writing skills can be improved with WhatsApp electronic journaling in a relatively short period of time. It is possible that university EFL instructors will consider having all students keep an electronic journal. Using this method allows university EFL instructors to make use of current technology as well as century-old methods to help their students develop writing skills.

Using WhatsApp electronic journaling will allow university EFL instructors to add writing to their subject matter across the curriculum while helping their students to improve their writing skills at the same time. Electronic journaling is a tool that significantly helps students develop their voice and improve the vocabulary word choice in their writing. Instructors could spot students that need work in improving the specific skills of voice and vocabulary word choice and incorporate electronic dialogue journaling into an individualized assignment for them to help improve those skills.

Recommendations

In light of the results of this study, university EFL instructors need to be aware that WhatsApp electronic dialogue journaling methodology could be an effective method of helping their students to improve their writing scores. English language instructors in Saudi Arabia need to be made aware of the implications of this study because it will give them options in teaching their students to write.

Moreover, as this was a short term study, there is a need for a longitudinal study looking at the development of writing skills over a longer period of time, following students for at least one year but possibly four years, while they complete undergraduate level coursework.

About The Author

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References


The Effect of "WhatsApp" Electronic Dialogue Journaling

2013 from the World Wide Web:
http://www.usca.edu/medtech/courses/et780/may03/groupprojects/cmc-im.html


Appendix A:
Prompts Used in Research

-1st Writing Prompt
Some universities have computer labs where an entire class can use the computers and other computers have one or two computers in every lecture hall. Which method do you think is the best way to utilize the technology? Write a five-paragraph essay where you support one side of this argument or the other with supporting evidence.

- Journal about:
  1- What is your favorite weather? Why?
  2- If you could change one thing about the weather in Saudi Arabia, what would it be? Why?
  3- Who is the kindest person you know? Why do you think so? Give an example of this person’s kindness.
  4- In your experience, are grownups happy or unhappy about their jobs?
  5- What do you consider a good job? What are the duties? The salary? The hours?
  6- Some jobs are high stress. Name one high stress job and explain why you think it is high stress?
  7- You are on a desert island and you can have your choice of two books. What two books are you going to choose and why?
  8- You are still on the desert island and you can choose 10 articles of clothing to go with you. What do you choose and why?
  9- What is the nicest thing that someone has ever done for you at school?
10- What is the most miserable day that you ever had in school? What made it so Miserable?
11- Describe the best teacher that you have ever had? What made him/her so good at his/her job?
12- Is a lie always bad? Can you think of a time when a lie would be permissible?
13- What was the toughest decision that you have ever had to make? Why?
14- If you could change one thing about you or your life, what would you change? Why?
15- What was the best dream that you ever had? Why?
16- If you could travel to anywhere, where would you go and why?
17- You are allowed to make the classroom rules. What is your first rule? Why?
18- You are allowed to create two extracurricular school activities? What would the activities be?
How many people need to participate for it to be called a success?

2nd Writing Prompt
Many parents give children a weekly allowance regardless of their behavior because they think it teaches financial responsibility. Other parents only give their children an allowance as a reward for completing chores or when they have behaved properly. Explain which one of them you think is best and why? Write a five-paragraph essay where you support one side of this argument or the other with supporting evidence.

Note: These writing prompts are adapted from: Anderson.D.(2010).The Effect of Electronic Journaling on Writing Skills Development on High School Freshmen Disaggregated by Groups. Published Dissertation at University of Tennesse at Martin

Appendix B
Writing Rubric
Word Choice and Author's Voice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Does not meet</th>
<th>2 Partially Meets</th>
<th>3 Does Not Fully Meet</th>
<th>4 Meets</th>
<th>5 More Than Meets</th>
<th>6 Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary/Word Choice</td>
<td>Careless or inaccurate word choice, which obscures meaning.</td>
<td>Language is trite, vague or flat</td>
<td>Shows some use of varied word choice</td>
<td>Uses a variety of word choice to make writing interesting</td>
<td>Purposeful use of word choice</td>
<td>Effective and engaging use of word choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author's Voice</td>
<td>Writer's voice/point of view shows no sense of audience</td>
<td>Writer's voice/point of view shows little sense of audience</td>
<td>Writer's voice/point of view shows that sense of audience is vague</td>
<td>Writer uses voice/point of view. Writes with the understanding of a specific audience</td>
<td>Writer has strong voice/point of view. Writing engages the audience.</td>
<td>Writes with a distinct, unique voice/point of view. Writing is skillfully adapted to the audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The Original Writing Rubric is available at:
Oral Communication Problems Encountering English Major Students: Perspectives of Learners and Teachers in Palestinian EFL University Context

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Abstract
The present study investigates Palestinian English major students’ problems in oral communication. To that end, qualitative analysis is manipulated to explore such potential problems from learners and teachers’ perspectives. Levelt’s (1989) L1 speech production model and De Bot’s (1992) L2 speech production models are used as a theoretical framework for the study. Participants were 20 students and 6 senior teachers from a large Palestinian university in Gaza. Analyzing data from participants’ interviews, the study unveiled that students’ incorrect pronunciation, limited vocabulary, lack of exposure to the target language, and L1 interference were amongst the main oral communication problems. The study also revealed that students had not developed the habit of extensive listening and reading. Further, the students were unable to organize their ideas and meanings in a coherent way, and they seemed to lack self-confidence. The pedagogical implications of the study are of significant value to EFL university teachers who are interested in developing learners’ oral communication skills.

Keywords: exposure to the target language, L1 interference, oral communication problems, self-confidence, speech production models
Introduction

Globalization has promoted English to a world-leading-medium of communication. Many scholars have accentuated the importance of communicating in English effectively and appropriately, particularly with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) are often preoccupied with developing their oral communication, which is direly needed to improving their academic performance, professional development, personal and social effectiveness (Lafford, 2004, Richards & Renandya, 2002).

In this study, oral communication refers to students’ ability to speak English fluently and effectively. Nunan (1991) argues that a success in language learning is measured in terms of learners’ ability to carry out a conversation with interlocutors in the target language. Nonetheless, speaking seems to be a challenging skill to develop (Fulcher, 2003, Jamshidnejad, 2010, 2011; Levelt, 1989; Ya-ni, 2007) in foreign language context, despite the many years of language instruction and use of various teaching methodologies and approaches. Communicating in a foreign language can be a highly complex multi-faceted skill (khan, 2010). This study investigates Palestinian English major students’ problems in developing oral communication in order to highlight the complexities and challenges involved in this skill from teachers and learners’ perspectives.

Literature Review

Speaking can be perceived as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information (Burns & Joyce, 1997; Lindsay & Knight, 2006; Richards & Renandya, 2002). Although the desirable goal of learning a foreign language is to communicate effectively in that language, scholars have observed that EFL learners have formidable challenges in communicating in English. Numerous researchers have investigated the complexity of oral communication in second language (L2) (see Skehan, 1998; Bygate, 1998, 2001; Ellis, 2003; McCarthy, 1998). House (2003) maintains that scholars studied oral communication problems employing two different approaches: the linguistic approach and the interactional approach. On the one hand, the linguistic approach comprises language-based problems, in which the linguistic differences play key role. The interactional approach, on the other hand, refers essentially to the social factors such as socio-cultural differences (as cited in Jamshidnejad, 2010).

A number of previous empirical studies examined English as a second language (ESL) university students’ oral communication problems while studying in English speaking countries (Ferris, 1998; Kim, 2006). Ferris (1998), for example, investigated the perception of ESL international students about their listening and speaking problem at three American tertiary institutions, and revealed that the students faced challenges in oral presentations and whole class discussions. Apparently, the inability to communicate one’s emotions and ideas can lead, in some cases, to a feeling of frustration and apprehension (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

However, EFL learners in departments of English in the Arab world face oral communication problems due to various reasons. Rababah (2005) points out that English language departments admit high-school-student graduates without taking into consideration their level of language proficiency and ability to continue in a program of English studies. In crowded classes, teachers naturally may not be able to pay close attention to every individual student and create adequate opportunities for language use and interaction.
Further, Rababah (2005) argues that lack of enough exposure to the target language can be one of the problems facing Arab learners of English; hence, the teaching context may not be conducive to developing oral communication skills, and learners face challenges in their speaking output. To the best of my knowledge, there is scarcity in literature that examines Palestinian English major students’ oral communication problems in university context. The present study bridges the gap in literature through exploring Palestinian English major students’ problems in developing oral communication in order to highlight these complexities and challenges from learners’ and teachers’ perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

Many researchers have argued that speaking should be seen and investigated as an independent skill (Levelt, 1989; De Bot, 1992; Bygate, 2001; Kormos, 2006). It has also been considered as a highly demanding and complex cognitive skill that involves different competences and mechanisms (Levelt & Roelofs & Meyer, 2000). Rested on a solid empirical basis, Levelt’s (1989) model of speech production of L1 seems to be an effective example in the field psycholinguistics. The latest version of Levelt et al. model (1999) emphasizes five main processing components: conceptual preparation, grammatical encoding, morpho-phonological encoding, phonetic encoding and articulation. It also assumes three stores: mental lexicon, syllabary and knowledge of the internal and external world.

Levelt (1989) places the lexicon at the heart of his model of L1 speech production. To him, a lexical item has two levels of representation: the lemma (contains semantic and syntactic information) and the form (contains morphological and phonological information). According to Bei (2013) the conceptualizer controls macro-planning stage, which provides general knowledge and discourse knowledge as input for the formulator in the next stage. The formulator combines the vocabulary, grammar and syllabary to generate phonological plan, which is used in the final stage, i.e. the articulator, for actual speech production. Further, Schueze (2002) explains that a speaker conceptualizes the content of a message, puts it into a preverbal speech plan, and then encodes the message by exchanging information between lemmas and forms. The message is finally articulated and checked for comprehension (ibid).

However, in second language acquisition (SLA), scholars (see De Bot, 1992, Poulisse & Bongaerts, 1994; Payne & Whitney, 2002) have emphasized the complexity of speaking performance and highlighted learners’ incomplete knowledge of the L2 (Figueiredo & Mota, 2009). Several models of speech production have been presented (see De Bot, 1992; Levelt, 1989) to illuminate the interdependencies and complexities of peoples’ speech production. These models basically assume four distinctive levels of knowledge: semantic, syntactic, morphological, and phonological.

De Bot (1992) was the first to apply Levelt’s model for speech production in L2. He essentially adapts it to the lemma level as well as to the word form. Bei (2013) argues that the conceptualizer supervises the whole course of speaking for appropriacy of the content and accuracy of the language and pronunciation. Although L2 speech production shares many of characteristics of L1 speech, there are some significant differences (Poulisse, 1990). First, learners’ knowledge of L2 is not as adequate as that of L1; therefore, learners use strategies to compensate for the limitations of linguistic and lexical knowledge as well as grammatical structures. Second, the degree of automatic information processing seems to be lower in L2 speakers, so learners may appear less fluent and have to pay more attention to grammatical and phonological encoding phases (ibid). L2 speech production studies have also shown a
compelling evidence of a higher level of hesitation phenomena, e.g. repetition, correction, filled pauses, slips of tongue (Lennon, 1990). Third, L1 traces exist in L2 speech, which may lead to accidental code switching at the phonological, lexical, syntactic and pragmatic levels (Khan, 2010).

All these differences are obviously manifested in L2 compared to L1 speech, and therefore any model of L2 speech production has to deal with these differences. Kahn (2010) maintains that in L2 speech production, speakers’ knowledge of the L2 seems to be incomplete and speech processing involves more complicated steps; moreover, L1 is still active and may impact L2 speech production. These factors can elucidate learners’ struggle to conceptualize, formulate, and articulate messages in L2. Consequently, L2 speakers’ communication output seems to be more problematic (Khan, 2010). This study explores predominantly Palestinian English major students’ problems in developing oral communication in order to highlight the complexities and challenges involved in this skill from students and teachers’ perspectives.

Research Question
This study attempted to answer the following general question:
How do Palestinian English major students and teachers perceive oral communication problems?

Methodology
The study employed qualitative content analysis method to analyze data gathered from semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1). A semi-structured interview is flexible, allowing new questions to be generated during the interview; meanwhile, a researcher tailors a set of questions and a framework of themes to be explored (Lindlof & Tyor, 2002). This method allows the study to generate understanding of this real-world setting and interpret participants’ perception of their own linguistic, social, and individual problems in L2 oral communication. Although this qualitative study depended mainly on teachers and students’ interviews as a main source of data, it maintained different reliable features of rigorous qualitative research such as quality, credibility, trustworthiness, and neutrality (Davies & Dodd, 2002). All the interviews were about participants’ experience of oral communication problems; however, teachers’ interviews manifested their experience of students’ problems in L2 oral communication. The interviews were carried out in English, audio-recorded, and then transcribed. To protect the identity of participants, all the names used in this research are pseudonyms.

Participants
Participants in this study were 20 English major students and 6 senior teachers from an English department in a large Palestinian university. The students group comprised 13 female and 7 male students enrolled in different courses in spring semester of 2013. The teachers selected for this study have taught oral communication, or relevant courses. The study chose students and teachers who were interested in the research and accepted to take part. To gain an in-depth familiarity with students’ problems in oral communication, the study interviewed the students as well as teachers once, or twice in some cases. All the names used in this research are pseudonyms.

Generating categories and themes
The study started with some preliminary categories to focus data gathering, coding, grouping, and analysis. These categories depended mainly on certain codes (words, phrases, and expressions) derived from the theoretical framework constructs, research question, and problem
areas. After gaining deep familiarity with the data though finding relationships and classifications, themes started to emerge from the different categories. Those themes were expressed overtly by the participants themselves, and the study discovered them through inductive and interpretive analysis of the participants’ semi-structured interviews.

**Searching for alternative understanding/perception**

To search for other possible explanations and sound interpretations, the study asked participants, a critical friend, and community of practice whether they agreed with the study interpretations or had different understandings. The researcher’s critical friend and community of practice played significant roles at different phases and helped in identifying the blind spots and suggesting various ways of seeing the data. The analyses conducted in this study are by all means exploratory. It is hoped that the research results can help Palestinian educators as well as teachers of English in general to better understand the problems and challenges that face Palestinian English major students in developing oral communication.

**Results and Interpretations**

**Research Question:** How do Palestinian English major students and teachers perceive oral communication problems?

Through analyzing students and teachers’ interviews, the following themes emerged:

1. **Linguistic Problems**

   a. **Pronunciation constitutes an obstacle in students’ fluent oral communication**

   Both groups of interviewees believed that pronunciation impacts learners’ speaking ability and has a strong correlation with the lack of self-confidence. Mohammad, a senior teacher, illuminated that students’ perception of ‘self’ and incorrect pronunciation can impact their participation in class discussion and interaction:

   Many students do not participate or speak because they think that their English is not correct English. In terms of pronunciation, they do not know how to use stress and intonation patterns or pronounce certain words, so they keep silent. They do not want to speak or interact. Hamza, another teacher, thought that students encounter different types of pronunciation problems including consonant clusters, vowels, and supra segmental phonemes:

   Students face problems in pronouncing clear articulation of consonants and vowels, e.g., consonant clusters, rhythm, stress, and intonation. These have to do with typical phonological problems that EFL students generally have.

   Ahmad, a freshman student, looked up to American native speakers, and he was deeply frustrated because he could not speak English as fluent as native speakers:

   The major problem I am facing is, I think, I am always speaking wrong. American people or British people do not use the same expressions as I do. I decide not to speak because they speak something else. I look up to Americans and I cannot be like them, and it’s frustrating.

   Similarly, Heba, another freshman student stated, “I don’t know the right pronunciation for all words, and that makes me upset because I feel that I am not a good speaker”. As can be seen, pronunciation is seen as an obstacle that can hinder learners’ fluency. Students believed that a good speaker should be as fast/ fluent as a native speaker. This resonates with Jamshidnejad (2011) participants’ perception of ideal speaker:

   It is therefore reasonable to assume that these qualities will feature as part of the participants’ own self-image. L2 users who choose ‘to be perfect’ as their image of ‘ideal speaker’ would like ‘to speak flawlessly, with no grammatical or pronunciation errors, and as easily as a native speaker (p.11).
Additionally, Gilbert (2009) maintains that in many cases EFL students may not have the self-confidence to speak in class because they do not know how to pronounce a certain word appropriately. Further, they may be worried to be an object to their peers or teachers’ evaluation and criticism.

b. Students lack adequate exposure to English inside the classroom

Unlike teachers who stressed the need to develop students’ own language input and learning strategies, several students complained that classes were crowded, and they needed more practice in class. Amjad, a senior student, pointed out that he had always needed a conversation partner to practice the language communicatively: The problem is that you do not have the interlocutor, the one to communicate with. The students are not given adequate space to speak. It’s either a question you have to answer, or a short discussion, and it may take just five minutes, that’s all. Even if you want to talk to students after class, they do not take it seriously.

Likewise, Alaa’, a sophomore student, thought that classes were so crowded and few students participated in class discussions and activities: Class time can be good if we have thirty girls or forty, but not eighty-five. There are some students who dominate the class and answer all questions, other students are shy. But those who dominate the class are so fast and fluent, and when we compare ourselves with them, we prefer not to speak.

Although some students complained about crowded classes and inadequate class practice, others were more aware of learners’ responsibility towards their own learning and self development. Said, a junior student maintained that students should shoulder responsibility towards their own learning:

But the thing is that it’s all on the student… think of the class as the only learning source, this is one tiny bit of English that he can get one section. You can go home and just keep listening and practicing, it’s all on students.

Even though some students indicated that their classes did not have adequate speaking practices and interaction, others advocated developing learners’ autonomy and effective learning strategies. The following section highlights teachers’ perspective about learners’ exposure to foreign language inside classroom.

c. Students have not developed the habit of extensive listening, speaking, and reading

On the other hand, several teachers articulated similar ideas regarding students’ responsibility towards exploring various ways to enhance their own oral communication proficiency. For example, Naser, a senior teacher, suggested that students can develop their oral communication through extensive listening and extensive reading. Additionally, he encouraged students to use technology and the wealth of sources available on the Internet: The major problem is the problem of extensive listening or extensive reading, if you like. Our students rarely listen to English; they live in an Arab speaking community, and all the time they speak Arabic, think in Arabic and laugh in Arabic. In terms of listening, if they like listening to news, youtube, clips, you know, this will enrich their information and background on how to manipulate the language.

Similarly, another teacher pointed out that students should be aware of the fact that class time alone may not be adequate to develop their oral communication proficiency. Therefore, students should be guided to the different sources outside classroom, including social networking, websites, and other Internet facilities: Said: I don’t think that even ten courses would be enough because we are talking about language.
We have the advantage of technology and the Internet, and also social networking, websites and ability to get exposure to the language outside classroom. This is important for the teacher to create the context in which students can learn the language. Many teachers also emphasized developing students’ learning strategies that can potentially help them develop language proficiency inside and outside classroom. In a nutshell, teachers were deeply aware of class limited time; consequently, they highly recommended students to make the best use of technology and the Internet in order to develop their oral communication skills. Baker (2013) argues that the potential of these technologies is to enable intercultural exchange through access to authentic materials and intercultural communication with members of other cultures through the Internet. Additionally, they need to develop their self-learning strategies, autonomy, and responsibility towards their own learning (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2013).

d. Oral communication can be affected by limited vocabulary
A number of students maintained that lack of active vocabulary hindered oral communication proficiency. Ayman, a sophomore student, illuminated that he could not use the right vocabulary item in its appropriate contexts:

Sometimes I use three or four words to express one idea and this idea I can express by using one word. I keep rotating and rotating around to make the other one understands what I mean- it’s lack of vocabulary of course.

Nonetheless, many teachers argued that vocabulary development cannot be learned by memorizing vocabulary lists. A senior teacher suggested that intensive listening and intensive reading could be an effective approach in contextualized vocabulary development:

Ameen: Some learners believe that vocabulary should be accumulated in their minds, and this is like a mistake… they think of vocabulary and its meaning in Arabic; they don’t think of vocabulary as a dynamic language that should be developed through the process of intensive listening and intensive reading, I mean to learn vocabulary in context not in isolation.

Another senior professor argued that limited vocabulary may not be the real problem. To him, some teachers do not draw learners’ attention to the actual use of vocabulary in context:

Omar: I don’t think that the problem is in the limited vocabulary; rather the problem is in using the vocabulary. They teach meaning, spelling and pronunciation, but they draw little attention or no attention at all to how to use the language, its actual use in context.

Likewise, Khalid, a senior student, concurred with his professors that learning vocabulary should be natural; i.e., not through the traditional way of memorizing lists of vocabulary “If you keep up with language, the vocabulary will come... just all come simultaneously”. For some learners, limited vocabulary can constitute a problem in oral communication; however, teachers perceive vocabulary development as a dynamic process that should be taught or learned in context; i.e. through intensive listening and reading. Practicing a new vocabulary item in context helps learners to use it more effectively in real life.

Rababah (2005) argues that although the communicative language approach is widely used in Arab institutions, vocabulary items are still taught in isolation. She highlights the importance of teaching vocabulary in real-life- contexts. Zhengdong’s (2012) findings echo with other research in that lack of vocabulary is regarded as a prevalent concern among EFL students and a major obstacle for oral communication. In short, while active vocabulary knowledge can lead to positive language reception and production, the inability to use vocabulary in context constitutes a serious problem for students to express their ideas and feelings in the target language.
e. Interference of L1 hinders oral communication

According to numerous teachers and students, L1 and L2 interference seems to influence learners’ oral communication proficiency. Farouk, a senior teacher, illuminated that L1 interference is apparent, especially in learners’ pronunciation, vocabulary, writing, and even body language:

Interference between L1 and L2 has influence on pronunciation and choosing vocabulary in context. It has influence on the style of writing, speaking, and body language. Yes, mother tongue has influence on structuring sentences. Students sometimes try to think in Arabic and translate…this translation sometimes comes very literal, so the meaning is influenced by the mother tongue.

Similarly, another teacher argued that L1 interference was more noticeable in low level students, particularly in vocabulary, structure, and thinking in native language:

Hakeem: Slow rate in oral communication can be related to L1 and L2 interference. This often happens depending on the proficiency level of students. If students have low language proficiency, so you’ll have high level of interference…students still think in their language, look for a proper word, or structure. This takes time and definitely this is L1 interference.

Furthermore, students indicated that L1 interference impacts their pronunciation of specific language features such as certain sounds, stress and intonation, grammar, and sentence formation. The following extracts serve as an illustration of students’ perspective:

Nour: This is one of the fundamental difficulties, no one can ignore…this interference leads to negative impact on our performance and learning English. For example, there are a lot of sounds that constitute a problem for us…vowels are totally different, stress, intonation, grammar, sentence formation…I think everything is different.

Mohanad: Sometimes when you’re talking to a native, all of a sudden an idea would cross your mind, but it is actually Arabic, so if you translate it into English, it sounds silly…it does not convey the message; yes, the Arabic language has a major role.

Consequently, according to teachers and students, L1 interference seems to impact some language aspects such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence formation. In a study of paragraph writing involved 28 Thai English minor students, Bennui (2008) reveals that L1 interference plays part in students’ writing in terms of words selection, sentence, and discourse. The lexical interference, for instance, takes the form of literal translation of Thai words into English, while the interference at the sentence level involves using same structures from Thai language such as word order, subject verb agreement, and noun determiners.

f. Students are unable to structure their ideas and meanings in a coherent way

One of the teachers explained that students were unable to structure their ideas and meanings in a cohesive and coherent way, and in some cases, they lack background knowledge about certain topics in L2:

Ameen: This has to do with the coherence of the argument, with how students structure their ideas and present them in a logical and comprehensible and communicative manner. From my experience, this can be with higher level students. It is related to the familiarity with the topic, so yes they have the structure, they have the language knowledge necessary for running a conversation, but they don’t have many ideas about this topic.

Mazdayasna (2012) concurs with the above finding in that learners have little opportunity to develop the skills for organizing their ideas cohesively and coherently while speaking the target language. It can be concluded that in addition to the linguistic competence, knowledge about a certain topic can be significant to run a successful conversation.
Besides the linguistic variable that seems to hinder or slow down oral communication, the interviewees highlighted some psychological barriers that may result partially from the insufficient linguistic competence, or from other various reasons. The following section discusses the psychological problems that English major students encounter in oral communication.

2 Psychological Barriers

*English major students lack self-confidence*

Young (1992) argues that speaking, from teachers and students’ perspectives, is inarguably considered the most stressful skill among the four skills. Several interviewees thought that part of learners’ inability to speak fluently is related to their lack of self-confidence, which can be due to insufficient linguistic competence and social misconception about the foreign language. Kareem, a senior teacher, states:

Students do not feel the confidence to stand and talk because they do not have the linguistic competence to make them talk, so they feel that they are going to be criticized or going to be ridiculed. This hinders their attempts to speak their thoughts. This *inhibition* is perhaps attributed, partially, to the social misconception that English is a difficult language.

In addition, Morad, another senior teacher, expressed explicitly that students feel inhibited to speak as a result of psychological as well as linguistic barriers:

There are some psychological barriers such as lack of confidence, fear of taking risks, not so many of them are risk takers. They are afraid of making mistakes. They have some inhibitions about how to articulate, how to pronounce words. So, generally they prefer to be on the silent side because they do not want to sound not proficient in the language in front of classmate or in front of the teacher.

Similarly, students explained that their inability to speak the language fluently was due to feelings of shyness and lack of confidence to speak in front of class. Samia, a freshman student stated, “We do not have enough confidence to talk in front of people. We do not trust our knowledge and language, so it is difficult to talk and express ourselves”. Another interviewed student complained that speaking constituted a problem for him because he was worried about not being an affective speaker “sometimes I feel shy to speak and give my opinion to others even if I know the correct answer”. Students sentiments comport with Heyde (1983) that self-confidence can be negatively affected when a language learner think of oneself as deficient and performs poorly in the target language. However, high self-confidence can be positively correlated with effective oral communication.

Further, students’ inability to communicate effectively in a foreign language class may stem from the evaluations and attitudes of both teachers and classmates (Senel, 2012). Furthermore, Daly (1991) illuminates other possible reasons for students’ communication apprehension in foreign language; for example, students avoid speaking because they are unprepared, uninterested, alienated from the class, or lacking confidence in their competence (as sited in Senel, 2012). In a nutshell, besides the linguistic problems, lack of self-confidence and inhibition can be amongst the main variables that hinder students’ fluency in Palestinian EFL university context.

**Pedagogical Implications**

Based on my own findings and other research discussed in this study, a number of implications for EFL teaching and learning can be drawn. The teacher plays a key role in encouraging and putting learners at ease in developing their sense of self-confidence and trust,
and minimizing anxiety, fear, worry, and hunting for mistakes. State-of-the-art teaching techniques and strategies stress the need to encourage and empower learners to participate in class discussions and interactions through positive reinforcement, affective filter, and strong rapport. Wealth of activities can be utilized to help students express their ideas and feelings, for example, role play, information gap, presentations, drama and acting. These activities can be conducted in pairs, small groups, or team works. Many video clips about a variety of topics are available on ESL labs, youtube, or other websites.

Listening and speaking classes can employ authentic materials that mimic real-life-situations and engage students in different tasks. In this way, learners can expose themselves to the culture and norms of oral communication in the target language. Learners can be guided to use some applications on ‘I pad’ or ‘I phone’; these applications access many interesting TV channels and radio stations in English. By the end of semester, learners can present their ‘e-portfolios’ in front of class. Further, to maximize practice, all teachers are invited to integrate oral communication activities (arguments, discussions, debates) in all courses and to make these activities as an essential part of course assessment. Consequently, this may lead to enrich the course materials and elevate students’ oral communication skills and self-esteem.

Teachers can also encourage extracurricular activities including different types of clubs, reading club, speaking club, acting club, games, competitions, etc. Teachers of oral communication skills should have workshops with other teachers in the department to spread the culture of spoken language and its crucial significance in our modern age. Additionally, vocabulary items can be contextualized, i.e., to focus on collocation and actual use with concrete examples. Teaching methodology should move from teacher-centered classes to learner-centered classes, and the materials used should serve that same goal, even the assessment should be changed accordingly. To develop oral communication, students are invited to develop their own sustainable learning strategies, autonomy, and self-dependence.

**Study Limitations & Future Research**

Although the findings of the study could to a large extent highlight Palestinian English major students’ key oral communication problems, many limitations should be addressed here. The participants of the study were 20 Palestinian English major students and 6 senior teachers. The findings are limited to the participants and the university context, and therefore the study cannot make generalization about English major students’ oral communication problems in different EFL contexts (Marshall & Roseman, 1999). Moreover, that limitation derives from the uniqueness of a single setting, conceptual framework, and design of the study. However, it is hoped that there will be aspects of the findings which will be informative and inspiring to other EFL teachers and researchers.

In future research, it can be suggested that the oral communication problems should be carried out involving specific problems such as the impact of self-confidence, inhibition, pronunciation, or limited vocabulary on oral communication. Different variables such as learners’ individual differences such as attitudes, age, and gender can also be taken into consideration in future research in foreign language classes. The present study was about the overall problems that Palestinian English major students encounter in oral communication.
Conclusion

Within the context of globalization and growing need for intercultural communication, foreign language educators are invited to place more emphasis on developing students’ oral communication skills. The purpose of the study was to investigate Palestinian English major students’ oral communication problems. The study used qualitative content analysis to analyze participants’ interviews. The participants were 20 students from different levels and 6 teachers from a reputable university in the Gaza Strip, Palestine. The study revealed that incorrect pronunciation, limited vocabulary, lack of exposure to the target language, lack of self-confidence, and L1 interference were amongst the main oral communication problems. The study also unveiled that the students had not developed the habit of extensive listening and reading in the target language, and they were unable to organize their ideas and meanings in a coherent and cohesive way. It can be concluded from the study that oral communication has been considered as a highly demanding and complex cognitive skill that involves different competences and mechanisms (Levelt & Roelofs & Meyer, 2000). Besides the linguistic competence, the perception of the self and other affective factors have been highlighted. Interestingly, the study explored and compared students and teachers’ perceptions about oral communication problems, hoping that each side becomes more aware of his responsibility towards easing oral communication problems.

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References


**Appendix 1**

**Interview Questions**

The main goal of this study is to investigate Palestinian English major students’ problems in developing oral communication (speaking) in order to highlight the complexities and challenges involved in this skill. The study employs semi-structured interview for data gathering; however, the interview may cover some or all the following questions.

1. What are the major problems that English major students face in oral communication (speaking)?
2. Do you think that these problems are due to a limited vocabulary or inadequate knowledge of L2 in general?

3. Some scholars believe that these problems are caused, partially, by learners’ attitude towards the TL and culture, lack of motivation, self confidence, or support from teachers? What do you think?

4. Do you agree that the large number of students in class and lack of adequate practice are really responsible for the problems?

5. Some scholars think that learners have many phonological, syntactic, and morphological complexities that make them unable to express themselves and articulate their ideas fluently. Have you noticed any of these problems?

6. Does the problem have anything to do with teachers’ textbooks/materials and teaching methodology?

7. Some researchers argue that oral communication should be integrated in all courses, and shouldn’t be limited to one course or a couple of courses. What do you think?

8. Do you think that this problem is due to L1 and L2 interference and lack of similarity between the two languages in terms of their phonetic, semantic and syntactic systems?

9. From your perspective, how oral communication or speaking can be developed in our department? Any recommendations?
The Significance of Using Literature in FL/SL Classrooms

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Abstract
This study is an attempt to investigate and highlight the significance of using appropriate carefully selected literary materials in FL/SL Classrooms. The study comprises several various aims, among which: Concreting EFL learners' educational background and personal experiences based on the subject matter of the literary work. In addition to that, assisting EFL learners to comprehend the semantic signification that the authors attempt to convey in order to enhance learners' reading abilities. Moreover, the study strikes at enhancing EFL learners' critical thinking and judgmental abilities. In addition to the above, the paper aims at promoting EFL learners' writing abilities through essay-writing and comments related to the theme of the literary work. This study is intended to be a contribution to EFL teaching and learning processes, thus it attempts to compensate the lack of classroom practices as well as materials that do not appear to provide EFL learners with adequate communicative performance needed for more target-like realizations. As a result, this study attempts to explore the want of rich and contextually appropriate input in the classroom and suggests that in the absence of opportunities for communication and feedback outside instructional settings, thus, utilizing interesting literary materials is required to help the learners through their teachers to promote communicative performance in English language.

Keywords: literature, EFL/ESL learners and classrooms, context, Cultural Model, Language Model, Personal Growth Model.
1. Introduction

For so many years literature has been the Cinderella of the teaching materials. It is impractical to design a syllabus excluding literature, simply because it imparts an effective and healthy language learning atmosphere to the classroom, so it should be a main part of the armory of any designed syllabus. Using literature in the classroom augments the learners’ language performance and enables them to improve their communication skills. Recently there is an ongoing significant increase of controversies about the de-motivation and the ennui inside the classrooms but in the researcher’s viewpoint teaching literature will effectively pose a landmark and render EFL learners the service of better communicative abilities, plus, upgrading their underachievement. Due to the lack of interest in language learning, EFL learners brought up some slogans such as: ‘if pass will do, so why the credit?’ or ‘if fifty will do, so why fifty one?’

The focus of literature teaching is not only to assist EFL learners to comprehend the semantic patterns that the author attempts to express, but also to enhance learners’ thinking as well as language abilities and study skills. EFL learners have to learn vocabulary, discover questions, evaluate evidence individually and in group discussions, form a coherent argument in support of a particular position. The study of literature has always played an important role in the acquisition of a foreign language, but increasingly students are reluctant to choose literature modules, particularly those dealing with pre-twentieth century texts. In order to make the literature of foreign places and from past ages more immediately relevant to the interests and the experiences of the students, new courses, aimed at reawakening the students’ interest in literature, have been designed according to thematic rather than chronological criteria.

Although the students read and write in FLL/SLL settings, seldom do they understand how their world is affected by their reading and writing, and in turn how their reading and writing affect their world. The overall significance of this point is the multi-meanings of utterances. EFL learners should be familiarized to go beyond the general denotations of utterances in order to reach their deep connotations. In addition to that, learners should be acquainted with the practical, social, and linguistic dimensions of utterances. This is reminiscent of a complaint voiced by Candlin (c.f. Widdowson, 1975):

For too long materials have remained at the surface patterns of linguistic text and have not drawn learners towards an understanding of the layers of meaning which can be peeled off from utterances; learners have seen sentences only as illustrations of grammatical patterns and have not asked pragmatic and sociolinguistic questions of what communicative value they have in given settings. P. vii

2. Why do we Teach Literature?

Literature is a suitable and precious means through which EFL learners can achieve significant purposes. McCloskey and Stack (1996) state: “literature is an appropriate, valuable and valid medium to assist English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students in accomplishing important goals.” P.VI

Literature motivates learners because it explores themes that are interrelated to their outside world. Moreover, literature provides learners with the variety of language that is used by native speakers of that language. In addition, literature can broadens the horizons and mental scope of the learners by developing their imaginative capabilities. Furthermore, literature enables learners to communicate and interact because it addresses issues that are interesting and
stimulating to them. Then they add (ibid) “literature provides students with motivation to learn and models of high-quality language while it enhances students' imagination, interaction, and collaboration:

1. Motivation

Literature motivates students by touching on themes they care about, such as: love, fear, communication, character, and hopes for a peaceful world in the future. Good literature is about the human experience; it is meaningful to students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

2. Models

Carefully chosen literature provides models of high-quality language with sophistication and complexity appropriate to students' age levels. Literature offers new vocabulary in context and serves as a source for learning about the mechanics of language in authentic contexts, as they are used by masters of that language.

3. Imagination

Imagination is one of the abilities that make us fully human. Literature can give students the means to imagine and think creatively. Literature demands that the reader step into the author's world: good literature demands thought from the reader. Students who are learning a new language need and deserve the challenges to their imagination that appropriate literature provides.

4. Interaction and collaboration

Language is learned best in a setting in which it is put to use. Literature provides a common text from which students can negotiate meaning. Well-selected literature addresses issues that are vital to young readers and stimulate lively discussion among students. Using literature in combination with collaborative activities helps students understand the literature better, relate it to their own ideas and experiences, and go beyond the literature to produce their own literature-related products.

3. Arguments over Using Literature in FL/SL Classrooms

It is argued that including literature in language courses has a disorderly effect on the well-organized and carefully controlled courses. The inclusion of literature was “a potentially disruptive influence in the well-ordered world of the carefully controlled language courses,” Widdowson (1984, P. 161).

However, during the 1980s there was a strong reawakening of interest in literature and language teaching. Linguists and ELT scholars, Widdowson, (1984); Brumfit, (1985); Long, (1986), Long and Carter, (1991) among others, argued not only for the value of teaching literature in the language classroom but for the necessity as well of re-inventing a different pedagogical approach for non-native speakers of English. The pedagogical interface of literature and language teaching should become the students’ responses to the text for the reason that: "...the teaching of literature is an arid business unless there is a response, and even negative responses can create an interesting classroom situation," (Long, 1986, P. 42).

The reawakening of interest in the teaching of literature to non-native students was a major motive for the design and publication of several books. Among others from the 1980s and the early 1990s Language for Literature (1983) by R. Walker, Reading between the lines (1984) by J. Mc Ray and R. Boardman, A Course in English Language and Literature (1986) by B. Lott, The Web of Words, (1987) by R. Carter and M. Long, Past into Present (1990) by R. Gower and Making Headway Literature (1992) by J. and L. Soars attempt to ‘bridge the gap between language and literature studies’ or ‘to introduce [the students] to some of the finest literature in
English’ making use of the texts as a basis for language practice and ‘to improve and develop students’ understanding and use of the language through the reading and discussion of literary texts.’

Using literature in EFL classes has been argued which in turn discouraged learners to be interested and respond enthusiastically to literary texts. Long (1986) states:

The place and the role of literature in the language classroom was questioned furthermore by the ELT approaches during the period 1960-1980, which did not encourage students to develop a ‘feeling for language, of response to texts. P. 42-45

In addition, it is also argued that literature does not play an effective role in enhancing the communicative and practical purposes of language during the seventies and early eighties. Widdowson (1984) argues:

On the other hand, the Communicative approach to language teaching during the 1970’s and early 1980’s emphasized the study of the language for practical purposes and since literature has no obvious practical uses it contributed nothing to the utilitarian objectives of language teaching, thus, it had no place in the language classroom. P. 161

The extra exercises help in appreciating the texts by clarifying the various stylistic features and language interrelated connections which form the whole text.Gower.R. (1990: Introduction) states: “the accompanying exercises are designed to further appreciation of the texts by showing how the different features of style and language work together to create the whole.”

English literature was chosen as an educational subject, not only including poetry and fiction, rather, history, biography, scientific and expository writing as well, during the 18th century up to the mid of the 19th century. Bagherkazemi, M. and Alemi, M. (2010) argue:

From the 18th century to the mid 19th century, ‘English literature’ was designated a much broader scope as an educational subject, including not only poetry and fiction, but also history, biography, scientific, didactic and expository writing. P. 1

Literature was not treated as a distinct subject; rather its study was woven into the teaching of classical rhetoric which was then aimed at enhancing in learners the skills of discovery and communication. Bagherkazemi, M. and Alemi, M. (ibid.) state: “in the 18th century, the field of English studies placed a premium on aligning the ability to produce oral and written discourse with an appreciation for literature.”

Bagherkazemi, M. and Alemi, M. (2010), add: “what this auspicious historical point bears is that current beliefs as to the potential of literature for fostering ‘communicative competence’ in language learners have a long history to them. However, it needs to be admitted that not all aspects of ‘communication’ as conceptualized today were attended to at that time. P. 1.

However, the swinging of the pendulum which has always characterized the field of language teaching did not leave attitudes toward using literature in L1/EFL/ESL untouched. In parallel with the 19th century’s surge of concern with comprehension rather than production in English and literature’s studies, which were then indistinguishable, communication gave way to formal correctness as a prime goal to be achieved in the field of rhetoric, Bagherkazemi, M. and Alemi, M. (ibid.). Induced by both socioeconomic and pedagogical concerns, this shift of emphasis to grammatical instruction and error correction was probably the first ominous sign to
This heralds the controversial position of literature in language teaching. It led literary scholars to avoid dancing attendance to rhetoricians and to run their own reader-centered literary criticism courses, giving literature its deserved scope as poetry, drama and fiction.

This way the once indistinguishable fields of literature and language studies were dissociated and the role of literature in language teaching with its emphasis on form and correctness at the time was put under a question mark for a number of reasons which were to sojourn the mysterious land of ELT for a matter of a century.

Real. W. (2003), mentions three arguments over novel successive reading:
(1) The students are no experienced readers in the foreign language. Therefore they are unable to read a comprehensive narrative text all by themselves.
(2) If the students read the text successively, their distance towards the text is rather small, which might lead to a better active cooperation in class.
(3) As long as the students do not know the outcome, they are willing to advance reasonable hypotheses concerning their expectations. This means that the potential for discussion is higher.

“No argument over successive reading of the novel is convincing.” Real. W. (2003). As to the first argument, it must be looked upon as a dangerous self-fulfilling prophecy: if the teacher gives hints as to this conviction, the pupils will not hesitate to confirm this. Education should be just the opposite: it is for the teacher to withdraw where pupils or children can become active. Whoever is too much afraid of putting demands on his students will soon not teach them anything because such an educator will not be taken seriously any longer. Therefore no teacher should argue that pre-reading is not practicable. In a recent article it has been shown that even a comprehensive and complex novel like Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale may be pre-read by the pupils at home.

As to the second argument, successive reading also has got disadvantages since the novel is split up into many small elements; successive reading of the novel bears the risk of its being fragmented, which may detract from the pleasure of the reading process. Besides, it may contain the risk of slowing down the work in class too much and therefore may keep motivated pupils from going on reading. Moreover, if some of them have knowledge of different parts of the text than others, this will lead to communication problems in class. Moreover, building up critical distance towards the novel is a valuable teaching aim rather than an undesirable state of affairs.

The third argument possesses little weight since it cannot mean that after reading the whole text, there is no potential for discussion anymore. Many modern texts have an open ending, so follow-up tasks may still be discussed in class. In addition, there are always gaps in the text to be filled in, imaginative extensions and creative tasks are not rendered impossible by a sound textual knowledge of the whole novel.

4. Resolving Opposition to the Use of Literature in FLL/SLL

Given that the current focus in FLL/SLL is on meeting the specific academic and occupational needs of the students, it is normal to discount the efficacy of using literature in language teaching. It is therefore necessary to review the arguments against using literature in language teaching and resolve them (McKay, c.f. Brumfit and Carter, 1986, P. 191-194). There are three arguments over using literature in foreign and second language learning which are:
1. Literature fails to make a significant contribution to the goal of teaching the grammar of the language since literature uses language in a complex and unique way.
2. The study of literature will not adequately help students fulfill their academic or occupational goals.
3. The presence of a particular cultural perspective in literature could create difficulties for the students at a conceptual level.

Sivasubramian. S. (2006), states:

First, literature fails to make a significant contribution to the goal of teaching the grammar of the language since literature uses language in a complex and unique way. Second, the study of literature will not adequately help students fulfill their academic or occupational goals. Third, the presence of a particular cultural perspective in literature could create difficulties for the students at a conceptual level. P. 267

Sivasubramian. S. (2006), c.f. Povey (1972, P. 187) argues that literature increases all language skills because it extends linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax. Though literature has always been associated with the teaching of language usage, we cannot disregard the advantage of using literature to teach language use, since it presents language in discourse in which the parameter of the setting and role relationship are well defined. In the light of this observation, we can confidently state that literature could contribute to knowledge of language use. P. 268

Sivasubramian. S. (2006) reports: there are more recent attacks on the use of literature in FLL/SLL by Edmondson (1997, P. 53) who argues that:
1. A special and specific function for literary texts in the business of language teaching and more importantly, language learning seems not to obtain.
2. Claims for a specific role for literature serve to provide a weak justification for learning modern languages.
3. It would be beneficial to subject such extraneous goals and traditions to critical scrutiny and reject them consequently.

5. Benefits of Using Literature in FL/SL Classrooms

A number of reasons for or benefits of, teaching literature in the FL classroom have been preferred by a variety of authors. For example, Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000, P. 9-11) list, with more or less approval, the following:
1. Cultural enrichment: Reading literature promotes cultural understanding and awareness.
2. Linguistic model: Literature provides examples of “good” writing, linguistic diversity, expressive ranges, and so on.
3. Mental training: Better than any other discipline, literature trains the mind and sensibility.
4. Extension of linguistic competence: Literature stretches the competences of learners who have mastered the linguistic rudiments.
5. Authenticity: Literature is genuine linguistic material, not a linguistically contrived textbook.

Gajdusek (1988, P. 2) states that literature is both literally and figuratively decontextualized. However, instead of viewing it as a drawback which devalues literary texts among other language learning materials, he asserts that the context-reduced nature of literature entails two other features which make it a perfect means for developing communicative competence in learners:
1. Internal coherence: Each line interrelates with other lines to create an internally coherent meaning. It is exactly this self-sufficiency of a literary text which engages the reader in interpretation, meaning negotiation and the generation of coherent discourse-based meaning, hence literature’s highly interactive demands on learners.
2. Conscious patterning: The language of a literary text is fashioned into recurring patterns of sounds, meanings, and structures, connecting intellectual, emotional, and physical experiences. Discovering, exploring and appreciating these patterns would create a lot of reader-text interaction which is an essential feature of communicative and interactional competence.

Gajdusek (1988, P. 3) adds some other advantages of using literature in the language classroom:

1. It serves as a stimulus for composition.
2. It is a perfect means for constituting content for content-based classes.
3. It encourages talking.
4. It helps generate purposeful referential questions.

Van (2009, P. 3) believes studying literature in the EFL classroom is advantageous for a number of reasons:

1. It provides meaningful contexts
2. It involves a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues and prose
3. It appeals to imagination and enhances creativity
4. It develops cultural awareness
5. It encourages critical thinking

Zoreda and Vivaldo-Lima (2008, P. 22) state: “the significance of connecting culture to the language learning process, “literature modules would be a great way to incorporate U.S. and British cultural elements while strengthening English reading abilities.” They bring up some reasons to justify the use of literature in the language classroom:

1. It helps language teachers foster their own cultural, linguistic and interpretive skills.
2. It involves students overcome negative attitudes, if any, toward the target culture.
3. It introduces variety into the language classroom.

Schoepp. K. (2001:3) c.f. Eken (1996, P. 46) states that songs can develop the four skill areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Thus, songs can be used to:

1. present a topic, a language point, lexis, etc
2. practice a language point, lexis, etc
3. focus on common learner errors in a more direct way
4. encourage extensive and intensive listening


a. Write a dialogue between King Solomon and the guard holding the sword after the mother and the son, and the other woman left the palace.
b. Paraphrase the first four sentences of the paragraph, “And in this way they argued . . . whose child it was” (fourth paragraph from the bottom) see appendix (3).
c. Summarize the story in three sentences, including the main character, setting, conflict, climax, and resolution.
d. Write one sentence on the theme of the story.
e. Write a paragraph on what causes people to lie.
f. Write a classification essay on different kinds of lies.

6. Language Learning Dimensions

Literature develops language acquisition, because most of EFL/ESL learners read and write to understand the ideas and obtain the intended knowledge in the target language. Reading and understanding written materials is a significant instructional aim that requires learners to
comprehend, infer, and read between the lines of the target language. Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006) states:

The use of literature promotes language acquisition. In most second language classrooms, students read and write in order to decipher the input in the target language. The need to decipher written input in English becomes an important instructional objective demanding that students process and interpret the target language. P. 261-262

Literature provides learners with interesting situations to produce contributions, discuss meanings, and increases stimulation, i.e. literature is the effective medium for acquiring the target language. In addition, since literature comprises hidden connotations, thus, it can develop classroom activities which require exchanging sentiments, emotions, as well as viewpoints and attitudes. In other words, literature makes language-learning is a process of exchanging responses by exploring situations and subject matters that learners take pleasure in, then seeking hidden meanings. Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006) adds:

In such situations, by providing interesting contexts for students to generate input, negotiate meaning, and develop motivation, literature can become an efficient vehicle for language acquisition. As literary texts contain multiple layers of meaning, they can promote classroom activities that call for exchange of feelings and opinions. Such activities trigger the response potential in students. So learning a foreign language becomes a process of response. The students find the activities and the context in which they engage with these activities so absorbing that they enjoy taking risks in their search for meanings. P. 262

Developing and increasing stimulation and impetus via touching on the sentimental and exciting areas inside the learners. “The use of literature promotes motivation in the classroom, i.e. by strengthening the affective and emotional domains of students; literature develops a sense of involvement in them,” Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006), (c.f. Carter and Long, 1991; Collie and Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993).

Non-literary materials or ordinary textbooks do not offer any sentimental involvement between learners and the target language because they concentrate on the emotionless automatic features of language learning. Nevertheless, the rigid form of course books, makes learners anxious, stressed, lack motivation, monotonous and even bored. Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006) states:

Course books do not provide for any emotional and reflective engagement with the target language. This is because course books, for want of interesting and engaging content, focus the learners’ attention on the mechanical aspects of language learning. The form-focused practice that most course books demand, subjects the learners to a lot of anxiety, stress, demotivation in addition to monotony and boredom. P. 262

The dry and barren nature of course books, fail to capture learners’ engagement with the text. “As a result, the arid and trivial content of the course books fails to bring about a sense of involvement,” Sivasubramaniam. S. (ibid) (c.f. Wajnryb, 1996). Course books prevent learners from being engaged with the text of the target language, and as a result take away the enjoyment of learners to use the target language inventively and thoughtfully. “The failure to instill a sense of involvement in the learners prevents them from an emotional engagement with the target

In the light of this discussion, motivation becomes synonymous with a process of engagement through which the learners begin to feel a sense of involvement with the target language. In this regard, literary texts can offer a beneficial alternative to the rule-based language learning promoted by course books. Furthermore, it should be noted that the points raised above reinforce the concerns with reference to students’ personal sense of involvement in reading and writing as a basis for promoting literacy in society. Exploring literary materials, with the process of time, readers start to live in the atmosphere of the text through surprise and suspense elements. The following view, expressed by Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006) (c.f. Collie and Slater (1987, P. 5-6), locates teachers' understanding of motivation as an outcome of engagement with literary texts:

Engaging imaginatively with literature enables learners to shift the focus of their attention beyond the more mechanical aspects of the foreign language system. When a novel, play or short story is explored over a period of time, the result is that the reader begins to inhabit the text. He or she is drawn into the book. Pinpointing individual words or phrases may make them less important than pursuing the development of the story. P. 262

Literature promotes learners’ cultural awareness, since it includes numerous samples of experiences, outlooks, and values of people across the various cultures of the globe. However, the international widespread of particular examples of culture can cause problems in terms of the idea of culture in the target language, which in turn can jeopardize the use of literature in FL/SL classrooms.
Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006), (c.f Brumfit and Carter, 1986, P. 140-149; Lazar, 1993) reports:

The use of literature develops cultural awareness in students. Literary texts contain copious examples of practices, attitudes, and beliefs of people across the cultures of the world. While these examples serve to promote a comprehensive view of culture, they can also raise problems regarding the notion of culture in the target language. This is because English is used across the world as a first and second language and a stereotypical view of the target culture can endanger the use of literature in FL/SL classrooms. P. 263

The use of literature develops language awareness in students. The interesting contexts provided by literary texts serve to illustrate the noticeability of lexical and syntactical features. Prolonged exposure to literary texts not only familiarizes students with the numerous interesting features of the written language but also develops the response potential in them. As students respond to literary texts, they begin to realize how meaning as an outcome of response can open up contexts for imaginative use of language, Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006, P. 264) (c.f. (Collie and Slater, 1987; Gibbs, 1994). The scope provided by literary texts for using imaginative/figurative meanings alerts them to “the richness and variety of the language they are trying to master” Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006), (Collie and Slater, 1987:5), and to the need to develop it through their interpretative experiences with literature. It is argued that the human mind is naturally inclined to use language figuratively rather than literally, given that the notion of literal meaning is a problematic one, Sivasubramaniam. S. (ibid) (c.f. Gibbs, 1994).
7. Educational and Social Outcomes

Literature instructs and teaches people how to feel and appreciate things through providing readers with the opportunity to discharge and let go their sentiments. “Literature educates human emotions. It does this by channeling our emotional energies and providing an emotional release,” Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006, P. 265).

literature makes people travel so far distances through their imagination, thus, it provides them with the chance to experience things that are not possible in their real lives. Moreover, literature readers are exposed to a number of life aspects such as exciting actions, aggression, victory, liking, detestation, etc, which in turn sharpen and deepen their real life experiences. Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006) adds:

An engagement with literature exercises peoples’ senses are more actively than they can otherwise achieve. Through literature, people enjoy the beauty and splendor of nature as they travel to far-away lands. People go through experiences that will not be possible in their real lives. As readers read literature filled with images of action, adventure, love, hatred, violence, triumph, and defeat, they create an outlet for their emotions. As a result, the perceptions of real life experiences become sharper and deeper.

“The imaginary situations we participate in through literature enable us to identify with others and their experiences. The topic regards this ability as a valuable human attribute which only literature can nurture in us,” Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006), (c.f. Rosenblatt, 1995). According to this view that literature is the one and only vehicle through which peoples’ ability to picture and imagine things is cultivated.

The ability to imagine things via literature helps learners to widen their knowledge about the outside world. Furthermore, literature provides learners with the opportunity to read and know about the experiences of others, which in turn makes them understand the multidimensional nature of the human being. Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006), (c.f. Rosenblatt, 1995) reports:

It is argued that this ability underlies fluency in reading and writing. Literature helps our students enlarge their knowledge of the world. By reading about the experiences of others, our students come to understand the multidimensional nature of the human being. The interactions with the literary text provide ‘a living through not simply knowledge about’ the world and the experiences of human beings in it. P. 38

Literature plays an effective role at the social level through exploring the need for social changes, i.e. exposing learners to repeated contact with the various types of characters, manners, and lifestyles teaches them to imaginatively put themselves into their places and act like them. Then, learners can issue judgments about the acceptable and deniable social behavior, which in turn can result in flourishing social changes in their everyday contact with others. Sivasubramaniam. S. (2006) (c.f. Rosenblatt, 1995) mentions:

Literature contributes to social sensitivity by illustrating the need for social adjustments. A prolonged engagement with literature puts students in frequent contact with the personalities of different types of people. Thus, they learn to imaginatively put themselves into the places of others. As a result, they are able to understand how their actions affect others. A sense of plausible deniability dictates their judgment of what is acceptable or
unacceptable social conduct. This can result in successful social adjustments in their daily dealings with others. P. 38

Possible dangers are expected due to the nonexistence of social changes, since learners live in a contesting and practical world, so they might not care about the feelings and needs of others, however, literature can act against the anti-social inclinations by developing a sense of social sympathy in the learners. Nevertheless, learners’ own cultures exert their impacts on them through their families and societies, which in turn develop a parochial outlook and narrow-mindedness in them, however literature exposes them to the different lifestyles together with their new ideas.

8. Findings of the Study
1. Literature when selected carefully can be a valuable resource for integrative EFL learning.
2. Utilizing literature enhances learners' reading and writing skills, together with their sub-skills such as (skimming, scanning, outlining, handwriting, spelling, etc).
3. Teaching literature through multi-media devices, promote learners aural-oral skills.
4. Literature broadens learners' horizons and widens their imagination.
5. Literature improves learners' communicative skills.
6. Literature promotes learners' critical thinking.

9. Recommendations of the Study
1. Literature is better, useful and beneficial to be included in the high schools level as a supplementary material,
2. Making literature books accessible and available at the university libraries.
3. At the national as well as the international level, university lecturers and professors should be delegated to attend: workshops, training courses, conferences, debates, language competitions, and most importantly get scholarships abroad.

10. Conclusion
To conclude this study, it could be said that literature is a fit subject for the purpose of language teaching. It may be exploited both for content teaching and skills promotion. However, adequate attention should be paid to proper text selection. If the text is beyond the level of comprehension of the learners, then the purpose of language teaching will also get defeated. Therefore, the text should be simple and interesting in keeping with the level of proficiency of the learners.

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References
Language Transfer and Grammatical Speaking Errors among Saudi Students

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Abstract
The English language has certainly become the most prominent international language in the world. Various initiatives in non-English speaking countries have sprung out to promote the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language and the Arab world is certainly no exception to the rule. The study will focus on Saudi Arabia where new plans, are to be initiated to improve students’ language proficiency in view of the tremendous importance of English as an international language and its critical role in the commercial, industrial, technological, and audio-economic development of the Kingdom. This brings up to surface the issue of language transfer errors and its crucial role on speaking proficiency. This paper aims to discuss grammatical errors resulting from language transfer amongst Saudi students. The study will discuss the extent to which the language transfer theory is accepted or rejected. Accordingly, thirty Saudi students were interviewed in the process in Saudi Arabia. The study will be accordingly divided into three main sections: firstly, it will look into the acceptance and the rejection of the language transfer theory. Secondly, an analysis of students’ grammatical speaking errors will be presented according to the source of errors. Thirdly, this study will provide education practitioners to place greater focus on improving spoken English skills in order to raise speaking proficiency in Saudi Arabia. Finally, the paper will conclude with some suggestions to tackle the issue of speaking errors among Saudi students.

Keywords: Language transfer, Saudi Arabia, speaking, grammatical errors, learning input
1.0 Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language in the Arab World is certainly witnessing increasing interest and higher demands due to the many opportunities it provides to its speakers in many fields. However, one needs to keep in mind the challenging and often complicated process of learning English especially to Arab speakers. This is due to the completely different Arabic and English language systems. Being a Semitic language, Arabic enjoys many characteristics and features that distinguish it from other languages. Its grammar is very different from English grammar. This on its own, results on a large potential of errors when Arab learners produce written or spoken English unlike their English learning peers from Indo-European language families.

This paper is interested in studying language transfer speaking errors amongst Saudi Students. It provides a broader theoretical content in which to place the subject matter of language transfer and look at how this latter has developed in the Arab world. The study will then attempt to understand whether speaking errors in Second Language (L2) production are the result of language transfer. It will also seek to find out the most common grammatical speaking errors according to their importance and consistency in order to identify the major causes of L2 errors among Saudi speakers of English. It also includes an insight into.

The concept of language transfer was first introduced in the contrastive analysis hypothesis theory. Language transfer was considered to be a major component of this theory approximately 50 years ago. The concept of transfer according to the contrastive analysis hypothesis, assumes that certain elements in the first language hinder second language acquisition through negative interference or facilitate learning through positive interference. Therefore, linguists assume that by contrasting first and second languages, they could foresee those areas in which learners would encounter difficulties.

One of the general hypotheses concerning second language acquisition and language transfer in particular is contrastive analysis. According to Gass and Selinker (1983), the major assumption of this theory is that second language learning difficulties can be predicted and compared with the patterns of the native language and teaching materials can be chosen according to the similarities and differences. This theory was formulated by Lado (1957) and, in his view, in regard to linguistics across cultures, “we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and the culture to be learned with the native language and the culture of the student.”(p.1–2) Thus, it might be suitable to refer to Fries’ famous statement regarding the remarkable nature of contrastive analysis in regard to language learning: “The most effective teaching materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learnt, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner.”(1945, p. 9)

Earlier studies of contrastive analysis had been tremendously successful for a long period of time until their rejection by many theoreticians in the field of linguistics and language learning. Such theoreticians claimed that the difficulty or ease of learning can sometimes be determined by other factors rather than the differences between the systems of two languages. Additionally, it is not possible for learners to learn only about the differences between languages while ignoring the similarities, which it is already assumed will facilitate learning since every language has its unique system and language patterns (Gass&Selinker,2008).

In spite of the rejection of perspectives of contrastive analysis in language learning and teaching, there remain a number of beliefs about the validity and reliability of that theory.
According to Wardhaugh (1970) in his reviews of the contrastive analysis hypothesis in relation to teachers of English and to speakers of other languages, it might be interesting for teachers and researchers of linguistics to accept, to some extent, contrastive analysis in the teaching and writing language curriculum, though it is difficult to practise the theory with respect to choosing teaching materials.

The language transfer theory has been studied by a plethora of researchers in the Arab world. For example, Hamdan (1994) studied the problem of language transfer and the acquisition of the English dative alternation by native speakers of Arabic. This often occurs when students use grammatical forms from their first language and apply the rules from their native language to the target language. Although this is a syntactic-based study, the results show that the issue of language transfer is a common problem among Arab learners. Many researchers have conducted studies to research this phenomenon. In a Saudi study, Alsamadani (2010) focused on the issue of language transfer as it occurs in written form in the Saudi context. Kamel (1990) studied the factors affecting writing performance in English as a foreign language; the results of this study showed that transfer from Arabic to English remains a problem for Arab learners and affects their writing skills. Labidi (1992), Rui (2011), and Ibnian (2011) all studied the learning strategies used by English as Foreign Language (EFL) students who were learning either vocabulary or grammar. These studies indicated that learners at various stages use forms of their native language and apply them to the target language.

Many additional studies have investigated this phenomenon (Khan, 2011; Samra, 2003; Al-Saidat, 2010). Alsamadani (2010) studied the possible relationship between Saudis’ first language (Arabic) and second language (English) in relation to writing competence and students’ ability to express themselves in the second language. Studies in the field of language transfer suggest that various first language elements, both oral and written, are transferred during second language (L2) linguistics production. Other studies involving language transfer have examined in depth the transfer of simple prepositions from standard Arabic to English (Mansoor, 2010). The type and classification of errors that is, whether they are grammatical or phonological in nature or whether they relate to vocabulary is an area that has been studied by researchers, such as Ahmad (2011), who focused on pronunciation problems among Saudi Learners at Najran University, Saudi Arabia. This study showed that the most common phonological errors involve those sounds that do not exist in the students’ first language (Arabic) and that these are the ones that are most frequently mispronounced and affected by the sounds of the first language.

### 2.0 Methodology

The paper will be based on an analytical study whereby Interviews have been conducted on thirty Saudi Students in Saudi Arabia in order to identify the most common grammatical errors made by Saudi students in Saudi Arabia and to find out the level of language, the kinds of errors produced, and the procedures that students learn to overcome the transferred errors. Participants’ speech will be analysed and grammatical speaking errors pointed at. The research uses interviews to collect the students’ data, which is a very common method of conducting research according to Robson (1993). Interviews which will be recorded and used as main research instrument consist of open-ended questions, for instance, ‘What major will you choose at university?’ and ‘What subject areas are you particularly interested in?’ The aim of these questions is to turn the interview into a kind of conversation between the students and the interviewer. Some items will have follow-up questions, which will be used with some students in order to elicit their responses and encourage them to talk more as some of them may be shy to...
speak when being recorded. The follow-up questions will serve to maintain the conversation alive as the aim will be to hear students speak, and not to solicit the correct answers to questions. Robson (1993) states that interviews, as a speech genre should contain an introduction at the beginning and a warm-up stage, after which the main body of the interview contains the main content. Finally, there should be a cool-off period, which indicates that the interview is about to end, followed by a concluding statement. Initially, the interviews will give the students a general idea of the purpose of the interview. The interview itself will be divided into three sections. First, there will be an informal interview in which the students will introduce themselves. Secondly, I will ask them to narrate a story or describe a television programme that they like to watch. This will help discern which aspects of grammar are produced as a result of language transfer. Thirdly, we will discuss most heard of or read about current affairs. Finally, in order to bring the conversation to a close, the interviews will be summed up with two or three sentences, such as thanking participants for their cooperation and for taking part in the study.

3.0 Literature review

3.1 Earlier Studies on First Language Transfer

The understanding of the nature of second and foreign language learning has developed significantly in recent years as a consequence of research into many dimensions of language and behaviour that were previously unexplored. Studies of the acquisition of different aspects and terms of language learning and teaching have been expanded. The concept of language transfer was initially taken from Lado (1957)’s remarkable claim about second language acquisition. He stated that “individuals tend to transfer the forms and meaning, and the distribution of forms and the meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and respectively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the cultures as practised by the native”(p.2). This quotation and the associated research have been a famous source for hundreds of bodies of empirical studies related to the field of second language acquisition in contact situations and the phenomena of language transfer. In, Language Transfer and Language Learning, Gass and Selinker (1983) illustrate the development of the language transfer concept, while Fries (1945) formulates the need for contrastive analysis in language learning by observing learners’ errors and how they relate to the differences and similarities between the two languages, which will be explained more in the next section. In 1954, Harris proposed a model of “Transfer Grammar”, basing his views on the translation type model as language learning founded upon a purely structural comparison of the two languages. Thus, the early notion of language transfer discussed a number of views on the importance of understanding how a second language is learned.

Transfer is a highly ambiguous term that has been intensively investigated by numerous researchers. Dechert and Raupach (1989) mention Weineriach (1953) and Juhasz (1970), who argued that “transfer in production...is found not only in second language productions in that they resemble the primary language, but also in the absence of appropriate target language structures as a result of an interaction from L1 to L2.”(p. xiv) This signifies that the target language is facilitated by the structure of the native language and transfer usually occurs in a target language contact situation. Thus, the notion of transfer was first considered a major source of learner error before follow-up studies provided further evidence of transfer as a learning process rather than focusing on the negative role of the first language in understanding second language learners’ errors. However, after the 1960s, the role of the native language in the
learning of the target language began to be considered as facilitative rather than as a source of errors resulting from the underlying similarities between languages. Selinker (1966) was the first to discuss language transfer from the native language to the second or foreign language by providing further evidence of transfer as a major process of language learning and by researching the relationship between transfer and interlanguage, which was always his primary area of focus. Though Selinker (1969; 1972) did not characterize what the learner’s interlanguage should look like (Corder, 1981), he did repeatedly imply that transfer was one of the factors associated with the unique system of the learner language (Lui, 2001). It is important to acknowledge that after Selinker’s revolution in the field of linguistics and his controversial theory about language transfer, there were other views that argued that language transfer was relatively unimportant in language learning. For example, Krashen (1981) and Burt and Dulay (1974) believed that learning a second language was based on habit formation and that the first language played only a minimal role in learners’ second language acquisition. Nevertheless, Gass and Selinker claimed that “there is overwhelming evidence that language transfer is indeed a real and central phenomenon that must be considered in any full account of the second language acquisition process.”(1983, p.7)

Language transfer has also raised numerous questions in the field of language learning; these include what language transfer entails, what is actually transferred, how language transfer occurs, and what type of language transfer has been proven as truth. The main concern of language transfer is linked to second language learning and the level of language performance. Building upon Gass and Selinker’s (2008) findings on Theories of second-language acquisition, “The identification of transfer was also discussed by Corder (1981), who remarked that it is the duty of both teachers of languages and native speakers of the language to point out the transfer according to the rules of language. At the same time, Corder implied that the source of data for transfer research lies in the learners’ production or utterances” (Lui, 2001, p. 4). This means that it is important to observe second language learners’ production of the target language in order to identify which area is being transferred from the native language. In this regard, the concept of transfer has been subjected to a host of studies that concern the role of the first language in second language learning. Ringbom illustrates the role of the first language as follows: “We are naturally inclined to assume that the nearer the foreign language is to our own, the easier it is” (1988, p. 44). Nevertheless, relevant findings and research carried out until the 1990s have revealed that the issue of transfer is still uncertain regarding whether the linguistic entities in the native language facilitate or hinder learning of the second language. Kasper (1996) identifies the concept of transfer in second language acquisition by comparing the differences and similarities between the native and the foreign language. This knowledge can then be used to determine whether transfer has a negative or positive influence.

In light of the arguments concerning the concept of transfer and, more specifically, whether it should be counted as an important stage in the language learning process or merely an unimportant notion in second language acquisition researchers have increasingly begun to focus their attention on this issue; it is obvious that there is, in fact, a need to delve more deeply into the concept of language transfer and its effects in light of the utterances produced by second language learners and, more specifically, by those who are beginners in this regard.

Gass and Selinker (1983) assume that, at some point of their learning process, most second language learners have experienced the effect of language transfer on their level of language proficiency and that serious treatment of this issue should refrain from examining different language learning and teaching approaches. The concept of language transfer is difficult
to pin down. According to Ellis (1997), language transfer refers to what can be used from the native language, ‘the linguistics information’ to use in a context of a second language. Osgood (1953, p. 520) defines transfer in the field with regard to training and learning a language as follows: “the effect of a preceding activity upon the learning of a given task”. Ausubel (1963) provides yet another definition of language transfer, which is “the impact of prior experience upon current learning”(p. 28). According to these authors, an accurate definition cannot be given as the “preceding activity” or “prior experience” is related to the native language, while the “given task” or “current learning” is related to the foreign language. Moreover, Kellerman (1986) attempts to draw a distinction between transfer and influence. Transfer is not the same as influence. Transfer refers to those linguistic behaviours that are incorporated from the first language into the target language without capturing other elements of the effects of the second language, whereas influence, on the other hand, refers to those first-language effects, such as avoidance and other speech aspects of the first language, that act as constraints on second language learning and performance. Theoreticians and language teachers have also debated whether the term transfer is still a valid concept in second language acquisition. For instance, Lado(1957), Corder(1981), Selinker(1972), and Ellis(1997) propose that at least in one stage of the learning process, second language learners rely heavily on the patterns of their native language when communicating in the target language, usually they do in the beginning of learning a foreign language. Dulay and Burt(1974)argue that the term transfer is largely unimportant in the second language learning process. Thus, to determine the importance of transfer, it would be useful to briefly consider the relevant theories in which the concept of language transfers where first discussed.

3.2 The Role of the First Language and Kinds of Transfer

After examining the general arguments related to the dissatisfaction with contrastive analysis as a major account of second language acquisition, the contrast between the systems of the two languages is understood as not being the only factor affecting second language acquisition and responsible for second language learners’ errors. Another major factor is the role of the first language in language learning. According to Richards (1974) in his study of learners of English, the mother tongue is considered to be the first important factor in the language learning process. He assumes that, “Interference analysis tends to be from the deviant sentence back to the mother tongue. Contrastive analysis works the other way, predicting errors by comparing the linguistic system of the mother tongue and the target language”(p.5). Hence, current research tends to partly dismiss contrastive analysis and the comparison between the two languages; the focus is now placed on the learners themselves as they develop their own language competence throughout the process of learning using the mother tongue.

A definition of second language learning from the perspective of language transfer is provided by Ellis: “It is the way in which people learning a language other than their mother tongue using some elements of that language” (2000, p. 3). The process of learning undergoes different stages; learners’ knowledge of the language gradually develops as they rely heavily on the use of the linguistic elements of the mother tongue. There is a common belief that second language (L2) acquisition is strongly influenced by the origin of the learner’s first language (L1). Research has been conducted in the field of second language acquisition to measure the role of the native language and its effect on the process of learning a second language. The interest in this area stems from professional experience and from observing native speakers of the Arabic language learning English as a second language.
Many theories and approaches have been concerned with the transfer of the first language or the interference of L1 as one important stage in the process of learning as it has become increasingly accepted in the field of language learning as a phenomenon rather than a problem. Moreover, Corder states that, “Since most studies of error were made upon performance of learners in formal situation where it appears that errors related to the mother tongue are more frequent, it was natural that an explanation of the phenomenon was of considerable concern to the applied linguist”(1977, p. 85). Additionally, Gass and Selinker quoted George’s claims as follows: “one third of the errors in his corpus could be accounted for by means of native language interference.”(1983, p. 324) As a result, for many years, it was presumed that the only source of learner errors resulted from first language interference, though there were other factors that were considered to be major sources of errors related to the learner’s environment. However, my reason for mentioning the issue of language transfer or interference is that I strongly believe that it affects the learner’s performance at least in one stage of the learning process. Consequently, Krashen’s1981 research findings regarding the role of the first language in the acquisition of the second language, which are also in keeping with the views of Banthy, Trager, and Waddle (1966), indicate that the first language interferes as it might be a “substitute” in some parts, while the second language is acquired as the learner uses his or her first language to convey a message in the target language as a lack of the target language acquisition. To some extent, what Krashen found could be true in some respects, such as the level of learners, as he linked his findings to the early stages of learning the language, beginners and intermediate learners; thus, some other evidence proved that even advanced learners may unconsciously transfer some elements from their first language to the target language, which is a case that is still being discussed in the field of second language learning. Gass and Selinker(1983) state that acquiring a second language is a creative process in which learners are interacting with both environmental factors and the mental process in order to produce unlimited utterances of the linguistic data of the second language to which they have already been exposed; thus, their language production cannot be predictable.

Moving on from the above mentioned theories and language transfer as the source of learners’ errors, the study will look at the influence of the first language as a major source of errors which has been divided into three main components. According to Ellis (1997), Gass and Selinker (1983), and Odlin (1989), the learner’s first language can be directly correlated with the type of errors accrued during the second language learning process. This is called ‘negative transfer’, which is referred to when the differences between the two languages appear to be the main reason behind certain errors. It is a process that can occur whenever there is a significant difference between the target language and the first language (mother tongue), and the learner’s attempts to produce the target language by relying on the system of the first language. This kind of error has been examined in many recent bodies of research related to aspects of language such as grammar and phonology. A 1994 study of Arab speakers by Hamdan, proved that in speakers of the Arabic language, the English dative alternation is transferred from the system of the Arabic language and is applied to the second language (English) even among advanced-level learners. Though it is a syntactic-based study, the results still prove that negative language transfer is affected by language competence as a result of first language interference. However, not every transfer is negative. Also, the similarities between two languages sometimes facilitate learning, such as when similar elements already exist in the two languages, or at least have already been recognised by L2 learners. When such similarities between the two languages occur, the new language seems easier for learners to produce as a part of the process of acquiring
the target language. There is agreement today regarding the recent perspective on the language transfer issue; more specifically, that there is a clear and accepted relationship between L1 and L2 and that, to some extent, the learner can perceive and use many similarities between L1 and L2 to facilitate his or her learning process. Learners who have an L1 that is closely related to the target language can, at the beginning of the learning process, make use of easily perceived formal similarities with their first language. However, according to Ringbom, “languages unrelated to the target language also influence learning. Even if learners cannot perceive cross-linguistic similarities to the L1, they tend to assume such similarities. In many cases, assumptions of similarity cause errors, especially in production” (2007, p. 6).

This type of effect is known as ‘positive transfer’, as it also leads to another aspect of language interference. For example, Ellis (1997) and George (1972) illustrate this aspect of positive transfer using the “avoidance” method in language production, which is considered to be the major role of L1 transfer. It usually occurs when some learners do not use a particular tense or verb form due to the absence of such tenses or forms from their first language. Thus, recent research correlated with the issue of language transfer for Arab students proved that most Arab learners are unfamiliar with the use of some English grammatical tenses that do not exist in their first language, resulting in their avoidance of the use of certain forms of the target language. This leads us to the third aspect of L1 transfer, which is ‘neutral language transfer’. Gass and Selinker explain this as “the process which occurs whenever there is no statistically significant predominance in the native language of either of the two alternative linguistics entities, which is then paralleled by a lack of predominance in an analysis of the attempted production of the foreign language, one alternative linguistic entity being a non error since it concurs with an experimentally established norm of that foreign language” (1983, p. 51). In other words, when the learners produce some speech utterances that do not exist in the second language and attempt to apply them in an effort to communicate using the target language to give the impression of fluency, these learners use unconscious neutral transfer, which relies on the overuse of certain elements of the first language, such as applying certain forms or structures from the mother tongue to the second or target language. Ellis (1997) describes this as the “overuse of speech acts”, where learners try to transfer their first language formulas, such as requests and apologies, to the new language. This kind of language use indicates the influence of pragmatic features transferred from the mother tongue. Littlewood consequently suggests that there is “a need to emphasise the linguistic features of the target language for second language learners in order to give them the opportunity to integrate separate structures into a creative system for expressing meanings” (1984, p. 91). These descriptions of the kinds of transfer from early studies are still uncertain as many other theoretical approaches provide other explanations for the errors produced by second language learners. Also, the reason for engaging in a brief discussion about them is the reasonable recognition of using some aspects of the first language function related to the learners’ competence in the target language, a matter that will be discussed later against the background of error analysis.

According to the behaviourism theory, most errors are considered to be a result of transference from the mother tongue. However, this theory has recently been rejected. Language development is viewed as a formation of habit in which learners make connections between the system and the experiences of their mother tongue, and attempt to apply them to the new language (McLaughlin 1987). Although this theory suggests that the influence of the learner’s first language may result in errors, learning a language is a more complex and complicated process than merely the interference of the habits and structure of the first language, which might
prevent learning. Ellis (1997) claims that comparisons between two languages are not always possible. As some researchers, e.g. Dulay and Burt (1974), claim, only 5% of errors are a result of the differences between two languages, and even the relationship between this theory and the contrastive analysis hypothesis cannot predict all of the kinds of errors that hinder learning. Some of the errors are unique and unpredictable (Krashen 1985). Additionally, Ellis states in regard to the use of the linguistic features of the L1 while speaking in the L2, that learners have a sense of which features of the L1 are, in some way, basic. They are more prepared to risk transferring such features than they are those that they perceive to be unique to their own language (1997, p. 53).

Moreover, errors resulting from transferring from the mother tongue are a significant aspect of all Second Language Acquisition theories, whether behaviourist, mentalist, or cognitive. Selinker (1975) assumes that the transfer of rules from the mother tongue is more frequent in beginners and intermediate learners rather than in advanced level learners. This is because the latter tend to use what they already know about the language in order to make sense of new experiences during the process of learning a second language. However, according to the above mentioned theories, many teaching materials and methods have been designed to serve the purpose of helping students to overcome these predictable errors (Littlewood, 1984). While other studies are concerned with the kind of grammatical features that result from the stages of development of the second language, which are not related to the transference of rules from L1 to L2, the main concerns of the language transfer hypotheses relate to language as a result of the cognitive process (Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor 2005). In other words, the transfer of the L1 and its relationship to L2 acquisition is still the most controversial issue whether the language is learned by transfer or by students’ capacity to pick up the language by learning and practising what they learn. However, Ellis, Krashen, Littlewood, and Lightbown all suggest that learning is improved when we distinguish between the “acquired L2” and the “learned L2”. However, the reason for my quick review of the role of the first language in the acquisition of the second language is to expand our understanding and experiences, and to help in my continued search for further explanations of language transfer, and to identify the source of learners’ errors which will be explained more in the importance of errors analysis.

4. Grammatical Speaking Errors amongst Saudi Students:

According to the data collected during our series of interviews conducted as part of the study, pronunciation errors were predominant due to the fact that English has three times as many vowels sounds as Arabic. Some consonants in English are very hard to reproduce by Arab speakers. Not surprisingly, Arabic speakers failed to distinguish between some of the word they heard such as the sound /θ/ in words such as that and thin or the swapping of /b/ and /p/ at the beginning of words or the use of /f/ instead of /v/.

Although our cluster of learners was able to clearly pronounce words, there were some sounds that were mispronounced or replaced with other sounds. In the term of the grammatical features, the learners’ main problem was grasping the correct form of the verbs, particularly with regard to tenses. Also, they generally used the present tense instead of the past tense, and vice versa, and also committed some errors when using the unmarked form of the verb that was widely committed by them. Furthermore, most of them had the same problem with the third person(s), as they tended to use the singular instead of plural, and vice versa. Additionally, they sometimes used three different tenses to indicate the past tense, for example, ‘I didn’t’, ‘I can’t’ and ‘I couldn’t’. There were also problems distinguishing between regular and irregular verbs,
and using articles and pronouns. Moreover, the case of pronouns coping, such as “my father he, my mother she” as a result of following the structure of Arabic sentences was significantly committed. Additionally, some of students used sentences without verbs such as ‘he tell’, ‘she busy’, ‘he tall’. Moreover, the influence of first language appears in some sentences used by students, for example, sentences with pronoun copying, such as ‘the man he knocked on the door’ and ‘the girl she carry the bag’. Interestingly, some of the students were able to correct themselves instantly, for example changing ‘I am study’ to ‘I am studying’, as well as ‘when it’s rain’ to ‘it’s raining’. Since the students were able to correct themselves and use some of the tenses in the correct forms, we can deduce that they were moving on in different stages of the learning process. This will be summed up in more detail later in the paper.

Table 1 below highlights a sample number of errors committed by each student in regards to the grammatical features:

**Table 1: Grammatical errors**

*Illustrating a sample of the number of errors in each aspect for each student*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>unmarked form of verbs</th>
<th>Third person (s) pronouns</th>
<th>Misused Singular and plurals</th>
<th>Regular And irregular verbs</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Sentences without verb</th>
<th>Sentences with pronoun copying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>8 times</td>
<td>13 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>4 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>14 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>8 times</td>
<td>2 times</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>3 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>15 times</td>
<td>11 times</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>3 times</td>
<td>4 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>11 times</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>10 times</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>8 times</td>
<td>3 times</td>
<td>3 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>17 times</td>
<td>4 times</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>11 times</td>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>5 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6</td>
<td>15 times</td>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
<td>14 times</td>
<td>4 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7</td>
<td>13 times</td>
<td>4 times</td>
<td>11 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>8 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
<td>5 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 8</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>8 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 9</td>
<td>15 times</td>
<td>11 times</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student10</td>
<td>11 times</td>
<td>4 times</td>
<td>11 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>8 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
<td>4 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student11</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>4 times</td>
<td>3 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student12</td>
<td>10 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>10 times</td>
<td>3 times</td>
<td>8 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>3 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student13</td>
<td>13 times</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
<td>4 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student14</td>
<td>13 times</td>
<td>10 times</td>
<td>8 times</td>
<td>8 times</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student15</td>
<td>15 times</td>
<td>13 times</td>
<td>10 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>11 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Data Analysis and Discussion

According to the data, the average use of the unmarked verb among the 30 students was 43%, which indicates that each student in the intermediate level commits this error between 9 and 17 times while speaking. There was a 26% error rate with the third person(s) and around 36% for the misuse of singular and plural. During the 10 minutes of speech the students engaged in, the average error rate with regular and irregulars verbs was 23%. Errors with articles consisted of 31%. The use of sentences without specified verb was 31% among 30 students. This means that each student committed this errors a minimum of 3 times and the maximum of 7 times during their speech. And finally, the percentage of the errors in the sentences with pronoun coping were 15%, in total of 140 errors committed among the group by each student. However, we should not see errors as a sign of failure in learning the language, as teachers and students
should be aware of the process of learning. The process of learning undergoes different stages by means of which the learner’s knowledge of the language gradually develops. A learner’s production of a language is due to external and internal factors to which he or she is exposed. Moreover, as previously mentioned, learning a second language depends in some way on the learner’s previous knowledge of his or her first language. Lightbown and Spada (2006) argue that prior knowledge can be advantageous in learning a second language as it gives the learner an idea of how language works. On the other hand, it can also be responsible for errors due to incorrect guessing as to how the new language might work. However, one way to investigate how a second language is developed is to analyse errors which tackle the issue in this case study. According to Ellis (1992), errors are quite important because they are a significant feature of language learning and they help learners to develop their knowledge through self-correction of those errors.

According to Littlewood, ‘second language learners are actively constructing rules from the data they encounter and gradually adapting these rules in the direction of the target-language system.’ (1984, p. 22) These errors can be construed as being a result of misinformation about rules, as students use one form of verb instead of another, which may lead to grammatical mistakes in particular. (Ellis 1997) Moreover, articles and irregular verbs can be traced back to their omission in second language learning, and also to over-generalisation errors.

Both errors of omission and over-generalisation are common in speech of all L2 learners, irrespective of their L1, in which learners are to be seen as actively involved in shaping the ‘grammar’ they are learning, and create their own rules. (Ellis 1997, p. 18)

Furthermore, students are at an intermediate level and have been learning English for six years at least, which means they already possess some knowledge of the second language, and most of the errors they committed were a result of the grammatical competence they already knew (Cook 2001).

Interestingly, the research also drew the attention to the use of the past tense, for instance incorrect usage such as ‘maked’ instead of ‘made’ or ‘teached’ instead of ‘taught’. It is true that we can consider these as over-generalisation errors of the rules the learners have already studied, but it also indicates the learners’ understanding of the second language system and mixing them with the patterns of their own first language (Lightbown and Spada 1984). Although learners were able to communicate well using the second language, to which we should give prior attention among errors, they were trying to deliver the message fluently, but with the omission of articles and verb inflections which affected their language accuracy. However, Littlewood (1984) describes this as ‘redundancy reduction’, which makes the learners’ speech easy to listen to but not clear in some particular points. What might concern us as English teachers is to help students interact effectively using the second language. By giving students more questions and extra comments on their answers during the interviews, the negotiation of meaning has arisen, which is considered to be a good sign in the process of language learning. According to Lightbown and Spada, one important feature of the process of speech in second language learning is ‘accomplished through a variety of modifications which naturally arise in interaction’ (1993, p. 122). Most students were able to self-correct their own mistakes relating to grammatical rules such as ‘when I come’ instead of ‘I came’ and ‘I am interesting’ instead of ‘I am interested’, which can be an interpretation of self-monitoring and ‘a process that happens concurrently with the stages of conceptualisation, formulation, and articulation’ (Thornbury 2005, p. 5). However,
the more interaction students have with their teachers or other students using the target language, the more awareness they will have regarding the language learning process.

Additionally, it is natural that the differences between the Arabic and English languages will lead to such errors, such as the “unmark forms of verp” especially in the grammatical features. The Behaviourism theory predicts that transfer from the first to the second language must exist as a basic stage in the second language learning process. Ellis states that,

…the differences between the first and second language create learning difficulty which results in errors, while the similarities between the first and second language facilities rapid and easy learning. (Ellis 1985, p. 22)

On the other hand, teachers’ awareness of these differences, and the errors that can be expected from students, will help to identify them and assist the learners to overcome the negative effect of their first language on their learning process. “The teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of students will know better what the real problems are and can provide for teaching them”(Lado 1957, p. 23).

4.2 The Role of Input and Interaction in L2 Grammar Acquisition

With regard to learning a second language, specifically learning English as a second language in Saudi Arabia, the majority of teachers believe that the language will not take care of itself, and that good input should be provided to students. In fact, Thornbury (1999) raised an important question that will lead to my discussion: Do we have to learn the rules and apply them in real-life situations in order to attain the knowledge of how to use language, or do we have to use the language in life-like communication in order to learn it? In other words, will learners be able to use the language of communication only by simply communicating? Ellis (1997) and Mitchell and Myles (2004) claim that there is very little empirical evidence that communication that results from receiving comprehensible input will facilitate the acquisition of grammatical features or new patterns. Moreover, a scale of communicative competence has still not been devised, since acquiring a language requires more than a communication function, and communication is not the only function of language learning (Rutherford 1987). However, Krashen claims that teachers and students are deceiving themselves if they are convinced that the acquisition of grammatical functions occurs through learning and participating in a suitable classroom environment, when the fact is that learning occurs in a free medium, not through the teacher’s message in a learning environment (Krashen 1988). Ellis (1992), however, states that the acquisition of certain grammatical features can occur only by learning, and that communicating in a second language in a native community does not ensure the development of full-target language competence. In my opinion, there is always room for grammatical features and second language rules to be learned inside the classroom, and then developed further in real-life communication, and there is ‘the possibility that some grammatical features (e.g. the resilient ones) may be learnt naturally, whereas others (e.g. the fragile ones) may not be’ (Ellis 1997, p. 50). This may go against some views in teaching second language, which emphasise that the errors students commit result from not having enough exposure to the English language outside the classroom. However, learning English as a second language, and the acquisition of English grammar and success in overcoming this problem, is not always possible. It is still a controversial issue, and no evidence has proven whether, or to what degree, proficiency can be acquired by practicing the language in a native community or by learning it in a second language classroom setting.

The role of grammar within communicative methodology is elusive, sometimes excluded as an irrelevance, sometimes ‘done’ latently in the classroom,
sometimes reinvented in what is deemed to be a more accessible, palatable format and centring on a discourse that focuses on language as ‘patterns’. (Field, 2000, p. 142)

However, Ur (1988) puts the aim of practice for learners as an absorption of language structures, which means that, through practice, students will be able to transfer what they know from short-term memory (doing exercises in class) to long-term memory (producing the language they have learned). However, Larsen-Freeman (2003) assumes that even when students transfer what they have been taught and practiced inside the classroom, they will not be able to transfer their knowledge into real-life communication. In other words, the process of integrating new grammatical structures and phonological features into language production requires time. In this case, Larsen-Freeman suggests that,

…instruction draws learners’ attention to language features and permits them to develop knowledge of those features, but that learners will not incorporate such features into their interlanguage until they reach the requisite developmental stage. (Larsen-Freeman 2003, p. 103).

5.0 Conclusion

Based upon the outlined perspective on the problem of language transfer, operational research has been conducted to identify solutions to overcoming the errors that result from the influence of the mother tongue on second language learning. There is a very prevalent belief that research into theoretical and applied linguistics posits that the communicative approach is an effective comprehensible input that can resolve this issue. However, the use of linguistic devices, such as the model of grammar or phonology, in the process of developing a theory of human cognition in language learning is still being debated. In other words, those who are concerned with language teaching assume that using a model of linguistic theory is not always relevant to solving problems in language learning although there are some general principles and objectives that define some aspects of language transfer that must necessarily be applied in language teaching. Consequently, identifying errors is very important for investigating learners’ performance and learning development. According to Richards, & Lockhart, “Errors are the use of linguistics items in a way that a learner of the language regards them as showing faulty or incomplete learning, they occur because the learner does not know what is correct, and thus errors cannot be self corrected.” (1985: 95). Moreover, Gass and Selinker (2008) claimed that errors to some extent are systematic, sometimes they occur and not recognized by the learners and it is the teacher or researcher’s job to identify the source of errors.

EFL learners should provide themselves with, at least in language classes, the opportunity to practise the language while raising their consciousness about language competence. This would facilitate learning without giving too much attention to the errors that learners might produce as a result of the differences between their mother tongue and the targeted language to be learnt. Many researchers have assumed that raising learners’ consciousness about the target language and certain grammatical functions facilitates their language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman 2003). Additionally, Ellis states in regard to the use of the linguistic features of L1 while speaking in L2, that,

Learners have a sense of what features in their L1 are in some way basic. They are more prepared to risk transferring such features than they are those they perceive to be unique to their own language. (1997, 53)
The problem of learners’ lack of ability to use the grammatical functions or phonological features of the target language might be alleviated by both practising the language and by raising their awareness of language competence. In other words, even though learners may not need explicit knowledge in order to communicate, raising their awareness of the grammatical features may help them to contribute to their own ability to communicate. Additionally, Rutherford states that,

…learners require opportunities for both form-focused and function-focused practice in the development of particular skill areas, and if one or the other is lacking, they do not appear to benefit as much. (1987, p. 25)

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References


The Correlations of Onset Age to Taiwanese Junior High EFL Learners’ Listening and Reading Abilities

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Abstract
This study aimed to investigate the correlations of onset age of learning English to Taiwanese junior high EFL learners’ listening and reading proficiencies. A total of 458 students recruited from a public junior high school in New Taipei City participated in this study. The participants were all asked to fill in a questionnaire and take GEPT tests in listening and reading. The collected data were then analyzed by using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients. The results of this study showed that there was a significant correlation of the participants’ ages of first exposure to formal English instruction to their listening test scores ($r=-.133$, $p<.01$). However, no significant correlation was found between the age factor and the learners’ reading test scores ($r=-.043$, $p>.05$). The findings suggested that onset age played a role in the listening area of foreign language acquisition but not in the reading area.

Keywords: CPH, onset age, age factor, listening, reading
Introduction

The English proficiency of college students in Taiwan has often been criticized because most of the students still have difficulties using the language to conduct a simple daily conversation with native English speakers even though they have studied it for at least six years before entering university. In addition, compared to EFL students in other countries who have studied English for roughly the same amount of time, they frequently do not perform well on standardized tests such as TOEFL. The Taiwanese government, hence, started to reform its policies for English education several years ago in the hope that its students were able to reach a certain level of English proficiency. For example, elementary schools in Taipei City were authorized to design their own English courses as an extracurricular program in 1993. English at that time was taught two hours per week, and twenty-two percent of the public schools provided this type of program (Shih, 2001). Moreover, in order to improve the English proficiency of Taiwan’s next generation, the Committee of Education Reform of the Executive Yuan proposed in 2003 that the Ministry of Education (MOE) should add in the primary curriculum the ability to understand basic English conversation and to write the English alphabet as a requirement for all elementary school students in the country (Ho, 2011). On September 19, 2011, the MOE even announced that the third graders in elementary schools who could not pass the 26-English-alphabet test were required to receive the Differentiated Instruction Program beginning from September, 2012 (MOE, 2011). By this time, the onset age of exposure to formal English instruction for Taiwanese EFL learners had been decreased from 12/13 to 9/10.

As a matter of fact, years before English courses were officially offered in Taiwan’s primary schools, many schools in urban areas had taken the initiative of having their students learn English from the first or the third grade on. Furthermore, Taiwanese parents who could afford it have, for a long time, been known to send their children to private language schools at a very early age. Why do schools and parents in Taiwan insist that their students and children learn English so early? The reason can be attributed to the fact that they, as well as many language scholars and policymakers, deeply believe that the earlier children start to learn a foreign language, the better their language proficiency will be.

The idea of earlier is better in the field of language acquisition originated from the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), which was first proposed by the Montreal neurologist Wilder Penfield and co-author Lamar Roberts in a 1959 book entitled Speech and Brain Mechanisms. Their CPH version claimed that the plasticity of human brain determined whether or not language acquisition was complete. The hypothesis was then made famous and popular by Eric Lenneberg in 1967 with his Biological Foundations of Language. Lenneberg (1967) examined the effects of brain changes in early life on how well a first language could be acquired. He stated that the critical period for language acquisition ends in puberty in life, and within this period of time, successful language acquisition can be achieved. If this time (i.e., the critical period) is passed, some parts of language may be acquired, but complete mastery cannot be reached, and foreign accents may stay. Nearly all case studies of abused or feral children who were not exposed to their first language until after puberty lent credence to Lenneberg’s hypothesis. One piece of evidence is the case of Genie, a little girl who was a victim of lifelong child abuse. When discovered at home in Arcadia, Los Angeles at the age of thirteen, she was tied to a potty chair with a strap and was wearing diapers. What is more, she appeared to entirely have no linguistic knowledge since her father had determined her to be retarded at birth and had chosen to isolate her. Although she afterwards received formal English instruction of many years, her phonology and syntax still did not function as well as native speakers’ (Curtiss, 1977). Another similar case
is Chelsea, who began to learn language in her thirties, and her grammatical ability turned out to remain inaccurate like Genie’s (Curtiss, 1988). Due to the findings of these case studies, more and more language experts and educators now believe that a learner’s attainment of his/her native language decreases as the age at which he/she starts to learn it increases (Hung, 2008).

After validating the crucial role of age in first language acquisition, researchers started to extrapolate the same hypothesis to second/foreign language (L2/FL) settings and attempt to determine the position it assumed in these contexts. Mixed results, however, have been found. In the field of phonology, Thompson (1991) replicated Oyama’s (1976) study by exploring the role of age of arrival (AOA) in the foreign accent of thirty-six Russian immigrants in the United States. The immigrants were divided into two age groups, the early arrivals (AOA ≤ 10) and the late arrivals (AOA ≥ 10). They were asked to record three types of speech: one was a constructed sentence, another was a prose passage, and the other was a casual conversation about their daily routine. The three speech samples were rated for their authenticity by two groups of native speakers: an inexperienced group which consisted of 8 college-educated native speakers of English, and an experienced group which was composed of 8 college-educated native speakers of English with fluency in at least one foreign language and who either had lived in other non-English speaking countries or had taken language courses. The outcome of the study indicated that the Russian immigrants who arrived in the U.S. before the age of 10 had a better chance of acquiring a native-like English accent than those who arrived after the age of 10. Flege, Mackay, and Meador (1999) researched the perceptual and productive accuracy of English vowels by seventy-two highly experienced native Italian speakers of English, who were further separated into four subgroups based on their AOA in Canada and the amount of their Italian use. A categorical discrimination test and an intelligibility test were utilized to assess all the participants’ English vowel perception and production. The findings of the research suggested that the later in life the native Italian participants started learning English, the less accurately they could perceive and produce English vowels. In addition, Hung (2008) examined the correlations of onset age of learning English to Taiwanese EFL learners’ proficiency in perceiving four English vowels (/ɪ/, /iː/ , /eɪ/, and /e/). A total of 104 freshmen from a private university in northern Taiwan were selected to participate in the experiment. Their accuracy in recognizing the tested vowels and language learning background were respectively evaluated and collected by a listening test and a questionnaire designed by the researcher. The study discovered that early exposure to formal English instruction corresponded to more accurate perception of the English vowels, particularly the high front vowels (/ɪ/ and /iː/). In contrast to the research results above, a study by Wang and Kuhl (2003) assessed the perception of four Chinese tones by four different English-speaking age groups after a two-week training program. All the experimental participants were required to take a pre-test and post-test before and after the training program on the tones. In the tests, the stimuli were presented in four blocks, with each tone being the target tone for one block. The order of the tone block presentation was counterbalanced across listeners. The statistics of the project revealed that the younger participants received lower scores than the older ones on both the pre-test and post-test. Moreover, Nikolov (2000) investigated how many highly advanced late L2/FL learners would be mistaken for native speakers. The research consisted of two experiments: one was to measure the pronunciation of twenty speakers of different native languages who learned Hungarian as a L2; the other one was to test the pronunciation of thirteen Hungarians who learned English as a FL. These two experiments were performed via the same structured interview that required the participants to talk about their language learning experience, describe an/a embarrassing/happy moment in their life, and read
out an authentic passage. The researcher of the study concluded that the strong version of Lenneberg’s CPH was not supported based on the outcome that a certain number of participants had been often or generally mistaken for native speakers in both experiments. Other research studies such as Baker and Trofimovich (2006), Bongaerts, Mennen, and Slik (2000), Tsukada, Birdsong, Bialystok, Mack, Sung, and Flege (2005) focused on the same linguistic aspect (i.e., phonology) and also had contrasting findings.

In the area of morphosyntax, Johnson and Newport (1989) looked into the relationship between AOA and forty-six native Chinese and Korean speakers’ proficiency in English syntax. The participants were split into two groups—the early arrivals, who arrived in the United States before the age of 15, and the late arrivals, who arrived after 17. They were all evaluated on several aspects of English grammar via a 276-item English grammaticality judgment test. The results of the test showed a clear and strong advantage for the early arrivals over the late ones. By contrast, Slavoff and Johnson (1995) rated the grammatical competence in English of 107 nonnative English children by means of a grammaticality judgment task. These young participants spoke various Asian languages (that were typologically different from English) as their mother tongue such as Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Korean. The study declared no significant correlations of AOA to the children’s scores on the test. Bialystok (1997) reported an experiment in which thirty-one native Chinese speakers’ grammatical knowledge of English was measured. The participants were divided into two groups on the basis of their AOA in Canada. The learners in the early group began learning English before the age of 15, and the ones in the late group began after 15. All the participants were asked to judge the acceptability of 160 English sentences based on six structures. The statistical data of this experiment indicated no relationship between AOA and the learners’ performance on the grammaticality judgment task. Furthermore, Montrul and Slabakova (2003) inquired into the acquisition of the morphological and semantic properties of Spanish aspectual tenses that were normally very difficult for Spanish learners by highly proficient English learners of Spanish as a foreign language. The participants of this study all started to learn Spanish after attending high school (i.e., their onset age $\geq 12$). They were separated into three levels—the lowest level being 17 near-native learners, the intermediate level being 23 superior learners, and the highest level being 24 advanced learners. Two linguistic tasks were employed to test the learners’ grammatical ability in Spanish: one sentence-conjunction task and one truth-value judgment task. The results displayed that 19 out of the 64 FL participants performed within the range of 20 native control speakers on both tasks. The researchers of the study contended that a native-like command of the Spanish aspectual system did not decay with age.

With respect to general language skills, Kuo (2001) explored the role of age of starting to learn English in the reading and listening proficiencies of more than 800 Taiwanese university EFL learners. The 1999 National Joint College Entrance Exam (NJCEE) for English achievement and an English placement exam designed by a prestigious private university in Taiwan were used to evaluate the participants’ reading and listening abilities respectively. The students were split into three age groups: 3rd grade group, 5th grade group, and 7th grade group. The dissertation found that on the listening test, the 3rd grade group obtained higher scores than the 5th grade group, which in turn scored higher than the 7th grade group. Regarding the results of the reading test, although the 3rd group excelled the 5th group, no significant difference was found between the 5th group and the 7th group. Cao Fenfu (曹逢甫), Wu Youxi (吴又熙), and Xie Yanlong (谢燕隆) (1994) investigated whether or not early start in learning English would
influence Taiwanese EFL students’ English language proficiency. The experimental group of the project consisted of twenty-nine 7th graders who had received bilingual education for 3 years. Their proficiencies in English listening, speaking, grammar, and reading were compared with the proficiencies of a control group with thirty-two 10th graders who had also learned English for roughly the same amount of time. The results of the tests showed that the 7th graders did better only on the listening and speaking tests. In terms of their grammar and reading abilities, these early learners did not have any advantage over the 10th graders. Chou (1989) researched the impact of beginning formal English instruction before entering junior high school on Taiwanese EFL learners’ later English achievement. A total of 1260 10th graders from 25 senior high schools in northern, central, and southern Taiwan were recruited to take part in this experiment. The researcher discovered that the students who started learning English before entering junior high school outscored the ones who began their learning after entering junior high school on the listening test. Early English learning, however, had no significant effects on the participants’ reading and writing proficiencies. Additionally, Cenoz (2003) conducted a study to understand whether age was closely related to the rate of English acquisition by 135 Spanish-Basque speakers who learned English as a third language. The participants of this research began their exposure to English instruction at the ages of 4, 8 and 11 respectively but received the same number of hours of instruction (i.e., 600 hours). After all the test scores and questionnaires were collected and analyzed, the outcome revealed that the older learners outperformed the younger learners in most of the measures of proficiency.

A close examination of past literature on the role of AOA/age in L2/FL acquisition above brings out two phenomena that motivated the researchers of the current study to run this experiment. First of all, from the conflicting and mixed research findings stated earlier, there are pros for and cons against the claims of the CPH. Thus, the influence that age exerts on L2/FL acquisition seems to be still equivocal no matter whether the examined area is phonology (Baker & Trofimovich, 2006; Bongaerts et al., 2000; Flege et al., 1999; Hung, 2008; Nikolov, 2000; Thompson, 1991; Tsukada et al., 2005; Wang & Kuhl, 2003), morphosyntax (Bialystok, 1997; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Montrul & Slabakova, 2003; Slavoff & Johnson, 1995) or general language skills (Cao et al., 1994; Cenoz, 2003; Chou, 1989; Kuo, 2001). Second, the literature review also implies that if there is really an age effect on FL acquisition of four general skills, it constrains the listening domain more than the reading domain. However, this argument requires more valid and reliable research results to be affirmed due to the fact that some of these studies such as Kuo (2001) did not use trustworthy instruments (i.e., standardized tests) to collect data. In addition, the participants in Cao et al. (1994) and Chou (1989) were senior high school students, and the ones in Kuo (2001) were university students. Younger FL learners like junior high school students or elementary school students were not recruited in these studies to get a comprehensive picture of the role of age. In consequence, based on the preceding reasons and to bridge the research gap, the present study aimed to re-examine the correlations of onset age of exposure to formal English instruction to EFL students’ listening and reading proficiencies via standardized tests, and the research sample was primarily selected from Taiwanese junior high school students. The following are the two research questions that this study sought to answer:

1. Does the age of first exposure to formal English instruction correlate with Taiwanese junior high EFL learners’ listening proficiency, as measured by a standardized GEPT listening test?
2. Does the age of first exposure to formal English instruction correlate with Taiwanese junior high EFL learners’ reading proficiency, as measured by a standardized GEPT reading test?
Methodology

Participants

The experimental sample of this study originally consisted of 522 seventh and eighth-grade students in a public junior high school in New Taipei City. Owing to the fact that the current research investigated the relationship between Taiwanese EFL learners’ onset age of learning English and their English listening and reading proficiencies, it only included students who had been learning English in Taiwan. Based on the results of the instruments employed in this research, three students who had taken the GEPT standardized listening and reading tests, five students who had lived abroad for more than one year, five students who spoke English at home, and fifty-one students who did not complete either the tests or the questionnaire were all excluded from this project. After the 64 students were removed, the data of the remaining 458 students (M=245; F=213; their onset ages of receiving formal English instruction ranged from 3 to 11) from 16 classes (7 classes in the seventh grade and 9 classes in the eighth grade) in the public junior high school was used and analyzed to answer the research questions of this study.

Instrumentation

This research was a quantitative study. Three measures were utilized to collect data: a standardized GEPT listening test, a standardized GEPT reading test, and a questionnaire. The full name of the GEPT is the General English Proficiency Test. It is a test of English language proficiency that was commissioned by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan in 1999. This standardized test was developed by the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) in Taipei and was first carried out in 2002. There are four levels of the test that are currently administered: elementary, intermediate, high-intermediate, and advanced. Each of the levels is administered in a two-stage process. At the first stage, all examinees need to take a listening and reading comprehension test. Only those who pass this stage are allowed to move on to the second stage, the speaking and writing portions of the test.

After the researchers of the current study considered the English level of the participants and the relevant suggestions from the GEPT developer (i.e., LTTC) about the use of the test, an elementary-level test was chosen as the chief measuring tool. However, as stated before, this research aimed to investigate the relationship between onset age and Taiwanese EFL learners’ listening and reading abilities. Thus, only the listening and reading parts of the test were finally adopted. The adopted standardized GEPT listening test was to rate the Taiwanese junior high EFL participants’ listening ability, particularly in understanding English questions, getting the main idea of the utterance or conversation, and giving appropriate responses. It was downloaded from the GEPT website after the researchers of this project informed the LTTC and obtained the permission of the copyright. There were totally thirty questions, and they constituted three sections. Each section had ten items. In Section One, the students could see ten pictures, and a question was asked based on each picture. Along with the question, the participants would also hear three choices of answer to that question. They then had to choose the best answer that corresponded to the picture presented for each question. The questions and the choices were not written out on their test sheets. Section Two consisted of ten items. For each item, the testees needed to listen to a short question which was not written out, and each question was spoken twice. The students then had to read three written-out choices of answer and choose the most proper one that best responded to the question. In Section Three, ten questions were designed to test the learners’ comprehension of English short dialogues. After hearing each dialogue, they were asked a question about the content of the conversation, followed by selecting the most
suitable cue out of the three provided on their test sheets. The dialogues and questions were repeated twice and were not printed on their test sheets. All the thirty questions must be finished within twenty minutes.

With reference to the adopted standardized GEPT reading test, it aimed to evaluate the junior high EFL learners’ reading comprehension. The measure was downloaded from the GEPT website as well. In total, there were thirty-five questions, and they were divided into three parts. In Part One, sentences were constructed to examine the students’ vocabulary ability and their concept of syntactic structures. From Items 1 to 15, there was one blank in each tested sentence, and right below the tested sentence were four choices of answer. The participants needed to choose the most appropriate answer which made the sentence meaningful and grammatical. Part Two was a cloze test made up of two written passages, and each passage had five separate words removed (Items 16 to 25). The examinees had to fill in each blank by choosing a correct answer to reconstruct the passages. This part tested the learners’ skills in making right grammaticality judgments and word associations. Part Three assessed the learners’ ability in getting main ideas of different types of writing genre (Items 26 to 35). The students were required to read the four passages and answer the questions on the basis of the content or implication of each passage. All the thirty-five questions must be completed within thirty-five minutes.

Regarding the questionnaire, it was devised to collect the participants’ language learning background. It included the following information: the students’ name (Item 1), class and number (Item 2), gender (Item 3), the age at which they started to learn English (Item 4), whether or not they took the same tests before (Item 5), whether or not they had lived abroad for more than one year (Item 6), whether or not they used English to communicate at home (Item 7), the average hours per week they spent learning English (at and outside school) before entering junior high school and the total length of the learning (in years) (Item 8), the average hours per week they spent learning English at junior high school (at and outside school) and the total length of the learning (in years) (Item 9), and their experience of having been taught by a native English speaker (Item 10). The questionnaire administered to the learners was written in Mandarin Chinese to assure their maximum understanding of the content. It was distributed to the participants after they took the standardized GEPT listening and reading tests.

**Procedure**

The GEPT standardized listening and reading tests and the questionnaire were all conducted in quiet, noise-free classrooms at the school where the participants studied. The participants were evaluated on a class basis. Before starting to carry out the three tasks, they were informed of the purpose of the study and instructed on how to answer the test questions and fill out the questionnaire. When the tasks were actually exercised, they were performed over a period of two hours. In the first class hour, the students were required to finish the reading test within thirty-five minutes. The listening test plus the questionnaire were then completed within twenty-five minutes during the second class hour. After all the measures were executed, the learners’ test scores were calculated and organized on Excel along with their language background for further statistical analysis.

**Data Analysis**

To answer the two research questions of the present study (i.e., does onset age of receiving formal English instruction significantly correlate with Taiwanese junior high EFL learners’ listening and reading abilities?), two Pearson Product-Moment Correlation tests were utilized to
analyze the collected data, and the software program for conducting the analysis was Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 13.0.

**Results**

Table 1 represents the correlations of the 458 Taiwanese junior high EFL learners’ ages of first exposure to formal English instruction to their scores on the GEPT listening and reading tests. The statistics of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation tests showed that there was a significant negative correlation between the students’ onset ages and their listening scores ($r = -.133$, $p < .01$); however, no significant correlation was found between the age variable and the learners’ reading scores ($r = -.043$, $p > .05$). The results suggested that the earlier the Taiwanese EFL participants began to receive formal English instruction, the better their listening proficiency was (i.e., the participants’ listening proficiency increased as their starting age of learning English decreased). This tendency unfortunately did not extend to the relationship between the students’ onset age and their reading proficiency. As a result, it seemed that onset age only assumed a position in these EFL learners’ listening ability but not in their reading ability.

**Table 1. The correlations of Taiwanese junior high EFL learners’ onset age to their scores on the GEPT listening and reading tests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Onset Age</th>
<th>GEPT Listening Score</th>
<th>GEPT Reading Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.133(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion and Conclusion**

As stated in the section of Introduction, many studies have been done to explore the effects of age on L2/FL acquisition. Some of these studies focused on the phonological domain (Baker & Trofimovich, 2006; Bongaerts et al., 2000; Flege et al., 1999; Hung, 2008; Nikolov, 2000; Thompson, 1991; Tsukada et al., 2005; Wang & Kuhl, 2003), some on the morphosyntactic aspect (Bialystok, 1997; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Montrul & Slabakova, 2003; Slavoff & Johnson, 1995), and others on general language skills (Cao et al., 1994; Cenoz, 2003; Chou, 1989; Kuo, 2001). However, conflicting and contrasting results have been found in terms of supporting or disproving the claims of Lenneberg’s CPH. For those that mainly investigated the role of onset age of learning English in EFL learners’ ultimate listening and reading proficiencies, despite their findings that age exerted significantly more influence on the learners’ listening ability than their reading ability (Cao et al., 1994; Chou, 1989; Kuo, 2001), the instruments utilized in some of these studies were, in fact, not very accurate in obtaining reliable results. Moreover, the samples examined in these studies were not comprehensive. Younger learners such as junior high school students and primary school students were not included. These two reasons thus motivated the researchers of the current project to re-analyze the relationship between onset age and EFL learners’ listening and reading skills by using
standardized tests and recruiting Taiwanese junior high school students as participants.

The statistical data of two Pearson Product-Moment Correlation tests revealed that the younger the EFL participants started to learn English, the better their listening comprehension was. Yet, the students’ reading proficiency did not increase as their onset age decreased. This finding was in harmony with what Cao et al. (1994), Chou (1989), and Kuo (2001) discovered. Hence, it can be concluded that age appeared to be a critical determinant in the acquisition of English listening ability rather than of English reading ability in the FL context like Taiwan.

Since the current study along with other similar studies have validated that the acquisition of English reading proficiency does not seem to have anything to do with the age at which EFL learners began their exposure to the target language, what on earth might be the key variable(s) that affect(s) the acquisition? In answering this question, Cheung (2006) could provide some clues. He researched the effects of several factors on Taiwanese university EFL students’ listening and reading abilities and concluded that the total amount of time the learners spent learning English contributed most to their learning outcome. The importance of the factor (i.e., total time of learning) in the acquisition of English reading proficiency in the FL setting can also be affirmed via a further examination of the test scores and language learning background of the participants in the present research. Based on these data, the researchers discovered that quite a few learners who scored high on the GEPT reading test tended to have received relatively more hours of instruction (in total). In contrast, many of those who did not perform well on the test were inclined to have received relatively less hours.

In addition to the variable of total time of learning, the discrepancy between the design of the test content and the type of training the EFL participants had received at school might be another factor that affected the results of this study. From the test scores of the learners, the researchers of the current experiment detected that a relatively high percentage of the students did not perform well on Part III of the reading test. This outcome could be attributed to or explained by the English teaching practice that pervades in the traditional language classroom in Taiwan.

In regular English classes at school or cram school in Taiwan, teachers usually spend most of the class time teaching new vocabulary and introducing various grammatical rules as well as sentence structures. The focus of the instruction is always on a single word or sentence itself. When sentences are put together to form bigger chunks of speech to evaluate learners’ ability in summing up key points like Part III on the reading test, the learners frequently get lost or stuck in the paragraphs. As a result, what has been taught in EFL classrooms in Taiwan is apparently out of accord with what the section of the test actually assesses. It is this variance that might have led to the poor performance of those participants on the test section, and their poor performance implied that they still lacked the ability to read lengthy texts and from which, to draw main ideas.

From the discussion above, several educational implications can be made. First, to enhance EFL students’ listening comprehension, it is better for them to start exposure to the target language early. Second, in the light of increasing the students’ reading ability, they need to immerse themselves in the language as long as they can. Furthermore, their language teachers should change part of their teaching focus to helping them cultivate the habit of perusing lengthy articles and develop the capability of capturing key points from what they have read.

On top of the ones just brought up, there are other variables that might have influence on EFL learners’ acquisition of listening and/or reading skills, according to the findings of other studies. For instance, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) reviewed some previous literature on factors that might affect EFL learners’ listening comprehension. They concluded that developing
learners’ intercultural awareness and application of listening strategies both assumed a role in EFL learners’ ultimate attainment of listening proficiency. Additionally, Chou (1989) asserted that the EFL participants’ learning motivation and parental occupation were two of the main factors that affected both their listening and reading proficiencies. Consequently, to understand the complete picture of what primarily results in the success of FL acquisition (particularly of listening and reading abilities), future research studies should include and examine these variables that were left out in this project plus those that have not been mentioned so far but were also of importance such as learners’ learning style, aptitude, cognition, and teachers’ teaching methods and the like. Hopefully, by doing so, language educators, experts, and even policy makers in the FL context can know more about the role of these factors, followed by creating the most appropriate curriculum and initiating new English educational reforms to ease and hasten learners’ learning.

With respect to other limitations and delimitations of this study, three can be put forward. First, although this study was conducted in quiet, noise-free normal classrooms, the results of the experiment might still have been affected by some external factors like classroom temperature and the quality of the equipment that was used to play the listening stimuli. Consequently, for those who are interested in replicating this research and would like to gain more reliable test data, it is advised that a language laboratory be used. Second, the 458 seventh-grade and eighth-grade students of this study were selected only from a single junior high school in New Taipei City. The outcome might not be generalized to the learners of other schools. Therefore, it is best for future researchers to recruit participants from different schools as well as from different parts of the nation and the world. Third, the present project only focused on EFL learners’ listening and reading abilities. Their speaking and writing proficiencies were not investigated. To have a better understanding of the relationship between the same issue (i.e., onset age) and the learners’ overall language competence, these two basic skills should also be included in the inquiries that follow.

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Critical Thinking and Learners’ Conception of Knowledge- A Meeting Point

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Abstract

Critical thinking as a topic lurks fascinatingly behind and about higher education and professional development. The scope of research done on critical thinking revolves mainly around how to promote and sharpen student’s critical thinking skills as they are considered to be at the heart of successful academic assertiveness. However, there is another component, namely developmental epistemology, which is central to developing and fostering critical thinking skills and which should be taken into account in pedagogical implications and applications. Epistemological development has been the subject of a number of studies over the last half century that indicate that there is a developmental sequence in learner’s epistemological beliefs and that this influences the manner in which the learners function; significantly affecting their capacity for critical thinking. In particular, this paper looks briefly at the relationship between critical thinking and epistemological development as a process as well as beliefs of the individual learner, both standing for learner’s conceptions of knowledge which impact to a great extent the acquisition of critical thinking skills and the process of critical thinking as a whole.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, epistemology, beliefs, knowledge
Introduction

Critical thinking is a complex and vast field of study as it lies at the intersection of several disciplines among which we primarily consider philosophy, psychology, logic and cognition. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to explore as well as expose it from different perspectives, as a general concept and as a fundamental educational outcome given that it prowls basically about higher education and professional development. It is an issue about which much has been written and which has been much debated as it lurks fascinatingly behind higher education. However, the scope of the present paper would slightly swerve from the effort of encapsulating the whole concept. It is rather an attempt to bring to light one of the various sides of critical thinking related essentially to the learner as a critical thinker, the way knowledge is conceived of in relation to the developmental nature of epistemological beliefs and the way they impact critical thinking abilities. The growing body of research evidence indicates that students’ epistemological beliefs about learning have influence on their various learning processes and problem solving behaviors. Research findings also suggest that the learner’s “naïve” beliefs about the nature of knowledge might obstruct the ability to use critical aspects of learning whereas sophisticated beliefs tend to enhance high order thinking skills leaving room for higher level learning and critical thinking to occur (Schommer, 1994). If we could capture the essence of the connection between developmental epistemologies and critical thinking we can find ways to make learners think critically. Accordingly, the latter factors have to be taken into account while designing course material intended to enhance critical thinking skills and dispositions.

Critical Thinking and Epistemological Beliefs

At a given stage of higher education, learners are expected to be critical thinkers who solve problems creatively, and responsible citizens who make ethical choices and know how to apply and integrate knowledge from different contexts and perspectives. Students are also expected to be able to present their thoughts cogently both in oral and written communication and at the same time analyze and evaluate important trends in a given discipline and understand the interconnectedness of knowledge. Understanding the way learners view knowledge (epistemology) and the way they construct it has implications for critical thinking abilities and ways of enhancing it. We have first to understand the learners’ beliefs about what constitutes knowledge and the process of knowing if we want to find answers to the question of how some individuals at the same level, the same age could face the same situation and perceive it differently, all claiming knowledge of the genuineness of a given conclusion drawn from that perception. This conundrum is perceived as being the impetus for studying epistemological belief.

When dealing with the term beliefs, a wide spectrum of definitions is denoted. However, the one definition concerned with critical thinking and its developmental nature is that designated personal epistemologies. They represent the set of personal beliefs relevant to knowledge and knowing. They are also defined as socially shared intuitions about the nature of knowledge and the nature of learning and involve knowledge about the limits of knowing, the certainty of knowing, and criteria of knowing (Jehng, Johnson, and Anderson, 1993, p. 24). The abovementioned personal epistemologies or epistemological beliefs have a developmental nature in the sense that they progress over time. This sequential nature goes hand in glove with the progressive nature of critical thinking skills and dispositions and explains to some extent why university students lack the critical thinking skills intrinsic to such a level.
Epistemological development has been the subject of many research over the last decades. These studies point out that there is a developmental sequence in the epistemological beliefs of the learner which influences the way he/she functions. Consequently, the learner’s capacity to think critically is significantly affected.

According to Gazzaniga, Ivry, & Mangun, 2002; Handley, Capon, Beveridge, Dennis, & Evans 2004, the learning process and outcomes build and alter the learner’s memories. These memories then shape the beliefs held either implicitly or explicitly by the learner. Accordingly, beliefs serve as filters through which received information is processed, stored and used to either modify and strengthen currently held beliefs, or are rejected being considered as incongruous to the already existing knowledge and beliefs (Schreiber & Shinn, 2003). Notwithstanding the nature of the subject, a learner’s prior beliefs determine the ability of that learner to acquire new knowledge. Hence, understanding the process through which beliefs are altered is intrinsic for understanding how learning occurs (Kuhn, 2000, 2001). Having a handle on ways in which to adjust beliefs is vital for developing painstakingly careful and accurate theory of learning. To clarify more the sequential nature of personal epistemologies, we devote the following section to some of the most prominent studies on epistemological development.

Developmental Epistemology: Description of Some of the Main Studies

William Perry’s scheme of intellectual and ethical development (1970) is one of the best known studies done about epistemic development and a major reference in this area of research. He proffers that college students’ journey through nine progressive positions from least to most sophisticate in terms of their attitudes towards knowledge. He divided the nine positions into four major dimensions. The first stage is Dualism or Received Knowledge and spoon feeding. At this stage learners in higher education interpret the world in an absolutist way of thinking and knowledge is perceived as largely indisputable as it is provided by the teachers: the experts. It is a matter of absorption of knowledge in a dualistic way that is to say either right or wrong, them and us, black or white. Dualism includes two dimensions. The first is basic dualism position where there is a right or a wrong answer to questions or problems and the teacher is an authority figure who holds the knowledge and knows the right and the wrong answer and the students learn the right answer. The second position is full dualism where disagreement of views and facts takes place and learners start to realize that the expert’s views and answers are obscure; hence, they learn the right solution or answer and discard the others. The second stage is Multiplicity or Subjective Knowledge. At this stage there are several conflicting answers, and multiplicity of opinions is accepted and recognized as legitimate. Therefore, students start to have some self confidence and trust their “inner voices” and not the external Authority. Earlier in this stage comes a position where students start to trust self and progress to a stage where they learn how to find right answers and solutions. Later on students discard the teacher’s answers as being right and start understanding that everyone has a right to their own opinion and that they are expected to have more personal and independent thinking. The third stage is relativism or Procedural Knowledge where knowledge is seen as being relative to a frame of reference and it is derived from coherent sources, evidence, logic, systems, and patterns allowing for comparison. Students learn to evaluate answers and solutions and then start to make decisions. The last stage is Commitment or Constructed Knowledge where the learners progress to a state in which they integrate knowledge learned from others with personal experience and reflection. They express their stance towards any given issue. They also discover responsibility of choice, commitment towards it, believe in their own values, and at the same time are open to consider other views and
reconsider their own. Correspondingly, the role of the teacher at this stage is seen as that of a facilitator within the process of knowledge development. Perry’s study was conducted on male students. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986), however, advocate that females might enroll in a different process of developing their conceptions of knowledge. According to them, the way women think about education and learning shapes their self perception. Belenky et al identified five epistemological perspectives. These are related to a larger breadth of epistemological development. The first of these stages is the silent stage in which one blindly follows authority, sticks to stereotypes and finds it difficult to define oneself and have a voice of one’s own. Received knowledge, a stage where one listens to voices of others subjectively, then comes a stage where one listens to oneself in a way that serves their senses of obligation to follow others’ view. Knowledge is conceived of in a subjective manner. Procedural knowledge, an epistemological phase where the process of connecting knowledge starts to take place as the notion of truth, becomes personal, particular and grounded in first hand experience. Women tend to seek truth through listening, empathizing, and taking impersonal stances towards information. Subsequently, they progress to a stage which Belenky called separate knowing in which feelings are completely excluded while making meaning and this process relies strictly on reason. The final stage is constructed knowledge a more sophisticated position where knowledge is perceived as being constructed and related to a context. There is more integration to own opinion and a strong emergence of sense of self. Similarly, Baxter Magolda (1992) was originally interested in gender issues. She argues the possibility of making a distinction between the types of thinking of men and women. Her study included a mixed population of college students. She highlights four main perspectives of knowledge and reasoning, similar to the previously discussed studies, in which she displays a similar sequential growth. Baxter Magolda’s study is well placed to illustrate the developmental nature of conception of knowledge relevant to higher education. Magolda’s first stage is absolutist knowledge corresponding to Perry’s dualist stage in which knowledge is seen as “absolute” and the process of learning mainly about absorbing the knowledge of the expert: the teacher. Another stage is transitional knowing, in which learners start to doubt the certainty of knowledge and progress to a position where they avow that there exists certainty and partial uncertainty which is subjective. The third phase is independent knowing where learners start to be aware of the fact that knowledge is uncertain and that there is acceptance of different opinions and beliefs. In a more developed stage _ that of contextual knowing_ knowledge is perceived as constructed and comprehended within the framework of effective evidence and context fitting.

We have, therefore, three studies described in this section which provides evidence that epistemological development is occurring in stages that follow a given continuum.

**The Intersection of two Dimensions: Critical Thinking and Epistemological Development**

Significant changes on the quality of the thinking process and thoughts produced occur during the period of higher education. As mentioned in previous sections, a learner’s prior beliefs determine the ability of that learner to acquire new knowledge. This is well illustrated in some researchers’ attempts to investigate the relationship between epistemological development and learning as an initial step to uncover some of the odds enveloping critical thinking and epistemological development. In his study, Rayan (1994), and based on Perry’s findings, suggests that one’s epistemological beliefs shape the psychological context in which the learner builds up standards to assess and analyze the extent to which knowledge has been extracted from
a given text. He assumes that the degree of knowledge extracted from a text is closely dependent on this learner’s stage of epistemological beliefs. The latter answers a range of questions concerned with the perception of knowledge in the classroom. Perry’s publication, ‘Different worlds in the same classroom’ (1985) advocates that the same teaching materials and the same teaching methods could be perceived differently by individuals in the same classroom but who are at different stages of epistemological development. It has been demonstrated that analysis of an individual’s personal epistemology and its developmental sequence predicts the ability of that individual to employ high order thinking in both personal and academic situations. In other words, the more mature or complex the beliefs are the more likely it is for higher order thinking to be employed or to occur. If we go back to the question of why most of our University students do not display the necessary critical thinking skills and dispositions, we would merely say that it is in part due to the fact that they are not yet able to conceive of knowledge in a way that allows them to fully engage in the critical thinking process. Still, I have concerns about the way learners deal with material of teaching which assumes they are at a more sophisticated stage of epistemological development than is their case. The teaching material might be a lecture which presents various theories or even a modeling of critical thinking. Learners who are still absolutists will be disturbed and their beliefs will be shaken by the wide span of alternatives presented. One way to manage this situation is for them to believe that they are being trained by the teacher to think by generating alternatives. However, the question to be asked at this point is: does the teacher know which is the right theory? Another way might be to learn the content of the material in an absolutist way, that is to say, memorizing for the sake of examination or dissertations, but then, would it be appropriate for the claims of enhancing critical thinking?

A better understanding of how one’s personal epistemology matures can help educators develop more effective methods to facilitate learning and lead to a more full understanding of epistemologically states of minds.

Pedagogical Practices Supporting the Enhancement of Critical Thinking and Epistemological Development

The enhancement of epistemological development and critical thinking occupies a major place in pedagogical practices within curriculum design. Baxter Magolda investigated the further development of both concepts in some of the students’ sample she assisted through university years. She was able to point out some of the factors contributing to further development. Magolda found that due to its nature, postgraduate education puts students in contextual conceptions of knowledge and so did professional life situations in the sense that it confronts them with real life situations which held them responsible for self decision making. Still, fostering critical thinking and enhancing epistemological development in a group of students requires careful management. They should also be provided with examples of critical thinking to be able to have a handle on the concept. Reflective approaches should be fostered in either oral or written communication to promote reflection. Teachers should select material that displays ambiguity and the possibility of multiple perspectives in order to stimulate the thinking of students like fiction and poetry (Kloss,1994) but still within the framework of epistemological stages.
Conclusion

According to the above mentioned studies, the conclusion to be drawn at this point is that there is a qualitative change that occurs in learners’ conception of knowledge and this is essential for the process of learning at the higher education stage. Fully developed critical thinking involves analyzing arguments, making inferences using inductive or deductive reasoning, judging or evaluating, and making decisions or solving problems. It also involves the recognition that knowledge is constructed. Hence, fully developed critical thinking cannot logically be possible until the learner has reached the developmental stage where he/she recognizes that knowledge has a constructed nature and that he/she can take a relativist stance of it.

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Language Teachers’ Perceived Computer Self-efficacy: Identifying Knowledge and Skills Gaps for Teacher-driven Professional Development

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Abstract
This paper reports on a study that explores computer self-efficacy of English language teachers at Sultan Qaboos University and the challenges they face when using computer technology in the classroom and in their daily working lives. Also investigated are the teachers’ preferred modes of training and professional development that will enhance their computer self-efficacy. The respondents are 113 Sultan Qaboos University Language Centre teachers - 41 males and 72 females – having various educational, socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The results demonstrate that almost all teachers, in spite of their work experience, previous and current professional development training, still face diverse challenges in using computer technology and many of these have emerged around aspects of their computer self-efficacy, including use of Excel, presentation software, e-learning, etc. Therefore, recommendations are provided for teacher-driven professional development, which seek to raise teachers’ belief in their capability to use innovative computer technology for high-quality language teaching.

Keywords: computer self-efficacy, language teachers, Language Centre, professional development, Sultan Qaboos University
Introduction

Continuing in-service English language teachers’ professional development, which includes formal and informal means of helping teachers with acquiring new skills, developing new insights into pedagogy and gaining a new or advanced understanding of professional content and resources (Grant, 1994), as well as its systematic examination and enhancement have always been in focus in educational institutions in the Sultanate of Oman (Al-Dafaei, 2012; Al-Khayari, 2011; Al-Siyabi, 2009; Al-Rasbi, 2006). The Language Centre at Sultan Qaboos University is no exception. Its faculty members are involved in various types and forms of professional development, which have emerged as an important tool in enhancing teachers’ knowledge base, skills, attitudes and professional beliefs (Al-Balushi et al., 2008). One such belief is about computer technologies and teachers’ computer efficacy as crucial determiners of effective high quality teaching (Al-Dafaei, 2012). In relation to such beliefs, recent studies (Absalom, 2012; Absalom, 2011; Butt et al., 2012) suggest that computer self-efficacy should be considered an important trait that factors into a language teacher’s ability to teach effectively in today’s classroom. This classroom, in addition to innovative teaching methods and techniques, features computer-based tasks and assignments suitable for their “digital native” (Prensky, 2001) students. Furthermore, computer self-efficacy is a key to language teachers’ readiness to adapt to the new reality of teaching and the workplace in general, to grow professionally and to keep in touch with what is happening in the field (Farrel, 1999). For that reason the teachers at the Language Centre seek to gain more experience in computer technologies and to enhance their computer self-efficacy, and, consequently, to achieve professional growth in their communication skills and teaching practice.

The aim of this paper is to present a study that investigates the computer self-efficacy and preferences for training in computer technologies of teachers in the Language Centre, a large language institution at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, which employs both novice teachers and those who have been in the English language teaching profession for a decade or more. In particular, it focuses on these teachers’ self-perceived knowledge and skills in using computers as well as on their ability to deal with possible challenges that are emerging from rapidly changing technology used in the workplace and in the language classroom. It also highlights the important areas for teacher-driven, research-based professional development, based on examination of teacher’s self-perceived computer needs, knowledge and skills gaps.

Brief overview of professional development at Sultan Qaboos University Language Centre

According to Glatthorn (1995), teacher development is about "the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching professionally" (p. 41). It is also about on-going interactive and cumulative learning necessary to develop new conceptions, skills, and behaviors (Fullan, 1992: 66) as well as various institutional initiatives, including the increased responsibility for excellence in teaching (Frye, 2008).

Following the above lines of reasoning, an institutional professional development forum, named the Professional Development Committee, was established at Sultan Qaboos University Language Center in 2008 (Al-Balushi et al., 2008). Since its inception the committee has been working in collaboration with the administration and other units and committees in the Centre, namely the Faculty Academic Support Unit, and the Curriculum Unit, to create a positive impact of professional development through a sequence of events by utilizing voluntary support of internal and external experts. These have included workshops, presentations, training sessions, peer observations, needs analysis and action research.
Professional development events offered by the Language Centre Professional Development Committee have involved working in teams and small groups, face-to-face and online interactions, allowing more co-operation and collaboration between teachers. Most of the events have centered on constructing specific skills of the teachers as well as about addressing short-term and immediate plans of the Language Centre. For example, the recently introduced English Foundation Program includes such elements as an electronic portfolio for enhancing students’ study skills, a Moodle-based platform for posting teaching materials and students’ assignments related to all four language skills as well as other language learning services, technologies and tools. Other courses in the Language Centre require teachers to be familiar with using specific presentation software, for example Prezi, as well as online platforms such as Wiggio and Google Drive. Teachers are expected to be mobile between courses and to be able to teach using the full range of these applications, some of which are an issue of concern with many teachers and require training.

Absalom (2012) indicates that “… university teachers seem to represent a reasonably well-equipped cohort of ICT users” (p.4). Nevertheless, barriers to the effective use of computers are still in existence. It can be time-consuming to prepare lessons and activities which make use of new and innovative technology. Added to this, technology is not always reliable and this can be very frustrating for teachers especially when training is insufficient and/or there is no opportunity for all faculty to articulate their training needs to enable them to exploit innovative technology to the full and with a greater degree of confidence.

**Computer self-efficacy: definition and possible effects**

According to psychologist, Albert Bandura (1997), self-efficacy relates to an individual’s confidence in one’s ability to employ suitable behavior needed to produce the preferred outcome. Bandura (1997) explains that one’s perceptions of self-efficacy come from different sources and mentions four sources of self-efficacy information: guided mastery, behavior modeling, social persuasion and physiological states. The strongest influence is guided mastery, i.e. actual experiences of success in dealing with the behavior. For example, the more successful interactions people have with computers, the more likely they are to develop high self-efficacy. Other sources of self-efficacy are behavior modeling, that is observing someone else performing the behavior; social persuasion, for example, reassurance by others and physiological states, especially anxiety, which can lower self-efficacy. This reasoning suggests certain interesting implications for training in computer technology and enhancing teachers’ self-efficacy in the contexts of constantly emerging and developing technology, i.e. beliefs in teachers’ capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Bandura (1997) describes efficacy expectations as differing in magnitude, strength and generality. Magnitude relates to the level of difficulty of the task in question. Individuals with higher self-efficacy judge themselves as more able to complete more difficult tasks than those with lower self-efficacy. Generality relates to the breadth of application of the efficacy expectation. Bandura (1997) contends that self-efficacy expectations have different levels of strength. Individuals with strong self-efficacy find it easier to overcome problems and will persist in their efforts, whereas those with weak self-efficacy are more likely to become frustrated. As indicated by Bandura (1977), people with a low level of self-efficacy will avoid tasks for which their skills might be insufficient. Furthermore, self-efficacy affects one’s ability to cope with a task once started because it affects the amount of effort one is likely to make as
well as one’s persistence in dealing with the challenges involved. Following Bandura’s (1997) thread of thought in relation to efficacy expectations, Chien (2012) reports that positive learning experiences lead to higher self-efficacy, which in turn enhances the effectiveness of training. This view is shared by Compeau & Higgins (1995), who contend that those with higher computer self-efficacy make more frequent use of computers, enjoy using them more and are less anxious about doing so. Consistent with Bandura (1997), Compeau & Higgins (1995) define computer self-efficacy as a person’s perceptions of their ability to use a computer to carry out a certain task. According to them, individuals with highly generalized computer self-efficacy would judge themselves able to use a wide variety of software and hardware, whereas for those with less generalized self-efficacy, the number would be more limited. For example, a teacher planning a lesson which incorporates innovative technology may have a certain perception of how able they are to manage the technology, based on their self-efficacy level. Thus, computer self-efficacy affects teacher’s performance.

Teachers’ computer self-efficacy has also a clear impact on student achievement as demonstrated in a study of Canadian students in grades K-3 (Ross et al., 2001). A study in Pakistan indicates that students of teachers with higher self-efficacy achieve better results (Butt et al., 2012). Furthermore, the link between teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction and student achievement is highlighted by Caprara et al. (2006). Thus, a teacher’s level of self-efficacy is a strong determiner of their persistence in the face of challenges, the benefit they receive from training, their enjoyment and use of the skills in question, their anxiety and, crucially, of their students’ achievements. Moreover, computer self-efficacy is dynamic, not static, and is able to increase over time with continued success (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, given the far-reaching effects of self-efficacy in an individual’s personal and professional life, it is vital to explore and challenge teachers’ beliefs and practices (Wallace, 1991) and to design professional development in a way to promote and increase self-efficacy. Only a careful examination of the aims, objectives and methods of professional development in the light of teacher-centered research will allow this.

The Study

Aimed at measuring and investigating teachers' computer self-efficacy in order to assess their computer knowledge and skills’ gaps for teacher-driven, research-based, professional development, this study was conducted in the Language Centre of Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate of Oman.

The site and participants

The Language Centre is a large language institution. It provides English language services which support students in their academic studies and prepare students for their future roles in the workplace. More than 200 teachers from 30 different countries work at the Language Centre. All of them come to work at the centre with their unique experience, linguistic and socio-cultural background. They are here to help their Omani students to better adjust to the English language academic environment, improve language skills and prepare for English-medium courses in their subject areas. These teachers are supported by the Language Centre’s Professional Development and Research Unit and Faculty Academic Support Unit in the form of formal professional development sessions and informal consultations to troubleshoot professional problems, including those related to the use of information and computer technologies. Members of both units comprised the team of investigators.
There were one hundred and thirteen teachers, who participated in the study, out of a total of 222, comprising just over 50% of the total academic staff of the Language Centre. The Language Centre teachers, who took the opportunity to drive professional development in the area of computer technology, are from a wide range of educational backgrounds and nationalities, with 25% of the respondents being in the age group 36-45 and 25% in the age group 46-55. 63% of the respondents were female and 37% male. In terms of highest qualification, 5% of the sample had a BA or BSc degree as their highest qualification, 83% had a MA or MSc and 11% a PhD. The average number of years teaching experience among the population is 21.45 years, with a range from 1-43 years and the average number of years experience in the Language Centre is 7.25 with a range of 0.5-26 years. 62% of the respondents had had previous training in information and computer technologies outside the Language Centre and 75% had had such training in the Language Centre.

**Procedures and Instrument**

**Procedures.** At the initial stage of the study, a survey of existing self-efficacy surveys took place. These included surveys for general and teacher self-efficacy, as well as more specialized self-efficacy surveys for information and computer technologies, computers, the internet and the web (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001, Milbrath and Kinzie 2000, Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Al-Dafaei, 2012, etc.). Then the most common queries regarding the use of technology were brainstormed. In addition, a preliminary survey of the Language Centre middle management was conducted to identify the computer skills necessary for teachers to work in any of the programs offered, as well as to pinpoint areas of common difficulty for teachers in their use of information and computer technologies. These stages led to the development of the initial paper version of the survey, which was validated by a group of Language Centre faculty members. The final version of the survey in the form of an online questionnaire, which took the respondents between ten and fifteen minutes to complete, was developed using Google Drive. Later, after appropriate human ethics clearance, an invitation email with an embedded link was sent to all the Language Centre faculty members.

**Instrument.** The survey consisted of three sections: Personal Information, Computer Skills and Training Needs (see Appendix A for more information about the instrument).

The first section, Personal Information, consisted of ten questions asking for information on age, gender, date of obtaining highest qualification, years of teaching experience, years of experience in the Language Centre, previous computer training both outside and inside the Language Centre, frequency of using computers in everyday life and finally a question asking respondents to rate the importance of using computer technology in English language teaching.

The questions in the first section were based on the most common contributory factors to computer self-efficacy levels in the literature. To exemplify, the age factor is discussed in detail in Absalom (2011). In this preliminary study of teachers’ attitudes to technology and their own literacy in information technology, it was found that the older the teacher, the more likely she/he is to have the perception that “students are way ahead of me in their use of information and computer technology” (p.623).

Another factor which is discussed is gender. However, there is disagreement about the effect of gender on computer self-efficacy scales. Busch (1995) found that male college students demonstrated higher levels of self-efficacy in programming and playing computer games. Quite interestingly, these male students reported that they had previously received more encouragement from parents and friends than the females, further substantiating Bandura’s (1986) argument that encouragement plays a crucial role in enhancing self-efficacy. The findings
of the study by Halder & Chaudhuri (2011) reveal that gender is significantly related to computer efficacy. However, they found out that gender differences in computer efficacy vary according to subject area. For example, their findings demonstrated that there were no differences between genders among science teachers-in-training. However, male teachers-in-training in the humanities had higher levels of computer self-efficacy than their female peers. Hence a question is raised about what the picture in the Language Centre would be with regard to these factors.

Watson (2006) reported the positive effect of professional development on use of the internet in the classroom on levels of self-efficacy among teachers of science and mathematics. Specifically, professional development composed of an intensive workshop during a summer program with follow-up online courses led to self-efficacy levels which remained high over time. Our instrument, therefore, included questions relating to previous training both inside and outside the Language Centre.

Frequency of use is also linked to computer self-efficacy levels. In their longitudinal study of trainee teachers, Milbrath & Kinzie (2000) found that their respondents had higher self-efficacy in word processing and e-mail, which were used more frequently, whereas with database management software and computer packages used for statistics, self-efficacy levels were significantly lower, further illustrating the idea that self-efficacy can be built through successful interactions with computers.

The second section of the instrument, Computer Skills, consisted of a 55-item survey on component computer skills, inviting responses to statements beginning “I can…e.g. find a piece of information in an excel spreadsheet with more than one page”, with possible responses on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”, designed to assess the strength of each individual’s computer self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). This section was further sub-divided to reflect the different skill areas under scrutiny: using Microsoft Word (any version after 2004), using Microsoft Excel, using presentation software, e-mail, working online, office hardware and finally e-learning/computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Within each sub-section, the skills were arranged in ascending order of difficulty in order to try to assess the magnitude (Bandura, 1977) of computer self-efficacy in each area.

The third section, Training Needs, was designed to survey needs and wants with regard to training. Respondents were asked to choose between face-to-face group workshops, face-to-face one-to-one training, pre-recorded videos for self-access or text/screenshot instructions for self-access. Other areas surveyed in this section were the preferred timing of training, as well as the preferred composition of the training group members, e.g. colleagues teaching on the same program, from across the Language Centre or from across the university. Three open questions were included at the end of this survey. The first one asked teachers what aspect of computer technology they would choose to be trained in if they could receive the training immediately. The other questions asked for any other comments on training and any other comments on any aspect covered by the survey.

Results and discussion

Personal information and computer skills

One hundred and thirteen teachers of the Language Centre participated in the study. This number of participants makes just over 50% of the total academic staff. Table 1 in Appendix B summarizes the basic results of the study.

The study revealed a clear correlation between average scores for computer self-efficacy and age, with a demonstrable decrease in average self-efficacy scores, the older the age group.
Teachers in the highest age range of 56-65 scored an average of 207.236842. Those in the second age range of 46-55, had an average score of 209.178571. Those in the age range 36-46, scored an average 223.535714 and those in the youngest age group, below 35, had the highest average score of 228.052632.

No significant difference was found in total self-efficacy scores with regard to gender. In fact, female teachers scored very slightly higher overall than their male colleagues, with 216.097222 as opposed to 213.780488 for males (see Appendix C for more information on the impact of gender on teachers’ computer self-efficacy in the four age groups).

Those teachers who had had previous training before joining the Language Centre scored significantly higher than those who had not, p<.01, with an average score of 220.9714286 among the former group and 205.9534884 among the latter (see Appendix D for information about the impact of previous training).

However, it was found that in-house training did not have an impact on computer self-efficacy, with those who had attended in-house training scoring an average of 215.845 and those who had not, scoring an average of 213.551 (see Appendix E for information about the impact of in-house training on teachers’ self-efficacy).

With regard to frequency of use, the teachers who profess to using computers ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ (n = 36) had significantly lower computer self-efficacy scores, p<.0001, (Mean = 195.361) than those who reported ‘always’ using computers (n = 77, mean = 224.558).

When asked their opinions on the importance of using computer technology in teaching, 98% of respondents rated this as either very or fairly important, with only four teachers rating this as not important. However, a clear correlation between this opinion and computer self-efficacy scores was identified.

Total scores for the eight categories in the component skills section were adjusted to allow for the different number of items in each category and converted to a score out of 5 to indicate computer self-efficacy of the total study population. The two areas in which teachers felt most confident were using word-processing and e-mail, similar to the study by Milbrath & Kinzie (2000). The lowest scores were in the online, classroom technology and e-learning categories (see Appendix E for more information on self-efficacy subscale scores). These findings were to some extent confirmed by the answers to the question in the final section of the instrument on training needs in which teachers were asked what skills they would like to be trained in if they could receive training the following day. The answers to this open question were analyzed using Nvivo software, which allowed a count of the number of times each target skill was mentioned. The most frequently mentioned target skills included a variety of needs, with Excel training appearing at the top of the wish list and the next three referring to e-learning and online skills. Troubleshooting problems with sound, printers and zero client computers was also mentioned frequently and this could be explained by the challenges of the unreliability of technology.

Within each skills category, the survey gave clear indications of training needs. For example, in the category of questions relating to presentation software, most people agreed that they were able to create a simple Microsoft Power-point presentation, the total faculty self-efficacy score being 514. However, when it came to adding transitions and builds to a presentation, the total faculty self-efficacy score was 402, indicating that training could usefully be given in the more advanced uses of this software. The lowest score within this category was for use of the relatively new presentation software, Prezi, with a total faculty self-efficacy score of 299. Similarly, within the group of questions relating to spreadsheet software, the overall
score among Language Centre teachers for finding a piece of information in a spreadsheet with more than one page was 519, whereas the score for creating formulae in Excel was much lower, at 387. In this way the instrument can be used to pinpoint the exact needs of faculty members in each area of computer skills.

Training Needs

Training needs and preferences were explored in the third section of the survey. Current practice for professional development in the Language Centre is to offer voluntary, face-to-face, group training sessions which take place at convenient times during the teaching week and which are open to all members of the Language Centre. Teachers were asked to choose the most preferred option from four possibilities regarding mode and timing of training delivery, as well as the target population of the training. As regards the mode of delivery, the option of receiving one-to-one training received a score equal to that of face-to-face group training (35% each). Step by step text/screenshot instructions for individual access was second choice (18%) and the least preferred mode of instruction was pre-recorded, step-by-step videos demonstrating the target skills (12%).

An attempt to correlate the type of training preferred with self-efficacy scores was made, but no significant correlation was found. In terms of the timing of training sessions, participants slightly preferred the option of attending training sessions at convenient times during the working week (30%) to the other options of taking part in sessions either during the break between semesters (29%) or before the academic year begins (24%). The end of the academic year was the least preferred option (17%). There was a clear preference for training to be delivered and targeted to teachers working on the same program together with 58% of teachers choosing this as their first option. The second most preferred option was for training sessions which are open to all members of the Language Centre 34%, with a very low percentage preferring training to take place with colleagues from other departments in the university (8%).

In the responses to the invitation to make open comments on any aspect of training, nine mentions were made of the problem teachers face when they attend a training session, but subsequently do not use the skill in question. Suggestions to overcome this problem made by the respondents included supplying follow-up worksheets after each session that could be completed as homework assignments, continuation of sessions online or for training sessions to be offered in series as short courses. The need for training to be streamed was mentioned by five respondents, with frustrations being expressed when participants in a session have widely differing skills levels.

There were also several comments on the general subject of support. Two respondents commented on the need for consultants to answer particular questions and two comments on the need to utilize and spread the knowledge of colleagues with more advanced skills. Availability of technical support was mentioned by two people and there were a further three comments on the unreliability of technology in the university and the effect this has on classroom practice. Linked to this, there were two comments on the fact that the university should invest more in up-to-date technology, including interactive whiteboards and I-pads.

Conclusions and recommendations
University language teachers in Oman with various levels of experience and from a variety of backgrounds seem to be actively involved in using computer technology in their teaching and working life. Nevertheless, teachers in the higher age groups as well as those who have had limited training in information and computer technology and who make less frequent use of it tend to have lower computer self-efficacy. These findings suggest that there is a need for training for these groups of teachers.

The ability to use a computer for word processing and emailing is perceived as relatively high by Sultan Qaboos University language teachers. This finding suggests that these areas of teachers’ computer self-efficacy can be given lower priority for training. However, there are some abilities and skills of the teachers that clearly need training and are of higher priority, namely working online, use of classroom technology, e-learning, trouble-shooting problems with office hardware, and using Excel and presentation software.

Teachers’ preferred modes of training and professional development that will enhance their computer self-efficacy include training sessions which are followed by self-access tasks in order to reinforce and practice the skills. Workshops given in series so that more basic tasks can be learned before moving on to more complex tasks are also preferred. Further, there is also a clear preference for professional development sessions that are streamed in terms of the ability of the teachers and targeted to their personal and professional needs. Teachers also need opportunities for one-to-one consultations with a highly experienced faculty member in order to find solutions to computer technology problems as soon as they occur.

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References


Appendix A

Investigation of LC Teachers' Perceived Computer Self-Efficacy: Identification of Knowledge and Skills Gaps for Teacher-Driven, Research-Based Professional Development.

Technology is changing rapidly and training opportunities are essential for every ELT professional. This study aims at measuring and investigating the Language Centre teachers' computer self-efficacy in order to assess their computer knowledge and identify skills gaps for professional development. This is a joint project by the Professional Development and Research Unit and the Faculty Academic Support Unit. For more detailed information about this project, please go to http://www.squ.edu.om/tabid/14123/language/en-US/Default.aspx.

Taking part in the survey
Please tick the boxes below to indicate that you are happy to take part in the survey.
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the introduction to this research project. □
2. I understand that participation is voluntary. □
3. I understand that anonymized quotes of any data I provide for this research project may be used in future publications. □
4. I agree to take part in the research study. □

Section 1 Personal Information
In this section we would like you to give us some information about yourself.
1. Age group. Please tick your age group.
   a. 35 or under □
   b. 36 – 45 □
   c. 46 – 55 □
   d. 56 – 65 □
   e. 65+ □
2. Gender – please tick:
   Female □
   Male □
3. Highest Degree – please tick:
   BA/BSc □
   MA/MSc □
   PhD □
4. When did you obtain your highest qualification? (Please write the year) _______
5. Please write the number of years' teaching experience you have: ______
6. Please write the number of years you have been working in the LC: ______
7. Have you had previous training in using computer technology outside the Language Centre? (Please circle)
   Yes   No
8. Have you attended training in using computer technology inside the LC in the last two years? (Please circle)
   Yes   No
9. How often do you use computer technology in your everyday life? (Please tick)
   a. Always □
   b. Often □
   c. Sometimes □
   d. Never □
10. How important to you is using computer technology in your teaching? (Please tick)
    a. Very important □
    b. Fairly important □
    c. Not very important □
    d. Not important at all □
Section 2 Computer Skills
This section measures your self-efficacy in carrying out a range of tasks using computers. Please rate yourself in terms of your confidence with each task.

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<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<td>Microsoft Word – any version after 2005</td>
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<td>7. find a piece of information in an Excel spreadsheet that has more than one page.</td>
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<td>9. copy and paste information from one Excel spreadsheet to another.</td>
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<td>11. extend formulae over a range of cells in an Excel spreadsheet.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. create a simple presentation using e.g. PowerPoint.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. create a simple presentation using Prezi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. organize text on slides in a presentation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. download a picture from the internet and add it to a presentation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. create a presentation with transitions and builds.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. access a document attached to an email.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18. send an email with an attachment.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. send one mail to several recipients.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. send a picture of an appropriate size for an email.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. manage emails using folders / key words.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. use a Google account to send and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Online</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. receive emails (Gmail).</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. use a Google account to share documents (Drive).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. use a Google account to share my calendar (Google Calendar).</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. join and contribute to an online group e.g. Wiggio, ‘Moodle Forum’.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. check my class list on the SQU Admissions and Registrations online system.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. book a room for a meeting using the room booking system on the Virtual Language Centre.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. capture a YouTube video using an add-on in Mozilla Firefox.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. use an online tool for referencing e.g. End Note, Zotero, Son of Citation Machine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. back up my files to a Cloud service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. set a proxy setting in Internet Explorer, Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. use outside on-line teaching resources e.g. Onestop English, Oxford University Press.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. create a blog or website for teaching purposes.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. sign up for a webinar.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Hardware</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. troubleshoot printer problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. scan a flash-drive/thumbnail for viruses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. find and play a CD track on a classroom computer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. use a Zero Client, assuming it is working efficiently.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. use a LCD projector in a classroom to show a document/video/picture/website.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. connect a laptop to a LCD projector using an RGB cable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disagree  Strongly  Disagree  Not sure  Agree  Agree  strongly

1  2  3  4  5
44. Troubleshoot sound problems in a lab or classroom.
45. Troubleshoot problems with a Zero Client.
46. Introduce Clarity software e.g. Tensebuster, Active Reading to students.
47. Teach using an already established Moodle course.
48. Check my students’ progress on Moodle.
49. Create my own Moodle course.
50. View my students’ Moodle Reader results.
51. Add a new student to my class in Moodle Reader.
52. Create a class in Turnitin.
53. Create an assignment in Turnitin.
54. Use quick marks in Turnitin to give feedback to my students.
55. Create an electronic portfolio.

**Section 3 Training Needs and Preferences**

1. Which type of training would you prefer? Please grade the following options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>1= least preferred</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4 = most preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. One-to-one, face-to-face training session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Face-to-face group workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Pre-recorded, step-by-step videos demonstrating the skill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Step-by-step text/screenshot instructions for individual access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. When would you prefer training to take place? Please grade the following options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>1= least preferred</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4 = most preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. During the semester break (January/February)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Convenient slots during a normal working week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. At the end of the spring semester before going on leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. One week before classes start</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Which group of people would you most like to be trained with? Please grade the following options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>1= least preferred</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3= most preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The people teaching the same course as me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Colleagues from across the LC.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Colleagues from across SQU.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. If you could receive training tomorrow on any aspect of computer technology, what would you like it to be about?

5. Any other comments on training?
6. Any other comments on any aspect of this questionnaire?

---

### Appendix B
Basic Results Of The Study: Test Level Statistics

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Items</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Examinees</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Possible Score</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Possible Score</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum actual score</td>
<td>96.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum actual score</td>
<td>275.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>215.2566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>215.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>32.6171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix C
Impact of Gender on Teachers’ Computer Self-efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Average Group 1</th>
<th>Std.Dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>St Dev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;35</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>227.438</td>
<td>23.441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>210.647</td>
<td>32.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>206.500</td>
<td>26.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 up</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>201.105</td>
<td>36.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total/Overall</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>216.097</td>
<td>30.570</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Male     |    |                 |         |
|          | n | Mean            | St Dev  |
| <35      | 3 | 231.333         | 30.665  |
| 36-45    | 11| 243.455         | 26.987  |
| 46-55    | 8 | 215.875         | 26.281  |
| 56 up    | 19| 213.368         | 38.238  |
| Total/Overall | 41 | 213.780 | 36.645  |

### Appendix D
Impact of Previous Training Outside the Language Centre on Teachers’ Computer Self-efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Average Group 1</th>
<th>Std.Dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training Before LC</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>220.9714286</td>
<td>32.9972744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Training Before LC</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>205.9534884</td>
<td>30.2518386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E
Impact of Training in the Language Centre on Teachers’ Computer Self-Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICT Training in LC</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>215.845</td>
<td>31.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No ICT Training in LC</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>213.551</td>
<td>37.780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix F
Collective efficacy Subscale Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Excel</th>
<th>Presentation software (PowerPoint, Prezi)</th>
<th>E-mail</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Office Hardware</th>
<th>Classroom technology</th>
<th>E-learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Technology Use in the Language Classroom:
Paradigms, Experiments, and Recommendations

Sanaa Riaz
Applied Linguistics Program, College of Liberal Arts
Ashford University, Denver, Colorado, USA

Abstract
The use of technology in language learning brings forth several challenges to task-based teaching and student preparation in colloquial usage. As the internet becomes a mode for new forms of written, oral and visual languages everyday with their unique community of users, the last two decades have seen a redefinition of the pedagogical paradigms that inform language literacy goals in the classroom. Where technology-based activities are challenging teachers who wonder its efficacy in meeting the language proficiency goals of their syllabus, teachers who have incorporated such activities to teach language have not seen overwhelming success, thereby making them hesitant to experiment. The purpose of this paper is to bring pedagogical challenges posed by technology use in language classrooms to the forefront and discuss a few case studies from across continents to highlight how a constructivist approach to language teaching using technology and effective teacher scaffolding allows for student engagement in their own learning and helps teachers achieve the desired proficiency level in their classes. The paper ends with a look at the limitations of and recommendations for incorporating technology in language teaching.

Keywords: technology-based activities, constructivist approach, cultural experiments, cultural competence, critical thinking.
Introduction

The world of internet is increasingly the first place where the youth is engaging in and learning their first conversational discourses. The need for language teachers to incorporate technology-based activities in their classrooms is the primary mode through which they can bring the target language closer and make it more relatable to the out-of-class world of their students. However, this poses several challenges in terms of the paradigms that define a teacher’s role and approach in the classroom and requires an understanding that simply applying technology-based activities is not an end in itself. Rather, it requires scaffolding. In this paper, I will examine the pedagogical approaches that have traditionally informed language teaching and how they have been challenged by the pedagogical paradigms of teaching using technology in the last two decades. I will next bring forward some recent case studies and experiments done across the world to incorporate technology in language teaching, the approaches they were based on, and the extent to which their results were positive. In the process, I will include a discussion of the problems that scholars state teachers will run into if they simplistically replace non-technology mediated classrooms with projects involving technology. I will conclude by highlighting the limitations of and recommendations for incorporating technology-based activities in language classrooms.

Challenging Paradigms

Pedagogical approach to incorporating technology in language classrooms in the 1960s and 70s was based on the behaviorist model that equated computer-assisted instruction (CAI) with language drills and practices. The 1980s and 1990s turned attention to the cognitive and language proficiency needs of ESL students that further led to an emphasis on content-based teaching. The last decade, however, has ushered in a constructivist approach to incorporate technology in language classrooms, which entails that learning is an active process that requires the teacher to move from a sage to a backstage guide (Wang, 2005). It is a break away from the simple interaction paradigm in which technology supports the study of language instruction for the instructor to one in which technology is the instrument for the students to experience first-hand and apply the target language in authentic, context-embedded social scenarios (Davis, 2000).

Authenticity and Validity

Technology-based assessments are becoming common (Bahrani, 2011). An important struggle with computer-adapted tests is that they are not individualized enough. Test developers and teachers, thus have to be cautious of adopting them without alterations. Self-assessments and short screening tests so far have been the recent techniques used to tailor tests. However, individualizing questions to assess the speaking proficiency of students through multiple-choice based questions is not basing them in authentic, real world activities that can prepare students in using the language (Jameison, 2005). For a language assessment to be valid, it must be based on the student’s communicative competence in the language in relation to its functionality in a social environment and community and not on the student’s ability to guess the best answer based on the test maker’s worldview.

Task-based Teaching

Lai (2011) states that in order for a teacher to incorporate task-based activities using technology, it is important that they first redefine what task means. Usually, teachers are of the opinion that task-based activity is the accomplishment of a task that will allow the student to fulfill a requirement for the successful completion of the coursework and be promoted. Lai argues that that does not guarantee the holistic absorption of language in all its forms and the capability to develop on it after the course ends. The author, thus, redefines task-based language teaching as a holistic activity which assists the student in succeeding in displaying cultural competence rather than linguistic perfection outside the classroom. The aim is to encourage and assess student’s language learning through their reflective engagement in the process, rather than their performance on a language exam. What it automatically calls for is a less structured learning environment in which inquiry is based on student agency, rather than teacher-ordained
tasks that mirror an abstract ideal of proficiency that students reactively and blindly follow the syllabus rules to achieve. Lee (2006) argues that once students are made in charge of their learning and in doing it their own way, cyber activities can really help provide different learning mediums. His team’s experiment with students using technology demonstrated that exchanges between native and non-native speakers through emails, simultaneous text-based online chatting and voice chatting showed positive results in syntax, vocabulary, speaking, writing, and intercultural competency.

Peters et al. (2011) noted that French language students at five different Canadian universities use the web to maintain and improve their language skills, that is, for goal-oriented purposes, to check and gather information, that is, for action-oriented purposes, to receive, search and share knowledge with other French learning students (that is, collaborate and socialize), and to learn about the French culture (that is, to improve their cross-cultural competency skills). Thus, a teacher can aim towards raising a topic in the classroom every week that is selected based on the student’s language proficiency level and interest, and ask students to join different chat rooms and exchange ideas with their classmates or other students in the institution.

Constructive Learning Goals and Meta-Communication

Constructive learning involves learning that satisfies one’s social and personal needs. Mitchell (2012) conducted a study of the use of Facebook by ESL students to conclude that they do not make friends on interacting with native speakers to fulfill classroom assignments so much as by making friends and sharing information in English on Facebook. Fakebook, is a social networking site that imitates Facebook with privacy settings that allow students to use it for educational purpose, while being able to control the community of outsiders who can view it. Sites like Fakebook allow teachers to help students relate their social lives outside of class to their language goals without running into privacy issues. Language learners create profiles, express what they feel in status updates (similar to maintaining daily dairies), subscribe to group pages that connect them with their research and social interests, and similar activities in the foreign language that acculturate them to its culture and train them to use language critically and effectively for a specific purpose without feeling the pressure of performing successfully on a class assignment.

Istifci (2011) adds to the argument by stating that meta-communication, communication about communication, is an important process through which language is practiced. However, if the information in the communication is only commented upon by the teacher, then it is not constructive learning, but simply students learning the worldview of the teacher. As interaction online is focused on the spontaneity of response as well as reflection on one’s own and other’s responses, using online forums help develop the meta-communicative skills of ESL students.

One of the problems in the kind of language students learn in the classroom, specifically adult and content-specific ESL classrooms, is that it is too academic to prepare students for everyday, colloquial usage and the abbreviations with which the cyber culture is inundated. Taking cue from Istifci, incorporating chat room, Twitter like micro-blogging platforms allow students to master the colloquial as well as the standard dialect, while the community of users speaking that language from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds that they put students in touch with simultaneously builds their cross-cultural competence. Since internet language is three-dimensional, it has the immediacy of speaking, is a forum for both formal and academic writing, and a medium to engage in the creation, reception, and blending of visual symbolism through videos, images, and presentation software. A child learns his/her first language by constantly receiving and filtering oral, visual, verbal and written stimuli. Whether a student enters a chat room or begins adding to or editing a previously authored Wiki entry, or simply discusses a college subject, he/she is simultaneously receiving and filtering information and developing a stance towards it (Crystal, 2011). This ensures that the student’s cultural competency in knowing how to appropriately use a language is being developed as much as his/her traditional language skills; reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Corbett, 2003). Finally, a large component of meta-communication involves non-verbal
communication, a skill that is rarely emphasized in language classrooms, but available through the language of emoticons, heightened use of exclamations, and graphics in internet forums.

Lee’s experiment (2006) with second and fourth graders to improve their writing skills seconds Istifči’s argument. He used e-text because the fact that it is available in a variety of forms such as, games, simulations, educational software, talking books, and telecommunications, allows teachers to create the various contexts, audio-visual, spatial, sensory, and motory skills in the students that they unconsciously absorb growing up in their first language. This way, Lee argues, teachers were able to develop the students’ visual, audio, and textual comprehension of the language in context, rather than provide them textbook lesson examples that have them imagine scenarios without making them a part of them. Lee argues that technology infused with such constructivist pedagogy also allows students to work collaboratively and autonomously. This style of working in which students create and disseminate knowledge on their own dismantles the teacher-student hierarchy in which students only strive to perform better to impress their teachers. With hands-on activities like that offering real world experience, students take interest in and responsibility for their own learning and take their cohorts as resources, not competitors. Teachers can utilize mediums like internet chat to allow students to discuss assignments with their peers through conferencing, or use chat room forums to conduct book discussions. The presence of the transcript in a chat room can allow them to see syntax and reflect on how they should frame their own and respond to others’ statements. Dozens of free and easily purchasable discussion boards and web page services, such as eslcafe.com/forums/student, http://amazingforum.com, quicktopic.com, and others exist online that teachers can introduce to the students to create their own collaborative, learning environment (Lacina, 2004/2005).

Context-embedded Learning: Experiments across Cultures and Student Populations

Sharing their experiment in an ESL classroom in Japan, Hinkelman et al. (2012) note that blended classroom environment reduced student anxieties and encouraged teachers to use more locally-authored multimedia materials instead of using internationally published course books that do not speak to the cultural sensibilities of the language learners. Using a Language Management Software (LMS) in this experiment, one teacher at Kita University called response papers as Lecture-feedback Module. Students entered responses each week after class by going to the class website in one of the computer labs. The LMS became a record of the course, allowed for student-authored comments, access to the teacher’s summary, and tracked individual participation. Hinkelman et al. thus, conclude that power and hegemony become subject to mediation in virtual space as production and ownership of teaching materials is passed on from the teacher to the students. In the same vein, I would like to draw attention to how technology use in the classroom can improve student-teacher relation and students’ socialization patterns in general outside the classroom, thereby returning to the idea that incorporating technology in language teaching builds students’ inter-cultural communication competency (Corbett, 2003).

Visual reinforcement is an essential element for any special population. Deaf and hearing students with limited English proficiency require three-dimensional language. Cambridge and team (1998) initiated a sharing Shakespeare project in which students used software to link original text fields to images found on the World Wide Web, images scanned in from research discovered in books on Elizabethan times, and “frame grabbed” from their play on videotape. Students videotaped the vocabulary of King Lear translated into American Sign Language. They then connected the camera to an audiovisual computer and “digitized” the video sign clips. As a result, they collected more than 100 digital Shakespearian Signs and stored them for later. This hands-on activity engaged them beyond classroom hours and made the language project part of their lifelong memory.

Tanner and co-researchers (2004) debated the idea of intelligibility and challenged the usefulness of Computer-aided pronunciation (CAP) that show pronunciation accuracy for isolated words or phrases. The immediate feedback on the accuracy of the utterance is a great way to lessen the teachers’ burden of grading student pronunciation work, but it does not guarantee that the student is going to have a vision of the words in context to use them correctly in sentences, phrases and conversations in the future. Tanner
upholds that intelligibility of utterance for second language learners should be based on criteria that make native speakers decide whether non-native speaker’s speech is intelligible or not in terms of stress, rhythm, intonation, and pauses. For example, even the most perfect conversation, if not accompanied by the right duration of pauses at the right points in a sentence can disrupt the immediate comprehension of the meaning the speaker intends to communicate. Tanner thus suggests that podcasts are a better solution to CAPs. His experiment involved using recorded podcasts of native speakers on various topics in ESL classrooms. Students were asked to put stress and pause markers after listening to podcasts and then making their own podcasts following that model. Students then shared it with the class to see how close they were in passing for native intonation and rhythm in delivering complete ideas. In phonology, stress factor in intonation must be learned because native speakers do not hear a word completely; they hear the primary stress and determine what the rest of the word is. For example, simply hearing RE in record will tell a native speaker that the noun form is being used, whereas hearing CORD in reCORD will tell that the verb form is being used. Tanner’s experiment can be used to blend traditional writing exercises in similar experiments at the early stage. Students can write the text of their podcasts with stress and pause markers and then record them, until they no longer need them for spontaneous speech.

Yakimchuk (2010) highlights that technology can help students with reading and writing challenges. In a study conducted on English language learners (ELL) and non-English language learning international students at a Canadian university, the participating group of ELL students showed 9% academic improvement through screen-reading software use and the non-ELL students showed 3% improvement. Whether the effect is significant or not, it highlights the enhancement that technology-based activities can bring to ELL’s learning experiences.

Limitations and Recommendations

There are at least five main challenges to incorporating technology in language teaching. First, is training the teachers who can be overwhelmed with reviewing and managing RSS feeds related to multiple projects for overlapping individual and communal/collaborative projects (Akinwamide, 2012). Hassanzadeh et al. ran an experiment on 102 teachers to understand if technology use requires a different kind of pedagogical disposition. They found a direct correlation between the quotient of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extroversion, neurotism, and openness in teachers who were enthusiastic about incorporating information and communications technology (ICT), such as internet, email, presentation, word processing and office work in their language classrooms. However, they still demonstrated low levels of ICT usage for specialized software applications such as authoring, graphics, and simulations, which demonstrated the importance of not just pre-training, but on-going training of teachers in CALL. The researchers highlight that even in cases where teachers were more prepared to incorporate ICT, the curriculum planners, teacher educators, and policy makers were slow in catching up with the ideas teachers had to incorporate technology-based projects in the classroom. They, therefore, pointed to the need to synchronize these intentions at both the curriculum development level and the pedagogical level.

The second challenge is related to the first one; the class size must be controlled to allow proper attention and time to each student. The third challenge is training the students because equal participation requires and assumes that all students will be availing technology for individual learning and for contributing to group projects and if some students learn it slower than others, then their performance will be affected, they may get tense about falling short of receiving good evaluation from their teacher, and fall short of making the most of the class projects for their language development. The fourth challenge is ensuring that the class duration is long enough for students with varying learning paces to completely immerse in interactive learning. The fifth challenge is that a teacher who incorporates RSS and other technological tools can only hope that students will continue to use them after completing the course, especially because the next teacher, say at the next proficiency level at an ESL institute, may not use them in teaching. Therefore the fifth challenge of convincing enough teachers to incorporate RSS, Weblogs, and other constructive learning tools and of ensuring that students continue to use surf, research, and socialize in the foreign language only.
Oxford and team (2006) measured the effects and benefits of weekly/structured, in-class computer-assisted grammar drill and practice on the composition quality and quantity of intermediate university Spanish learners. The result showed that the student group that received weekly, structured computer grammar and vocabulary practice had higher scores for composition quality and quantity. However, it must be remembered that technology use must continue to aid students’ long-term engagement with the language and that performance in a composition test focused on how many words a student can write in a given time cannot measure their immersion in the language. Rather, technology use must be incorporated into the processual stages of writing, rather than the assessment of the final product.

Technology in language teaching should aim at not only teaching cultural diversity, but also cultural complexity, discuss issues of technological imperialism and engender a wider view of the language in them through critical thinking of web-based content (Lear, 2003). Lear notes that Spanish language students cannot use technology as effectively for multi-context based learning because everything in the World Wide Web is mostly in English. Thus, incorporating newspaper columns for reading and summary-based writing is not enough. Students should be allowed to critique biases in this and other technology-transmitted mediums, so as to discriminate bad information from good information, and deconstruct linguistic, cultural, and discourse hegemonies on the web.

Conclusions and Future Trends

Technology-based language learning involves contesting the traditional notion of linear, unidimensional literacy and opening up to the idea of various social and intellectual literacies that the world-wide web can help students develop on their own with some teacher guidance (Murray, 2005). Reading information on the web is not the only important factor in literacy. Being able to code and decode it, to contribute to the shared corpus of knowledge on the web and use it for one’s own creative and personal enrichment is also important. In electronic blog and wiki activities, print literacy, the ability to analyze the what, who, and why in reading, to take positions in writing and argue for and against a point of view, and to discuss controversial subjects in a cultured and academic manner remains the overarching paradigm of literacy (Pegrum, 2010). Teachers simply need to provide scaffolding to allow students to use this multi-dimensional mode of literacy to improve their cultural competence and proficiency in the language.

Neville (2010) argues for using 3D digital games in second language classrooms, which allows students to do something that accentuates their outside classroom life, see language embedded in conditions and behaviors, and a narrative they can all experience and share together. However, he warns that such experiments cannot simply mean putting students in a computer lab and having them play the game. It involves understanding the environment of the particular game, the social contexts implied in it, which might challenge many second language learners, and the incidental information that the game is meant to expose students to, the role of the players, the particular language skills that the game will be used to teach, etc. Similarly, Cobb and Horst (2011) studied that the use of an integrated suite of vocabulary training games for Nintendo called My Word Coach by French speaking ESL students at a school in Montreal led to much higher levels of recognition of vocabulary, longer oral productions, reduced code-switching, and a better sense of lexicon than before.

Little research has been done on learner control with advisement in computer-assisted language learning. Wang and Sutton (2002) took two student groups in Taiwan and advised one to demonstrate that advisement improved the English vocabulary of that group in comparison to the other group. More studies highlighting the quantitative and qualitative effects of CALL with advisement control are needed. More broadly, studies are needed on the effects of CALL on student proficiency and teacher’s pedagogical success.

This paper was an attempt to highlight how technology use in language classrooms calls for a dialogic approach to student learning and one in which students construct knowledge rather than passively receive it from the teacher. As the experiments highlighted, technology-based activities must be context-driven, culturally sensitive, and accompany teaching scaffolding in terms of goals and use. Technology-
based language building activities ensure that students are individually and collectively critically analyzing the discourse, that is the context and the positioning of the speaker when reading, they are developing reflective writing skills, they are filtering information for quality and their needs like native speakers do on a daily basis, they are at once a part of speech acts, they are role-playing, and they are negotiating their positionalities, in relation to varying social communities and situations. It is, therefore, crucial for teachers to incorporate and celebrate this medium and to redefine their role, their pedagogical approach, the learning outcomes of the course, and their teaching tools in ways that ensure that their students can relate language learned in class to their experiences outside the classroom.

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References


Theories of Semantics: Merits and Limitations

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Abstract
Meaning is so intangible that one group of linguists, the structuralists, preferred not to deal with it or rely on it at all. It is a variable and not to be taken for granted. Nevertheless, many theories have been interested in the study of meaning. Because of the limited scope of this paper, the discussion will cover some of the well-known theories of meaning formulated in the last century. Mainly referential theory of meaning, non-referential theory of meaning and generative grammarian theory of meaning are discussed. Some assumptions, merits and limitations for each theory are also described. The researcher hopes that many people can benefit from this article since meaning is a complex concept and difficult to understand.

Keywords: Generative Grammarian Theory, Meaning, Non-Referential Theory, Referential Theory, Semantics
Introduction

Semantics is the technical term used to refer to the study of meaning, and, since meaning is a part of language, semantics is a part of linguistics. Unfortunately, “meaning” covers a variety of aspects of language and there is no general agreement about the nature of meaning, what aspects it may properly be included in semantics, or the way in which it should be described.

Meaning is so intangible that one group of linguists, the structuralists, preferred not to deal with it or rely on it at all. To illustrate what we mean by the intangible quality of “meaning”, think of such words as “beauty”, “goodness”, “love”; it would be hard to find two people who agree absolutely on what each of these words implies. A person may seem good to one onlooker and a hypocrite to another. Similarly, we all think we know what we mean by “boy” and “man”, but at what age does a boy cease to be a boy? At thirteen? Fifteen? Eighteen? Twenty-one?

Meaning is a variable and not to be taken for granted. Meaning has become a matter of great concern to philosophers, literary scholars and thinkers all over the world. Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and others in ancient China and in ancient India made many statements about meaning and some of them are still relevant today. Because of the limited scope of this paper, the researcher is going to discuss the main assumptions, merits, and limitations of three well-known theories of meaning. These theories are: referential theory of meaning, the non-referential theory of meaning and generative grammarian theory of meaning. None of them is perfect; each of them has merits and limitations. Since meaning is a complex phenomenon and difficult to understand, it is hoped that many students can benefit from this study and form certain views about meaning and how it operates. In the following sections, each theory will be explained with some detail.

I. The Referential Theory of Meaning

a. Meaning as the Relationship between Words and Objects

Greek philosophers say that there is a relationship between words and objects. In other words, the best way of indicating the meaning of a word is to refer to the object represented by that word. In their points of view, the best definition of the meaning of a word is its ostensive definition: defining an object by pointing to that object.

This view has been criticized because it works very well only with concrete words, such as dog, house, table, sun, door...etc, but it does not with abstract words—such as, the, and, because, ambition, happiness,...etc.

b. Meaning as a Triangular Relationship

Ogden and Richard (1923:11) explained the meaning of a word with the help of a triangle.

Reference (Thought)

Symbol

Referent

The symbol is the spoken or written word; the reference is the information that the spoken or written shape of the word conveys to the reader/hearer; and the referent is the thing or the object we talk about. The broken line means that there is no direct relationship between word and the object that it refers to. Their view about meaning is nearly the same as of the Greek philosophers. The only new thing they added is that it is the human mind that links an object...
with the word used for that object. Again, this view works only with concrete words, but it does not with abstract ones.

c. Bloomfield’s View of Meaning

Bloomfield (1933) stated that the context of situation was an essential part of meaning. He defined the meaning of a linguistic form as the situation in which the speaker utters it and the response which it calls forth in the hearer. Palmer (1981) used reference in the sense of non-linguistic world of objects and experiences. In this sense, the word reference is used for the whole network of the contexts of situations in which we live. In other words, both Bloomfield and Palmer focus on the context of situations. Bloomfield also thinks of meaning as something describable in terms of stimuli and responses like Skinner who came after him. Skinner (1957) views meaning as a result of stimuli and responses made by participants in a verbal act of communication. Like Skinner, Bloomfield explained his view of meaning with the help of an imagined verbal communication between Jack and Jill.

Jill, who is hungry, sees an apple. The apple in this case is the stimulus. This stimulus can produce in Jill a response in the form of an action and Jill can go and get the apple. Jill’s response may as well be in the form of a verbal action and she may ask Jack to go and get the apple for her. Jill’s verbal action operates as a linguistic response of his getting the apple for Jill. For him, meaning can be defined as the non-linguistic events that precede and follow that verbal action.

Bloomfield (p. 139) also states that “we can define the meaning of a speech form accurately when this meaning has to do with some matter of which we possess scientific knowledge”. He believes that speech is a physical event and the human behaviors and language as part of human behavior are subject to the laws of science which were applicable in the case of other physical events in the universe. He thinks that knowledge obtained from research in physical sciences would solve all linguists’ problems.

His belief may work well in the area of phonology, the phonetic laboratory. But in semantics, his view seems untrue because it is impossible for us to provide a scientifically accurate definition of the meaning of every word in a language. He himself asserts that “the statement of meaning is, therefore, the weak point in language study, and will remain so until human knowledge advances very far beyond the present state” (p. 140).

Leech (1981:2) has described this statement as “a pessimistic note, which turned out to be the virtual death-knell of semantics in the USA for the next twenty years”. Therefore, Bloomfield’s theory loses its force when we realize how many of the relevant predisposing factors are unknown and unknowable. Skinner’s theory runs into difficulties of a similar kind. It is easy to identify the stimuli, the responses and reinforcing events in the lab, but human behavior, especially language is much more complex and it is impossible to identify the relevant events.

Malinowski (1923) and Firth (1951) believe that the description of a language could not be complete without some reference to the context of situation in which the language operates. They made statements of meaning in terms of the situation.

For Malinowski, a context of situation was a bit of the social process which can be considered a part or an ordered series of events. He does not provide the basis of any workable semantic theory. He does not even discuss the ways in which context can be handled in a systematic way to provide a statement of meaning.
Firth felt that Malinowski’s context of situation was not satisfactory for the more accurate and precise linguistic approach to the problem. So, he sees the context of situation as part of the linguistic apparatus in the same way as are the grammatical categories that he uses. It was best used as “a suitable schematic construct” to apply to language event, and he, therefore, suggested the following categories.

- The relevant features of participants: persons, personalities.
- The verbal action of the participants.
- The non–verbal action of the participants.
- The relevant object.
- The effect of the verbal action.

In this way, contexts of situation can be grouped and classified; this is essential if it is to be part of linguistic analysis of language.

Firth’s view of meaning is more comprehensive than many other views because, for him, meaning includes those aspects which are describable in terms of intra–linguistic relation, and also the other aspects which are described in terms of the relationship between language and the world outside language. But it is impossible to decide what is in the world and what is in language. Contexts of situations may not be right for the vast majority of the sentences that we encounter. He himself believes that we could never capture the whole of meaning.

II. The Non–Referential Theory of Meaning

Bridge (1927: 6) states that “the proper definition of a concept is not in terms of its properties, but in terms of actual operations”. For him a concept is nothing more than a set of operations. If the concept is physical as of length; the operations are actual physical operations, namely, those by which length is measured: or if the concept is mental, as of mathematical continuity, the operations are mental operations, namely those by which we determine whether a given aggregate of magnitude is continuous.

Wittgenstein (1953) states a similar definition of meaning and says that the meaning of a word is defined by its use in the language. His opinion of words and concepts are like the instruments in hands of a technician.

Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw–driver, a ruler a glue–pot, glue, nails and screws. The function, of words are as diverse as the functions of those objects.

To make this view clear, he compares the use of language with the game of chess. Just as the role of a piece in the game of chess can be defined only in relation to the other pieces in that game, the meaning of a word can be defined only in relation to the way that is used in relation to other words in the language. To make his view evident, he says that the meanings of the word have are not the same in the following examples:

- Birds have wings.
- I have two children.
- I have a good memory.

Similarly, the meanings of the word is in the following sentences are not the same.

- The rose is red.
- Twice two is four.
Wittgenstein suggests the use of the lexical substitution technique to perceive the differences in meaning in these examples by allowing us to replace the word *is* in the second sentence by the sign of equality, and forbidding this substitution in the first sentence (p.149).

The non-referential approach as suggested by its name doesn’t take into consideration the context of situations or the reference in determining what meaning is. There is a relationship between language and the outside world because language doesn’t exist in vacuum. Therefore, this may indicate a weakness in this theory.

**III .The Generative Grammarian Theory**

Chomsky (1957) ignored meaning in his formulation, *syntactic structures*. This approach was based on the assumption that syntactic rules operate independently of meaning. Chomsky and others believe that changing the active into passive structures does not change the meaning of the sentence.

Kats and Fodor (1963) revealed a basic change in the transformational grammarian approach to the study of meaning in "The Structure of a Semantic Theory". Since then, meaning has been a matter of great theoretical concern to transformational grammarians. Despite several modifications suggested by others, their theory contributes to be the foundation to the study of meaning until present.

Chomsky (1965) introduced in his book: "Aspects of the Theory of Syntax", the concept of the deep and surface structure and stated that the meaning of a sentence depends on the network of relations in the deep structure of a sentence. Later on, the generative framework became two different theories. Lakeoff (1974), and others developed a theory known as *Generative Semantics*, whereas Jackendoff (1972) and others another theory based on the theory introduced by Katz and Fodor, and this theory is known as *Interpretive Semantics*. In the following two sections, the researcher is going to give a brief outline of these two theories.

**A. Interpretive Semantic Theory**

One aspect of this theory is the complete exclusion of the context of situation from its theoretical framework. This view is different from other views, particularly Firthian ones discussed previously. Katz (1972) and Fodor (1982) state that meaning should confine itself to the knowledge of language and not to the knowledge of the world. In other words, the aspects of meaning which are explainable only in terms of one's knowledge of the world should be better discussed by pragmatics and not by semantics. To illustrate their points they suggested the following sentences:

- Our store sells horse shoes.
- Our store sells alligator shoes.

It is on the basis of one's knowledge of the world (that shoes are made for horses but not for alligators and that shoes made out of the skin of an alligator but not out of the skin of horses) that one assigns only one interpretation to such phrases. Therefore, non-linguistic knowledge helps in understanding the meaning. But this knowledge which one needs for processing meaning is physically endless. So this theory will face difficulties if it attempts to include this knowledge within its framework. Katz and Fodor (1963) make the following observation. Since there is no serious possibility of systematizing all the knowledge of the world that speakers share and since a theory of the kind we have been discussing requires such a systematization, it is *ipso facto* not a serious model for semantics. Because of many changes
made in the basic structure of this theory in 1970s, the researcher is going to discuss it with some
detail into two sections.

1. The Early Interpretive Semantics

The two components of interpretive semantics are the lexicon and the projection rules. The
function of the lexicon is to provide the information we need for each word of the language
concerning its role in meaning interpretation. The word has a grammatical portion and a
semantic portion. The grammatical portion tells us whether the word is a noun, a verb, adjective,
adverb... etc. The semantic portion of the lexicon provides us with semantic components of each
word. To illustrate this, we should study the following examples:

Man = + human + male + adult
Woman = + human –male + adult
Child = + human ± male – adult
Bull = + bovine + male + adult
Cow = + bovine – male + adult
Calf = + bovine ± male – adult
Ram = ovine + male + adult
Ewe = ovine – male + adult
Lamb = + ovine ± male – adult
Stallion = + equine + male + adult
Mare = + equine – male + adult
Foal = + equine ± male – adult

On the basis of these semantic markers, the meaning of these words can be
distinguished. Here the lexicon specifies the selectional restrictions applicable to each word. They help
the user of language why a particular expression in a language is semantically
anomalous. For example, green ideas sleep, is anomalous because we know that “green” has the
feature + physical object and “ideas” has the feature – physical object, so the meaning of these
two words together is anomalous in standard English. Similarly, the word “sleep” has the feature
+ animate and it is the incompatibility of the selectional restriction between these two words that
makes the sentence “ideas sleep” a semantically anomalous expression. The selectional
restrictions help us in choosing one of the two or more meanings of a particular word in a
sentence, for example, the word ball has two different meanings. It means “a round physical
object” and it also means “a dance”. If we have a semantic like, “Murad kicked the ball”, we
choose the meaning “round physical object” based on selectional restrictions. The verb “kicked”
can only take an object which has the feature + physical object. The word “ball” in the sense of
dance has the feature – physical object.

The grammatical component provides us with the phrase makers of a sentence. Lexical
items are put in proper places in the phrase marker of that sentence. At that stage, the projection
rules assign a meaning to a sentence as a whole based on the structured lexical items in that
sentence.

Interpretive semanticists believe that the meaning of a sentence depends on its deep
structure. They also think that certain transformational rules have to be applied to the deep
structure of a sentence to have its surface structure. These transformational rules do not affect
meaning. This view was given a lot of importance at that stage of generative grammar as we will
see in this paper.

2. The Later Interpretive Semantics

Chomsky (1967:407) said the following:
In fact I think that a reasonable explication of the term “semantic interpretation” would lead to the conclusion that the surface structure also contributed in a restricted but important way to semantic interpretation, but I will say no more about the matter here.

His view contradicted some generative grammarians who thought that the deep structure of a sentence had all the necessary information for the semantic interpretation of that sentence and that the surface structure of a sentence had absolutely no role in its semantic interpretation.

Katz (1972) continued claiming that interpretive rules apply only to the deep structure of a sentence, whereas Jackendoff (1972) argues that interpretive rules apply to the deep structure and also to the surface structure. He also continued to hold the view that interpretive rules are necessary for semantic interpretation. His view of interpretative semantics is as follows:

Everything needed for the semantic interpretation of sentence is not present in its deep structure. To illustrate his view, he gives us the following two examples:

- Only Peter reads books on linguistics
- Peter Only reads books on linguistics

These two sentences are different in meaning. The difference is due to the position of the quantifier “only” in the surface structure of each sentence. He emphasized that applying interpretive rules, only to the deep structure was not always enough for a satisfactory semantic interpretation of that sentence.

Jackendoff pointed that the active and the passive forms of a sentence do not have exactly the same meaning. To explain his view, he supported us with the following examples:

- Many arrows did not hit the target.
- The target was not hit by many arrows.

In the first sentence “many” has a more prominent meaning, but in the second, the meaning of the negative becomes more prominent than the meaning of the quantifier. The difference in meaning in these two sentences is due to the different places of the quantifier and the negative in the surface structure of these sentences.

**B. Generative Semantic Theory**

This theory depends on the assumption that there is no distinction between syntactic and semantic processes. In other words, they are integrative. Chomsky (1965) pointed out that “the syntactic component of a grammar must specify, for each sentence, a deep structure that determines its semantic representation. (p. 16). The advocates of this theory took this view a step further and equated the deep structure of sentences with their semantic representation. Katz and Postal (1964) who were generative grammarians pointed that transformations do not change the meaning of a sentence and others continued holding the same opinion. They argued that all aspects of the meaning of a sentence are represented in the phrase marker of that sentence and the role of transformations is to change the semantic structure of a sentence directly to its surface structure. They were aware of the fact that in many cases the two transformational variants of a sentence, the active and the passive, for example, do not always convey exactly the same meaning. They were also aware of the fact that the meaning of a sentence depends to a certain extent on the place assigned to quantifiers and negatives in the surface structure of that sentence. But they accounted for all such changes of meaning in terms of what they called global rules. These global rules, for example, that if a logical element had a wider scope than another in the semantic representation of a sentence, it must occur earlier in the surface structure of that sentence.
Interpretative Semantics versus Generative Semantics

For linguists, the deep structure, is the underlying network of syntactic relations. For generative semanticists, the deep structure is not “deep” enough. This approach wants the deep structure of a sentence to be so deep to be identical with its semantic representation. For interpretive semanticists, the semantic representation of a sentence has to be derived from its syntactic base, but for generative semanticists, the syntactic representation of a sentence, i.e. its surface structure has to be derived from its semantic base. For generative semanticists, the deepest level of the representation of a sentence is a network of language–independent categories definable by symbolic logic. They did make use of syntactic categories like noun, verb and sentence, but this was because these syntactic categories were virtual, the same as the categories of logic. The syntactic category of sentence, corresponds to the category of arguments and verbs correspond to the category of predicates in logic.

For generative semanticists, the underlying deep structure of a sentence has to be conceptualized in terms of the laws of thought compatible with the notion of a universal base hypothesis. Generative semanticists make no distinction between semantics and pragmatics, whereas interpretive semanticists did. Interpretive semanticists say that semantics should be studied only in terms of language, whereas the situational aspects of meaning should be studied by pragmatics and not by semantics. Generative semanticists increased the domain of grammar and included within its fold a study of all those societal phenomena which contribute to one’s understanding of meaning and one’s judgments about grammatically.

Lakoff (1974) emphasized the importance of external setting in the study of meaning and of grammar. He pointed out that there are certain concepts from the study of social interaction that are part of grammar, e.g. relative social status, politeness, formality, …etc.

Interpretive semanticists avoided the context of situation in their formulation, but generative semanticists focused on the context of situation and considered it a vital part of their theory.

Conclusion

The researcher has discussed the main principles of three well–known theories of meaning, namely the referential theory to meaning, the non–referential theory to meaning and the generative grammarian theory to meaning. None of them is complete; each of them has strengths and weaknesses. It is hoped that students can benefit from this study by forming some background about meaning and how it operates since it is a complex concept and not to be taken for granted.

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Abstract
This study explored college students strategies in learning English language. Two questions were presented. The first question is what strategies are used by the students in learning English language and the second question is how do the students use strategies in learning English language. To answer the first question, 201 college students gave respond on Strategy Inventory For Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire. Then, to answer the last question, five students participated in think aloud protocol (TAP) sessions. The data analysis from SILL questionnaire showed that the students were medium user of strategies in learning English language. The strategies then ranked from social strategies, followed by metacognitive, cognitive, affective, compensation, and memory strategies at the latter position. Then, to find out how do the students use strategies in learning English language, think aloud protocol (TAP) sessions with inter rater reliability 0.858 presented that the students made use of three major strategies in learning English language, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. These three strategies were used by the students in three different activities (understanding reading passage, dealing with unfamiliar words or phrases and self-awareness) as the study was limited to reading skills. In conclusion, the students made use of different strategies when doing particular task given to them. At this point, students in some ways have the ability to learn by themselves, that is by using strategies as lecturers cannot always facilitate students' learning, especially when lecturers teach large class.

Keywords: English language, English language learning, individual differences, language learning strategies, strategy in learning, psychology of language learner
Introduction

The atmosphere of English language learning the Indonesian students had before taking higher education in college whether at home, their neighborhood and even previous schools haven’t give the students much exposure for them to learn or practice English. As Saslow and Ascher (2005) pointed out that the language learning experience in an neighborhood which is surrounded by the English language is more effective by means of giving exposure and opportunities to practice with each other. However, it doesn’t stop the college students to learn English. Instead, English language is encourage to be learned as part of higher education curriculum.

One of the reasons are, scientific literature which are important for their study mainly are written in English language. Besides, there are a lot of opportunities to enrich knowledge and life experience by communicating with people or specifically scholars from other countries by using English language. These reasons provide the students purposes to learn English as foreign language.

As stated above, to achieve the purpose, the students have to learn English as foreign language. In the progress of English language learning, one of the factors which has influence to be successful English language learner is individual differences.

Individual differences, as pointed out by Dörnyei (2005) is characteristics of individuals which showed them to be different from each other. One of the individual differences which is being the main focus of this study is learning strategies. Strategies or learning strategies or even language learning strategies could be in many forms which are useful to improve language learning by facilitating internalization, storage, retrieval or use of the new language. Brown (2000) even noted that learners use different strategies to solve or approach a problem. Language learning strategies are very promising and not many articles or journals have been published about language learning strategies specifically to Indonesian college students.

As a result, the purposes of this research are: (1) to find out the strategies that have been used by the college students in learning English language; and (2) to find out how the college students use strategies in learning English language. At this point, this study presented findings on what strategies have been used by college students and how they use it in learning English language.

Literature Review

The Nature of Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies, or any other terms such as learning strategies or even strategies was actually has been well defined by Oxford (1999) who use the term learning strategies and proposed its definition as “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students use to improve their own progress in developing skills in a second or foreign language. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language” (p. 518).

The definition gave broad understanding not just about what the form of learning strategies can be but also provided the use of the learning strategies in developing skills in a second or foreign language by facilitating internalization, storage, retrieval or use of the new language.

Then, Brown (2000) defined strategies as "specific methods of approaching problems or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned design for controlling and
manipulating certain informations" (p. 113). The definition showed more specific form of strategies that exist which is used to achieve a specific purpose.

Referring to these two definitions, strategies or learning strategies or even language learning strategies could be in many forms which are useful to improve language learning by facilitating internalization, storage, retrieval or use of the new language. Brown (2000) also noted that learners use different strategies to solve or approach a problem.

**Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies**

Two taxonomies of language learning strategies are presented in this study (Present tense). First is by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) which classified language learning strategies into three categories, namely (1) cognitive strategies; (2) metacognitive strategies; and (3) social/affective strategies. Then, Oxford (1990) provides a more specific classification of language learning strategies, namely: (1) cognitive strategies; (2) memory strategies; (3) compensation strategies; (4) affective strategies; and (5) social strategies.

These two taxonomies are almost the same where cognitive strategies of O’Malley and Chamot (1990) are specified by Oxford (1990) into cognitive and memory strategies. Then, social/affective strategies of O’Malley and Chamot (1990) are considered standalone strategies in Oxford (1990), affective and social strategies. Meanwhile, metacognitive strategies are exist in both taxonomies, and compensation appeared only in Oxford (1990) taxonomy.

Regarding to these two taxonomies, Oxford (1990) taxonomy provides a clear cut of categories of language learning strategies.

**Research on Language Learning Strategies**

There are many research have been conducted on language learning strategies especially related to English as foreign language (EFL). Some of them are mentioned below.

First, there are some studies which overview previous language learning strategies theories (Clouston, 1997; Griffiths, 2004; Lee, 2010) and resulted a very broad perspective on language learning strategies as the theories have been reviewed many times.

As a result, the development of language learning strategies theories have led many researchers to conduct more research on language learning strategies. That is why, many studies on language learning strategies are correlated to other aspects, such as foreign language teaching (Hismanoglu, 2000; Chamot, 2004), English language proficiency (Mingyuan, 2001; Azumi, 2008), gender (Tercanlioglu, 2004) and many more. Moreover, one classic topic that exist nowadays is language learning strategy preferences (Özmen, 2012).

These studies have inspired the researcher to find out language learning strategies preferences in Indonesian college students context. What makes this research different is that besides language learning strategy preferences, the research also focusing on how do the Indonesian college students use strategies in learning English language.

**Method**

**Subjects**

201 first year students of College of Teacher Training and Education of Teachers Association of The Republic of Indonesia of Pontianak, West Borneo, Indonesia or known as STKIP-PGRI Pontianak, West Borneo, Indonesia who are taking English education study program as their area of interest gave respond through Strategy Inventory for Language Learning or known as SILL. Then, five college students were chosen purposively to join think aloud protocol sessions. There was no specific criteria used to choose the sample. In this case, the
college students were chosen from five different classes who have filled Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire.

**Techniques of Data Collection**

Two techniques were used to collect the data, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire and think aloud protocol or known as (TAP).

**Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)**

SILL is well known by its use to identify language learning strategy preferences. Kazamia (2007) pointed out that SILL consist of 50 items which the items presenting language learning strategy and every respondents will be asked to respond to the SILL items by indicating how frequently they use those strategies by selecting one response out of five Likert scale options.

The SILL classified language learning strategies into six parts which use Oxford (1990) classification of language learning strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, social and affective strategies).

Knowing that SILL has been used worldwide, a pilot test was conducted to check its reliability to 40 students who have the same characteristics with the sample. The data has been analyzed by using SPSS. or known as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Based on the result of SPSS, the reliability coefficient Cronbach alpha was found to be .902, which showed that it was highly reliable.

**Think Aloud Protocol (TAP)**

Think Aloud Protocol or known as TAP was used to provide how the students use strategies in learning English language. TAP is very commonly used to explore language learning strategies (Ohly, 2007).

Specifically, a reading task was given to the students. And while the students do the task, they should talk what they think to give insight of how students use strategies in learning English. Moreover, even though it seems that TAP will be focusing more to mental processes, to cover the entire language learning strategies that have been identified, the students were allowed to interact with other students and use both Indonesian or English language as long as it is beneficial for them while doing their task. The process was audio recorded. In addition, before the real TAP begin, a practice was conducted before to achieve better results.

To make the data analysis reliable, two raters were invited to give judgment on TAP analysis. As a result, the inter rater reliability as evaluated by the kappa reliability test, was 0.858 with a standard error of 0.05.

**Techniques of Data Analysis**

The result of SILL was analyzed to provide description of the data, in this case, frequency distribution of the language learning strategies that are more to less frequently used by the students in learning English language. Meanwhile, the data from TAP was analyzed qualitatively. After the students think aloud procedure have been audio recorded, the recording then transcribed to do a content analysis. There were two raters who gave their judgements on the transcriptions to find out the strategies and how do the strategies were used during the task given. Finally, the result from the transcript was summarized to describe how do the students use strategies in learning English language.
Findings

The Analysis of Strategy Inventory For Language Learning Questionnaire Result

There were 201 respondents who filled in the SILL questionnaire. From the data analysis, the overall average score (m= 3.25) showed that the strategies used are at medium degree. Then, the strategies were ranked from the highest mean to the lowest mean. It showed that social strategies at the first rank with an average score of 3.53, followed by metacognitive strategies with average score of 3.46, then cognitive strategies with average score of 3.24 at the third rank, affective strategies with average score of 3.15 at the fourth rank, compensation strategies with average score of 3.06 at the fifth rank, and the latter position, memory strategies with average score of 3.04.

Below is the table which showed the summary of descriptive statistics regarding the result of the SILL questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Average Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Analysis of Think Aloud Protocol Results

At this part, think aloud protocol has provided important data on how do the students used strategies in learning English language as the protocol was commonly used to explore language learning strategies (Ohly, 2007). To be specific, this study only use reading task which provided specific data related to strategies that can be used during reading.

There were two sessions in TAP. At the first session, the students were asked to get to know how to do think aloud protocol during reading task (1st reading task) and at the same time making sure that the tools (recording devices) are ready to use. After the students fully prepared, the actual think aloud protocol was conducted using different reading task (2nd reading task). In addition, the students were doing the think aloud protocol in the same classroom to make them more comfortable and they were allowed to use English or Indonesian language to help them providing rich data during the reading tasks.

After the think aloud protocol finished, the data which were recorded during the reading task were transcribed, then analyzed by two raters to provide reliable result of data analysis. The inter rater reliability as evaluated by the kappa reliability test, was 0.858 with a standard error of 0.05.

From the data analysis, it was found that in order to understand a reading task, the students were using five different strategies. First, translating the target language into Indonesian language as their first language was frequently used during the reading task. At this point, the students were able to use this strategy when they have sufficient vocabularies. For example: A15: For young and old alike, a trip to the beach means relaxation *hmm untuk ahh anak muda atau orang tua yah aahh liburan ke pantai itu diartikan sebagai relaksasi yah*. 
A15: For young and old alike, a trip to the beach means relaxation for young or old man for a vacation to beach in meaning as a relaxation.

Besides translating, it was also found that the students were also skimming the reading passage which followed by reading the passage carefully. This strategy was relevant with SILL questionnaire item number 18 which stated “I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.” For example:
A23: Ok and a this stories ah the title is how to make a sand castle. Ok (silent reading).

The third strategy to understand the reading passage was making a summary per each paragraph which relevant to SILL item number 23 which stated “I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.” For example:
A23: Aah in the second paragraph they are talking about step per step aah how to make a sand castle and then to to smooth off the top and side of the wall and tower.

Then, the fourth strategy was retelling the reading passage by using one’s own words. For example:
A25: Dan disini kita bisa memulai dengan digging up dan langkah-langkah seterusnya. Kita disini tidak hanya membuat satu castle but sixteenth-century sandcastle ehm dan disitu dipisah oleh suatu walls ehm setelah itu kamu sudah memiliki sixteenth-century sandcastle...
A25: And here we could begin by digging up and all of the steps afterward. We do not only build a castle but sixteenth-century sandcastle ehm and it is separated by walls ehm after that you will have sixteenth-century sandcastle...

The latter strategy was reading the passage without looking up every new word which relevant with the SILL questionnaire item number 27. At this point, the students were able to understand the reading passage without having looking every new words that came up in the passage. For example:
A35: Making a sand castle is a favorite project of beach goers of all ages Building sand castle is a favorite activity for all ages.

And, when the students found unfamiliar words or phrases, there were two different strategies that the students used. First, inferring known words to recognize unknown words from the passage and try to make sense. For example:
A35: Whether swimming or surfing apakah berenang or surfing tossing a volleyball bermain volley ball or just snoozing in the sand bermain dipasir kali nih.
A35: Whether swimming or surfing whether swimming or surfing tossing a volleyball play volley ball or just snoozing in the sand maybe playing in the sand.

Then, looking back or reread unfamiliar words or phrases to find its meaning was used when inferring known words didn’t help to understand the unfamiliar or unknown words or phrases. For example:
A15: ok waves wipe clean everything full stop oh ya there are still some doubtful words.
A15: ...ok waves wipe clean everything full stop oh ya there are still some doubtful words.

Finally, self awareness was also used during reading where student giving comments to one’s own ability. For example:
A25: Ya mungkin itu ajah sedikit penjelasan yang gak terlalu jelas.
A25: Ya probably that is all a bit explanation which is not too clear.
As a result, from the examples provided, the data analysis showed that the students applied three major strategies to understand the reading passage, namely: (1) cognitive strategies (translating from the target language to the first language, inferring known words, skimming and making summary); (2) metacognitive strategies (retelling, look back unfamiliar words or phrases, and giving comments to one’s own ability as self awareness); and (3) compensation strategies (reading English without looking up every new word).

Discussion of The Study

Strategies That Are Used By The Students In Learning English Language

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning or known as SILL questionnaire was used to find out strategies that are used by the students in learning English language. From the finding, the students were categorized as medium user of strategy with overall average score of 3.25. Meaning there was no outstanding strategy has been used by the students or in other words, the students were able to make a balance use for each categories of strategies.

However, judging from the mean score for each strategies, social strategies have important contributions in their English language learning. It showed that the students were likely to communicate with others that contribute to English language learning. This finding is inline with Alhaysony (2012) who discovered that social and skipping strategies are the most used strategy categories regarding to vocabulary learning.

Meanwhile, opposite finding was showed by Zhang (2001) who pointed out compensation strategies as the most used strategies in his study followed by metacognitive strategies. Then, Alhaisoni (2012) showed cognitive and metacognitive strategies as the most used strategies. Regarding to the findings of Zhang (2001) and Alhaisoni (2012), metacognitive strategies was ranked at the second position which is the same rank position in the present study. In this case, metacognitive strategies enable learners to control their own cognition by considering and connecting with prior knowledge, understanding, postponing speech production, managing, setting aims and objectives, preparing for a language assignment, seeking for chances of drills, self monitoring and evaluating (Zare, 2012).

Furthermore, Zhang (2001) and Alhaisoni (2012) findings are inline with the present study which pointed out memory strategies as the least strategies used by the students. But, Zhang (2001) and Alhaisoni (2012) also noted that besides memory strategies, affective strategies were also categorized as the least used strategies in which the present study showed the opposite finding. Affective strategies help learners to organize their feelings, motivation, and behaviors that are related to learning (Zare, 2012). In this study, the students try to relax whenever they feel afraid of using English.

How do the students use strategies in learning English language

The finding from think aloud protocol showed that the students made use of different strategies in learning English language. There were three major strategies that are used by the students, namely: (1) cognitive strategies; (2) metacognitive strategies; and (3) compensation strategies which inline with Ohly (2007). However, Ohly (2007) pointed two strategies with different rank, that is, metacognitive and cognitive strategies.

Those strategies as mentioned above were used by the students for different purposes. There were three activities that the students did during the think aloud protocol sessions.

The first activity the students did was to understand the reading passage given. In order to do that, the students use three different strategies. The very frequently used by the students was...
translation which belong to cognitive strategy when they have sufficient vocabularies. It means that, “the students had understood the text correctly when they put it into their L1” (Kern, 1994, p. 44). And, when the students have limited knowledge in vocabulary, they made use of compensation strategy, that is, reading without looking up every new word. Skimming and summarizing which belong to metacognitive strategy were also used by the students when they can deal with the complexity of the reading passage given.

The second activity which the students did in the think aloud protocol was when they found unfamiliar words or phrases. At this point, the students use two strategies. First, the students made use of cognitive strategy by inferring known words to find the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases. By reading known words, they could infer the meaning of the unknown word or phrases. And, when it took too long for them to do that, they kept continue their reading, and use a metacognitive strategy, that is, looking back or reread the unfamiliar words or phrases once to find its meaning.

The last activity was self awareness. At the end of the reading, the student gave comment to one’s own ability. It showed that the student being aware of one’s competence.

It should be noted that the result from think aloud protocol in this study is not just about strategies that the students use in the practice as what Ohly (2007) did, but also showed how do the students use strategies in learning English language.

However, the finding from think aloud protocol was limited to reading skills which could not facilitate every strategy that has been analyzed through SILL questionnaire, such as social strategies. Even though, the students were allowed to interact with other students, the students were not doing any contact to each other. Then, the researcher also could not identify any affective strategy which involved emotional feeling in their English language learning as think aloud protocol or think aloud method was designed to know more about cognitive processes (Someren, Barnard, Sandberg, 1994).

Moreover, the study only involved first year students of College of Teacher Training and Education of Teachers Association of The Republic of Indonesia of Pontianak or known as STKIP-PGRI Pontianak which located in West Borneo, Indonesia. That’s why, the result of study shouldn’t be generalized because even though the findings were promising, we need to put in mind that every student have their own characteristics, including their strategies and how do they use these strategies in learning English language.

Conclusion

This descriptive case study was conducted to find out what strategies that are used by the college students and how do they use strategies in learning English. The sample was the first year students of STKIP-PGRI Pontianak. Two instruments were used to collect the data from the sample.

The first instrument was strategy inventory of language learning or known as SILL questionnaire. The data analysis of SILL questionnaire presented that the overall average score \( m = 3.25 \) showed that the strategies used are at medium degree. Then, it was found that social strategies at the first rank, followed by metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, affective strategies, compensation strategies and the latter position, memory strategies.

However, this finding didn’t show how do they use strategies in learning English language. As a result, a think aloud protocol or known as TAP would provide the necessary data to find out how do the students use strategies in learning English language. From the findings, the students made use of three different strategies (cognitive, metacognitive and compensation
strategies) in three different activities (understanding reading passage, dealing with unfamiliar words or phrases and self-awareness) as the study was limited to reading skills which could not facilitate every strategy that have been analyzed through SILL questionnaire.

At this point, students in some ways have the ability to learn by themselves as lecturers have very limited ability to teach, especially when lecturers deal with large classes. Yang (2007) mentioned that effective strategy use can determine students success (p. 50). It means that, by providing language learning strategy training will activate students' autonomous learning in which will be beneficial for the students in learning English language and the students will not depend to lecturers where nowadays learning should be students centered instead of teacher centered.

The first thing to do in language learning strategy training, especially in Indonesian classroom setting which in this case students are very dependent to lecturer is by developing students awareness of strategies through examples. By giving examples, it will enable them to understand things that they usually do in learning English are actually could be said as strategies.

After the students aware of their language learning strategies, the lecturers should proceed the training by introducing more strategies that could be used in learning English language. For example, based on the think aloud protocol, the students made use of translation. By giving them understanding that besides translation, there are other strategies that could be used which basically depends on the skills of the students have.

The last step is practice. Giving students time to practice strategies that they have learned will help them to improve their strategy use. After practice, lecturers should provide necessary feedback which will indicate whether the students have applied effective strategy or not. Also, by giving feedback, the students could find their weaknesses in applying a strategy and try another strategy which is suitable to them.

In conclusion, the study provided valuable information about the preferences of language learning strategies and how do the students use strategies. However, the finding was very limited to a specific private college students, and without considering any affective factor which might have influence in language learning strategy use. Future study could be conducted by involving more sample which will provide rich data on language learning strategy preferences and use, then considering affective factors such as gender, motivation or even students achievement.

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References


**Appendix**

**Strategy Inventory for Language Learning**

*Version for Speakers of Other Languages Learning English*

**Directions**

This form of the STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL) is for students of English as a second or foreign language. You will find statements about learning English. Please read each statement. Write the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS on the line beside the number of the statement.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE OF ME means that the statement is very rarely true of you.

USUALLY NOT TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true less than half the time.

SOMEWHAT TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you about half the time.

USUALLY TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true more than half the time.

ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you almost always.

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Work as quickly as you can without being careless. This usually takes 20-30 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, please ask.

**Part A (memory)**

_____1. I think of the relationship between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
_____2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.
_____3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the new word to help me remember the word.
_____4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
_____5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
_____6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.
_____7. I physically act out English words.
_____8. I review English lessons often.
_____9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

**Total A**

Average (total divided by 9)
Part B (cognitive)

10. I say or write new English words several times.
11. I try to talk like native speakers.
12. I practice the sounds of English.
13. I use the English words I know in different ways.
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.
16. I read for pleasure in English.
17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.
18. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.
20. I try to find patterns in English.
21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
22. I try not to translate word-for-word.
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.

Total B
Average (total divided by 14)

Part C (compensation)

24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.
25. When I cannot think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.
27. I read English without looking up every new word.
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.
29. If I cannot think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

Total C
Average (total divided by 6)

Part D (metacognitive)

30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.
35. I look for people I can talk to in English.
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.
38. I think about my progress in learning English.

Total D
Average (total divided by 9)

Part E (affective)

39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.

Total E
Average (total divided by 6)
Part F (social)

45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or to say it again.
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.
47. I practice English with other students.
48. I ask for help from English speakers.
49. I ask questions in English.
50. I try to learn about the culture of the English speakers.

Total F
Average (total divided by 6)
Overall Total
Average Total (overall total divided by 50)

☺Thanks for your cooperation☺

Reading Passage for Think Aloud Protocol (TAP)

Date:
Name:
NIM:
Class:

Training Session Sample Essay.

My Holiday in Bali

When I was 2nd grade of senior high school, my friends and I went to Bali. We were there for three days. I had many impressive experiences during the vacation.

First day, we visited Sanur Beach in the morning. We saw the beautiful sunrise together. It was a great scenery. Then, we checked in to the hotel. After prepared ourselves, we went to Tanah Lot. We met so many other tourists there. They were not only domestic but also foreign tourists.

Second day, we enjoyed the day on Tanjung Benoa beach. We played so many water sports such as banana boat, jetsky, speedboat etc. We also went to Penyu island to see many unique animals. They were turtles, snakes, and sea birds. We were very happy. In the afternoon, we went to Kuta Beach to see the amazing sunset and enjoyed the beautiful wave.

The last day, we spent our time in Sangeh. We could enjoy the green and shady forest. There were so many monkeys. They were so tame but sometimes they could be naughty. We could make a close interaction with them. After that, we went to Sukowati market for shopping. That was my lovely time. I bought some Bali T-Shirt and souvenirs.

In the evening, we had to check out from the hotel. We went back home bringing so many amazing memories of Bali.

Saharani (2010)
How to Make a Sand Castle

For young and old alike, a trip to the beach means relaxation, adventure, and a temporary escape from the worries and responsibilities of ordinary life. Whether swimming or surfing, tossing a volleyball or just snoozing in the sand, a visit to the beach means fun. The only equipment you need is a twelve-inch deep pail, a small plastic shovel, and plenty of moist sand.

Making a sandcastle is a favorite project of beach-goers of all ages. Begin by digging up a large amount of sand (enough to fill at least six pails) and arranging it in a pile. Then, scoop the sand into your pail, patting it down and leveling it off at the rim as you do. You can now construct the towers of your castle by placing one pailful of sand after another face down on the area of the beach that you have staked out for yourself. Make four towers, placing each mound twelve inches apart in a square. This done, you are ready to build the walls that connect the towers. Scoop up the sand along the perimeter of the fortress and arrange a wall six inches high and twelve inches long between each pair of towers in the square. By scooping up the sand in this fashion, you will not only create the walls of the castle, but you will also be digging out the moat that surrounds it. Now, with a steady hand, cut a one-inch square block out of every other inch along the circumference of each tower. Your spatula will come in handy here. Of course, before doing this, you should use the spatula to smooth off the tops and sides of the walls and towers.

You have now completed your very own sixteenth-century sandcastle. Though it may not last for centuries or even until the end of the afternoon, you can still take pride in your handicraft. Do make sure, however, that you have chosen a fairly isolated spot in which to work; otherwise, your masterpiece may be trampled by beach bums and children. Also, make a note on the high tides so that you have enough time to build your fortress before the ocean arrives to wash it all away.

Nordquist (n.d)
The Effectiveness of Reading Techniques Used in a Saudi Arabian Secondary School Classroom as Perceived by Students and Teachers: A Study of Methods Used in Teaching English and their Effectiveness

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Abstract
This paper describes a study conducted in Saudi Arabia regarding the effectiveness of currently employed strategies of teaching English reading skills in the country, taking into consideration the points of view both of teachers and students. The findings highlight significant discrepancies between the variously perceived usefulness of common strategies. Another problematic area identified is the lack of support mechanisms that should supplement the classroom teaching of reading skills. The paper makes certain recommendations towards furthering the teaching of English reading skills to Saudi students.

Keywords: EFL/ESL, English Language, Pedagogy, Reading Skills, Saudi Arabia
Introduction

Reading is an extremely essential skill that equips individuals with the ability to interact with written texts. The ability to read allows one to attach meaning to written words thereby facilitating fluency and comprehension. There are numerous skills, which are extremely essential when it comes to grasping the ability to read. These include automatic recognition, synthesis and evaluation skills. Reading plays a significant role since it brings tremendous satisfaction to individuals through enabling them to be informed and enriched. Competence in reading makes it possible for readers to understand and learn how to attach meaning to various texts. In this paper, there is considerable focus on the development of English literacy and reading skills among secondary-level students in Saudi Arabia.

English is a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, which makes it pivotal for communication purposes. Being competent in English language refers to a situation whereby one can comprehend and interpret the meaning of written texts. Basal readers are extremely used in teaching English in the country’s public learning institutions. This involves empowering the learners to read before introducing them to comprehension (Al-Jarf 2007). There are numerous other methods used in teaching foreign languages such as grammar translation method. This method is based on the assumption that studying vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure is crucial when it comes to understanding a foreign language. Communicative approach is yet another method of teaching and learning a foreign language. This method entails placing a lot of emphasis on the ability to interpret essential instructions written in foreign languages.

This evaluation intends to highlight pertinent issues concerning development of reading and literacy in English among students in Saudi Arabia. This paper presents a formative analysis of instructional designs for teaching English in Saudi Arabian schools. The paper also intends to demonstrate whether a basal reader is an effective technique of teaching and reading English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. In other words, this paper seeks to evaluate English reading competency among Saudi Arabian students and the various learning strategies used. The paper seeks to make an impact in improving the design of the learning strategies used to teach and learn English in Saudi Arabia.

Background of the Study

It is essential for students and teachers to have an easy access to pertinent reading materials. This is mainly comprehending a foreign language is a difficult task that can only be made possible through matching the interests of students with appropriate learning materials. Contemporary reading tasks involve various phases, which include pre, while and post-reading stage. Pre-reading phase entails motivating students before engaging them in an actual reading exercise. This plays a pertinent role in aiding the activity of the appropriate schema, thereby facilitating the comprehension of a text. The while-reading stage is aimed at enhancing the ability of students to develop their linguistic and schematic knowledge too. Post reading phase on the other hand emphasizes the enhancement of learning comprehension through reference to matching exercises, cut-up sentences and comprehension questions.

Studies on the efficient teaching of reading skills have, in recent times, dwelt on the use of computers (MacGregor, 1988; Knaack, 2003; Johnson, Perry & Shamir, 2010) or considered the role of information technology, such as the Internet (Laborda, 2007). This paper takes into account those studies that deal with the impact of instructional design on the development of students’ reading skills. It intends to conduct a formative or internal evaluation of the instructional designs or strategies for teaching English reading skills to Saudi Arabian secondary-
level students. The main purpose of this study is to enable teachers to monitor the progress of Saudi Arabian students when it comes to learning English. This study will also play a vital role in helping teachers to assess the suitability of their preferred teaching strategies.

Teachers in Saudi Arabia make use of different, reading strategies in order to enhance comprehension by students. It is essential to note that the teachers are exceptional when it comes to teaching about reading strategies. The teachers demonstrated the fact that they did not teach students how to establish the purpose of regular reading exercises. It is also essential to note that the students were not competent when it comes to generating questions concerning various texts in a consistent manner. The strategy of assessing the comprehension process was taught to Saudi Arabian students some of the time only as opposed to regularly. However, comprehension strategies are essential when it comes to enhancing reading processes.

According to Al-Jarf (2007), Saudi Arabian public schools (state schools in United Kingdom) use standardized basal readers to teach native students to read. The students are first made to learn to read, and then to comprehend. Teachers across Saudi Arabia use the same basal readers with students, cover the same texts and exercises, and follow the same teaching approaches (al-Jarf, 2007). The comparative effectiveness of this method is the issue that concerns this paper.

Reading competence enables one to undergo the process of understanding and constructing meaning from a piece of text (Zhao, 2009). Therefore, the improvement of reading competence among English as a foreign language/English as a second language (EFL/ESL) learners is a primary and overriding goal in the English-language pedagogy in Saudi Arabia. There is, therefore, an essential relationship between the strategies used by EFL teachers and the entire reading comprehension. Poor knowledge of English vocabulary is one of the key causes of difficulty in comprehension.

Both reading and comprehension are key elements when it comes to learning English among Saudi Arabian students. Different students including first grade (Year 10) have different reading styles in Saudi Arabian secondary schools. Whereas one student may benefit from a particular reading strategy, it might have a different impact on yet another student.

In the traditional grammar translation method of language teaching, the teacher interacts with the class in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language. Vocabulary is taught in the form of isolated word lists; the rules of grammar, syntax, and inflection are given in the form of long and elaborate explanations; difficult classical texts are prescribed early; students are asked to translate disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother language; and pronunciation is neglected (Prator & Celce-Muria, 1979). This method has no theory, and no literature offers a rationale or justification to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). In this approach, low-level learners read only sentences and paragraphs generated by textbook writers and instructors, while the works of great authors are reserved for high-level students who have acquired appropriate language skills (Byrnes, 1998). In spite of these drawbacks, as Brown (2001) observes, the traditional method of teaching English reading skills continues to be used.

The communicative approach to language teaching and learning has given instructors a different understanding of the role of reading in the language classroom and the types of texts that can be used in instruction. When the goal of language instruction and learning is communicative competence, everyday materials such as train schedules, newspaper articles, and travel and tourism websites become appropriate classroom materials. To be able to read them is one way of developing an EFL/ESL communicative competence. This is because instruction in
reading and reading practice is viewed as an essential part of language teaching at every level (Byrnes, 1998).

In broad strokes, the grammar translation method and the communicative approach to teaching language skills, particularly reading skills, indicate the complexity of the enterprise of teaching reading skills. The success of that enterprise is also difficult to measure, since there are different ways of testing reading ability, and different reading standards also have differing opinions regarding the very definition of literacy. The question of selecting the right method, strategy, approach or intervention relative to reading and teaching reading skills in particular situations involving various possible learners is hotly debated.

The present paper describes a study and shares findings from it regarding the reading competency of Saudi Arabian secondary-level students and the learning strategies and materials employed in their instruction. It determines the students’ reading skill levels, evaluates the current pedagogical strategies adopted by public secondary schools, and suggests pedagogical interventions to further improve the teaching of reading skills among Saudi Arabian English readers.

**Actual Study**

The study involved thirty (30) first-grade (year 10) secondary-level students in a state school in Saudi Arabia, and four (4) secondary-level English reading teachers. The students are of the same age (16-18) and are all females; the teachers on the other hand are of different ages, and expertise levels but all are females.

The study made use of triangulation research: that is, it employed both qualitative and quantitative research approaches in studying the current reading competence or skill level of the students and in evaluating the teachers’ pedagogical strategies in teaching reading skills.

The quantitative research approach necessitated the use of survey questionnaires for both the student and the teacher-participants. Partly patterned after the checklists pertinent to the effectiveness of instructional design (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, 2010) and partly on the can-do statements delineated by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), the survey questionnaire for the students consisted of sections on their self-assessment as English readers, their perception of the teaching of reading strategies by their teachers, their evaluation of the post-reading activities they are made to go through, their reading activities at home either doing self-initiated reading or completing the homework assigned by their mentors, and their motivation in learning to read in English.

The survey questionnaire for the teacher-participants was oriented towards gathering pertinent baseline information about them in their role as secondary-level English reading teachers. The students’ self-assessment of their reading skills was validated through the review conducted by the teachers. The teachers were asked to indicate the frequency of their use of different reading teaching strategies, post-reading activities, and reading comprehension strategies. They were also asked to elaborate on their style of assessing the reading skills of their students. Finally, they were posed the question of how well they collaborated with the parents of their students with the end view of soliciting their help and support in raising the students’ reading competence level.

The qualitative approach was made through interviews and focus-group discussions (FGD) designed to supplement the information gathered through the survey questionnaires. The interviews were scheduled with individual students; the FGD was conducted involving seven students. The teacher-participants were qualitatively evaluated through direct observation of their
teaching activity. This is mainly because the questionnaires were administered in English, which explains the significance of the need to grasp the questions.

The data collected from the above sources were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis, yielding simple summaries. Univariate statistical analysis was used to summarize the frequency of participants’ answers, and the determination of the estimated centre of the distribution of the values of the variables was carried out through simple averaging.

**Findings: baseline information about the teachers**

All four (4) teacher-participants in this study held degrees/the required academic qualifications necessary for teaching. They had spent varying numbers of years teaching in the school, with various amounts of exposure to opportunities for professional development (Table 1).

**Table 1. The teacher-participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher-participant</th>
<th>Years in the teaching profession</th>
<th>Recent professional advancement training</th>
<th>Self-updating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6–10</td>
<td>One 10-hour seminar</td>
<td>Sometimes reads books or professional journals on teaching in general. Often reads books and professional journals on teaching reading in particular. Reads English magazine articles for leisure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>16–20</td>
<td>One Six-hour in-service workshops directly on teaching reading skills</td>
<td>Sometimes reads books or professional journals on teaching in general. Never reads books or professional journals on teaching reading in particular. Reads English novels and short stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>16–20</td>
<td>(No answer)</td>
<td>Sometimes reads books or professional journals on teaching in general. Sometimes reads books and professional journals on teaching reading in particular. Reads English magazine articles for leisure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>One Six-hour in-service workshops directly on teaching reading skills</td>
<td>Sometimes reads books or professional journals on teaching in general. Reads English novels and short stories. Rarely reads books or professional journals on teaching reading in particular.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings: the English reading students**

This study saw no need to focus upon obtaining baseline information regarding the participating English reading students, but the participants were asked to complete a self-assessment (Table 2). The ALTE’s can-do statements are notably ranked from the easiest to the hardest. The student-readers were expected to rate themselves as readers as defined in the ALTE
scale. That is, they were expected to agree generally, for instance, that they could read basic notices and understand the general meaning of a simplified textbook or article, which is a higher level of reading activity than merely being able to understand basic instructions and messages with help. It is crucial to note that the self-assessment pointed out that the students did not entirely perceive themselves as readers on the basis of the ALTE scale. By and large, the result of this self-assessment by the students indicates that the majority of the students are indeed on the level where they might be expected to be, given the nature of their academic training.

**Table 2.** The English readers’ self-assessment viz. the ALTE’s can-do statements, where F denotes the number of respondents; F=Number of students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agreement degree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes F %</td>
<td>Sometimes F %</td>
<td>Rarely F %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can understand basic instructions and messages – for example, library catalogues – with help.</td>
<td>2 73.</td>
<td>3 23.</td>
<td>1 3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I can read basic notices and instructions.</td>
<td>2 76.</td>
<td>3 10</td>
<td>4 13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I can understand the general meaning of a simplified textbook or article, reading very slowly.</td>
<td>1 60.</td>
<td>6 20.</td>
<td>4 13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I can read quickly enough to cope with an academic course.</td>
<td>1 50.</td>
<td>1 33.</td>
<td>4 13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I can access all sources of information quickly and reliably.</td>
<td>8 26.</td>
<td>1 56.</td>
<td>4 13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I can scan texts for relevant information and grasp the main point of a text.</td>
<td>5 16.</td>
<td>6 60.</td>
<td>6 20.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The self-assessment by the students with regard to their reading competence is validated by the teachers (Table 3). The majority of the students are well within the expected level of their reading competence.
### Table 3. Teachers’ evaluation of the students viz. the can-do statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can-do statements</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can read basic notices and instructions.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can understand basic instructions and messages - for example, library catalogues - with some help.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can understand the general meaning of a simplified textbook or article, reading very slowly.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can scan texts for relevant information and grasp the main point of a text.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can access all sources of information quickly and reliably.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can read quickly enough to cope with the demands of an academic course.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Practically, according to the teachers’ assessment, and using the ALTE gauge, the majority of the students were already within the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) definition of an independent English user: that is, within categories B1 and B2. The teachers also indicated that there were at least 10 students – comprising 35% of the class – who were even more advanced in their language skills.

When asked to identify their own reading problems, most students (21, constituting 70% of the participants) reported that lack of concentration was the greatest hurdle they faced. Being a central factor in determining the ability to read quickly and effectively, concentration is a prerequisite for retention. Lack of retention gives one an experience of reading something through to the bottom of the page, yet not being able to remember what one has read. It is often mistakenly blamed on one’s memory, but the real reason is poor concentration during reading (Turner, 2005).

The next most common problem, according to the students’ self-assessment, was comprehension. There were 14 students (46.7% of the participants) who can relate to the problem. Defined as the level of understanding of any writing, reading comprehension depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. Without this ability, students use much of their processing capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to synthesize and comprehend what is being read (Adams, 1994). Asked to elaborate on their lack of concentration and difficulty in comprehension, the students complained that the texts they were given to read were not interesting, and the procedure for their reading lessons was unchanging and inflexible.

Eight of the students (26.7%) identified lack of speed as their greatest problem. The speed or rate of reading is determined by reading fluency (Mather & Goldstein, 2001). It is defined as the ability to read connected text rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little conscious attention to the mechanics of reading such as decoding (Meyer & Felton, 1999). It is the key to skilled reading (Ehri, 1998).

Finally, five students (16.6%) stated that their major problem was lack of retention. Retention in reading is the ability to remember what has been read. It is essential when it comes to organization and summary of the content and having it readily connect to what the readers already know. It is about storing information in one’s long-term memory, and calling upon it and applying it as and when needed.
Confirming that the English reading students indeed have varying kinds and degrees of reading problems, the teachers divulged the number of students who receive remedial instruction in reading. One teacher disclosed that there are five (5) students in curative instruction in English reading. Another teacher revealed that there are fifteen (15) students who receive remedial reading instruction. The other two teachers did not provide data on this point.

It was apparent from the responses that the students’ primary motivation for learning English is pragmatic. They are convinced that being able to read English would give them an advantage over those who are unable to do so. They also expressed the opinion that the ability to read English would help them in their studies.

Findings: teaching strategies

Table 4 below presents a diagram of the different strategies adopted by the teachers for teaching English reading skills, and the consistency with which these strategies are employed in the classroom. The teachers were observed to follow the psycholinguistic and behaviorist models in their classroom instruction. Their procedure reflected the purposeful task-based nature of the reading lesson (Williams, 1986; Day & Bamford, 2002). They encouraged the students to make use of what they have read, e.g., through the completion of diagrams and mind maps, among other tools.

Table 4. Reading teaching strategies used by the teacher-participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching strategies</th>
<th>Consistency level</th>
<th>Aver age</th>
<th>Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Sometimes F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud to the class.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students strategies for decoding sounds and words</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students new vocabulary systematically.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping students understand new vocabulary in texts they are reading.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking students to read aloud to the class.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking students to read silently on their own.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching or Modeling for students different reading strategies, e.g., skimming, self-monitoring.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving students time to read books of their own choosing.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking students to read aloud to the class.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking students to read along silently while other students read aloud.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To complement their pedagogical strategies, the teachers were found to use different resources in teaching English reading. The most frequently used resources by the greatest number of teachers are workbooks and/or worksheets and reading material from the Internet. Textbooks and reading series, such as basal readers and graded readers, are next. They also include supplementary material such as newspapers, magazines, and computer software among the readily available resources for English reading classes. Three teachers disclosed that they used material produced by the students themselves for reading instruction (see Table 5). Whereas the teachers gave exceptional answers, it was extremely clear that the teachers rarely held unanimous views. This is evident and goes on to illustrate that one teacher was notoriously opposed to the other three colleagues. This illustrates the fact that despite the fact that a majority of teachers have a popular view, some key players are opposed to the system.

Table 6 shows the comparative helpfulness of the different teaching strategies as perceived by the students. It appears that students find learning to decode sounds and words the most helpful technique in developing reading skills. Being allowed the time and opportunity to read books of their own choosing; listening to the teacher as he/she reads aloud to the class; receiving help in understanding new vocabulary; being taught new vocabulary systematically; reading aloud in class; reading silently on their own; reading silently as one of their classmates reads aloud; learning different reading strategies; and reading aloud in small groups are the other techniques they commented upon, serialized above according to a descending order of helpfulness (from the students’ perspective).

Asked to elaborate on their perception of the activity of reading aloud in class, some participants in the group discussion remarked that they disliked it because they were afraid of making mistakes. This concern was strong enough to override their pride in listening to their own voices reading English. They also said reading aloud hindered, rather than helped, their understanding of the text, because they tended to concentrate on the sound that they produced, and not on the meaning of the text. On the other hand, when asked to read silently and/or try to answer comprehension questions, the (weaker) students often resorted to locating words from the question in the reading passage and simply copying the sentence containing that word and submitting that as the answer. Obviously, this defeats the purpose of the exercise.

The observation and group discussion sessions revealed that the students had a great deal to say, for instance, on the teachers’ conduct in class. Mostly, the students complained about the opacity of lesson objectives and the desultory approach of the teachers. They reported that these problems resulted in their getting lost in the discussion. The teachers did not deny the problems, but shifted the blame to time limitations. A 45-minute session every two weeks is not a long enough time to apply appropriate methods of teaching reading skills, they stated, and neither is it adequate for sustaining the students’ motivation at the optimal level.
### Table 5. Resources used by teachers for reading instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching resources</th>
<th>Agreement mark</th>
<th>Averge</th>
<th>Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workbooks or worksheets.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading materials from the Internet, e.g., websites.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading series, e.g., basal readers and graded readers.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials from other subjects.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers and magazines.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer software for reading instruction, e.g., DVDs and CDs.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials written by students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6. Effective teaching strategies as evaluated by the English readers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very helpful</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
<th>Sometimes helpful</th>
<th>Never helpful</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are taught to decode sounds and words.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are given time to read books of your own choosing.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You listen as the teacher reads aloud to the class.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are helped to understand new vocabulary in the text you are reading.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are taught new vocabulary systematically.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You read aloud in class.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silently, you read on your own.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You read along silently as your classmate reads aloud.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You are taught different reading strategies: scanning, skimming and self-monitoring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The level of agreement</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very helpful</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Sometimes helpful</td>
<td>Never helpful</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering reading comprehension questions about what you have just read.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering oral questions about or orally summarizing what you have just read.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing a project about what you have read, e.g., a play or a piece of art.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with your classmate about what you read.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing something about or in response to what you have read.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking a written quiz about what you have read.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 below presents the students’ perception of the comparative helpfulness of different post-reading strategies and activities as prescribed by the teachers.

**Table 7. Helpfulness of post-reading strategies as perceived by students**

Findings: supplementary activities

The teachers assign specific activities to supplement the English reading experience of the students, as presented in Table 8, ranked according to the frequency of their use by the teachers. The significance of this information lies in the lesson that Table 7 demonstrates. Normally, the choice of strategy for teaching reading skills is a teacher’s judgment call, as informed by his or her professional training and individual preference. However, in the context of Tables 6 and 7, which disclose the students’ evaluation of the pedagogical methods, Table 8 becomes particularly relevant in achieving a balance between the teachers’ judgment and the students’ demands.
Table 8: Supplementary activities for English reading students; F=Number of teachers.

| Strategies                                      | Consistency of marks | Orde  
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------  
|                                                 | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |       |
| Looking up information on the Internet.         | 4 | 100 | - | - | - | 1 |  
| E-mailing or chatting with other students about what they are learning. | 3 | 75.0 | 1 | 25.0 | - | - | 2 |  
| Using instructional software to develop reading skills and strategies. | 1 | 25.0 | 3 | 75.0 | - | - | 3 |  
| Reading stories or other texts on a computer.   | - | - | 4 | 100 | - | - | 4 |  
| Using a computer to listen to stories or other texts. | 1 | 25.0 | 1 | 25.0 | 2 | 50.0 | - | 5 |  
| Using the Internet to do projects with students in other schools or countries. | 1 | 25.0 | 1 | 25.0 | - | - | 2 | 50.0 | 6 |  

Discussion and conclusion

It appears from the above data that by the teachers’ evaluation, at least 80% of the Saudi Arabian student-participants in this study are already at CEFR A2 level, or the Waystage level in ALTE (2002, p. 8). This is significant because it justifies their being in secondary school, where English is taught as a second language (Ardan, 1991). On the other hand, the fact that just 80% of the students are at Waystage parallels the disclosure by the teachers that there are a number of students who are currently receiving remedial instruction in reading. The readers’ perception of themselves essentially corresponds to the evaluation by their teachers. The first three statements that students agreed to correspond to the skills expected from the CEFR basic users and threshold level (B1) of the independent level. It is pertinent to note that other statements were randomly arrived at by students. In addition to that, majority of the students agreed that they possessed more C1 and C2 skills as compared to B2 skills. It is essential to appreciate the fact that the teachers’ assessment reveals that the English readers’ skill levels meet the requirements for successful pursuit of academic studies. This point to the assertion that the readers are being schooled in English. However, the assessment conducted on the students shows that a substantial percentage of the students do not consider themselves as competent readers.

Based on Sessa’s (2005) idea that students learn better when they like the teaching strategy, it is significant that both parties agreed that teaching students to decode sounds and words and the teacher reading aloud to the class are very helpful techniques. However, insofar as the other strategies are concerned, the teachers and the students seem to be in disagreement. One example is the contrary views regarding the helpfulness of allowing students to read books of their own choosing. Thus it would appear that many strategies adopted by Saudi Arabian English teachers are deficient in effectiveness if evaluated on the basis of students’ feedback.
On the subject of allowing students to read texts of their own choice, it can be said that encouraging extensive reading is regarded as a helpful strategy in ESL/EFL (Day & Bamford, 2002; Krashen, 2005; Greenberg et al., 2006). It has been found that rapid or extensive reading exposes students to the myriad lexical, syntactic, and textual features of reading materials (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989). Letting students choose their own texts can only promote extensive reading.

The quality of learning is directly dependent upon the competence of teachers (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). The significance of teachers in the overall pedagogical set-up and process is held to be greater than that of the socio-economic background of the students, the characteristics of the whole school or system, the gender of the teacher, and other pertinent factors in determining the students’ schooling outcomes (Rowe, 2003).

While the competence and experience of the teacher-participants is not in doubt, it must be mentioned that the school is deficient in terms of support systems for reading competence. As attested to by the teachers, the school has no other professionals to assist the reading learners, and no learning specialists or speech therapists. There are also an insufficient number of guide books for teachers. This often compels the teachers to be creative in helping those who fall behind. While these strategies usually work, it would certainly have been more effective to have proper support mechanisms to supplement classroom instruction. Many studies suggest that students benefit from working jointly with speech and language therapists and classroom teachers (Baxter et al., 2009).

Given the above, this paper makes the following strategy recommendations for the better teaching of reading skills to Saudi secondary-level students. First, the teachers should capitalize on the pragmatic motivation of readers related to their learning to read in English. English readers have a competitive edge, not only in their studies, but also in the labor and job markets. With the expansion and diversification of the Saudi economy, English users are likely to be given progressively greater preference, especially in matters of foreign trade and relations.

Secondly, teachers should initiate an environment conducive to reading, which Alsamadani (2008) finds to be an important lack affecting Saudi Arabian EFL/ESL learners’ reading comprehension. The creation of a reading-conducive environment would also depend on support mechanisms for English reading. Besides the employment of learning specialists or reading therapists, schools should also establish English reading laboratories and involve these in the English reading curriculum.

Studies on the rapidity of acquisition and success of students learning to read on account of the teaching methods have produced equivocal results (Harrison, 1996). It seems obvious from the present study that there is a discrepancy in the perception of the utility of different teaching strategies. Without trying to determine whose perception in the matter is closer to the truth, it should be emphasized that teachers need to consider student viewpoints for the sake of initiating a dialogue with them that can only be beneficial in the long run. Especially valuable would be their adoption of the rapid or extensive reading method, which has been established as helpful in learning a second language. This, of course, should not be done at the expense of lexical or grammatical improvement. Reading skills alone cannot compensate for the lack of fundamental language skills, and amount to little without comprehension (Nuttall, 1982). Following Wasserman (2009), this paper suggests that instead of relying on the good will of teachers in implementing the above suggestions and recommendations, there may be a need for training programs that are not “business as usual” pedagogies.

Limitations of the study include the small size and homogeneity of the sample – 30 students and four teachers from a certain public secondary school – which sets limits upon its
generalizability. Likewise, the validity and reliability of the instrument that was used in this study still needs to be improved. It may serve succeeding researchers to correlate the instruments with other standard instruments, if any, employed by similar studies. Further, there is the possibility that the research participants might have been influenced by the Hawthorne effect, the halo effect, and subject expectancy, which are the usual biases at play in this kind of study (Brown, 1988). However, there is no reason either in favor of or against supposing that such limitations significantly influenced the results.

The study has brought to the surface several issues pertinent to instructional strategies for EFL/ESL readers. Its inability to establish whether the teachers and the students jibe in their perceived utility of the several pedagogic techniques and materials is itself an interesting outcome. Alsamadani (2008) has already established that gender does play a role in reading skills development in students, with girls doing somewhat better than boys, particularly in Saudi Arabia. It may be interesting and useful to try to determine whether the gender of teachers is a significant variable as well.

While the study was unable to establish how the different methods of teaching reading skills are effective, it was nonetheless able to pinpoint the delimiting factors on the instructional methods to reach the desired achievement by the students in reading and to meet the readers’ needs. Succinctly put, to produce fuller and more effective instructional methods, Saudi Arabia needs teachers who are better equipped to manage the learning process within the classroom, and also a supportive school environment comprising a curriculum that puts a premium on the development of the students’ reading competence.

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References


Book Review

Rethinking academic writing pedagogy for the European University

Author: Ruth Breeze
Title of Book: Rethinking academic writing pedagogy for the European University
Year of Publication: 2012
Publisher: Amsterdam: Rodopi
180 Pages

This book takes a fresh look at the importance and related challenges of teaching academic writing in European universities. However its importance goes beyond a European audience. This is reflected in how it also makes particular reference to second language contexts for the many international students. As well revisiting ‘classic’ approaches to teaching academic writing the book also focuses on various new directions – such as academic literacies, corpus tools, and web writing. This useful overview of approaches from a fresh perspective is perhaps the main contribution of the book.

The early chapters provides a critical perspective on the history of academic writing pedagogy at European Universities. This includes various approaches covering the most influential textbooks, across-cultural contexts, inter-disciplinary approaches and a genre-based framework. As the author points out the textbook tradition is heavily influenced by examination
practices in US and British universities. One of the classic approaches discussed in depth is the process writing model. As Breeze points out, in relation to a second language approach “the process writing model is reflected in most of what has been published for second language writers of English and their teachers from 1990s onwards, framed as an advance on the product-based model which is presented as the only alternative”.

In the later approach the author discusses future directions. She particular focuses on the influence of the academic literacy model. In this way she identifies how academic writing is linked to the acquisition of related academic skills also framed in relation to the socialization process of disciplinary communities. In a later section she discusses the strengths and weaknesses of both teacher and peer feedback to learners. As she points the essential aim of feedback “is to provide a channel for teachers to communicate constructively with students and help them to develop as writers.” The final chapter outlines some tentative principles for assisting with better designing and implementing specific academic writing courses.

Dr Ruth Breeze is a very experienced scholar in her field, and is currently the director of the Institute of Modern Languages at the Navarra, Spain. Her book reflects a very rich knowledge about both classic approaches to and new directions in academic writing. She writes with a very interesting style and her chapters are supported with a variety of evidence, examples and implications. I strongly recommend this book as a textbook for postgraduate courses. Furthermore, the book contains excellent updated bibliographical references about academic writing which will be very useful for all researchers and post graduate students in our field.

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