Special Issue on CALL

No. 6

AWEJ July-2020

www.awej.org
Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL Number 6. July 2020

Team of this issue

Editor
Prof. Dr. Khairi Al-Zubaidi
Executive Director
Arab Society of English Language Studies

Dr. Mohammed Abdel Hakim Farrah
English Department, Faculty of Arts, Hebron University, Hebron, Palestine

Dr. Mohialdeen Alotumi
English Department, Faculty of Languages, Sana'a University

Dr. Ariel E. San Jose,
Institute of Human Service, Southern Philippines Agribusiness and Marine and Aquatic School of Technology (SPAMAST), Malita, Davao Occidental, Philippines

Dr. Adcharawan Buripakdi
School of Foreign Languages, Institute of Social Technology, Suranaree University of Technology, Muang, Nakorn Ratchasima, Thailand
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Titles &amp; authors</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team of this issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Video-driven Approach to Promoting Pragmatic Development in the Context of</td>
<td>3-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuha Abdullah Alsmari</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing TED Talks as Authentic Videos to Improve Taiwanese Students’ Listening</td>
<td>24-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension in English Language Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chia-Pei Wu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Technologies in Acoustic Analysis of English Television Advertising Discourse</td>
<td>38-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olga Valigura, Liubov Kozub &amp; Iryna Sieriakova</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Use of Edutainment in Promoting Higher Order Thinking Skills in ESL Writing among</td>
<td>49-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian University Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siti Hamin Stapa &amp; Nur Izzati Ibaharim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Effects of an Interactive Web-based Test of English for International Communication</td>
<td>67-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring Course on Thai Students’ English Grammar Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orabudh Mayanondha &amp; Kittitouch Soontornwipast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Linguistic Characteristics and Functions of Hashtags: Is it a New Language?</td>
<td>84-101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iman M. Mahfouz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing for Journal Publications: A Case Study of Eight Computer Scientists in Algeria</td>
<td>102-113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anissa Cheriguene, Kebbache Tayeb &amp; Chaker Abdelaziz Kerrache</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Writing: Challenges and Potential Solutions</td>
<td>114-121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manal AlMarwani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flowchart: Scaffolding Narrative Writing in an English as a Second Language (ESL)</td>
<td>122-139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie Selvaraj &amp; Azlina Abdul Aziz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Language Classes: Semiotic Practices in PowerPoint Slideshows in Pharmaceutical</td>
<td>140-156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-Mediated Presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noura A. Alghamdi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Arabic Media Related Vocabulary through Twitter at the University of Alabama</td>
<td>157-170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saad Bushaala, Safa Elnaili &amp; Maysoun Ali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Integration of Implicit and Explicit Vocabulary Instruction, Project-Based Learning</td>
<td>171-190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia, and Experiential Learning to Improve Thai EFL Senior High School Students’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Ability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satit Somjai &amp; Kittitouch Soontornwipast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Blended Learning to Support the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language</td>
<td>191-211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebah Asaad Hamza Sheerah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect of Using Whiteboard Animation in Project-Based Learning on Indonesian EFL Students’ English Presentation Skills across Creativity Levels Fatimatus Suhroh, Bambang Yudi Cahyono &amp; Utari Praba Astuti</td>
<td>212-227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Paragraph Writing Skills of Saudi EFL University Students Using Flipped Classroom Instruction Bala Swamy Chatta &amp; Mohammad Imdadul Haque</td>
<td>228-247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Teaching in Higher Education: an Innovative Pedagogy to Generate Digitally Competent Students at King Khalid University Shadma Ifat Rahmatullah, Sufia Sultana &amp; Ghazala Sultan</td>
<td>248 - 260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Saudi Students to Blended Learning Environments at the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia Ammar Anas</td>
<td>261-277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration through Online Discussion Board: A Discourse Analysis of CALL in a Normal University in China Cheng Hsu</td>
<td>278-289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Effect of Using Conjunction as Cohesive Device on the Undergraduates’ Quality of Writing in Argumentative Essays of Jordanian EFL Learners Rawhi Yousef Salman Al Shamalat &amp; Che An Binti Abdul Ghani</td>
<td>290-301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Pedagogic Video to Enhance English for Specific Purposes Teaching Program (ESP) for Saudi University Students: A New Prospective Approach Ali Albashir Mohammed Alhaj &amp; Mohammed H. Albahiri</td>
<td>302-317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Use of Social Media Platforms to Enhance Vocabulary Developing in Learning a New Language: A Review of The Literature Meshari Alharthi, Andy Bown &amp; Darren Pullen</td>
<td>318 -331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizlet: An Online Application to Enhance EFL Foundation Students’ Vocabulary Acquisition at Rustaq College of Education, Oman Moza Abdullah Al-Malki</td>
<td>332- 343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigating the Effectiveness of YouTube as a Learning Tool among EFL Students at Baghdad University Nawal Fadhil Abbas &amp; Tabarek Ali Qassim</td>
<td>344 - 356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Effect of Using Padlet as a Vocabulary Knowledge Enhancement Application on Saudi EFL Female Learners, and their Attitudes toward its Value in Learning Abbad M Alabbad &amp; Hadeel Saad Bin Huwamel</td>
<td>356-377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Awareness and Writing through the Use of WebQuest: Iraqi Students at Al Furat Al-Awsat Technical University as a Case Study Shahad Saleh Al Asadi</td>
<td>378 392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties of Teaching Saudi Female Students Linguistic Courses through Educational Closed-Circuit Television at Albaha University Elsadig Mohamed Khalifa Gawi</td>
<td>393-407</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Video-driven Approach to Promoting Pragmatic Development in the Context of English as a Foreign Language

Nuha Abdullah Alsmari
Department of English, College of Science and Humanities
Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University
Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia

Abstract
While pragmatic competence has proven to be teachable over the past three decades, determining the most appropriate and effective approach to facilitating English as a foreign language (EFL) students’ pragmatic development is still a central concern for researchers of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). An investigation into the effects of video-driven prompts on less-studied and more complex teaching speech acts, such as complaints, will significantly supplement the inconclusive results of pragmatic interventional studies in foreign language contexts. To this end, the present study aims to investigate the effects of metapragmatic instruction on English complaints through the implementation of video-driven prompts to raise Saudi female EFL students’ awareness of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects associated with the production of appropriate and accurate target-like complaints during one academic semester. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data from 62 English majors, assigned to an experimental group (n = 31) and a conventional group (n = 31), at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. To elicit the required data, a proficiency test and pre-/post-test written discourse completion tests (WDCT) were distributed among participants. The results of the post-test demonstrated significant improvement in participants’ pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic skills in the production of English complaints. The experimental group immensely outperformed the control group due to their exposure to authentic, contextualized video excerpts. The study supports the teachability of complaints as well as the benefits of incorporating metapragmatic awareness tasks based on contextually authentic input, which can, in turn, accelerate EFL students’ ability to produce pragmatically appropriate and accurate target-like complaints.

Keywords: consciousness-raising, complaints, metapragmatic instruction, pragmatic development, speech acts, video-driven prompts

1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence has been established as a critical element in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and a core component of communicative competence models (Bachman, 1990), being “the ability to comprehend and produce meaning in context” (Taguchi, 2011, p. 432). From a pragmatic point of view, language competence entails two interrelated domains, known as pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence (Leech, 1983). The former comprises awareness of the relationships between language functions and power, social distance, and the amount of imposition involved in the performance of a speech act, as well as conventional practices, social status, and the implications of what you do, when you do it, and to whom (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The latter includes the comprehension of and ability to utilize target language conventions of means and conventions of form appropriately (Thomas, 1983). It is, therefore, necessary for language learners to master not only the grammar of the target language (TL) forms but also the social and cultural values associated with the use of these formulas to use them in a contextually appropriate manner. Research has shown that linguistic proficiency does not necessarily parallel pragmatic ability. Bardovi-Harlig (2013) has reported that even advanced second language (L2) learners may fail to use pragmatically appropriate language, and therefore appear uncooperative or even rude. Besides, some pragmatic functions and relevant contextual factors are not sufficiently salient to be noticed by learners despite extended language exposure in TL communities (Taguchi, 2019). This suggests that pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge need to be systematically taught to help learners acquire them consciously.

A large and growing body of literature has been published to date on the cross-cultural performance of various kinds of speech acts as well as on the teachability of different interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) features in classroom-based interventional treatments, including apologies, refusals, requests, and compliments, in L2 contexts (for reviews, see Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019). Research has conclusively reported positive effects of classroom instruction on students’ pragmatic development, regardless of linguistic background; therefore, instructional intervention is beneficial and facilitative for the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence. Nevertheless, the degree of pragmatic progress is susceptible to several variables affecting the learning process, such as the targeted pragmatic feature, contextual factors, and individual differences among learners (Sánchez-Hernández & Alcón-Soler, 2019). In the same vein, other ILP researchers have proposed that language learners’ attainment of the ability to use the pragmatic aspects of the TL accurately and appropriately is profoundly affected by three factors: “appropriate input, opportunities for output and provision of feedback” (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p. 9). As a result, empirical investigations have sought to securitize the effects of various contextual parameters that may activate the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence, such as motivation, language proficiency, emotional intelligence, the educational setting, length of residence in a TL country, and metapragmatic discussions (Derakhshan & Eslami, 2015; Sánchez-Hernández & Alcón-Soler, 2019; Rafieyan et al., 2014; Roever, 2012; Takahashi, 2010a; Takahashi, 2010b). As pragmatics have increasingly proven to be amenable to intervention, ILP researchers and practitioners have begun examining the effectiveness of dichotomous teaching approaches and modes of instruction in comparison to others and exploring whether different teaching approaches yield different outcomes in various contextual settings, namely explicit vs. implicit, inductive vs. deductive, input vs. output-based instruction, and metapragmatic instruction, with a few studies focusing on the
integration of modern technological tools into L2 pragmatics instruction (e.g., Alcón-Soler & Pitarch, 2010; Alsmari, 2020; Takahashi, 2010a).

Despite the increasing interest in cross-cultural pragmatic research addressing speech act performance and the recorded success of pedagogical interventions in teaching pragmatic features within ILP literature, limited research has undertaken cross-cultural variations among Arab foreign language learners and native speakers of the target language in speech acts (e.g., Al-Maymooni, 2013; Altheeby, 2012; Morkus, 2014). Additionally, Arab learners of English are relatively under-represented in the field of ILP research, particularly concerning the speech act of complaint (Deveci, 2015; Rashidi, 2017; Umar, 2006). Surveying related ILP literature indicates that the complaint speech act, the focal point of this study, has not been as thoroughly tackled as other speech acts, particularly in countries where English is a foreign language (El-Dakhs et al., 2019). The current research has further documented that the speech act of complaint represents a communication difficulty for ESL/EFL learners in various aspects, such as formulas, strategy selection, the realization of the influence of contextual variables due to its complex nature, and lack of sufficient sociopragmatic knowledge among non-native speakers of English (Deveci, 2015; Li & Suleiman, 2017; Yuan & Zhang, 2018). Very few studies have been conducted on Saudi EFL students’ performance of the speech act of complaint (Al-Shorman, 2016; Assallom, 2010; El-Dakhs et al., 2019), and interventional pragmatic studies on complaints are still lacking. Rashidi (2017) argues, “Saudi learners have not so far contributed to interlanguage pragmatic research on complaints” (p. 12). Hence, due to the scarcity of research on the acquisition of English complaints by EFL learners and the inconclusive findings on the effective instructional approaches and best practices for pedagogical intervention to support the advancement of L2 pragmatic competence, the current study sets out to fill a research gap and contributes to the existing ILP research by investigating the effects of metapragmatic awareness via video-driven instruction on Saudi EFL production of pragmatically appropriate and accurate target-like complaints in a classroom setting. Moreover, the study examines whether the probable beneficial effects of the pedagogical intervention on the development of pragmatic proficiency are linked to the video-driven teaching approach in comparison to conventional teaching approaches.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

With the rise of international investments, the increasing demand for English proficiency in various sectors in Saudi Arabia, and the growing number of Saudis pursuing higher education abroad (Al-Seghayer, 2015), effective communication is a priority, which entails learners’ ability to apply language functions in different situations and convey culturally appropriate messages. However, successful communication depends mostly on learners’ attainment of pragmatic competence. That is, EFL students need to learn the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic aspects of all kinds of speech acts to be able to produce pragmatically appropriate language functions and speech acts in various communicative situations. Contrariwise, failure to do so may result in being assumed inconsiderate or even rude (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). According to El-Dakhs et al. (2019), “developing pragmatic competence is becoming a requirement for Saudi learners of English to advance a successful career, especially when most well-paying jobs require work in multi-cultural contexts where English is the main language for communication” (p. 297).
However, the acquisition of pragmatic aspects seems to be a daunting venture, particularly in foreign language (FL) settings in which opportunities for processing adequate authentic input are minimal, and classrooms constitute the only place for communication, which is mostly teacher-oriented. Research has acknowledged that pragmatic competence will not be sufficiently acquired unless learners are systematically provided with various learning opportunities of authentic language exposure and consciousness-raising tasks that help enhance the attainment of and reflection on the linguistic and sociopragmatic features of spoken discourse (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013; Cruz, 2015: Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019). One such learning opportunity involves the use of video-driven prompts and multimodal strategies, which are thought to offer opportunities for meaningful practice during formal classes and hence maximize and enhance the intercultural competence of EFL learners (Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2018; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020; Taguchi, 2015). The present study aims to explore whether incorporating contextualized video-driven instruction in a classroom setting can accelerate Saudi EFL students’ pragmatic awareness and aid their production of pragmatically appropriate and grammatically accurate English complaints.

1.2 Questions of the Study

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

– In what ways can the video-driven approach to pragmatic instruction promote Saudi EFL students’ ability to produce pragmatically appropriate and accurate target-like complaints?

– To what extent will the mode of instruction (video-driven vs. conventional) affect Saudi EFL students’ performance of appropriate and accurate target-like complaints?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Complaint speech act

Complaints fall within the classification of expressive speech acts with the illocutionary meaning of expressing some kind of disapproval or negative feeling towards a specific past event (Searle, 1969). Therefore, as Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) point out, complaints are an extremely complicated speech act in which “the speaker expresses displeasure or annoyance as a reaction to a past or ongoing action, the consequences of which affect the speaker unfavorably” (p. 19). According to Olshtain and Weinback (1993), there are four necessary preconditions for the speech act of complaint to be undertaken. These conditions create the speech events that reflect what makes speakers complain, what they are complaining about, and what the point of complaining is. These four preconditions are: (1) the speaker has some expectation—either for a favorable event to occur (appointment, debt return, a fulfillment of a pledge, etc.) or for an unfavorable event (cancelation, injury, attack, etc.) to be prevented from occurring. The action that arises violates the speaker’s expectations by either preventing the favorable event or failing to deter the unfavorable activity; (2) the speaker finds the action to be offensive, as it has adverse consequences for him/her; (3) the speaker deems the hearer liable for the action, and (4) the speaker opts to convey his/her feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration verbally.

In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish between two major types of complaints: direct and indirect complaints. According to Boxer (2010), a direct complaint is one that is “directed to a person either responsible of a perceived offense or in a role in which s/he can remedy the offense” (p. 164) while an indirect complaint is made to a listener who is not liable for the perceived offense. Direct complaints are typically characterized as face-threatening acts to the hearer, since they...
involve the interlocutor in remedying the complaint. However, for indirect complaints, the speaker does not hold the hearer responsible for the grievance, but s/he seeks agreement or venting from him/her. Accordingly, Cruz (2015) states that direct complaints are cases in which the hearer becomes the target of a complaint, such as, “You are always so late!” In contrast, indirect complaints are cases in which the goal is beyond the speaker’s or the hearer’s control, such as, “Peter is so ungrateful! He is always asking for favors; he cannot return!” In this case, the target is labeled as complainable, and the complaint can be considered a rapport-inspiring speech act (Boxer, 2010). The selection of these complaint formulas, which vary from direct to indirect realizations, is further dependent on three different parameters that contribute to politeness between the interlocutors, namely (1) the interlocutor’s comprehension of the severity of the offense implicated in the communicative action, (2) the degree of social distance, and (3) the difference in social power between the speaker and hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The speech act of complaint is considered a face-threatening act in terms of the politeness theory, in which the complainant must take into consideration the complainee’s face in to avoid any possible threat (Brown & Levinson, 1987). That is to say, complaining threatens the hearer’s public image (need to be respected and appreciated) as the speaker reveals his/her disappointment with the hearer. Hence, the speaker needs to handle complaining of special care to deliver the message and persuade the hearer to act while maintaining rapport with the hearer. Due to the delicate nature of complaints, a certain degree of nuance is required, a nuance which does not come naturally to those learning English as a second language. Miller (2006) points out that it is essential to understand that speech acts involve real-life interactions and require knowledge of the language as well as the ability to use that language appropriately within its culture. Social variables, such as power, social distance, and situational setting, directly influence the appropriateness of politeness strategies.

Given the complexity encountered in the complaint exchange, the speaker must be alert to the existence of various formulas that can be utilized to appropriately express a complaint to the hearer and avoid communication breakdowns between the two interlocutors. What is perceived as polite in Arabic may not be seen as so in English or French. As a result, EFL learners who lack adequate pragmatic competence in L2 or draw on their L1 pragmatic norms may fall into pragmatic failure; that is, they may be at risk of offending other interlocutors or miscommunicating face-threatening acts (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Gaily, 2014). Pragmatic failure has two levels: (1) the pragma-linguistic level resulting from assigning pragmatic force to an utterance different from that usually attached to it by the native speaker or transferring inappropriate conversational strategies; (2) or the sociopragmatic level resulting from differences in cultural norms governing linguistic behaviors in different societies (Thomas, 1983). Accordingly, studying complaints involves various perspectives; that is, linguistic, sociopragmatic, and cultural concerns. To do so, especially in FL contexts where there are limited opportunities to experience authentic complaint situations, pedagogical interference appears to be crucial.

2.2 Interventional pragmatic studies on complaints

A large and growing body of interventional classroom-based experiments has been conducted in the field of ILP research that is directed at promoting pragmatic competence via short- and long-term pedagogical frameworks in L2/FL contexts (for reviews, see Plonsky &
Many have conclusively reported positive effects on language learners’ pragmatic performance regardless of linguistic background. The speech act of complaint is a relatively under-represented speech act in interlanguage pragmatic research, particularly in foreign language contexts (Al-Shorman, 2016; Deveci, 2015; El-Dakhs et al., 2019; Umar, 2006). Unlike other speech acts, complaining was comparably less investigated due to its complexity; it does not have pre-determined linguistic forms and the interpretations of the complaint formulas are often negotiable (Chen et al, 2011). More specifically, hardly any attention has been given to the teachability, learnability, and performance of complaints among Arab foreign language learners (Al-Shorman, 2016; El-Dakhs et al., 2019; Rashidi, 2017), and this has motivated the present study.

Using a pre-test/post-test design, Eslami-Rasekh, Eslami-Rasekh, and Fatahi (2004) attempted to examine the impact of explicit metapragmatic instruction on learners’ comprehension of three speech acts: requesting, apologizing, and complaining. Findings revealed that EFL learners’ pragmatic knowledge of the speech acts under study developed significantly, supporting the advantages of incorporating direct instruction in EFL classrooms to foster learners’ pragmatic competence. Similar findings were documented in research conducted by Gaily (2014), Noonkong et al. (2017), and Li and Zhoumin (2019). They reported that significant improvement in students’ pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic skills and concluded that pragmatics couldn’t be effectively acquired without explicit pragmatic intervention.

It should be noted from the literature mentioned above, that only a small number of investigations tackle the speech act of complaint with EFL learners. Although the last decade witnessed a growing interest in teaching pragmatics to Arab learners of English, no study, to the researcher’s knowledge, has considered the teachability of complaining to Saudi EFL undergraduate students. Thus, it is reasonable to focus on the development of the production of complaints with the help of some innovative teaching approaches and different modes of instruction, such as video-prompt instruction. What follows is a review of the use of authentic audio-visual excerpts in the area of pragmatics.

2.3 Research on authentic video-driven prompts

Research into the pragmatic competence of adult foreign language learners has highlighted essential principles that should be considered when teaching pragmatics and its components in educational contexts. One of these fundamental principles that may contribute significantly to the acquisition of communicative competence is the use, as frequent as possible, of authentic language in classroom settings. Nunan (1999) describes authentic language as any spoken or written resource that has been generated in the course of genuine communication to serve some social function in the language community rather than written explicitly for purposes of language instruction.

Authentic audio-visual material has caught the attention of many ILP researchers, has recently become one of the wealthiest resources available for EFL teachers. Some benefits of using genuine audio-visual input, as reported by Lingzhu and Yuanyuan (2010), are exposing students to real language, promoting student motivation, and accumulating student knowledge. Such observations were further supported by Brock and Nagasaka (2005). They argue that using videos,
films, and television shows makes the classroom atmosphere more exciting and stimulating as they provide a variety of natural, everyday life exchanges with various expressions spoken in the TL accompanied by verbal, as well as non-verbal, communication strategies. These authentic materials may work as an adequate substitute to textbook conversations, which focus primarily on linguistic competence rather than pragmatic competence, and which, for some researchers, are not a reliable source of pragmatic input either (Derakhshan & Zangoei, 2014). In the same vein, Alcón-Soler and Pitarch (2010) find that authentic, video-driven prompts pose a solution for many EFL teachers overwhelmed by assisting their students in acquiring pragmatically appropriate speech act use—particularly in the case of complaints, which have no stereotypical forms and no corresponding second part. Similarly, Derakhshan & Zangoei (2014) cherish the use of video-driven prompts for bringing real life to the classroom and presenting learners with the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge needed for the acquisition of pragmatic competence in EFL contexts, which sorely lack native-like and naturalistic input inside and outside classrooms.

Using a pre-/post-test research method with a control group, Birjandi and Derakhshan (2014) addressed the effect of consciousness-raising, video-driven prompts on the pragmatic listening comprehension of the speech acts of apology, request, and refusal among 78 upper-intermediate EFL learners. Participants were assigned randomly into four groups: metapragmatic, form-search, role-play, and control. Each group adopted a specific instructional approach accompanied by 45 video clips taken from the Flash Forward and Stargate TV shows and the film Annie Hall. In contrast, the control group followed regular listening comprehension lessons, which consisted of comprehension questions, repetition, and vocabulary drills. Utilizing a Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MCDT), findings have shown the significant effect of using audio-visual data on the progress of the comprehension of targeted speech acts, as the three experimental groups outperformed the control group. The most considerable improvement was for the metapragmatic group, followed by the form-search group, which had a better performance than the role-play and control groups.

Similar results were confirmed in two follow-up studies conducted by Derakhshan and Esfami-Rasekh (2015) and Derakhshan and Arabmofrad (2018). Likewise, Hashemian, Domakani, and Ansari (2016) examined the efficacy of using movies as a contextualized teaching strategy to enhance EFL learners’ pragmatic abilities. Results have demonstrated a beneficial impact of using films to promote EFL students’ utilization of various request and apology strategies after watching the videos. Considering the Saudi context, Alerwi and Alzahrani (2020) proposed the use of sitcoms to improve EFL freshmen students’ acquisition of speech acts of requests, refusals, apologies, and compliment responses on the targeted speech acts represented through video clips from different sitcoms. Statistical post-test findings indicated a vast improvement in EFL students’ performance of the targeted speech acts despite the brief period of the experiment. Also, the sitcom experience had a profound influence on students’ perceptions and willingness to learn.

Overall, the review mentioned above of the interventional pragmatic studies on speech acts has highlighted the beneficial effects of incorporating video-driven prompts, extracted from authentic language multimedia, into planned pedagogical sessions to enhance the learnability of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features of speech acts. Nonetheless, none of these studies...
has examined this method’s efficacy on teaching complaints as the targeted pragmatic feature, nor have any been conducted in the Saudi context. Accordingly, as Martínez-Flor (2016) argues, additional investigation is required to broaden the scope of participants’ first language and examine the effects of different instructional approaches using various modes of teaching on the pragmatically appropriate speech act performance. Apart from this aspect, all previous studies have mainly implemented a quantitative approach to examining statistical differences. To this end, employing a mixed-methods research design, the present study intends to explore the influence of a video-driven approach on teaching Saudi EFL students’ use of accurate and appropriate complaints over one academic semester.

3. Methodology

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach in which both qualitative and quantitative methods were integrated to evaluate the effect of a video-driven prompts approach on female Saudi EFL students’ production of pragmatically appropriate and grammatically accurate English complaints. The independent variable is the instructional approach, whereas the dependent variable is EFL students’ performance of complaining before and after the treatment.

3.1 Participants

The sample of the study consisted of 62 female Saudi EFL students majoring in English at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. They were assigned to two intact classes: “video-driven prompt group” (n = 31) and “conventional group” (n = 31). Respondents aged 22 to 24 years were selected based on a demographic questionnaire and a written version of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Allan, 2006) that were administered before the treatment to ensure homogeneity of the two groups. Participants had no previous experience of studying abroad, nor had they been introduced to any pragmatics program prior to the pedagogical intervention; thus, the treatment represented their first exposure to pragmatics. Students were of an intermediate level of English language proficiency, and this level is appropriate for acquiring pragmatic competence (Kasper, 2001).

3.2 Instrument of the study

To gather the required data, a written discourse completion test (WDCT) was utilized as the pre-test and post-test. The WDCT was adopted from Blum-Kulka (1984), culturally validated by Assalloom (2010) then Aldaghri (2018), and finally adapted in line with the objective of the study (see Appendix A). The WDCT consisted of six scenarios, each involving a situation that simulated a complaint to someone in students’ family, social, or academic lives to ensure the naturalness of data. The scenarios were devised to elicit complaints from interlocutors of high, equal, and low social status in situations of high and low levels of impositions that are practically implicated in different contexts in which students need to make complaints. The social variable of distance was controlled as learners need to deal with people with whom they are familiar to derive as natural a response as possible (see Appendix A). The test took about 45 minutes to complete. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the WDCT was handed to a jury of five professors to seek their viewpoints on the clarity, accuracy, and appropriateness of the research tool. The WDCT was further piloted with 25 participants to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, which was found to be 0.86 using Cronbach’s alpha.

3.3 Procedure
A Video-driven Approach to Promoting Pragmatic Development

Alsmari

Using a pre-/post-test design with a control group, the process of collecting the data took one semester. A total of 62 level-six English undergraduates were allocated into two intact classes: video-driven and conventional groups at the Department of English at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. A WDCT was developed to assess participants’ pragmatic productive ability before and after the treatment. The data collected through the pre-test and post-test were evaluated and scored by three raters according to Taguchi’s (2011) scoring system for assessing pragmatic production. The metapragmatic information of the complaint speech act patterns, strategies, and rules was drawn from ILP research that is empirically established in the literature. The sociopragmatic elements of these patterns were extracted using the relations, notions, and concepts defined by the literature. Over twelve-weeks, the teaching sessions were held once a week for approximately 60 minutes in which learners of the experimental group were exposed to various types of metapragmatic instruction, and awareness-raising tasks based on 44 video prompts concerning the speech act of complaint. These vignettes were extracted from different episodes of the sitcom Friends due to the resemblance of the linguistic and extralinguistic features in Friends to those of natural conversations (Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020). Quaglio (2009) notes that Friends shares some key characteristics that embody various registers in natural conversations. The validity of the selection of these video prompts was cross-checked by the researcher and two professors of applied linguistics.

The instructional method embraced in this study was a modification of the pedagogical approach suggested by Alcón (2012) and further developed by Martínez-Flor (2016), who generated a framework to teach apologies featuring episodes from TV shows. To this end, the researcher followed a four-step procedure adopted from Martínez-Flor (2016), which includes: 1) recognizing complaints in communication, 2) clarifying the speech act set and sequence, 3) negotiating and analyzing learners’ use of complaints, and 4) providing feedback on learners’ complaint responses. The aim of this video-driven prompt approach is three-fold: first, provide learners with the contextualized authentic input necessary for acquiring the target feature under study; second, raise their awareness of the pragmalinguistic (referring to the linguistic resources for formulating a speech act) and sociopragmatic (referring to the contextual and social variables which determine the appropriateness of a linguistic choice) features involved in making complaints; and third, encourage them to reflect on this metapragmatic information through collaborative practice and role-plays. By engaging learners in such an instructional approach, Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010) claim that learners are equipped with the three mandatory requirements to improve their pragmatic proficiency in the English language—specifically, access to the appropriate input, opportunities for production, and provision of feedback.

At the beginning of the session, learners of the experimental group were provided with the plot of the studied vignettes as well as the transcripts in which the speech act of complaint was introduced. After watching the targeted video prompts, learners had to identify the sequence of the complaint structure. Then, the teacher-researcher had to develop EFL learners’ pragmatic comprehension through elaborating on the metapragmatic aspects of the complaint formulas, including the critical elements of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics associated with the appropriate use of these complaint strategies as contextualized in the video scenes regarding power, distance, and level of imposition. Once learners are aware of the various forms of the speech act of complaint and their appropriate uses, they are further provided with opportunities to
produce them in a variety of different role-plays equivalent to the encounters experienced in the video-driven prompts and pragmatically focused tasks. The teacher-researcher offered immediate feedback on students’ performance as well as metapragmatic explanations concerning the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic issues associated with their practice. On the other hand, the control group received regular instruction on the targeted speech act under study, as presented in the course curriculum, which discusses some aspects and theories of pragmatics, including the speech act theory.

3.4 Data Analysis

The present study adopts both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze the collected data. Using the statistical software SPSS, data collected were statistically analyzed using paired-samples t-tests and independent-samples t-tests to calculate any prominent variations between the experimental and control groups in the pre-tests and post-tests at the level of significance (p < 0.01). Participants’ performance on the WDCT was rated by two native speakers and the researcher. The rating was based on Taguchi’s (2011) six-point rating scale of appropriateness, ranging from ‘no performance’ (0) to ‘excellent’ (5) and including detailed descriptions of the pragmatic as well as the grammatical aspects.

Table 1. Rating scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratings</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5 Excellent | - Expressions are almost entirely appropriate and effective in the level of directness, politeness, and formality.  
- No or almost no grammatical and discourse errors.                                      |
| 4 Good   | - Expressions are not perfect but adequately appropriate in the levels of directness, politeness, and formality. They fall short of target-like, but are pretty good.  
- Very few grammatical and discourse errors.                                              |
| 3 Fair   | - Expressions are only somewhat appropriate in the level of directness, politeness, and formality. They are more direct or indirect than the situation requires.  
- Grammatical and discourse errors are noticeable, but they do not interfere with appropriateness. |
| 2 Poor   | - Expressions are inappropriate. They sound almost rude or too demanding.  
- Due to the interference from grammatical and discourse errors, appropriateness is difficult to determine. |
| 1 Very Poor | - Expressions are very difficult or too scarce to understand. There is almost no evidence that the intended speech acts are being performed. |
| 0 No Performance |                                                                                                                                              |
taxonomy displayed in Table 2, which is built on Olshtain and Weinbach’s (1993) categorization of complaint strategies along with Trosborg’s (1995) severity scale coding scheme to explain the differences in the learners’ performance in the pre-test and post-test responses.

Table 2. Coding scheme of complaint strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity level</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Least Severe</td>
<td>Below the level of reproach</td>
<td>A speaker avoids explicit mention of the offense by using remarks that do not directly blame an interlocutor.</td>
<td>Don’t worry about it, such things happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expression of annoyance or disapproval</td>
<td>A speaker employs indirect or vague indications that something has been violated without holding the interlocutor directly responsible. The speaker avoids confrontation with the interlocutor and makes general remarks that something has happened by expressing some sort of annoyance at the violation.</td>
<td>This behavior is unacceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Severe</td>
<td>Requests for repair</td>
<td>Questions are directed to the hearer to remediate the problem</td>
<td>Please see if you can fix this as soon as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Justifications</td>
<td>The speaker gives reasons to defend or lend support to their position or demand for repair.</td>
<td>Look at these things all over the place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly Severe</td>
<td>Explicit complaint</td>
<td>The speaker overtly states a direct complaint, holding the interlocutor responsible for a violation. It is a direct and unmitigated complaint pointed at the interlocutor’s face.</td>
<td>You are such an impolite person; you should’ve consulted with me first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Accusation and warning</td>
<td>It is an overt action conducted by the speaker to make an explicit complaint that may carry potential consequences for the interlocutor.</td>
<td>Next time, you will pay for it with your own money!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Severe</td>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>The speaker threatens the interlocutor by applying some sort of punishment.</td>
<td>If we don’t finish the project today, I’ll have to discuss it with the boss.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Results
4.1 Quantitative Findings

In response to the research questions of the study, an independent-samples t-test was carried out to calculate whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores of both the experimental and conventional groups before and after the treatment. The results of applying the statistical procedure, shown in Table 3, illustrate that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental (M = 14.50) and control (M = 15.11) groups in terms of pragmatic performance (t = 0.31; p = .83 > 0.01) before the intervention, and this result is compatible with the objective of the study. Accordingly, any progression found in the results of the post-test can be mainly attributed to the pedagogical intervention.

Table 3. Independent-samples t-test for the difference in the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15.11</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attempting to compare the post-tests, the findings of an independent-samples t-test, displayed in Table 4, demonstrate that the mean score of the experimental group (M = 27.22) was substantially higher than that of the control group (M = 17.51), and this difference is statistically significant (p = .000 [<0.01]). The substantial increase in the mean score of the experimental group indicates that the pedagogical intervention in the EFL classroom had a positive effect on the pragmatic development of complaints used by EFL learners after being enrolled in the teaching experiment. While conventional teaching may, to some extent, facilitate the development of the control group’s pragmatic knowledge, as there is a slight increase in the post-test score, there is a great potential to expedite the advancement of EFL students’ pragmatic abilities through integrating authentic video-driven prompts in EFL classrooms, as seen in the experimental group’s performance. Hence, the effectiveness of video-driven prompt instruction over conventional instruction is advocated in contributing to successful learning outputs in the production of pragmatically appropriate and grammatically accurate complaint speech acts.

Table 4. Independent samples t-test for the difference in the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27.22</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>8.692</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18.51</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To explore differences within groups, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre- and post-tests in the experimental and control groups before and after the experiment. The results in Table 5 indicate that participants’ performance in the experimental group considerably increased on the post-test (M = 27.22), and it was a statistically significant outperformance (p < .01) in contrast to the pre-test. On the other hand, the mean score of the control group slightly increased, which can be attributed to the students’ ongoing progress as a result of conventional instruction. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the quantitative difference between the two
groups confirms the beneficial impact of utilizing authentic audio-visual vignettes in EFL classrooms to promote the pragmatic abilities of FL learners.

Table 5. *Paired-samples t-test for experimental and control groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experimental</strong></td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>11.77</td>
<td>29</td>
<td><strong>.000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>27.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>15.11</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td><strong>.043</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>18.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 *Qualitative Findings*

To obtain a more detailed understanding of the quantitative findings mentioned above, participants’ performance in the pre- and post-tests were further explored. The qualitative analysis focused on three aspects: EFL learners’ awareness of complaints, their linguistic repertoire when producing the target speech act, and their sociopragmatic knowledge of the social parameters affecting the production of complaints. Based on the pre-test results, the teacher-researcher observed that Saudi EFL students were suffering from linguistic weaknesses and pragmatic deficiencies in English. First, most learners used the same strategy to respond to all scenarios, such as using rhetorical questions to express annoyance, like “*Why did you do that?*?” or expressions like “*never do it again,*” which could be interpreted as a threat. Second, some students portrayed their emotional state or the action they would take instead of performing a complaint speech act, such as “*we will have a fight,*” “*I will say nothing and dress up anything else,*” “*I will lose my mind,*” and “*I get so angry.*” Some students reacted to some scenarios by opting out—“*I will say nothing,*” or “*I cannot say anything*”—and some of them even provided a justification for doing so, particularly in scenarios where the interlocutor is the mother or a young sister. Third, the excessive use of imperatives with no polite markers is further proof of the lack of sufficient pragma-linguistic knowledge as well as the misuse of inquiries when seeking clarification and justification, such as responding to the scenario of the professor with “*Give my recommendation letter now. I need it,*” “*Give it to me right now,*” and “*Why don’t you send the letter?*” It was noticeable that some students did not use the suitable degree of severity or the appropriate strategy depending on the complaint situation, such as using “*It's okay don’t worry about it*” and “*never mind*” as a reaction to the housemaid who damaged the skirt, thereby implementing a strategy below the appropriate level of reproach instead of making a direct complaint. Fourth, learners’ complaints were restricted to the head act; accordingly, intensifiers (upgraders) and softeners (down-graders) were notably absent. In addition, there were several grammatical and spelling errors that made it necessary to provide the students with the video scripts depicting the speech act of complaint as well as several representations of the first culture effect.

In the post-test results, WDCT responses of the experimental group differed utterly from those in the pre-test, as shown in the following samples:
Table 6. *Samples of the experimental group’s performance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental group participants</th>
<th>Interlocutor</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>Maid</td>
<td>Be careful next time.</td>
<td>Oh God, how did that happen? Can you please be more careful next time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>Little sister</td>
<td>I will beat her.</td>
<td>Please do not play with my stuff again without my permission! Because you have deleted an important file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>You are delaying my application. How can you forget something important like that?</td>
<td>Oh no, this is the final day for applying, could you please spare some time today to do it for me. I will be thankful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Please write me a letter of recommendation. I need it as soon as possible.</td>
<td>Sorry for bothering you professor. This form is very important to me. I really hope that you give me a hand and write the form. Thank you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Okay mom.</td>
<td>Mom. I gave them my word. Please mom let me go this time and I promise to attend the next occasion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6</td>
<td>Classmate</td>
<td>Bring them tomorrow.</td>
<td>Why did you forget to bring them? I really need them by now to study for the quiz. I think you have to come to my house with the notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>Never talk to me today.</td>
<td>Are you serious? I waited all night long while you’re sleeping. Don’t do it again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to the pre-test, the performance of the experimental group participants outperformed the control group in terms of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge after receiving the metapragmatic video-driven prompts instruction, as displayed in Table 4. For instance, student 1 responded to the housemaid scenario, where imposition is considered to be high, with an imperative as a request for repair in the pre-test, while in the post-test, she used a rhetorical question to express annoyance along with a proper form of request. In the scenario of the little sister, student 2 decided to opt out in the pre-test due to a lack of linguistic pragmatic knowledge. However, in the post-test, she used an imperative as an accusation and warning. She also used justification— *"You have deleted an important file"*—as well as a softener: *"please."* As for the scenario of the professor, student 3 used a rhetorical query to express annoyance as well as an explicit complaint, and student 4 used an imperative and justification as an expression of his complaint in the pre-test. On the other hand, in the post-test, student 3 used an explanation— *"This is the final day for applying"*—followed by a polite and formal request for repair and concluded the complaint with *"I will be thankful."* Student 4 used pre-complaint-stage strategies (i.e., excusing herself for the imposition and establishing a context), followed by request for repair and a *"thank you"* as a closing strategy. Concerning the scenario of the mother, where imposition is
low, student 5 used an approach below the appropriate level of reproach in the pre-test. However, in the post-test, she used an expression of annoyance and a justification followed by request for repair. In the last two scenarios, where students 6 and 7 had equal power with their interlocutor, (female classmate and female cousin, respectively), both speakers used imperatives as expressions of annoyance in the pre-test. In contrast, both students used different strategies in the post-test depending on the level of imposition. Student 6 used an accusation in the form of a rhetorical question followed by a justification and ended with a request for repair. Student 7 used an explicit complaint with a justification and concluded with a warning, “Don't do it again,” as the scenario was of a high imposition.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The present study presents an investigation into the effects of metapragmatic, video-driven instruction on Saudi EFL students’ production of pragmatically appropriate and grammatically accurate target-like complaints. Given the qualitative and quantitative post-test findings, it is evident that pragmatic intervention facilitates interlanguage pragmatics development. More specifically, the experimental group participants became more aware of the pragmalinguistic, and sociopragmatic aspects associated with language functions and speech acts, as shown by the significant improvement of their production abilities in the post-test results. Students became more expressive and used extended responses instead of the linguistically limited answers used in the pre-test. Students who couldn’t produce a complaint or used partial complaints were later able to use more suitable strategies for different situations, showing sensitivity to different social variables. It is evident that students incorporated several strategies in one response and involved multiple components of a complaint. The prominent results from the WDCT post-test have further proved that the pedagogical intervention of pragmatic competence implementing authentic language conversations to teach speech act realizations, patterns, and rules can foster participants’ interlanguage pragmatic ability to make native-like complaints using various linguistic strategies and considering social variables existing between interlocutors. These findings are compatible with Birjandi and Derakhshan (2014), Gaily (2014), Hashemian, et al. (2016), Derakhshan and Arabmofrad (2018), and Alerwi and Alzahrani (2020), in which they reported that using consciousness-raising video prompts extracted from authentic materials supported by metapragmatic instruction and planned pedagogical intervention had an immense impact on EFL students’ pragmatic performance of speech acts.

These results support Schmidt’s (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, which argues that learners’ noticing of the target feature is an essential prerequisite for learners’ ability to convert the input to intake, thereby resulting in further second language development. Although some pragmatic knowledge is universal and some can be transferred from learners’ L1, EFL students do not always use what they know. Hence, pedagogical interventions can help them conceive what they already know and enable them to use their L1 pragmatic knowledge appropriately in L2 contexts (Kasper & Rose, 2002). In the study context, participants of the experimental group consciously acquired the pragmatic features of the target language presented in the classroom by recognizing the targeted expressions used for complaining and understanding the effects of contextual parameters affecting language use; this resulted in more appropriate formulas being employed in the post-test.
The results cast light on the role of video-driven prompts as an influential source of authentic input in teaching and learning interlanguage pragmatics, especially when a growing body of research has documented that textbook conversations are not a reliable source of pragmatic knowledge as they do not confer sufficient meta-linguistic and meta-pragmatic information (Jalilian & Roohani, 2016; Tatsuki, 2019). As compensation, the use of audio-visual prompts, extracted from sitcoms, movies, and TV series, can overcome the inherent limitations of FL contexts. They can provide EFL teachers with solutions for the obstacles encountered when dealing with teaching sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects as they contain real-life situations and common cultural issues and portray characters with which learners can sympathize and imitate Alcón-Soler & Pitarch, 2010; Derakhshan & Zangoei, 2014). Similarly, the results were in line with Al-Shorman (2016), who found that exposing EFL learners to authentic learning situations can enrich their pragmalinguistic repertoire, increase their motivation for learning, and decrease their anxiety and stress when learning a foreign language. It can further help them to achieve successful communication by minimizing the production of culturally specific expressions when responding to complaints in the target language that may cause communication breakdown and violation of the target language’s social-cultural norms. Furthermore, based on a pedagogical framework, genuine materials can make the classroom setting more interesting and inspiring, accelerating learners’ pragmatic and strategic competence when effectively exploited in consciousness-raising activities, collaborative output production tasks, and role-plays in which FL learners can notice gaps in their knowledge and receive explicit feedback (Hashemian et al., 2016; Tognozzi, 2010).

Although the findings of this study are substantial and significant, the researcher recommends several areas for further inquiry. First, the study focuses on the impact of video-driven prompts on the production of the speech act of complaint. It is suggested that further research should focus on the instruction of other kinds of speech acts and pragmatic aspects. It is also advised to duplicate the experiment with a larger number of participants across different levels of proficiency to confirm the effects of instruction and methodology. Second, while the study results provide a persuasive proof that pedagogical intervention can improve EFL learners’ pragmatic abilities, there is still inconclusive evidence as to which approach is most useful to promote pragmatic knowledge, particularly in the Arab world, and most specifically in the Saudi context, where interlanguage pragmatic research is severely lacking. Third, the treatment was confined to female learners, as the study was conducted in a female college. Additional research may explore gender differences, which may hold different results.

In conclusion, this study presents a proposal for pragmatic intervention on English complaints through the implementation of video-driven prompts to raise Saudi female EFL undergraduates’ awareness of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects associated with the production of accurate and appropriate complaints. The most valuable contributions of this study will be its classroom applications and its significance and pedagogical benefit to the teaching and learning of foreign language. The findings of the study have proven that if EFL learners are exposed to contextualized learning conditions, their linguistic performance and pragmatic competence will accelerate dramatically, given the rich input provided by authentic audio-visual materials. The findings also hold implications for language educators, curriculum planners, and EFL material designers in Saudi Arabia, given the lack of pragmatically centered materials, in that
if they consider teaching speech acts in classrooms, they can implement excerpts from sitcoms, films, and TV shows that will offer various opportunities for EFL learners to raise their awareness of the communication norms of the native culture as well as the socio-pragmatic rules associated with the use of these kinds of speech acts. In summation, to become pragmatically competent, EFL learners need to gain knowledge of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of all types of speech acts to be able to comprehend and produce pragmatically appropriate language functions in various communicative situations.

Acknowledgment
The researcher would like to thank the Research Center at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University - Deanship of Scientific Research - for their constant support, encouragement and guidance.

About the Author
Dr. Nuha A. Alsmari is an Assistant Professor of applied linguistics at the Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. Her research interests include foreign language teaching and learning, pragmatic instruction, language learning strategies and self-directed learning. ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9121-0868

References
A Video-driven Approach to Promoting Pragmatic Development

Alsmari


A Video-driven Approach to Promoting Pragmatic Development

Alsmari


Taguchi, N. (2015). Instructed pragmatics at a glance: Where instructional studies were, are, and should be going. *Language Teaching, 48*(1), 1–50. doi:10.1017/S0261444814000263


Appendix A
Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT)

Name: ______________________________

Read the following scenarios carefully then write your response in the space below. Imagine yourself in such situations and give your response as naturally as possible. Your answers will be used for research purposes.

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
1. It is 5 p.m. and now you will be meeting your friends at the mall in 20 minutes. You go to your room to dress up, but you find that the skirt that you intend to wear needs ironing. You give it to your housemaid to iron. After 10 minutes, she returns it back burnt with a big hole that exposes your legs. What would you say to your housemaid?

2. Last night, you stayed up late writing a research paper, which is due within two days and must be submitted to your professor on time. You finished writing your paper and you went to bed at 3:00 a.m. Two hours later, you woke up to find your youngest sister, who is 9 years old, entered your room, played with your laptop. Then, she mistakenly deleted your file. You tried to search for a copy, and you found one, but the latest changes are missing. What would you say to your youngest sister?

3. You are applying for post graduate studies in the university. It is required to have 3 recommendation forms filled out by your professors. 3 weeks ago, you asked one of your professors, who is originally American, to do that for you. Today is the final day for applying. You meet her to collect the form, but she said that she has totally forgotten about the form. You complain to her saying:

4. Yesterday, you got your mother’s permission to go to your friends’ monthly gathering. Today, when you start dressing up, your mother asks you: “where are you going to go?” When you tell her that you are going to the restaurant, she says that she can’t let you go because she forgot to tell you that there is an important family occasion tonight. What would you say to your mother?

5. On Monday, you have a lecture about English literature for which you spend two hours writing down some notes. At the end of the lecture, one of your classmates asks you to lend her your hand-written lecture notes to photocopy to get prepared for next- week quiz and return it by tomorrow. On Wednesday, when you ask her to return your notes, she says that she has forgotten both copies at home. What would you say to the classmate?

6. Your female cousin, who is about your age, promises to visit you at home tonight. So, you start preparing for this invitation from about 5:00 p.m. she is expected to arrive at 7:00. Now it is 9:00 p.m. and your cousin has not shown up yet. After calling your uncle’s house, her mother informs you that your cousin is still sleeping. You cancel your dinner and next day you call her. What would you say to your cousin?

Appendix B

Categorization of the Six WDCT Items According to the Two Social Variables of Power and Imposition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Scenario/ interlocutor</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Imposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Damaging your skirt/ housemaid</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Deleting some information in important file/ young sister</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Forgetting about recommendation letter/ professor</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Forgetting about your visit to your friends/ mother</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Forgetting to return your notes/ classmate.</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Not paying you a prescheduled visit/ cousin.</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementing TED Talks as Authentic Videos to Improve Taiwanese Students’ Listening Comprehension in English Language Learning

Chia-Pei Wu
Department of Applied English
I-Shou University, Taiwan

Abstract
This research paper explores implementing authentic video materials in EFL listening classrooms. Videos have been used as one of the English listening learning resources; however, without effective learning supports, EFL students are likely to encounter difficulties in comprehending the content on videos and then demotivate learning English. This study aimed to incorporate authentic online videos into students' English listening activities in college-level English classrooms in a private comprehensive university in southern Taiwan. Based on the research background and rationale, there were three main questions: (1) Is there a significant difference among students with different majors on the perceptions of the effectiveness of the listening activities on watching Technology Entertainment and Design Talks videos? (2) Is there a significant difference among students with the content familiarity in their learning with TED Talks videos? (3) What are the students' perceptions of practicing English listening with TED Talks videos? This research was conducted in a one-semester project to uncover 82 EFL learners’ self-reports of learning their online video materials. TED Talks videos and listening activities were utilized in this learning environment. A questionnaire was administered and consisted of demographic information, Likert scale questions, and interviews. The results showed that most students considered that they improved their listening comprehension after learning the TED talks video. Students recalled their background knowledge and analyzed content in the TED Talks.

Keywords: authentic material, Computer-assisted language learning, English as a foreign language, English listening comprehension, Technology, Entertainment, and Design Talks, Taiwanese students

Cite as: Wu, Chia-Pei (2020). Implementing TED Talks as Authentic Videos to Improve Taiwanese Students’ Listening Comprehension in English Language Learning. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL (6). 24-37.
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.
Introduction

Technology has been an indispensable part of foreign language learning and teaching. Many instructors and educational practitioners use online learning materials to improve their insufficiencies. To keep pace with this change in language learning classrooms, especially in English, foreign language contexts have reinforced traditional classroom-based instruction with online learning materials. Besides, one cutting-edge technological tool uses videos to improve students' language learning and promote effective communication and education in teaching. More specifically, using video materials can motivate students' willingness to expose themselves to listening to English. Students could definitely benefit from more chances to interact with teachers and classmates for their independent learning outside the classroom. Extensive listening activities such as TED Talks could be one of the authentic video materials to offer students abundant comprehensive and enjoyable input (Cong-Lem, 2018; Lin & Wang, 2018; Renandya & Farell, 2011).

Learning English as a foreign language has been considerably highlighted in Taiwan. Among listening, speaking, reading, and writing, listening has been recognized as the most crucial competence of communicating with foreigners when it comes to addressing language development (Liu, Chen, & Chang, 2009). Recently, the popularity of multimedia technologies provides many opportunities to access English learning materials in listening. In this research, the researcher conducted the selection of authentic videos such as TED Talks in teaching listening comprehension could improve listening in English. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to incorporate authentic online videos into students’ English listening activities. The following research questions were investigated based on the research background and rationale: (1) Is there a significant difference among students with different majors on the perceptions of the effectiveness of the listening activities on watching TED Talks videos? (2) Is there a significant difference among students with the content familiarity in their learning with TED Talks videos? (3) What are the students' perceptions of practicing English listening with TED Talks videos?

Literature Review

Cultural-historical Theory

The Cultural-historical Theory provides insights and the framework support for understanding how human beings learn with different social and cultural tools and their interactions. Teaching and learning can be thought of as a state that students learn together in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The collaborative efforts between students are also designed into different cooperative learning pedagogies that have different directions to traditional education theories, especially those foreign language acquisition theories from Chomsky. (Lin, 1999) Because Vygotsky sees knowledge construction is derived from social interactions, which is the foundation of Cultural-historical Theory on using technologies as auxiliary tools for learning, the theory is suitable as a theoretical framework for this study's research design, explanation, and discussion.

Mediation through artifacts is the essential concept of the Cultural-historical Theory. (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) Mediation was described by Vygotsky as activities between sign and tool. (Cole, 1996, p.108; Vygotsky 1978, p.54) Moreover, it described it as "the use of signs and tools using the schema ... shows each concept subsumed under the more general concept of indirect (mediated)
activity" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 54). Vygotsky believes that when tools and signs work together and conduct indirect activities, mediation occurs. Therefore, according to Vygotsky's concept of social interaction in the Cultural-historical Theory, learning is constructed socially. The learning context has great influences on the use of cultural tools and signs to create meaning from new knowledge.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

According to the foundation of mediation and ZPD, culturally mediated means are utilized for language acquisition. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) describe language acquisition as "with respect to symbolic artifacts, language activity... is the primary, though not exclusive, mediational means humans deploy for thinking" (p. 79). Mediation and cultural means used in concept formation was a key for ZPD by Vygotsky. Vygotsky (1978) calls the discrepancies of learning of the existence of help from adults as the zone of proximal development.

Based on this understanding, grammar education for second language learners is not purely the reception to the established knowledge from "the other," but the active production of concepts. As a mediational artifact, TED Talks as a tool for inter-mental communication and sign for intra-mental communication in the process of language mediation. Learners aware of the mediational artifacts, but if the sign and tools within the learning mediation can be designed in a more spontaneous way for learners to cooperate with others in a classroom setting. (Gutiérrez, 2006). Computers, along with TED Talks, are used as mediational artifacts in communicating with learners to improve their listening comprehension in a more meaningful way.

Listening Comprehension in EFL Contexts

Communicative skills are important in our daily life. Listening to practice in a foreign language classroom, especially, is very challenging. Many researchers stated that foreign language teaching mainly emphasized productive skills: speaking and writing. (Nunan, 2002; Vandergrift, 1999; Wallace, 2012). Listening and reading regarded as secondary skills are often overlooked; therefore, listening is currently receiving more attention (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011a, 2011b; Nunan, 2002; Wallace, 2012).

Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (1981) is concerned with students’ acquisition. According to this hypothesis, learners improve and progress along with the 'natural order' when they receive second language 'input' that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. For example, if learners are at a stage 'i,' then acquisition takes place when they exposed to 'Comprehensible Input' that belongs to level 'i + 1.' Therefore, listening comprehension is crucial for language learners' right conditions to cultivate other language skills.

The two important perspectives regarding the processes of listening influencing language pedagogy since the 1980s are bottom-up, top-down processes (Nunan, 2002). The bottom-up process focuses on listeners' understanding of what they hear starts the smallest units of sounds such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. These sounds could become concepts. In this process, most listeners apply several types of knowledge in a "hierarchical" manner to comprehend the message (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). On the other hand, the top-down process perspective focuses on listeners actively reorganize the meaning of incoming sounds using prior knowledge of
contexts (Richards, 2003). Most researchers agree that both processes are necessary for effective learning when learning a language (Nunan, 2002; Richards, 2003; Wallace, 2012).

**Authentic Listening Materials**

Herrington and Oliver proposed a concept of authentic learning, useful as a model for curriculum design rather than a learning theory (Herrington, 2015). Authentic learning allows learners to explore, discuss, and meaningfully construct concepts and relationships in contexts involving real-world problems and projects relevant to the learners (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). Furthermore, Gauriento and Morley (2000) also echoed that when it comes to language teaching, the use of authentic materials in the classroom is beneficial to the learning process. In other words, learners are more likely to increase their motivation when teachers use real-world issues, problems, and applications. According to Al Azri and Al-Rashdi (2014), they categorized three kinds of authentic materials: listening, video, and print materials. The listening materials include films, news, cartoons, and songs.

Among authentic listening videos, TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) has many advantages as sources of authentic listening materials from the view of second or foreign language learning and teaching. Park and Cha (2013) concluded that four advantages of TED videos: interesting contents, distinctive "interactive transcript" feature, easy downloading, and simple access. Other educators also reported that Korean EFL students perceptions and attitudes toward authentic listening materials (TED Talks) were significantly positive (Gagen-Lanning, 2015; Kim, 2008; Watkins & Wilkins, 2011).

**The Familiarity of Content Knowledge**

ESL/EFL students have countered a problem when they listen to some unfamiliar content in English. Lack of social-cultural, factual, and contextual knowledge of the second/foreign language can demonstrate a difficulty of listening comprehension because language is used to mention about culture (Othman & Vanathas, 2017). More specifically, this presents that background knowledge plays a crucial part in interpreting meaning when this forms a foundation for listeners to connect new information to listeners’ existing knowledge. Furthermore, Gebhard (2000) stated that background knowledge was associated with real-world experience and expectations. The knowledge is very significant when teachers consider learners' language processing problems. He elaborated that in listening, comprehension can only occur when the listener can locate what he/she listens in a context. If the listener comprehends something about the speaker and his/her intention, comprehension is much more likely to be simple. Indeed, familiarity with the text makes listening comprehension easier for the students as they relate to their background knowledge (Gebhard, 2000; Othman & Vanathas, 2017).

**Motivation**

Motivation plays a significant part and is considered the universal principle that suggests that learners take an independent action (Dörnyei, 2001). Intrinsic and extrinsic were also two essential types of motivations, depending on the situation and individual traits; however, they could coexist. Bhattacharya and Chauhan's study of the blogging program revealed that the majority of their learners were mostly motivated by internal factors. Learning autonomy would be a key incentive to encourage them to learn more.
Students were motivated by intrinsic factors like the sense of achievement, self-motivated corrections … and seems to assert the standpoint taken by Dörnyei (2001) and Deci and Ryan (1985) that innate motivation is an essential construct in the development of learning autonomy. (p. 15)

Consequently, it is vital to cultivate a positive learning environment that develops a sense of achievement and self-motivation, learning students towards autonomy.

Methodology
Participants
In this study, the participants were two classes of freshmen from two departments, Business Administration (BA) and Industrial Management (IM), at a four-year university in Taiwan. Each class consisted of 41 students. The participants joined this TED project as a part of their regular course. The instructor encouraged the students to visit the assisted TED website every week. The average age of participants is eighteen. All of them had learned English for at least nine years. Most of them did not take or pass any English language proficiency.

Speaking and Listening Course
First-year students in the required core course (Basic English Listening) had 2 hours a week of English learning, most of which were dedicated to speaking and listening to foster their communication skills. The course was designed to establish a foundation for English core classes, assisting students in participating in activities, leading a discussion, and giving short presentations. As most of the hours in the Speaking and Listening course were used to develop students' productive skills, it was needed to provide additional exposure to authentic speech outside the classroom. Typically, Freshman Listening and Speaking course used a listening textbook with accompanying CDs. Students at this level were considered essential to intermediate. Listening receives a greater focus than speaking does; the course was followed by a second-year required course, Practical English.

Instruments
TED Talks
In the second semester of spring 2018, four TED talks were assigned for outside the classroom. There were three criteria for selecting four videos. Firstly, the length of the TED Talk should not be long. The average length for each video was approximately 8 minutes. Second, the language level should be at an intermediate level. Thirdly, these TED talks should be published within two years. Two experts who had more than six years’ experience of teaching English would select four videos. Four TED Talks videos were used in this study, namely “How do use a paper towel,” “Photos from a storm chaser,” “A skateboard with a boost,” and “Why I take the piano on the road and in the air.”
The Questionnaire with Open-Ended Questions

A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire of 30 items was modified based on the questionnaire from Chang’s study (2016) for the evaluation of language learning motivation and attitudes. The questionnaire was designed to investigate the students’ perceptions from three dimensions, including their perceptions toward their familiarity with content knowledge about TED Talks videos and the effectiveness of the listening activities and motivations. Each item was measured on the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from five (Strongly Agree) to one (Strong Disagree). The Cronbach alpha value of reliability statistics is .75, .72, and 0.79, respectively. Moreover, the researcher designed several open-ended questions for participants to understand their more in-depth reflection of watching TED Talks, impacts on learning comprehension, and any suggestions.

Interview

After conducting the questionnaire, six students from two classes were chosen randomly for a semi-structured interview. The follow-up questions were from the questionnaire, where the students were asked to elaborate more on the open-ended questions.

Procedure

This experiment was conducted in 2019 for 18 weeks. One TED Talk was demonstrated every other week, and each video lasted for several minutes and took 30 minutes to complete the worksheet. The researcher designed at least ten questions of each worksheet for each TED Talk based on the content of the TED Talks videos before the class. Before the class, the instructor first uploaded the file of TED Talks video on the learning platform, Moodle, asked students to take some notes, and preview the worksheet before the discussion. When the instructor considered that the students watched the video that students might not understand well, the instructor would ask them in class. Since each video played several minutes, most students watched the whole video once and simultaneously answered all the questions. At the end of the questions, the instructor would check the students’ answers and discuss them. There were two TED Talks videos that were included for each the midterm and final exams. Finally, students were given to complete the questionnaire and open-ended questions. Six participants were selected to interview at the end of the semester. This procedure was in a sociocultural context (see Figure.1).
Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire and open-ended answers were analyzed according to the research questions. SPSS 18 for Windows was used as the leading software for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were calculated to describe the means. Standard deviations were adopted to analyze the questionnaire results of perceptions towards TED Talks videos learning in an English listening and speaking classroom. For the open-ended questions from the questionnaire, each participant was given a code; for example, BA-0001 represents learner 0001 in the Department of Business Administration and IM0001 in the Department of Industrial Management. The researcher translated the responses to the open-ended questions into raw data for each participant and then re-coded the raw data to different themes to understand the learners’ perceptions of TED Talks videos listening activities. The themes were designed according to the research questions and their feedback in open-ended questions.

Regarding the interview data analysis, the answers from the questions asking students' perspectives on TED Talks videos listening activities were conducted in a qualitative manner. Participants' opinions were presented to build up a complete picture. The researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews for further content analysis.

Results

Results of Students’ Three Closed-Ended Questions

Question one: Is there a significant difference among students with different majors on the perceptions of the effectiveness of the listening activities on watching TED Talks videos?

To further explore the effectiveness of watching TED Talks videos on students' self-reports, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference among different majors' self-report toward the effectiveness of listening TED Talks activities. This analysis was done in relation to the criteria of ten items from the questions.

Results in Table one revealed that there were significant differences at the .05 level between the ten factors of the effectiveness of watching TED Talks videos and different majors \[[F (2,117) =6.30, p=.003]\], \[[F (2,117) =4.56, p=.012]\], \[[F (2,117) =6.34, p=.002]\], \[[F (2,117) =3.67, p=.003]\], \[[F (2,117) =4.97 p=.001]\], \[[F (2,117) =4.02 p=.02]\], \[[F (2,117) =7.61, p=.001]\], \[[F (2,117) =3.41, p=.004]\], \[[F (2,117) =6.69, p=.002]\], \[[F (2,117) =8.70, p=.000]\] (See Table 1)
Table 1. *The results of one-way ANOVA for the effectiveness of the listening activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of English listening</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>6.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>65.89</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>72.99</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand most part of the content</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>7.65</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>98.33</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>105.99</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Proficiency</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>7.57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>6.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>69.89</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>77.46</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase vocabulary</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>3.656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>82.16</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>87.30</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The efficiency of learning vocabulary</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>4.965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>77.72</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>.664</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>84.32</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember words with ease.</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>4.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>76.34</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>81.59</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new vocabulary</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>7.613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>82.70</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>93.46</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing with various videos</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>3.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>70.26</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>74.36</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of learning with TED</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>9.72</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>6.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks videos</td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>85.07</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>94.80</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build more confidence in learning English</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>11.55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>8.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>77.65</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>89.20</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: BT=Between groups, WG=Within groups, * p< .05

Scheffé post hoc comparison procedure was further implemented to examine multiple comparisons among the means of self-reports among two different majors. As indicated in Table two, IM scored slightly higher than BA students in the ten factors of effectiveness of watching TED talks videos. However, the BA class (M= 3.12, SD= 0.81) in the overall scores of the effectiveness of watching TED Talks did not significantly differ from the IM class. (M=3.21, SD=0.75).

Question two: Is there a significant difference among students with the content familiarity in their learning with TED Talks videos?

To answer the second question of this research asking whether there is any significant difference between the mean scores of content familiarity of learning TED Talks videos. One-way analysis of variables (ANOVA) was administered to the questionnaire questions regarding the content familiarity of TED Talks videos. Results in Table two concluded that there was no significant difference among students in terms of the nine factors of content familiarity questionnaire of learning TED Talks videos (p >.05), which meant none of two majors showed any significant differences on content familiarity questionnaire on their listening TED Talks videos in this sense. The only factor, analyzing content showed a significant difference between two majors and their mean scores of content familiarity of learning TED Talks videos [$F (4,134 )=6.68$, p=.002]. Next, the Scheffé post hoc comparison procedure was further implemented to examine
multiple comparisons among the means of self-reports of analyzing content among two different majors. However, there was no significant difference in the mean difference between the two majors. What is more, as for the factor of analyzing content, the results showed that the IM class (M= 3.24, SD= 0.85) scored higher than the BA class (M= 3.07, SD= 0.87) on their self-reports of analyzing content when they watched TED Talks videos.

Table 2. The results of one-way ANOVA for the content familiarity of the listening activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character background</td>
<td>BT 2.07</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT 94.57</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96.64</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background knowledge</td>
<td>BT 4.18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT 97.89</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.731</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102.08</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporating content</td>
<td>BT 5.38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT 103.81</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.775</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109.19</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction Expression</td>
<td>BT 7.63</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT 109.74</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.819</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>117.38</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction message</td>
<td>BT 7.81</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT 111.32</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119.13</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember message</td>
<td>BT 4.86</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT 115.65</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.863</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120.52</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keywords</td>
<td>BT 6.12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT 109.63</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115.76</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important sentences</td>
<td>BT 6.26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT 92.66</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.691</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98.92</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing content</td>
<td>BT 9.43</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT 100.31</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.749</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109.74</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main ideas</td>
<td>BT 4.19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.341</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WT 104.74</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108.94</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: BT=Between groups, WG=Within groups, * p< .05

Question three: What are the students’ perceptions toward the influence of practicing English listening with TED Talks videos?

To elicit the participants’ perceptions regarding the impact of practicing English listening comprehension with TED Talks videos, a semi-structured interview with six interview questions was used. With regard to the aspects of the improvement of learning their English listening by watching TED Talks videos, most of the learners agreed that practicing with TED Talks videos in class can improve their listening comprehension and increase vocabulary. For example, participant BA02 said that “watching TED Talks can know more new words. If I try to keep listening again, I would understand more what it talked about." Another participant#IM01 said that "my listening ability is making progress and getting more new words after watching TED Talks videos. Also, I
can practice listening to their daily usage little by little." Moreover, participant # BA 06 I feel I can catch more what the speaker said. In the beginning, I could not figure it out. After I try to listen to it again, I can understand it more and more." Hence, the results revealed that participants' listening comprehension was getting better, and they also promoted their vocabulary acquisition after practicing with TED Talks.

In response to students' motivation to watch assigned TED Talk videos before the class, six participants reported that they were less likely to practice listening to these assigned TED Talks videos because they would be lazy or distracted. They prefer to practice with TED Talks videos in class, not study alone at home. For example, participant # BA03 demonstrated, "in class, my teacher asked to write the worksheet, and I would work harder in class than at home." Additionally, participant # BA 05 stated, "it would be better for me to watch TED Talks videos in class because I can ask teacher questions immediately. Unfortunately, I did not understand TED Talks videos if I study alone at home." However, participant # BA01 addressed, "it would be helpful for me to practice listening to TED Talks videos at home since there was an app to assign TED Talks videos into different levels. The Teacher sometimes played the video, but I sometimes did not get it." Consequently, the outcomes disclosed that most participants prefer to learn with classmates and a teacher in class; however, some students liked to study TED Talks videos at home.

With regard to the perspectives of participants' preference of assigned TED listening material, most participants agreed that choosing content related to real-life was more practical and interesting to them. These materials would motivate them to learn different topics on TED Talks in the future. Participant # IM2 said, "Watching "Paper Towel" was very interesting. I could observe speakers' body language and tone. It was close to daily life, and I would think it was easier to understand what he talked about it." Participant # BA02 mentioned that "sports topic is my favorite because I like to play with a skateboard in my free time. This skateboard is very innovative in this video, and I want to try it if I have a chance to play with it." Furthermore, participant # BA03 talked, "the topic of paper towel is very intriguing for me; the speaker expresses that the use of paper towels in a creative way is important. The other topic I do not like very much is because I do not have the background knowledge, and the speakers speak very fast." Therefore, the findings showed that interesting topics would be their concern when they watched TED Talks videos. They also discussed that speakers' information could associate with their background knowledge would help them comprehend the content of videos.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to utilize the selection of authentic videos such as TED Talks in teaching listening comprehension to improve listening in English. It focused upon the effectiveness of the listening activities, content familiarity, and perceptions of practicing English listening with TED Talks videos, in relation to the pedagogical goal of improving students' listening comprehension. It also investigated the relationship between different majors and students' self-reports on TED Talks videos' learning effectiveness. What is more, the difference between students' majors and their content familiarity about listening materials on TED Talks was further explored in the study. Finally, students' interviews were analyzed to get more comprehensive information.
First of all, most students considered that they improved their listening comprehension after learning TED talks videos. Additionally, they could comprehend more what the videos delivered and acquired more vocabulary. Students majoring in BA (business administration) and IM (industrial management) on their self-reports of learning effectiveness demonstrated that there were significant differences between the following factors: improvement on English listening, understand most part of the content, listening proficiency, increase vocabulary, the efficiency of learning vocabulary, remember words with ease, learn new vocabulary, practicing with various videos, the effectiveness of learning with TED videos and build more confidence on learning English. Besides, the IM class outperformed the BA class in terms of the listening comprehension section in their midterm and final exams. Such research results support the previous studies (Gagen-Lanning, 2015; Kim, 2008; Watkins & Wilkins, 2011), indicating that listening activities with TED Talks videos are useful for raising students’ learning effectiveness and vocabulary acquisition.

Secondly, students from two majors did not show any significant differences in content familiarity questionnaire on their listening TED Talks videos. Since the selection of TED Talks videos in this study was diverse, their major would not significantly impact their perceptions of the content familiarity. However, only one factor, analyzing content, showed a slightly significant difference between two majors and their mean scores of content familiarity of learning TED Talks videos. Also, the BA class on self-reports scored slightly higher than the IM class. More specifically, students recalled their background knowledge and analyzed content in the TED Talks between two different major classes. This result is consistent with other findings of familiarity of content knowledge research (Gebhard, 2000; Othman & Vanathas, 2017), which reported the familiarity with the text makes listening comprehension accessible for the students as they are able to relate to their background knowledge.

Finally, according to the interview results, the results revealed that participants' listening comprehension was getting better, and they also enhanced their vocabulary acquisition after they practiced with TED Talks. Regarding the schedule of learning TED Talks, some students prefer to learn with classmates and teachers in class while other students chose to practice with TED Talks videos at home. Furthermore, students also elaborated that interesting topics would become their priority when they watched TED Talks videos. They also claimed that speakers' information could connect with their background knowledge. It would help them comprehend the content of videos and interesting and educational TED Talks would motivate them to think independently.

Conclusion

When learning a second or foreign language, students often encounter difficulties in watching or listening to learning materials, which involve a rapid rate of presentation or unauthentic content. In this paper, the researcher conducted the selection of authentic videos such as TED Talks in teaching listening comprehension could improve listening in English. After presenting the findings, it is evident that employing TED Talks may promote students’ listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation to pursue their interests independently. However, there are still some suggestions to be addressed. Firstly, some participants like to listen to TED Talks videos after class and prefer to practice with TED Talks privately. Teachers should consider the amount of time spent on listening materials and remind students to preview and review...
Implementing TED Talks as Authentic Videos to Improve Taiwanese

the learning materials. Secondly, a few students stated that only interesting or familiar topics on TED Talks they would choose to study. Teachers should give students a variety of topics in a learning list at the beginning of the semester. Thirdly, although few students claimed they had difficulties understanding different speakers' accents on TED Talks, the design of listening activities is to make students explore authentic English learning environments. It was concluded that students showed positive learning effectiveness on TED Talks listening comprehension activities, and they were willing to analyze content when they listened to unfamiliar materials. Future studies might explore whether students from different majors will have a chance to investigate the relationship between their listening comprehension and language proficiency. Besides, future students compile qualitative data to delineate how the activity affects listening comprehension elaborately. Finally, more research is necessary for identifying difficulties students encounter, particularly at lower proficiency levels and effective learning strategies to help students overcome them and become advanced listeners.

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 primary research interests include academic writing, computer-assisted language learning, and reading instruction.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5981-192X

References


Implementing TED Talks as Authentic Videos to Improve Taiwanese

Wu


Implementing TED Talks as Authentic Videos to Improve Taiwanese


Computer Technologies in Acoustic Analysis of English Television Advertising Discourse

Olga Valigura  
Department of Oriental Philology  
Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine

Liubov Kozub  
Romance and Germanic Languages and Translation Department  
National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine

Iryna Sieriakova  
Department of Foreign Languages  
Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine

Abstract  
Research studies in a variety of linguistic areas indicate that scholars often refer to computer technologies that become popular as a tool to reinforce the findings and provide the validity of the experimental results. This paper discusses the use of computer technologies in the acoustic analysis of speech prosody focused on the English television advertising discourse. The article aims to determine what the main prosodic characteristics of English advertising discourse are, and how they contribute to the maximum influence on the television audience. Therefore, the study relies upon the acoustic analysis using sound processing software WaveLab, Cool Edit Pro, SpectraLAB, Wasp, Sound Forge to ensure the reliability and validity of the obtained results. Moreover, the computer programs used in this research allowed us to measure the pronunciation accuracy and present results based on many experimental data, not only on the assumptions. Besides, the linguistic interpretation of the data of the perceptual and acoustic analysis of the English television advertising discourse prosody proves a strong correlation of these data. The obtained results indicate that detailed analysis of the quantitative prosodic characteristics of speech enables to get a clear picture of the prosodic organization of the English television advertising discourse. The research proves that the prosody of the English advertising discourse closely correlates with its pragmatic potential and some sociolinguistic features, namely, the social status of the viewer, contribute to the maximum influence on the television audience.  
Keywords: Acoustic analysis, English advertising discourse, pragmatic potential, prosody, sound processing software

Introduction

The present language study is so tied to technology that it has become a fact of life with important implications for applied linguists. A variety of computer programs used for phonetic investigations helps to detect regularities about the sound structure of the language, determine word and sound frequency, compare word frequency between written and spoken language, etc.

Carrying out the research of different linguistic phenomena, many scholars addressed software that ensured the accuracy of the obtained results (Conklin, Pellicer-Sanchez, & Carrol, 2018; Phakiti, De Costa, Plonsky, & Starfield, 2018; Quinn, & Hannan, 2012; Rankinen, 2014). Meanwhile, many phoneticians (Hagiwara, 2009; Singh, 2019; Thomas, 2001; Wayland, 2019) pay much attention to computer programs in their investigations, though they might neglect the application of special sound processing software in prosodic differentiation of English discourse modes. Despite considerable advances in learning and researching language through computer technology, there have been very few works that have provided studies at the interface between prosody, discourse, pragmatics, and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

Therefore, this research aims to study the main prosodic characteristics of English TV advertising discourse and to determine how they contribute to the maximum influence on the television audience, using sound processing software to reinforce the findings and provide the reliability and validity of the experimental results. Conducting the acoustic analysis of English TV advertisements, we tried to confirm the results of the auditory study and prove a strong correlation of these data.

Due to the tasks of the given research, the following sections cover the analysis of the pragmatic nature of TV advertising discourse and the discursive correlation of prosody and pragmatics in English oral speech, which contributes to a better understanding of the crucial role of prosody in determining the success of TV advertising influence. Since the adequate choice of prosodic means of any discourse largely depends on many factors, the research of the English TV advertisements prosody takes into account some social factors, namely, the social status of the addressee.

Finally, the paper discusses the results of the experimental phonetic research and linguistic interpretation of the obtained data of the perceptual and acoustic analysis. As a result, the interdisciplinary study of the English television advertising discourse prosody using special sound processing software has obtained broader scope and perspectives.

Theoretical Background of the Research

Pragmatic Value of TV Advertising Discourse

The research of TV advertising discourse is the focus of studies of many linguistic and non-linguistic disciplines such as semiotics, pragmatics, sociology, the psychology of advertising (Fennis & Stroebe, 2016; Fischer, 2016; Kaburise, 2011). Scholars regard it as a persuasive social discourse, supported by multimodal and multimedia techniques, produced with the intention to influence the addressee (Fennis & Stroebe, 2016). In this case, we perceive the discursive activity of the television communicator as an interaction process.
The communicator, devoid of feedback from the addressee while producing a discursive practice, primarily directs its message to a specific image of the addressee, predicts the possible reaction of the audience and simulates the process of the speech perception by the recipient (Armstrong, 2010; Belch & Belch, 2017; Fletcher, 2008).

The study of TV advertising discourse allows us to assert that pragmatic tasks of the addresser of the oral information are universal, i.e., the influence on the addressee, where prosody plays an important role. The addresser chooses specific strategies that involve the implementation of general pragmatic plans of impact on the addressee. One should bear in mind that when we talk about the pragmatics of the advertising discourse, we mean the influence of a rather high degree of intensity, the existence of both intellectual and emotional means of evaluation. Therefore, carrying out the acoustic analysis of English TV advertising discourse, we consider its pragmatic potential in correlation with prosody and social factors contributing to the maximum influence on the addressee.

The Discursive Correlation of Prosody and Pragmatics

Defining the relationship between prosody and pragmatics, it is necessary to emphasize the complex nature of the prosodic components, i.e., pitch, volume, tone, stress, pause in any given utterance. In defining prosody, Crystal (2003) asserts that psycholinguistic acoustic properties of sounds are the source of the main linguistic effects: pitch and loudness, which, along with those arising out of the distinctive use of speed and rhythm, are known as prosodic features of a language. Considering their sphere of usage, many linguists express the view that modern English makes more elaborate use of prosody to signal meaning and pragmatics than do most other languages (Hall & Hastings, 2017; Pickering, 2018). Among different functions of prosody, the pragmatic one is the most important.

Prosodic means of realization of speech influence in TV advertising discourse include such intonation components as speech range, melodic intervals, tempo, pauses, etc. (Crystal, 2010; Féry, 2016). The use of maximum (melodic range in the nucleus, slow tempo in a particular syntagm, length of syllables, pauses, etc.) and minimum (level of melodic contours, loudness, duration, etc.) values of intonation components contribute to the optimization of speech influence. Hence, combining the minimum and maximum values of the specified parameters creates the maximal degree of speech influence.

We can assume that a pragmatically oriented message influences the emotional and volitional behavior of the recipient of information through the speech prosody. Thus, we regard the process of implementing the pragmatic function of TV advertising discourse due to the integrated interaction of pragmatic and prosodic means used to influence the target audience.

Prosodic Means in English TV Advertising Analysis

Numerous studies of advertising texts (Gélinas-Chebat, Chebat & Vaninsky, 1996; Goddard, 2002) that convey the specific, concise information to the addressee pinpoint the leading role of prosody in ensuring their coherence. Prosody performs an integrative function and helps to organize a text as a hierarchy of functional units that express meaning. The prosodic means actualize the segmental composition of the text and connect individual segments into integral semantic units. Besides, the prosody divides the speech flow into suprasegmental units, phrases,
syntagms according to the syntactic structure of the utterance, and correlates it with a specific communicative type of the sentence.

Phoneticians agree (Rodero, Potter & Prieto, 2017; Wichmann, 2000), that there is no constant composition of prosodic parameters even in one type of text. The combinations of different features of the fundamental frequency peak values and frequency interval, intensity, and duration of structural elements of the utterance, influenced by the lexical and grammatical structure of the analyzed text usually form its prosodic organization.

Thus, we can assume that among the most relevant characteristics of English TV advertisements is the variations of such prosodic parameters as melodic range, tempo, volume, and descending and ascending tones. We can trace the periodicity of prosodic features in the texts under study using various software, which ensures the accuracy, reliability, and validity of the obtained results.

**Research instruments**

At higher stages of phonetic studies, there arises the necessity to look deeper into the nature of different sound phenomena and involve more sophisticated methods of speech analysis. The research focuses on the following computer programs: *Sound Forge, WaveLab, Cool Edit Pro, SpectraLAB, Wasp*, used for the acoustic analysis of English TV advertisements.

We use the software *Sound Forge* (2019) to convert the selected material to a *.wav* audio file format. The mentioned software made it possible to use the chosen experimental utterances in an audio format recognized by modern multimedia devices. Besides, the quality of the recorded material did not change significantly. However, the acoustic analysis of TV advertisements caused some difficulties due to background noises that influenced prosodic characteristics. For this reason, we carried out the preliminary auditory analysis of the experimental material and its segmentation.

A real-time sound processor *WaveLab* (2019), provides the possibility to perform advanced analysis on a selection of an audio file. With the help of this program, we divided the recorded speech fragments into segments corresponding to either sense units or separate phonemes. Then we analyzed each section for its duration (calculated automatically in milliseconds) and intensity (measured as total power in decibels). However, the program is not explicit enough for the fundamental frequency measurement, though it might be of interest while analyzing speech.

*Cool Edit Pro* (2020) is a Windows app with the capability to work with several tracks simultaneously. In addition to the essential functions described above, it is possible to display a two-dimensional spectrogram with the brighter areas corresponding to the higher amplitude values and vice versa.

However, the above-described programs still do not allow to regard the tone movement in the utterance. The program *WaveLab* lacks such a possibility at all, and the *Cool Edit Pro* embraces too wide a range of frequencies for an observer to differentiate between rises and falls. We can solve this problem with the Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) spectral analysis system *SpectraLAB* (2008). It possesses all the features mentioned above and makes it possible to examine the pitch
changes within the speech stretch of any convenient size. Here the lowest prominent band reveals
the fundamental frequency behavior, while the upper bands reflect that of the corresponding
harmonics related to the communicator’s voice quality. The program is an ultra-high-resolution
spectral analysis tool designed for research, audio test applications capable of performing complex
signal analysis. It incorporates superior amplitude, frequency and time resolution, measurement
accuracy, ultra sampling precision, as well as vivid visualizations. Moreover, SpectraLAB allows
the researcher to view the time series (waveform), average spectrum, two- and three-dimensional
spectrograms simultaneously in the corresponding windows. Thus, we can draw trustworthy
conclusions concerning the sound phenomena under study.

Results
Acoustic Analysis

The analyzed programs helped us to carry out the acoustic analysis of English TV
advertisements. All cases of fundamental frequency measurement were grouped depending on
maximum tonal realization into extra-high, high, medium-high, medium-low, low, extra-low levels
(Crystal, 2010; Rodero, Potter & Prieto, 2017). The comparison of the zones mentioned above in
TV advertisements intended for addressees with different social status (high, middle, low) proved
an increased use of the extra-high zone. Its function is to draw the viewer’s attention to the
keywords in advertising texts.

Thus, in TV advertisements addressed to recipients with high social status, we registered
the extra-high zone of the fundamental frequency at the beginning and in the main body of texts
of short duration (Table one). As the research proves, extra-high and medium-high zones usage is
the same (38.46%) in the main body of these texts. Medium-low level (50.00%), as well as
medium-high (25.00%) and extra-high (25.00%) levels, dominate in the ending of short texts.

Table 1. Variation of the fundamental frequency maximum in TV advertisements aimed at the
recipient with high social status (%)
The texts of medium duration are characterized by the fundamental frequency prevalence of high level (63.64%) at the beginning of the text and extra-high level in the main body (27.59%) and the ending (50.00%). Extra-high level (27.27%) is less recurrent at the beginning of the advertising texts, medium-high (24.13%) – in the main body, and high (33.33%) – in the ending.

TV advertisements of long duration are characterized by a high frequency of occurrence of medium-low level in the main body (34.78%) and in the ending (66.67%) with a smaller amount of medium-high level (21.74% and 16.67% correspondingly).

The extra-high level of fundamental frequency maximum remains prevalent (Table two) in TV advertisements for recipients with middle social status. In texts of short duration, it prevails within all structural components. Besides, at the beginning of TV advertising texts, we register the same (41.67%) frequency of actualization of extra-high and medium-high levels. The use of high and medium-low levels (8.33% each) at the beginning of the text, medium-high and medium-low levels (20.00% each) in the main body and high and medium-high levels (22.22% each) in the ending are less frequent.

Table 2. Variation of the fundamental frequency maximum in TV advertisements aimed at the recipient with middle social status (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text characteristics</th>
<th>Fundamental frequency maximum %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extra-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Structural components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for TV advertisements of medium duration, we observe the predominance of the medium-high level at the beginning and in the main body of the texts. Extra-high, high, and medium-low levels (20.00%) are less recurrent at the beginning of English TV advertising. Extra-high and high levels (25.00% each) are less frequent in the main body. The highest (41.18%) proportion of extra-high level with the lower (17.65%) amount of medium-high and medium-low levels characterize the ending of the text of medium duration.
In long TV advertisements, as well as in the texts of short duration, extra-high level of fundamental frequency maximum is prevalent in all their structural components. The following in terms of the number of realizations is the medium-low level.

The variation of the tone level of fundamental frequency maximum in TV advertisements for the recipients of low social status also indicates the predominance of extra-high level in the majority of structural components of short and medium duration texts (Table three).

Table 3. Variation of the fundamental frequency maximum in TV advertisements aimed at the recipient with low social status (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text characteristics</th>
<th>Fundamental frequency maximum %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extra-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main body</td>
<td>26.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main body</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>56.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the extra-high level (66.67%) dominates at the beginning of TV advertisements of short duration. We also observe the smaller (33.33%) amount of the medium-low level in the same structural component of short texts. The prevalence (26.67%) of extra-high and medium-low levels with a smaller (20.00%) amount of medium-high level characterize the main body of these advertisements. Besides, we register a considerable (40.00%) frequency of high-level occurrence with less (20.00%) recurrent extra-high, medium-low and low levels at the ending of the analyzed texts.

The prevalence of the extra-high level is peculiar to the beginning and ending of texts of medium duration. Also, we observe the same (33.33%) amount of extra-high and medium-high levels in the main body. The variability in the use of fundamental frequency maximum reflects the following distribution of their frequencies: at the beginning of TV advertisements the lower rate compared to the extra-high level is represented by high, medium-high and medium-low levels (20.00%), in the main body – by high level (19.05%), and in the ending – by medium-high and medium-low (18.75%) levels.

Therefore, a comparative analysis of different levels of realization of fundamental frequency tonal maximum within the structural components of TV advertisements aimed at addressees with different social status shows that, regardless of the text duration, the most frequently used zone is extra-high. At the same time, it is evident that high, medium-high, and
medium-low tonal levels of fundamental frequency maximum, which we register with different percentages in texts of varying duration, are typical for English TV advertisements.

The acoustic analysis confirmed the results of the auditory study and allowed to determine the following invariant features of English TV advertisements prosodic organization: positive narrow and medium intervals of tonal levels at the juncture of structural components of the text; extended and wide ranges of structural elements of the text; short and medium structural components duration; short and minimal pauses at the juncture of the structural components of the text; localization of the intensity maximum at the first rhythmic group of the syntagm and in the nucleus; narrow and medium intensity ranges of syntagms.

According to the results of auditory and acoustic analysis, we can single out differential features that allow distinguishing the variant realization of the prosodic organization of English TV advertisements intended for recipients with high social status, in particular: variation of terminal tone from descending medium to descending low and ascending low zones; changes in the range of the intonation group from broad to narrow levels; a variety of fundamental frequency maximum from extra-high to medium-low levels; volume changes from high to low.

Among specific features of TV advertisements intended for recipients with middle social status are the following: variation of the type of terminal tone from descending high to ascending low zones; changes in the range of the intonation group from broad to narrow levels; variation of the fundamental frequency maximum from extra-high to low levels; volume changes from moderate to high in the texts of short and medium duration.

Typical features that allow identifying TV advertisements intended for recipients with low social status are as follows: actualization of descending medium and descending low types of terminal tone in short texts and variation from descending high to ascending low tone in the texts of medium duration; actualization of the range of intonation groups in medium and narrow zones in short texts and their variation from a wide to narrow zone in medium texts; a variety of fundamental frequency maximum from extra high to low levels; realization of the increased and high volume in the texts of medium duration.

It is essential to note that in the complex interaction of prosodic parameters, one of them is dominant. Therefore, we paid particular attention to phonation segments, which were characterized by significant fundamental frequency fluctuations, frequency range, and the number of intonation groups measured with Wasp (2019) software (Figure 1):
It's hard to remember what it was like before iPhone.

The following prosodic parameters characterize the analyzed segment: total duration – 559 ms, pause coefficient – 1.3 (which corresponds to the data of the previous phonation segment and proves a semantic connection between them), tonal range – 332.7 Hz, the number of intonation groups – 3, rate of change of fundamental frequency – 56.8, frequency range – 4.04. The results of the acoustic analysis prove that such a wide tonal range, alongside with the variety of fundamental frequency maximum, intensity, and duration, influence the customer’s perception of the advertised brand.

It is essential to attain the pragmatic goal of the speaker, i.e., influence on the addressee, analyzing the pragmatic potential in correlation with prosody and social factors that contribute to the success of TV advertising impact. The study asserts that software applied in this phonetic investigation, ensure the reliability and quality of research findings. The sound processing software WaveLab, Cool Edit Pro, SpectraLAB, Wasp, Sound Forge, used in the analysis of English TV advertisements, provided the accuracy of the obtained results and increased the validity of the study.

Conclusion

Thus, the linguistic interpretation of the data of the acoustic analysis of the English TV advertising discourse prosody proves a strong pragmatic potential of English advertisements addressed to recipients with different social status. The investigation covers the usage of computer technologies for automatic quantitative and visual analysis of speech prosody. The obtained results indicate that detailed analysis of the prosodic parameters of speech enables us to have an accurate and clear picture of the English advertising discourse prosody. In correlation with the pragmatic potential and certain sociolinguistic features (the social status of the recipient), prosody contributes to the maximum influence on the addressee.

The suggested methods have potential applications in sociophonetic studies. The focus is on how the discourse prosody can facilitate the task of adequately communicating the material to the addressee and creating an appropriate speech coloring. The discourse prosody proves to be one
of the most critical factors that determine the success of TV advertising pragmatic influence on the target audience. The obtained results and the described software can contribute to further analysis of advertising texts in various languages and different types of discourse.

About the Authors

Olga Valigura, DSc. in Philology, Chair at the Department of Oriental Philology, Kyiv National Linguistic University. Her research interests include: experimental phonetics, research of speech communication, sociophonetics, cross-cultural studies, bilingualism. ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0428-5421

Liubov Kozub, PhD in Philology, Associate Professor at Romance and Germanic Languages and Translation Department, National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine. Her research interests are: experimental phonetics, sociolinguistics, pragmalinguistics, text linguistics. ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6617-6442

Iryna Sieriakova, DSc. in Philology, Professor of Linguistics at the Department of Foreign Languages, Kyiv National Linguistic University. Her research interests include: discourse analysis, pragmatics of discursive practices, non-verbal semiotics, cross-cultural studies. ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6446-7070

References


The Use of Edutainment in Promoting Higher Order Thinking Skills in ESL Writing among Malaysian University Students

Siti Hamin Stapa  
Language Studies and Linguistics Research Centre,  
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,  
Selangor, Malaysia

Nur Izzati Ibaharim  
English Department, School of Business  
Malaysia University of Science & Technology  
Selangor, Malaysia

Abstract
The aim of this article is to investigate the perceptions of university students on the use of edutainment in promoting Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in English as a second language (ESL) writing. 20 diploma students from Malaysia University of Science & Technology (MUST) participated in this study. This study adopts quantitative research design where a set of questionnaires was distributed to the students. Before answering the questionnaire, the students went through a treatment using edutainment. They had to play an online game downloaded from Play Store. They spent 13 weeks playing the game. At the end of the treatment, they had to sit for the post test. Then they were asked to complete the questionnaire. This study is in bringing positive impact to the society starting from the ministry to the students regarding the importance of the edutainment implementation in classroom teaching. The findings reveal that the students perceived that Edutainment has affected the stimulation of higher order thinking skills in their writing. This suggests that edutainment should be incorporated in the teaching and learning English.

Keywords: Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Edutainment, ESL writing, Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), Malaysian students, mobile game

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.4
Introduction

Writing is an important part of communication. Good writing skills allow a person to communicate a message with clarity and ease to a far larger audience than through face-to-face or telephone conversations. According to Dj and Sukarnianti (2015), writing is an effective method for individuals to communicate and expressing ideas, feelings and opinions to other individuals. Moreover, writing skills is one of all the four skills that students need to master. An individual with great writing skills is constantly successful at conveying everything that needs to be conveyed.

To measure individual’s intellectual level and the ability to portray something, writing skill is always the best platform. Hence, the technique of teaching and learning writing should be diversified and not only conform to the conventional learning components. This is to ensure that the methods adopted can attract students and thus can increase their participation in writing activities and later improve their writing skills. This matter is closely related to the techniques and approaches to teaching used in a classroom session where writing skills is taught. Therefore, edutainment approach has been introduced by the Ministry of Education to make lesson more enjoyable and exciting. Edutainment is the component of the execution of technology of modern forms of entertainment in traditional classes, lessons, workshops, and lectures (Yaylaci, 2016). According to Capila and Bhalla (2010), they discovered that the concept of edutainment is one of the approaches toward outlining and achieving and deliver media message to teach and engage the students in relation to meet the educational goals to expand the students’ knowledge on educational issues.

According to Alias, Rosman, Rahman and Dewitt (2016), the Malaysian Education Blueprint for higher education have noticed that Malaysian students need to create thinking abilities so that they can be prepared for future jobs opportunities especially from preschool to post-secondary. Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are treasured because students are believed to be prepared to face challenges in academic life and job responsibilities in a daily basis. Hence, students with HOTS are equipped with high capacity of thinking out of the box in order to succeed in this 21st century life and careers. However, the government exertion of presenting Higher Order Thinking skills in Malaysian Education is still at its underlying stage. Puchta (2012) indicates that higher order thinking is a complicated thinking that requires extra struggle and formed valued results. In order to develop higher order thinking skills, learners need to be a critical thinker. Higher order thinking skills include critical, logical, metacognitive, creative thinking and reflective thinking and they will be activated when learners face uncertain problems and ambiguous questions. As a result, it will help in promoting growth and other intellectual skills.

Technology has dependably been at the front line of human education. As technology ends up around the world, there is an expanding momentum to fuse it into education. According to Zaki, Wook, & Ahmad (2015), the central focus of the use of technology in teaching and learning is to attract students besides elevates the effectiveness of learning process of the students. The use of technology in education leads to numerous benefits. For instance, escalating access to education which can be accessed anytime and anywhere, improving the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process itself (Surjono 2015). Aksakal (2014) revealed that the core purpose of edutainment is to incorporate education with entertainment. The concept available in edutainment
is one of the alternatives that can be utilized by teachers in order to adjust education with the needs of today’s generation of students. Education is essential in planning worldwide and sensible citizens who are keen to be a part of an exceptionally assembled and technology-based society (Berry & Baker, 2010). Hence, the execution of edutainment is best done when educators assimilates this platform into teaching. Along this line, students are prone to the essential elements of 21st century learning at such a young age which is the best age to grasp everything especially learning a language.

This study will foster a positive attitude among Malaysian teachers towards the integration of Edutainment in improving writing skills of the students. Recently, students displayed poor outcomes in writing. Thus, by integrating a different approach or method such as edutainment in teaching and learning process in classroom will boost teacher’s attitude.

Besides that, this study is significant in familiarizing the undergraduate students with the application of edutainment to promote higher order thinking skills in writing. The implementation of Edutainment in classroom learning was introduced in the late 1990s. It is also beneficial to the educators as both teacher and students are the focal consumers in this field of education. This study will help to give a clearer picture in terms of understanding the effectiveness of Edutainment as a platform for a betterment in teaching writing in classrooms besides how by developing edutainment into teaching and learning session will affect students’ motivation in engaging themselves with fascinating and educational classroom.

Edutainment therefore plays a vital role in engaging students’ interest and English language learning among individuals. Since they spend most of their time in the classrooms, it is crucial to note that language learning and students’ interests towards teaching and learning process of the classrooms are of equivalent significance in getting these skills and engaging English language. This is supported by a study of the impact of an edutainment program that targeted high school students by Bjorvatn et al. (2019). They discovered that the approach has increased students’ interest in learning in the short run, engagement between language and students in the long run and at the same time reduced school investments on other outdated teaching instruments to teach.

A number of related studies have been focusing on the integration of edutainment in promoting higher order thinking skills in reading for ESL learners. However, studies that promote higher order thinking skills in writing is yet to be found in Malaysia, especially in Edutainment based learning. Since writing skills seem to be the most difficult skills and play a crucial role in mastering a language, it is supreme for the readers to acknowledge its importance (Blanka, 2010). The purpose of this study is to identify the perceptions of using Edutainment in promoting higher order thinking skills in English writing.

Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

The Importance of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

In the cognitive hierarchy, higher order thinking skills are the highest according to DeWitt et. al, (2015). As posited by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), basically, higher order thinking skills in learning can be defined as the expanded use of the cognition to overcome challenges in learning.
This is a concept established from Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning (1956). The capability of facilitating critical thinking and problem solving affects the transfer of learning (Brookhart, 2010).

Teachers agree that it is so important to teach students higher order thinking skills (Yee et al., 2012). According to a study by Dorgu (2016), the utilization of higher level questions which requires the students to incorporate and utilize different ideas level that will enhance students’ learning that is the way to acquire knowledge or skills or attitudes towards subjects that can cause behavioural changes.

Vernez, Culbertson and Constant (2014) claim that different activities that promote HOTS can be conducted in class to evaluate students’ abilities in creating new knowledge based on the previous learned knowledge. According to Saido, Siraj, Nordin, & Al_Amedy (2018), in Bloom’s taxonomy the order is from concrete to abstract according to the hierarchy of cognitive development from lower level to higher level of the processing of student’s cognitive. Knowledge, comprehension and application which are the first three levels in Bloom’s taxonomy are categorized as lower level of thinking skills that covers basic recognition of these domains. Conversely, the last three levels which are analyse, synthesise and evaluate foster the learning performance of the students that require them to utilize higher order thinking skills (Ghani, Ibrahim, Yahaya & Surif, 2017).

This is supported by Singh et al. (2018) in their study on which emphasized on the utmost contribution by the teachers in incorporating HOTS in 21st century learning process in classroom activities. The findings of the study disclosed that the modules for HOTS can be used as a guideline for the students under teacher’s supervision to implement and integrate thinking skills in the learning process of teaching writing.

AlKhatib (2019) conducted a study on Higher-Order Thinking Skills in Engineering & Humanities. He concluded that proposed teaching activities' initial assessments show high improvement in student learning and were applied successfully in higher education and partially tested first-grade students.

Tiew and Ng (2019) revealed that HOTS pedagogical practices employed by teachers in Malaysian schools could be categorised as practices that promote and practices that inhibit the teaching of HOTS. The synthesis revealed that some practices that promoted the teaching of HOTS were brainstorming, constructivist learning, inquiry teaching, thinking map, and problem-based learning whereas some practices that inhibited the teaching of HOTS were teacher-centered learning and teaching lower-order thinking skills.

**Methodology**

This research adopts quantitative method using questionnaire as the main collection of data. A set of questionnaires developed for this study is adapted from a questionnaire developed by Yee et. al (2010). 20 Diploma in Logistics and Freight Forwarding Management students who are taking Intermediate English subject from Malaysia University of Science & Technology (MUST) are selected as the research sample. The age of the participants ranges from 19-20 years old consisting
of nine male students and 11 female students. The selection of the students is based on their previous exposure towards entertainment in education.

In this study, a simulation process which requires the students to play the online games and a set of close-ended questionnaire were prepared to collect data on the perceptions on the integration of edutainment in their ESL writing.

After the simulation process, students were asked to answer a set of closed-ended questionnaire. This instrument was used to examine the perceptions on the use of Edutainment to stimulate higher order thinking skills in their writing.

The questionnaire consists of two parts including demographic profile of the students followed by the second part which is on the six levels of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy: 1) remember 2) understand 3) apply 4) analyse 5) evaluate and 6) create. For each level, three questions were prepared. This part of questionnaire required the respondents to indicate the level of agreement on the use of Edutainment in stimulating higher order thinking skills in their writing.

**Simulation Process**

In order to collect data, a mobile game app named Mo n Ki World Dash from Google Play Store was adapted. As stated in Google Play Store, this game is first fun arcade game with an attractive concept of “Learning while Playing”. The skills available in this game is higher order thinking skills (HOTS) which is one of the utmost crucial skills in soft skills other than creativity that players encounter the relevance of this game and the learning of English language in classroom. Students developed HOTS while playing this game in order to complete all 50 levels.

Students were instructed to download the game from Google Play Store for Android users before they were tutored on further explanation regarding the game.

**Treatment**

A simulation software named Mo n Ki World Dash was used as a treatment process in this research. The concept of this game is ‘Learning while playing’. The concept itself is in accordance with the platform of this study which is Edutainment. This game is vital in contributing the help to elicit a 21st century students with higher order level of thinking skills in English language classroom.

First and foremost, the participants were asked to upload this mobile app from Google Play for a start. There are 50 levels altogether to complete this game. Mo n Ki World Dash is a world tour that requires the players to run and rush throughout some of famous places and more than 20 real life popular monuments around the world. The places are Rio, Italy, India, United States of America, South Africa and London. The runner will rush and run freely to each country in order to complete all the tasks including catching the last train home, finding the subway, collecting fuel for Olympic ceremony, locating the ingredients for the best pizza in the region and etc. in this software, it provides more than 350 Global Trivia and fun facts about the countries to learn and beneficial to the students. Students were required to complete every level in order to gain more information about a country. The first country they encountered was South Africa. They had to
run and collect as many coins as possible. They will get additional coins worth about 250+ if they clicked on the questions that lead them to the information about that country. In order to gain knowledge about those countries, 50 levels of the game need to be completed. Researcher conducted this treatment for 11 weeks with five levels to play each week.

For the first week of the treatment, students played first five levels of the game which brought them to travel around South Africa. The journey continued in Rio de Janeiro started off with level six until level ten for the second week of the treatment. Another two levels of Rio which is level 11 and level 12 were played together with the journey in London until level 15. Next, since there are eight levels in total in London, students completed level 16 until level 20 in the fifth week. Level 21 until level 25 in week six brought the students to Italy followed by another four levels in the same country which is level 29 plus level 30 in the USA for week seven. It 37 was then followed by level 31 until level 35 in the USA in the 8th week of the treatment. Level 36 until level 38 in the USA added off with level 39 and level 40 in India in week nine. The journey in India covered 12 levels overall started with first five levels in that country which is level 41 until level 45 in week 10, level 46 until level 48 in week 10 finished off the journey in India with level 49 until level 50 in week 11. The game took place for 30 minutes for each session hence; it did not interrupt the academic requirements of the classes researcher teaches.

The treatment has taken place for 13 weeks. At the end of the treatment, a post-test essay was conducted to examine the use of the HOTS elements in the essays. From here we can see the perceptions of the students towards the use of edutainment in promoting HOTS.

**Findings**

The presentations of findings are divided into six types of categories: remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create.

**Remember**

*Remember* is the first category of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy which refers to the ability to retrieve knowledge from memory when it is used to recognize or regain facts to recall previous learned lesson, material or information. As reported in Table one, the first stated statement which is “I am able to retain information from the game” scored 4 mean score with none of the students answered strongly disagree, only one student answered disagree, three students answered slightly agree, nine students which scored agree as their level of agreement showed the highest number of students. Lastly, six of them answered strongly agree. This can be proven when they are able to retain information from the game during the first phase of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.

For the second statement, “I am an innovative person”, the mean score is 3.45 which means almost every student agree with the statement that they are innovative person. 11 out of 20 students answered agree and one student answered strongly agrees as their level of statement for the second statement. However, one student strongly disagrees with the statement. With the results of the second statement, it is proven that most of the students are creative in thinking.

As stated in the third statement which is “I am a person who depends on lecturers to repeat previous learned lesson”, the mean score from the SPSS results is 2.95.
The Use of Edutainment in Promoting Higher Order Thinking Skills

Stapa & Ibaharim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I am able to retain information from the game</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I am an innovative person</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I am a person who depends on lecturers to repeat previous learned lesson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understand

Next, the second level in Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy is understand. It is concerned with the ability to create meaning from various types of purposes either written messages or actions for instance, summarizing, interpreting, explaining and so forth. During this stage, students should be able to construct messages to verify that they understand the information or lesson given.

None of the students strongly disagree with “I know how to describe the lesson based on the game in general”, followed by only one student disagrees and four students slightly agree. seven students agree and the greatest number of students which is the remaining eight strongly agree with the statement. It shows that the game has helped the students to understand better to describe the lesson.

The second statement is “I know how to explain games in detail the ideas from the game. For this statement, the mean score is still high with 3.65 where not one of the students answered strongly disagree, only one of them answered disagree while eight of them answered slightly agree and the other eight agreed while the remaining three students strongly agree with the statement. It can be depicted that almost every student is able to describe the ideas from the game in details by applying the second category in Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Furthermore, the mean score for the third statement remains high with 3.8. Ten students agreed with the statement “I can explain the lesson based on the game to my peers in classroom”. None of them scored either strongly disagree or disagree while seven of them slightly agree with the statement. On the other hand, ten students agree and three of them strongly agree with the statement. For this phase of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy, it shows that most of the students are able to acclimate themselves into the second phase by understanding the game and applying this category into their learning process from the game.

Table 1. Frequency and mean score - Remember

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I am able to retain information from the game</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I am an innovative person</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I am a person who depends on lecturers to repeat previous learned lesson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Frequency and mean score - Understand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I know how to describe the lesson based on the game in general</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
The Use of Edutainment in Promoting Higher Order Thinking Skills  

Stapa & Ibaharim

2. I know how to explain in details the ideas from the game  

0 1 8 8 3 3.65

3. I can explain the lesson based on the game to my peers in classroom  

0 0 7 10 3 3.8

Apply

Apply category in Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy is concerned on the ability to utilize or carry out a procedure by implementing or executing the materials in rigid and recent circumstances. It refers to circumstances where learned lesson or information is utilized via simulations or presentations. As stated in Table 2, the results showed that the game has impacted the students positively in stimulating their higher order thinking skills in writing. Mean score for the first statement is 4.3 with none of the students answered strongly disagree or disagree to the “I am able to answer the exercises based on the game given in class” statement. Meanwhile, only one student answered slightly agree followed by 12 number of students agree and seven of them strongly agree with the statement.

As for the second statement, the mean score is 4.2. Four students slightly agree followed by eight students agree and the remaining eight answered strongly agree with the statement “I am able to transfer the information from the games into the exercises given”.

Moreover, the mean score for the third statement is 3.3. Only one student answered strongly disagree and four students disagree as they are not often involved in writing competition before. However, six students slightly agree with the statement followed by six students who agree and the remaining three students who strongly agree with the statement. This might be due to the student’s minimal interest towards writing competition. Therefore, there are still several students who participated in such competition before. Overall, the results portray positive remarks from students’ perceptions towards the utilization of Edutainment in promoting their higher order thinking skills in writing by applying writing skills and use the information they have gained from the game into their daily activities.

Table 3. Frequency and mean score - Apply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am able to answer the exercises based on the game given in class</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I am able to transfer the information from the games into the exercises given</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I am often involved in writing competition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analyse

The analyse category is related to the ability of the students to part the concepts, determine whether the breaking parts are linked to one another or correlated to the whole purpose. The functions are categorizing, investigating, differentiating and so forth. It is also the ability of the students to illustrate these functions by constructing surveys, charts or diagrams. In this phase, students should be able to distinguish between the concepts that they first separated. According to Table 3, the mean score for the first statement is 4.35. No one answered strongly disagree and disagree on the statement. The frequency of the students who answered slightly agree and agree are three and seven respectively followed by ten number of students who strongly agree with the statement “I have no problem in editing my work”.

Next, the second statement which is “I have no problem in completing essay writing given in class within the given time”. The frequency of the students who chose strongly disagree and disagree as their answers are zero. 8 students have chosen slightly agree as their answers while seven of them agree with the statement. Meanwhile, five students answered strongly agree hence, making the mean score 3.85 for this phase of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.

As for the last statement in this category, “I have no problem in identifying grammar errors in my work”, the mean score from the SPSS results is 3.85. None of the students have chosen strongly disagree as their answer and only student who disagree. This might be due to their difficulties in recognizing their grammar errors. However, there are five students who slightly agree with the statement followed by 10 students who have chosen agree as their answer which means they are able to identify their own grammar mistakes in their work with the remaining four students who answered strongly agree for the statement. Generally, the students face no difficulties in detecting their grammar errors hence, it is shown that they can apply analyse phase from Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy from the game.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I have no problem in editing my work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I have no problem in completing essay writing given in class within the</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>given time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I have no problem in identifying grammar errors in my work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluate

The second last category in Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy is evaluate. This category refers to making decisions dependent on criteria and principles by critiquing and studying. The process of evaluation is including recommendations and reports that can be constructed by some of the products. This phase is crucial before the last phase which is create because it is a part of earlier
conduct before an individual produce something during create phase. Generally, during this category, students are expected to be able to criticize, judge and even check the importance of the tools or platform used to improvise their skills. According to Table 4, the mean score for the first statement which is “I face no difficulties in solving the project or evaluation based on the views and ideas of the game” is 4.0. This statement is concerned on whether the students are able to resolve or validate any project given in regard with the ideas they obtained from the game. None of the students chose strongly disagree or disagree as their answers according to the results from SPSS. There are four students answered slightly agree to the statement as they might face minimal complications in evaluating any tasks given based on the game. Conversely, there are 12 students who did not face any problems in solving the given classroom activities by selecting agree as their level of agreement to this statement.

Next, the second statement stated, “I face no difficulties in solving the problems to act immediately to resolve critical problems based on the game”. The statement refers to the immediate action that can be taken when students encounter the need to resolve critical problems related to the game. According to the table, the mean score for the first statement is 3.95. For the strongly disagree and disagree level of agreement, none of the 20 students have chosen either one of the options. Same as the first statement, these students might not face any difficulties and hardships in solving the problems to give an immediate action in resolving critical problems that they face during the tasks in classroom based on the game. On the other hand, five students have chosen slightly agree to the statement while 11 out of 20 students answered agree to the statement as their level of agreement. Four students chose strongly agree to the statement as they did not face any complications at all in working out on the tasks given to act based on the game.

Thirdly, the last statement for this category in Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy is “I face no difficulties in justifying a decision to complete written tasks”. This statement is concerned on the justification made by the students in completing the given written tasks. The mean score for this statement is 3.8. Same as the two statements above, none of the students answered strongly disagree as their level of agreement while only two students have chosen disagree and five number of students selected slightly agree to the statement. This may be due to the difficulties they faced in justifying a decision to complete the written tasks given in class. However, there are eight students who did not encounter any complications in justifying a decision to accomplish the task by selecting agree as their level of agreement. Similarly, the remaining five students have picked strongly agree to show that they too, face no hardships in rationalizing a decision on the written tasks. In respect to the results from SPSS for this category of revised Bloom’s Taxonomy, it can be proven that the utilization of Edutainment as a platform to teach English language in class has a beneficial impact on students.

Table 5. Frequency and mean score - Evaluate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I face no difficulties in solving the project or evaluation based on the views and ideas of the game</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I face no difficulties in solving the problems to act immediately to resolve critical problems based on the Game.

I face no difficulties in justifying a decision to complete written tasks.

Create

Ultimately, the final phase in Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) is create. This stage refers to the ability of individuals to place all the elements to form something new and structured by preparing, creating or generating. Individuals are required to combine everything together in such a new, recent and different in creating something new. It is known as the most difficult stage in this revised taxonomy due to the fact that it stimulates higher order thinking skills. As depicted in Table 5, the mean score is 2.55 for the statement “I have difficulties to generate ideas during discussions in class”. Three students strongly disagree with the statement. This means, four of them did not face any complication in generating ideas during discussions in class followed by nine students who have selected disagree as their level of agreement which reflected that they face no difficulties in such situation. Then, four out of 20 students slightly agree with the statement. It shows that they might encounter some slight difficulties. The remaining four students have picked agree and strongly agree for the first statement as their answer that has portrayed that they faced hardships in generating ideas during discussions in classroom.

Next, the second statement indicated that “I have difficulties to generate ideas during discussions in group”. This statement is concerned on whether the students face any difficulties in generating ideas during discussions in group while discussing on any tasks or activities given. The mean score for this statement is 2.55. The highest frequency of students is 10 out of 20 which is disagree with the statement that they ever faced any difficulties to generate ideas during group discussions while four students picked strongly disagree as their level of the agreement. Meanwhile, the remaining four students agreed and strongly disagreed with the statement due to the difficulties that they have faced during the group discussions.

Lastly, the third statement which is “I have difficulties to generate ideas during open discussions” has resulted 2.35 for the mean score which is the lowest score among all. Nevertheless, student five and student eight answered the statement with strongly disagree and agree respectively. Thus, it may be considered as they did not face any obstacles during open discussions in order to generate and contribute ideas to the other classmates.

Table 6. Frequency and mean score - Create

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I have difficulties to generate ideas during discussions in class</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. I have difficulties to generate ideas during discussions in group

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. I have difficulties to generate ideas during open discussions

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The Perceptions of Using Edutainment in Promoting HOTS in English Writing

The six categories of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy listed in the questionnaire that were used to collect data for this study were based on the adaptation from a study by Yee et. al (2010). Those categories were identified as the major domains for higher order thinking skills.

Based on the finding, it is found that generally, through Edutainment, the students can apply six major categories listed in Bloom’s taxonomy in their writing. The results showed that nearly one third of the students hardly ever apply any of the categories in higher order thinking skills in their writing prior to the use of edutainment in their writing classroom. Approximately 10 percent of them have encountered difficulties in generating ideas and gathering information to write. The findings generally revealed positive perceptions from the students in all categories of HOTS. Most of the students perceived that Edutainment has helped them to improve their post-test results by promoting higher order thinking skills in their writing.

Remember

It is obvious that students perceived that they can retain information from the game where they can use as the information in their writing. The overwhelming positive mean score with 4.00 is credited to the Edutainment approach utilized during treatment process in the class. This finding is similar to Frafika Sari et al. (2018) where they indicate that in order to help students to stay motivated and engaged in class, the integration of technologies elements is fundamental.

Edutainment is believed to assemble innovative person that always curious and interested in digging things that they can remember from the previous learned lesson. Innovation in the working environment has been professed to be a key factor in hierarchical survival and achievement. University students are the main source of future advancements in authoritative settings (Montrieux et al., 2015). Therefore, being an innovative person is important in shaping the undergraduate students so they can be prepared before facing the working atmosphere. More than half of the students assumed that they are innovative person after the treatment process.

Despite all the positive perceptions from the students, the researcher found that students still depend on the lecturers to repeat previous learned lesson. Edutainment plays a crucial role in reminding the students on what they have learned previously in the sense of there is continuity on what they are going to learn to create new information and what they have learned to be linked in their writing. Nearly half of them assumed they faced difficulties in remembering previous learned lesson. However, the remaining students perceived they do not depend on the lecturers because they enjoyed playing the game as supported by Dorner et al. (2016), in developing a number of
cognitive skills, the interesting structure of activities embedded in video games provide learners a “mental workout” as an exercise for them to think more. Thus, during this stage, it can be seen from students’ point of view that they can apply remember category in their writing with the help of Edutainment.

Understand

Edutainment approach has caused the students to fulfill the criteria of being able to apply this category in their writing based on the findings from students’ perceptions. The mean score strongly showed that they know how to describe the lesson based on the game in general. It is proven with the help of Edutainment in class subsequently affected their understanding towards the lesson hence, they can give explanation generally as students are more engaged in the language learning. The mobile game app has made the students anticipate lesson conducted in class which further leads to better understanding on the lesson as supported by (Giannakos & Vlamos, 2013) where the enjoyment on students to play video games in class has resulted in positive effects for a better understanding.

Also, it can be seen the students assumed they know how to explain in detail the ideas from the game. The realization of the importance of mobile game app in gaining a better understanding on a lesson is important. It helps to equip the students with the ability to acknowledge a lesson to be explained and students are aware of the advantages they may face in the future. This is supported by a study by Alamri (2016) where he mentioned that video games offer a chance for learning effectively and students can simply acquire and understand knowledge and perform in the classroom. In this 21st century, traditional learning styles normally fail to generate students’ interest and teachers need to integrate technology in the classroom.

With the integration of Edutainment in classroom learning, students perceived that they can explain the lesson based on the game to their peers in classroom. This is due to the understanding as they enjoyed learning the lesson by using the mobile game app as postulated on a study from Putra (2018) where the results showed learning a lesson with the integration of Edutainment software was effective with respect to interest level of the students.

Apply

As far as apply is concerned, it is clearly affected by the session spent on the games. It is obvious that this category tops the other categories in promoting higher order thinking skills in writing where the highest mean scores derived from two statements. It is proven that students assumed they were able to complete the exercises based on the game given in class. Edutainment is believed to engage the students in language lesson that is educational and yet fun at once by going against the norm of how plain and unattractive language learning is. The learning process can be effective if students are able to apply their results and new retained information when they have admission to recent information on the lesson through Edutainment (Gorra & Bhati, 2016).

Majority of the students perceived that they were able to transfer the information from the game into the exercises given. It means they can fully apply this category when completing the tasks after they gained new material through the incorporation of Edutainment in the lesson. This category is fundamental in higher order thinking skills as it is concerned with student’s ability to
implement the materials in recent settings. The positive remarks from the students is because the mobile game app is interesting to the point that majority of them were able to apply this category in their writing.

Edutainment plays an important part in ensuring apply category in writing as it involves more than just thinking as indicated by Kim and Kim (2015) as the utilization of learned lesson can be perceived in presentations or competitions. This finding is supported by Aksakal (2014) when he mentioned that core purpose of edutainment is to incorporate education with entertainment. The concept available in edutainment is one of the alternatives that can be utilized by teachers in order to adjust education with the needs of today’s generation of students.

**Analyse**

Nearly all the students assumed that they face no difficulties in editing their work. They can categorize, investigate and differentiate their work accordingly. This is due to the assimilation of the mobile game app into learning session as an aid in helping them applying this category to amend their work by being able to distinguish between the concepts that they separated for editing part. Students find Edutainment as an enjoyable approach to use in learning language (Korkmaz, 2013).

Based on the findings, more than half of the students presumed that they have no problem in completing essay writing given in class within the specified time. The enough given time helps the students to analyse before completing the essay. This is because the mobile game app has stimulated their analyse category as they enjoyed learning the lesson with fun and attractive approach and did not face any problem or difficulties. The fourth category in Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy is believed to be affected by the incorporation of Edutainment in writing class.

The points explained above show the importance and effectiveness of Edutainment in applying analyse in writing. According to the findings, students’ point of view on this matter is they did not have any problem in identifying grammatical errors in their work. This might be due to the information gained from the game where they learned about the rules of grammar by reading all the information and knowledge provided as it is fun and stress-free to learn through mobile game app.

**Evaluate**

In ensuring the student’s ability to promote higher order thinking skills in writing, students must be able to accommodate this category. It is concerned with the student’s ability to make decisions dependent on the criteria and principles by criticizing. Based on the findings, the mean score showed positive perceptions from the students since they faced no difficulties in solving the project based on the ideas of the game. Edutainment approach conducted by the lecturer helps to keep their interest as new understandings help the students in applying evaluate in their writing. This is because the mobile game app is educational yet fun at the same time hence, the students enjoy learning session in class and gained information from the game at once. It also equipped students with the ability to criticize and check the importance of the game used to improvise their writing skills. Therefore, this justifies that the project was solved by critiquing the ideas of the game.
It is also perceived by the students that they face no difficulties in solving the problems to act immediately to resolve critical problems based on the game. They are expected to think critically in ensuring the development of 21st century students that can think critically before carelessly accepting any new information by continuously searching the legitimacy of the information received (Malik, 2018). Edutainment provides the students with a stress-free surrounding that they can cope with the learning process as it is the norm of young adults to like playing games but at the same time thirsty for new ideas and information. Therefore, as assumed by the students, with the integration of the game in classroom learning, students can resolve critical problems.

Based on the findings, nearly all the students did not face any difficulties in justifying a decision to complete written tasks. They perceived that due to the advantage of Edutainment in providing students’ excitement and approach, the written task was completed easily as they applied this category based on the mobile game app to rationalize a decision making. As far as evaluate category is concerned, it is positively affected by Edutainment. The students are seen to portray their ability in making wise decisions to complete any written tasks given.

Create
As kids and young adults invest most of their time in playing games, Edutainment is one of the best approaches to incorporate in classroom learning. According to a study by Aksakal (2015), it is found that Edutainment method gives a big impact on students learning process as they have a great time in experiencing how to create new knowledge and idea. Based on the findings, half of the students find it difficult to generate ideas during discussions in class be either in group or open discussions.

Based on the findings, nearly half of the students faced difficulties in generating ideas during open discussion. In ensuring student’s ability to apply this category in writing, they should be able to create new materials to be shared. The mobile game app utilized in classroom learning must be able to accommodate this final category of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy, so they face no hardships in producing new ideas during open discussions. Despite the critical lack of student’s ability to create new ideas, more than half of the students perceived that they can generate new information by their own critical thinking to be shared with the group members during various kinds of discussions. Capila and Bhalla (2010), seem to agree with this when they claimed that the integration of HOTS in classroom approaches deliver media message to teach and engage the students in relation to meet the educational goals to expand the students’ knowledge on educational issues.

Vernez, Culbertson and Constant (2014) claim that different activities that promote HOTS can be conducted in class to evaluate students’ abilities in creating new knowledge based on the previous learned knowledge.

Students in this era of fourth industrial revolution (4IR) need to be equipped with higher order thinking skills in order to have a healthy competition and stay pertinent in these recent industries. Before proceed with working industries, students are expected to be prepared in mastering writing skills to fit in the working situation such as writing a report, applying leave for
holidays, key in important data and so forth. Hence, it is fundamental for students to master and stimulate higher order thinking skills in their writing before they face real world. However, there is lack of Edutainment application in English writing classroom (Makarius, 2014) to help and equip the students with such skills.

Conclusion

Interestingly, nearly all the participants/students perceived that Edutainment has affected the stimulation of higher order thinking skills in their writing as proven in the output of the questionnaire. All the six categories in Bloom’s taxonomy were applied by the students at diversity level of their acquirement. However, it is noted that the final category which is create need the most improvement. Students need to be able to create and invent new material in order to be a good fit in working industries in the future. It is significant to generate new and fresh ideas to make a great contribution. These findings are reliable with the results found in the first two research questions as Edutainment are seen to give a positive impact along with the main factor in stimulating higher order thinking skills that act as an aid to help students in improving their writing.

In conclusion, the undergraduate students acknowledge that regular practice of integrating Edutainment will be a great advantage for them to elevate the application of higher order thinking skills in their writing. The findings of the study show the positive perceptions of the students and it is recommended that further studies should be conducted with bigger sample and different levels of studies.

About the Authors:
Siti Hamin Stapa is a Professor of Applied Linguistics from the Language Studies and Linguistics Research Centre, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Her expertise is in second language writing. She has conducted research and published on the teaching and learning L2 writing. She is also active in community-based research and currently involved in projects to create awareness on the effects on climate change among primary school children in Malaysia.

Nur Izzati Ibaharim is an English lecturer at Malaysia University of Science & Technology (MUST). She had been teaching undergraduate students while completing her master’s degree at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia from 2017 to 2019 before graduated and joined MUST as a full-time lecturer. She also went to Vietnam to teach Pre-Intermediate English course for one semester at Nam Can Tho University in Can Tho, Vietnam.

ORCid ID https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2469-4903

References
The Use of Edutainment in Promoting Higher Order Thinking Skills

Stapa & Ibaharim


The Effects of an Interactive Web-based Test of English for International Communication Tutoring Course on Thai Students’ English Grammar Proficiency

Orabudh Mayanondha
Language Institute, Thammasat University
Bangkok, Thailand

Kittitouch Soontornwipast
Language Institute, Thammasat University
Bangkok, Thailand

Abstract
There has been a range of online Test of English for International Communication courses in Thailand. However, the courses lack interaction, and learners do not have enough opportunities to contact tutors when they have problems. Therefore, the interactive web-based Test of English for International Communication tutoring course was developed in this study to promote interaction in online learning. This study investigates the effects of the course on students’ English grammar proficiency and explores students’ opinions on the course. The participants were 40 Thai students enrolling in the course. This research employed the mixed-methods approach. The effects of the instruction on grammar proficiency were assessed by pre- and post-tests. Students’ opinions were explored through reflective journals, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. The results show that students’ grammar proficiency significantly improved after taking the course. All students had a positive attitude towards the course. They perceived a high level of instructor-student interaction, leading to an increase in learning motivation and eagerness to complete the course. Although student-student interaction was in a slightly lower degree, the students had a positive impact on one another. Besides, considerable course flexibility facilitated active learning and increased students’ satisfaction. This course also encouraged autonomous learning as the students perceived a sense of responsibility for their study. Extrinsic incentives effectively motivated students to become more active and participate in activities. This study provides a guideline of the teaching approaches to incorporate the concept of interaction into web-based instruction to improve students’ grammar proficiency.

Keywords: English grammar, interaction, Thai students, Test of English for International Communication, web-based instruction

Cite as: Mayanondha, O., & Soontornwipast, K. (2020). The Effects of an Interactive Web-based Test of English for International Communication Tutoring Course on Thai Students’ English Grammar Proficiency. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL (6). 67-83. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.5
Introduction

Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) is the world’s leading standardized test of business English. Over seven million people take the test yearly (ETS, 2017). It plays a vital role in both career and educational aspects. TOEIC scores are the standards for admission and graduation, recruitment and selection, pay and rewards, and job promotion. Nonetheless, the average score of Thai test-takers was 478 out of 990, making Thailand become bottom of the list among other countries in Asia (ETS, 2019). Previous studies revealed that their participants gained low TOEIC scores ranging from 300 to 460 (Maliwan, 2018; Siriboon, 2008).

To gain a deep insight into TOEIC preparation and online TOEIC tutoring in Thailand, the researcher conducted a preliminary study by sending questionnaires to 185 students in an online TOEIC preparation course of a tutoring institution and conducting semi-structured interviews with ten students randomly. The results are parallel to the previous research. The students’ average TOEIC score was 481, and the minimum score was 230. It reflects that Thai learners’ low English proficiency is a severe issue. It is, therefore, essential to find effective ways to improve their English abilities to help them attain the target TOEIC scores.

Grammar is an integral part of the English language. However, the findings from previous research confirm that grammar is one of the main problems for Thais (Akkakoson, 2016). Regarding the preliminary study, the skill that most students in the course wanted to improve most was grammar. When evaluating their grammar proficiency, the students rated themselves only 2.2 out of 5. They encountered difficulties in the grammar part. Regarding TOEIC test format, grammar test items are included in part five (Incomplete Sentence) and part 6 (Text Completion), containing 30 and 16 questions, respectively. Hence, test-takers must develop strong grammatical skills to get good TOEIC scores. The study of Harada (2016) showed that grammar proficiency helps increase TOEIC scores. Hence, learners should study grammar points frequently found in the test.

The online TOEIC tutoring market in Thailand has fierce competition. More than 30 tutors offer a range of online TOEIC courses, most of which are asynchronous. Despite being convenient, the courses lack interaction and do not provide enough communication channels for tutors and students. When students have questions, they usually receive replies from web administrators and rarely get instant feedback. Regarding the preliminary study, interaction is the students’ primary concern in online learning. They were worried that they would not be able to contact their tutor if they had questions or needed help ($\bar{x} = 4.34$ from a 5-point Likert scale), and the interaction between tutor and students would be limited ($\bar{x} = 4.05$). Online instruction with insufficient support and interaction with teachers leads to frustration, a decrease in motivation and satisfaction, and higher dropout rates (Kaur & Sidhu, 2010). Online students value interaction. It is a human factor playing a vital role in the learning process (McLester, 2002). Therefore, instructional methods with a variety of interactive techniques should be developed (Chan & Law, 2007).

In Thailand, synchronous online TOEIC tutoring is generally delivered in a one-on-one session. Apart from that, synchronous sessions are carried out via Facebook Live by TOEIC tutors on their Facebook pages for free as a marketing strategy to attract followers. Besides, the
integration between asynchronous and synchronous instruction for TOEIC tutoring is still rare. It reflects a gap and a potential opportunity for online TOEIC instruction.

Despite a significant role of TOEIC, there is no previous research in Thailand aiming to develop teaching methodology specifically for TOEIC preparation. All studies surveyed learners’ opinions on existing TOEIC preparation courses and are not related to online instruction. The research using technology for TOEIC preparation also remains scarce worldwide. Moreover, all of the studies were conducted with students in a university context, not in the context of tutoring institutions. Besides, most previous studies involve listening and reading skills as they focus on the improvement of overall TOEIC scores. There is a lack of research focusing on grammar instruction for TOEIC preparation. To bridge these gaps, this study aims to develop an interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course to improve English grammar proficiency. There are two research questions:

1. What are the effects of the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course on students’ English grammar proficiency?
2. What are the opinions of students on the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course?

**Literature Review**

In this section, previous research related to designing frameworks for the development of the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course is presented.

**Web-based Instruction**

Web-based instruction refers to “the teaching methods that use multimedia devices or network technologies” (Zong, Li & Jia, 2018, p.8). There are three types (Salzer, 2011).

First, *asynchronous web-based instruction* is an online learning approach which does not happen in real-time. Asynchronous instruction provides great convenience and flexibility. However, it requires a high degree of self-regulation. Otherwise, the learning process could be interrupted (Zembylas, 2008). This posed a challenge in online learning, especially for adult students whose common learning issues involve time constraint and self-regulation (Jun, 2005; Whipp & Chiarelli, 2004). Besides, students can feel dissatisfied and demotivated because of delayed response and feedback from instructors (Huang & Hsiao, 2012).

Second, *synchronous web-based instruction* requires simultaneous interaction between teachers and students. Active communication between teachers and students can be promoted (Ng, 2007). Thus, students are less likely to feel isolated because it is more interactive and social (Hrastinski, 2008). Additionally, it enables immediate responses and feedback (Diaz & Entonado, 2009). This helps facilitate learning experiences (Theile, 2003) The students could share their comments and see the learning progress of their classmates like the traditional classroom environment (Martin & Parker, 2014). Nonetheless, synchronous learning could cause time obstacle since it requires all parties to be online at the same time (Ebner & Gegenfurtner, 2019).

Third, *blended or hybrid online instruction* combines asynchronous and synchronous formats. It harnesses the positives of both online learning approaches. Students have flexibility
since they can learn at their own pace during asynchronous sessions, while they can still interact and communicate with one another simultaneously via synchronous sessions (Frey, 2015).

**Previous Studies Concerning Interaction in Web-based TOEIC Instruction**

Ishikawa et al. (2015) studied the effects of the integration of web-based courseware featuring online materials for TOEIC preparation and in-class instruction on the students’ TOEIC scores. The teacher gave support and encouragement to the students via Line Application. Obari (2013) investigated the effects of online TOEIC training kit on the students’ TOEIC scores. The students watched online lessons and did practice exercises in the courseware. The results of both studies showed an increase in the TOEIC scores. Although the students were engaged with materials and activities in the courseware, the interaction was limited due to an asynchronous learning environment. Rahayu (2020) explored students’ experience of studying a synchronous TOEIC class via Zoom. Despite their positive feedback, the students thought face-to-face communication was easier and better. The previous studies in this area focused on either asynchronous or synchronous instruction, and mainly adopted quantitative data collection. Thus, there is a literature gap in the implementation of mixed types of online instruction for TOEIC to promote interaction and a mixed-methods data collection approach to provide insight into students’ opinions.

This study employs blended online instruction as treatment and a mixed-methods approach. Asynchronous learning tools are pre-recorded video lessons, recorded Facebook Live, discussion board in a Facebook group, and communication channels, including Facebook Messenger, Line, and Instagram. The synchronous learning tool is Facebook Live broadcast.

**Transactional Distance Theory**

Moore (1997) proposed that the separation between teachers and students in an online learning environment leads to communication and psychological gap called a transactional distance. It involves “teacher-learner relationships that exist when learners and instructors are separated by space and/or by time” (Moore, 1997, p.22). There are three clusters.

Firstly, **dialogue** means an interaction between teachers and students, between students and content, and among students themselves (Ustati & Hassan, 2013). Dialogue involves verbal messages, ideas, and actions. It minimizes a transactional distance. The ways teachers promote dialogues include expressing enthusiasm, establishing rapport, facilitating practice, providing feedback, and offering supports (Burgess, 2006). The more a teacher interacts with students, the more their relationship is strengthened (Pennings et al., 2016).

Secondly, **structure** refers to the flexibility of the course (Moore, 1997). It indicates the extent to which the instruction can accommodate learners’ inputs, including their preferences, needs, learning styles, and backgrounds. Structure involves lesson organization, content, materials, curriculum, strategies for teaching, and course activities. A live broadcast lesson has a loose structure enabling teachers and students to create dialogues. It reduces a transactional distance (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005).

Thirdly, **learner autonomy** means the extent to which learners can control their learning process, set learning goals, plan their study, and evaluate their learning process (Moore, 1997). It
The Effects of an Interactive Web-based Test of English

Mayanondha & Soontornwipast

Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL Number 6. July 2020

This study adopts the theory of transactional distance as a conceptual framework for the development of the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course. This theory plays a crucial role in helping us understand the nature of online instruction and how it works (Abuhassna & Yahaya, 2018). It provides a helpful guideline for online learning and teaching practices (Garrison, 2000). Transactional distance theory should be incorporated into online courses (Koslow & Piña, 2015). Transactional distance theory focuses on the factors having an influence on interaction and causing a gap in online learning. To bridge the gap, it is necessary to find ways to increase interaction.

Community of Inquiry

Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2003) proposed a community of inquiry theory. It serves as a model to promote interaction in online instruction. Therefore, it provides a solution to a transactional distance (Kucuk & Sahin, 2013). According to this theory, Tolu (2010) further explained that a meaningful online learning environment is developed when the interaction is promoted. Teachers employ a learner-centric teaching approach while students proceed with their learning by cooperatively participating in technologically enhanced activities in their learning community. There are three elements.

Social presence refers to the ways community members present themselves emotionally and socially as actual people via a communication to develop relationships (Rourke, 2001). It involves self-disclosure, voice tone, facial expression, body language, and eye contact. Open communication and collaboration promote social presence.

Cognitive presence refers to the ways community members construct knowledge in a meaningful way (Garrisson, 2007). Akyol and Garrison (2011) explained that there are four stages. First, activation occurs when teachers and students identify problems together through discussion. Second, exploration phase involves understanding problems by gathering and sharing ideas and information. Third, integration refers to the construction of meaningful solutions. Fourth, resolution involves the application of new knowledge.

Teaching presence refers to the roles of teachers to design, organize, facilitate, and direct teaching (Garrison et al., 2003). Arbaugh (2007) pointed out that teachers are responsible for creating effective learning experience and course preparation, which involves teaching approaches, learning materials, and course content. Besides, teachers facilitate the learning process by monitoring students’ discussion, encouraging idea sharing, and providing guidance. They also deliver instruction, clarify misunderstandings, and giving feedback.

Community of inquiry theory is included in the theoretical framework of this study. While transactional distance theory emphasizes the factors causing problems about interaction in online
learning, community of inquiry theory focuses on solutions to increase interaction and minimize transactional distance.

**Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach. A one-group pre-test and post-test design was employed. It was considered feasible for the context of a tutoring business since a tutor could not randomly select students. The sample included 40 students enrolling on the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course of the tutoring institution in Thailand during January and February 2020. They were between 19 and 35 years old. Purposive sampling was adopted. All students were interested in taking the TOEIC test. Students’ backgrounds and English language proficiency were varied. Approximately 52.5%, 35%, and 12.5% were full-time employees, full-time university students, and unemployed, respectively. Around 40% had taken the TOEIC test before. Their average score was around 528 out of 990.

The instructional instrument was the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course. It was developed based on transactional distance theory and community of inquiry theory. The course was the integration of synchronous and asynchronous instruction and the use of technological tools to promote interaction in online learning. It was a five-week grammar course for TOEIC preparation (January-February 2020). The students were provided with a course roadmap with details about course schedule and activities.

In the asynchronous online part, students watched video lessons on the website around 3-5 hours per week. They could manage their study freely and access lessons anywhere and anytime. The total length of all videos was 20 hours. At the end of each lesson in the coursebook, there were QR codes linking to online exercises on websites. The answer key and detailed explanation were given in a Facebook Live session.

In the synchronous online part, the lesson was delivered via Facebook Live broadcast weekly in a closed Facebook group at the weekend, and it was saved in the group for three days. Each session lasted 1-1.5 hours. The tutor practiced doing exercises together with students. The exercises included the online exercise via QR code in the coursebook and the pop quiz that the students had not seen before.

The Facebook group was a knowledge sharing space where the tutor posted useful materials and organized activities for the students. When students participated in each activity, they were given a star to collect as a point. Those receiving every star would get a big prize (a grammar e-book) when the course finished. The tutor also gave extra rewards i.e., grammar sheets for the students who took part in activities each week. Also, the Facebook group was a communication channel that the tutor used for reminding the students of course activities and weekly schedule. Besides, the students and the tutor could contact each other directly via three applications, including Facebook Messenger, Line, and Instagram. Additionally, the students were encouraged to reflect their learning experience in an online weekly reflective journal.
To collect data, quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted. Figure one shows the research design model. Each research instrument was validated by three experts in English language teaching. The quantitative results indicating the effects of the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course on students’ grammar proficiency were gained from pre-test and post-test scores. The test covered all grammar topics in the course. The test items in the pre-test and the post-test were the same. There were 30 multiple-choice questions. The test format was the same as the official TOEIC test in part five and six. Students were given 20 minutes to complete the tests online. The scores were analyzed by using a paired samples t-Test in SPSS to examine whether there was any statistically significant difference between their pre- and post-test scores. When finishing the course, all students were given the online questionnaire to explore their opinion on the course. The items in the questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale were about their learning experience and satisfaction. An open-ended section was also included so that students could give feedback and suggestions about the course. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations were used for the analysis of the items that were based on a five-point Likert scale. Data gained from open-ended questions were analyzed by thematic coding.

The qualitative results showing students’ opinions on the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course were gained from semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. The interviews were conducted with ten students after they completed the questionnaire. A reflective journal was an online report in which students weekly recorded their learning experiences. They were asked about their grammar learning, their participation in course activities, their opinion on lessons and interaction, and their reflection on learning progress and issues they faced. The qualitative data was analyzed by thematic coding.

Results and Discussion

Research question 1- What effect does the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course have on students’ English grammar proficiency?

The analysis of the difference between pre-test and post-test scores was carried out to answer this question.
Table 1. Paired-samples t-Test of the mean scores of pre-test and post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English grammar</td>
<td>16.78</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>20.25</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proficiency test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < 0.05

From Table one, the paired-samples t-Test showed a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of pre-test (mean = 16.78, SD = 5.83) and post-test (mean = 20.25, SD = 5.43); t = 5.47, p < 0.05. The gain score of the post-test mean was positive.

Moreover, the results from the questionnaire reveal that the students strongly agreed they had seen the development of their grammar skills (x̄ = 4.68) and gained more confidence in grammar after taking this course (x̄ = 4.48).

It can be concluded that students’ English grammar proficiency improved as a result of the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course. This is in line with the findings of the previous research conducted by Obari (2013) and Ishikawa et al. (2015), indicating that the web-based TOEIC preparation courses, along with active participation in e-learning activities, improve students’ TOEIC scores. It is consistent with the studies of Siriboon (2008) and Maliwan (2018) that students have a positive attitude towards TOEIC preparation courses and believed the courses could help them get higher scores and have more confidence in taking the test.

**Research question 2- What are the opinions of students on the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course?**

Data from the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and students’ reflective journals were analyzed to answer this question.

**Overall Impressions towards the Course**

The results from the questionnaires indicate that the students had a positive attitude towards the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course. They felt much satisfied with the interaction in the course (x̄ = 4.90). They strongly agreed that they gained good experience and was impressed with the course (x̄ = 4.88). Similarly, the results from the open-ended section in the questionnaires show that the students thought the course was well worth studying.

*This course is extremely impressive. The tutor taught very well and could explain each grammar point clearly. She provided lots of techniques, always encouraged me during the course. I felt this English course is worthwhile and I am glad that I decided to enroll on this course.* (S1)

**Students’ Opinions on the Interaction within the Course**

**Teacher-Student Interaction**
The findings from the questionnaires show that the students perceived a high level of teacher-student interaction in this course. The means in this area were very high (above 4.80). The findings from the interviews show that the interaction between the tutor and the students had a positive impact on online learning. It made the students have good feelings and enjoy learning, leading to an increase in their learning motivation. When the tutor regularly followed up students’ learning process, they felt active and eager to follow the learning schedule and complete the course in time.

The interaction within the course made me happy and have fun in learning. I wanted to study more and more because of the encouragement and attention from the tutor. It aroused my enthusiasm for learning. (S2)

I had studied many online courses before, but I had never completed any courses! This is the first course that I could finish. The interaction in this course was a great motivation that prompted me to become an active student. When the tutor contacted me during the week for the follow-up, I felt I had to be responsible for my study. I became less lazy and tried to catch up with the lessons. (S3)

The results were consistent with the previous literature. Interaction can turn passive learners into active learners (Chan & Law, 2007). The finding of the study conducted by Ivankova and Stick (2007) supports that there is a significant correlation between teacher-learner interaction and course completion rates. Students tend to persist in their online courses when teachers provided them with timely and suitable feedbacks, instant supports, and interactive activities.

Moreover, the students were provided with contact channels including Facebook Messenger, Instagram, and Line Application. This allowed them to communicate with the tutor anytime. They strongly agreed that the contact channels in this course were sufficient ($\bar{x} = 4.95$) and convenient ($\bar{x} = 4.93$). Also, results from the interviews show that quick responses and feedback from the tutor increased students’ satisfaction.

It is very convenient. Although we didn’t see each other in person, I could ask the tutor all the time. When I was confused or didn’t understand anything, I could always contact her directly, and she always responded to me promptly. I felt so good. This was helpful. (S4)

This accords with the findings of Huang and Hsiao’s (2012) and Diaz and Entonado’s (2009) studies in that immediate responses and feedback make students more satisfied and motivated. Apart from promoting learners’ motivation, instant communication allows teachers to correct students’ misunderstanding promptly (Chen & You, 2007). It enhances students’ learning experience and, therefore, plays a significant role in their development (Theile, 2003).

Teacher-student interaction also encourages students to freely express their ideas and feel comfortable to engage in discussion.

Interaction helped a lot. I had greater courage to ask the tutor questions and give answers to the class in the Facebook group and Facebook Live. The tutor was kind and friendly, making me feel that it’s okay to give a wrong answer. (S2)
Interaction strengthens the relationship between the tutor and the students. The more they interact with each other, the more closely their rapport is fostered.

*After the course finished, I will miss the tutor and Facebook Live class. I want to continue studying with her. I appreciated that she genuinely dedicated to her students. Thanks for her care and encouragement. She always provided us with support and advice. She is more than a tutor. I love her. I think I made the right decision to take this course.* (S5)

This result aligns with the finding of the study by Pennings et al. (2016) in that frequent interpersonal interactions strengthen teacher-student relationships. Lee and Ng’s (2010) further supported that students feel free and more willing to engage in discussion and share their opinions when they have developed a positive rapport with their teachers. Similar to the findings of this research, the study by Buskist and Saville (2001) revealed that instructor-student rapport increases the enjoyment in learning. The more they contact their teacher, the greater chance they will take the teacher’s courses later.

**Student-Student Interaction**

Although the students felt that they had an interaction with their coursemates, the level of student-student interaction they perceived was relatively low ($\bar{x} = 3.93$) when compared with teacher-student interaction. Ng’s study (2007) shows a similar result. This was because the students did not know their coursemates before.

Despite a low level of interaction among the students, the qualitative findings from the interviews indicate that the students had an impact on one another in many ways.

*I did not join the Facebook Live in the first week. When I watched the saved Live video, there were over a thousand comments, and the coursemates were active in participating in the Facebook Live. Then I realized that it’s time for me to focus on the lesson and keep following the pace of the class.* (S6)

*We had a chance to express our ideas promptly as if we were studying together in a real classroom. Studying with other coursemates was enjoyable and fun. Everyone was eager to do the practice exercise and share their answers.* (S1)

*At first, I felt a little bit shy to answer in the Facebook Live class. I preferred to answer after seeing other coursemates’ responses to ensure that my answer tended to be correct. After the first few weeks, I gained more confidence and enjoyed taking part in the Facebook Live session. I also learned from my peers’ answers.* (S7)

This is in line with the study of Martin and Parker (2014), revealing that text comments enable learners to see their peers’ learning progress and evaluate their learning comparatively. Thus, this promotes their motivation in learning. Sims (2003) further points out that students become more participatory and attentive to their studies owing to the interaction with peers. Plus, they tend to share ideas with others leading to a collaborative learning environment.
The Flexibility of the Course

The results from the questionnaire show that the students had flexibility in their study in terms of time ($\bar{x} = 4.35$) and location ($\bar{x} = 4.60$). They agreed they could fully manage their studies ($\bar{x} = 4.45$). Most students were full-time employees and university students. Studying online was convenient for them as they could learn anytime and anywhere. From the interviews, students accessed the lessons from various places such as houses, workplaces, universities, or even sky trains. They preferred studying at different periods. Moreover, they could study at their own pace and review the lessons as much as they wanted. This flexibility helped facilitate their learning and increased their satisfaction.

I think it was much better than studying in the real classroom since I could repeat the lessons that I did not understand. Conversely, when I could not catch up with the lesson in the classroom, it’s impossible to re-watch it again. Moreover, if I got something to do and could not attend the class, I would miss that whole lesson. (S1)

This is affirmed by the study of Kern and Warschauer (2000), stating that online instruction has advantages for learners with busy schedules, career duties, family obligations, and location constraints. Perveen (2016) emphasizes that in an asynchronous learning environment, students tend to learn and understand the lessons better. This is because it allows them to access and re-watch the lessons as much as they want to master the content.

Learner Autonomy in the Course

The students agreed that the learning pattern of the course helped them to be more responsible for their learning ($\bar{x} = 4.53$) and have clear learning goals ($\bar{x} = 4.65$). The course activities with rewards increased their learning motivation ($\bar{x} = 4.75$). In line with that, qualitative results indicate that the factors effectively motivating students included the course roadmap, Facebook Live, and course activities with rewards.

The course roadmap was helpful because I knew what to study that week and how long I should spend time on each lesson. I tried to manage my study time to follow the guideline. When I could complete all the lessons in advance, I felt proud of myself. (S2)

What kept me motivated in learning was Facebook Live. Sometimes when I was busy during the week, I would watch all recorded video lessons for one day so that I could catch up on the lessons before Facebook Live. (S8)

I liked the star collection activity. I wanted a big reward. In the final week, I left the conference earlier so that I could join the Facebook Live and get a star. Also, it was the last Facebook Live, so I did not want to miss it. I was responsible for my study since the beginning. So, I should try my best to complete this course fully. (S4)

In line with that, Slattery and Carlson (2005) shed light on the importance of course syllabus by suggesting that learners often rely on a syllabus, and it helps them allocate their time more effectively. Furthermore, the results of the study by Chanseawrassamee (2012) supported that adult learner has a positive attitude towards games and rewards which motivate them to learn more enthusiastically. English book was ranked first as the reward that Thai adult learners in his study wanted the most.
Problems the Students Faced in the Course

Regarding the results from students’ reflective journals and the interviews, the main issue considered as an obstacle for learning was time management. As most students either worked or studied full-time, they had to be responsible for their job or their university study. As a result, some of them did not have enough time to study. The result from the questionnaires indicates that although the students agreed that this course helped them to have more discipline in learning, the mean score (4.17) was relatively lower than those of the other statements in the questionnaire.

*I work as a nurse. When I had a night shift, I could not join the Facebook Live. My job is always busy, so I had difficulty in managing my study time. (S9)*

*In the second and third weeks, I could not complete the lessons and did not do online exercises because I had exams at the university. I felt nervous and afraid that I couldn’t follow the course schedule and other coursemates. (S10)*

This follows the idea proposed by Jun (2005) that as adult learners have many roles in their lives, the time constraint is their main barrier for learning. This could intervene in their learning progress (Zembylas, 2008). Online learning, which requires a high degree of self-discipline, could be challenging for them (Cercone, 2008). Whipp and Chiarelli (2004) suggest that self-regulation should be promoted through goal setting, planning, help-seeking (from teachers and peers), and self-reflection to deal with this issue.

Online learning plays an increasingly significant role in today’s education. The COVID-19 has resulted in a sudden shift from the classroom to digital platforms. Interaction is a challenge for educators to find ways to maintain it in order to engage students online and facilitate effective learning. This study fills the literary gap by providing a guideline to incorporate interaction into online learning under the context of both asynchronous and synchronous instruction. A mixed-methods research approach gave an insight into what and how the online interaction affected students’ grammar proficiency. The findings confirm that interaction increased students’ satisfaction. Teachers should actively promote interaction by regularly following up students’ learning progress, organizing interactive activities, giving timely responses, offering support and encouragement, and providing adequate contact channels. These approaches could arouse students’ enthusiasm, make them enjoy learning, and motivate them to study. In online learning, time management and motivation to keep learning could be the issues for students, leading to a low completion rate. This study suggests ways to deal with it by promoting learner autonomy through a course roadmap, activities, and rewards. Active learning, along with teacher’s support, could help students improve English grammar proficiency. The teaching model of this study can be applied to not only English courses but also other courses to promote interaction in online learning.

Conclusion

This study examines the effects of the interactive web-based TOEIC tutoring course on students’ English grammar proficiency. The results indicate that the students significantly improved their grammar proficiency after taking the course. They had a positive attitude towards the course. Online learning provided great flexibility for students, as they could learn anywhere and anytime. It is further suggested that the more contact channels, the higher level of students’
satisfaction. The communication between students and teachers helps strengthen their rapport and leads to learning motivation. Teachers play a vital role in facilitating an active learning environment. Their encouragement, support, and guidance positively affect students’ learning progress. Besides, as online learning requires a high degree of self-regulation, teachers should not only follow up learning progress regularly but also develop course roadmap to help learners better manage their time. Plus, rewards can be offered to encourage students to become more active in learning.

**Recommendations for Further Studies**

This research was conducted with one group of participants, and the sample size is small. It is recommended that future studies be done with a greater number of participants to gain richer data. Additionally, data collection took place within a short period. It would be interesting if future studies could investigate the long-term effect of an interactive web-based course on students’ performance.

**About the Authors**

Orabudh Mayanondha is a Ph.D. candidate at Language Institute of Thammasat University in Thailand majoring in English Language Teaching. Her research interests include web-based instruction, technology in teaching, and grammar instruction. [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3686-2337](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3686-2337)

Assistant Professor Kittitouch Soontornwipast, Ed.D. is a full-time lecturer at Language Institute of Thammasat University, Thailand. His research interests include teacher training, instructional media, action research for English teachers, and teaching methodology. [http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0461-7775](http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0461-7775)

**References**


The Linguistic Characteristics and Functions of Hashtags: #Is it a New Language?

Iman M. Mahfouz
College of Language and Communication (CLC)
Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (AASTMT)
Alexandria, Egypt

Abstract
Defined as a form of tagging that allows social media users to embed metadata in their posts, hashtags initially served to categorize topics and make them searchable online. Originating first on Twitter in 2007, hashtags have spread to other platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube. In addition to functioning as topic markers, hashtags have developed more complex linguistic functions. The ubiquity of this feature in the online medium, which now occupies a significant portion of our everyday communication is thus worthy of investigation. Although this topic has been researched in different disciplines, such as information diffusion, marketing, as well as sociology and public opinion, hashtags have not yet received enough attention from linguistic research. Using a sample of hashtags from a corpus of Instagram posts by Egyptian and Arab participants, this research thus aims to examine the characteristics of hashtags from a linguistic perspective, with particular focus on hashtags in the Arabic language. The study primarily seeks to determine the morpho-syntactic features of these recently emerging linguistic items according to the taxonomy proposed by Caleffi (2015). It also explores the pragmatic functions of hashtags based on Zappavigna’s (2015) view of hashtags as technologically discursive tools. The analysis points out that most of the hashtags in the data serve the experiential function and come as suffixes. The findings reveal both similarities and differences between English and Arabic hashtags.

Keywords: Arabic language, Callefi’s taxonomy, computer-mediated communication (CMC), hashtags, Instagram, pragmatic functions, social media

Introduction

Social media users have been increasingly creating and using hashtags in their uploaded content on various social media platforms. Defined as “a string of characters preceded by the pound symbol #” (Caleffi, 2015, p. 46), the hashtag enables users to add metadata to their posts, thus increasing the probability that their posts will be found and followed (Caleffi, 2015). This process of tagging has been termed ‘ambient affiliation’ by Zappavigna (2011), indicating that users may not have interacted directly with each other. Yet, they are linked by their interest in the same topics. According to Zappavigna (2015), the use of hashtags has marked a turn from people’s need to search for content to searching for other communities with shared values.

Hashtags were originally devised to categorize messages posted on social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, and Instagram. The first hashtag ever used was ‘#barcamp’ which appeared on Twitter in 2007. In July 2009, Twitter made hashtags hyperlinks, whereby clicking on them redirected the user to posts with that same hashtag (Pasho, 2017). Since the hashtag function was officially incorporated into Twitter search platform in 2009, hashtags have evolved into a ‘folksonomy’ for people to make commentary, express their feelings, and interact with each other (Lin, 2017).

Though initially launched to classify the topic of a post, hashtags have now developed several functions, such as expressing emotions, supporting movements, promotion and publicity, in addition to functioning as disclaimers. Born in the online environment, hashtags have even spread to the offline world as they can now be frequently seen in TV commercials, newspaper headlines, and demonstration banners where they are used to emphasize messages (Caleffi, 2015). According to Scott (2018), in the case of spoken hashtags, participants share physical context and have access to non-verbal cues, which restrict the functions served by hashtags.

The spread of hashtags has caused a controversy among the linguistic community. Some regard them positively in the light of language change, suggesting that they have come to constitute a new paralanguage (Lin, 2017). Others, however, claim that they are ruining the language. Biddle (2011), for instance, states that “the colloquial hashtag has burst out of its use as a sorting tool and become a linguistic tumor” (para. 3).

Among the social platforms that make use of hashtags is Instagram. Launched in 2010, Instagram has become a very popular photo-sharing app and social media platform. This social network enables users to upload photos and videos which can be edited, tagged, and viewed by their followers who can browse their content and view trending posts. In May 2019, Instagram reached one billion registered users (Iqbal, 2020).

Linguistic research on hashtags has evolved only recently. The significance of the present study becomes apparent given the limited literature on the language of hashtags whose primary focus has been on Twitter in particular. Furthermore, despite the growing popularity of social media in the entire world and the impact it exerts on our linguistic practices among other countless influences, non-English hashtags have been somehow neglected by linguistic scholarship, let alone for Arabic hashtags.
The scope of the present research hence covers a corpus of Instagram posts published by Egyptian and Arab participants. In order to investigate this relatively recent linguistic phenomenon of hashtags, the study seeks to answer the following two main research questions:

1. What are the main morpho-syntactic characteristics of Arabic hashtags as recently emerging linguistic items?
2. What are the pragmatic functions of hashtags as technologically discursive tools?

Review of the Literature

Several scholars have tackled the topic of hashtags in different disciplines, including information diffusing, marketing, sociology, and public opinion. Despite the abundance of research on social media language, hashtags, have not yet received ample attention from linguistic scholarship. Whereas Twitter hashtags have been the subject of much research (Evans, 2016; Page, 2012; Shapp, 2014; Tamara, 2011; Wikström, 2014; Zappavigna 2011; Zappavigna, 2015), Instagram hashtags are still a fertile field of study due to the recency of this platform. In accordance with the purpose of the present study, the literature review tackles two main perspectives for hashtag research, namely morpho-syntactic characteristics and pragmatic functions.

Morpho-syntactic characteristics of hashtags

A number of scholars have attempted to analyze the morphological and syntactic features of hashtags, including their structure as well as their position within posts.

Caleffi (2015) examined hashtagging as a new morphological process for word formation by looking at a corpus of English and Italian hashtags both online and offline. She proposed a tentative taxonomy of eight types of English hashtags (see Table 1). In her study, she explored the nature of these new linguistic items and their composition. She describes hashtagging as a new productive word formation mechanism that can be utilized to generate innovative linguistic items by stringing several words together, in a sense that may even lead to the redefinition of traditional word and part of speech categories. In her model, Caleffi’s (2015) takes into account the number of words in the hashtag and its position within the post, whether at the beginning, middle or end. The items that follow the “#” symbol are also analyzed, whether these include acronyms, combinations of digits and letters, symbols, or words and phrases.

Table 1. Caleffi’s (2015) taxonomy of English hashtags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of hashtag</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># + acronym/abbreviation</td>
<td>#ootd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 1 word</td>
<td>#marathon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 2 words</td>
<td>#prettyplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 3 words</td>
<td>#ThingsNobodySays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 4 words</td>
<td>#fromwhereistand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 5 or more words</td>
<td>#IAmElyarsBillionsthGirl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + letters and numbers</td>
<td>#b2bhour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + ??</td>
<td>#duhDumduhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuhDumDuh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Reprinted from Caleffi (2015, p. 53)
According to Caleffi (2015), based on Twitter conventions, hashtags usually follow certain constraints. First, no whitespace characters are allowed. Moreover, in a hashtag consisting of two or more words, the initial letter of each word may be capitalized (as in the title of the present research). A hashtag can contain numbers but cannot be made up entirely of numerical digits, neither can it start with a number. Special characters are not allowed except for the underscore symbol. Caleffi (2015) recommends that hashtags be used sparingly, since too many hashtags in one post or hashtags with numerous characters can be cumbersome and confusing.

Maity et al. (2015) described hashtags as “one of the most important linguistic units of … social media” and pointed out that it is thus worthwhile to analyze them from a linguistic perspective (p. 1681). They performed a quantitative analysis of the evolution of the basic linguistic features of hashtags over a two-year period. The researchers found that several hashtags have ‘coalesced’ or combined to form new ones over a short period of time, which have come to be known as ‘Twitter idioms’. They also observed that the frequency of occurrence of this new merged hashtag is usually much higher than that of its individual components. According to Maity et al. (2015), “what started as a way for people to connect with others and to organize similar tweets together, propagate ideas, promote specific people or topics has now grown into a language of its own” (p. 1685). Their findings also revealed that people tend to repeat the same hashtag in their tweets to express strong opinions or overexcitement.

Lin (2017), on the other hand, maintains that “hashtags stimulate people to build their own language” (hashtag as a paralanguage). They are very easy to produce since anyone can create a new hashtag just be adding the pound symbol “#” before a word or phrase, which makes them “uncontrollable but creative”. The presence of hashtags thus encourages people to use slang expressions or even create their own merged forms that then circulate on a large scale and start infiltrating into everyday language. Although they may not be syntactically formal or lack grammaticality, “this Internet slang has evolved into mainstream language” (Lin, 2017, hashtag as a paralanguage). Lin (2017) also found that the coalescing phenomenon is more common in social media than in standard written language due to informality and space limitation.

**The Pragmatic functions of Hashtags**

Apart from their primary categorizing and searching functionalities, hashtags have developed to serve a range of linguistic and pragmatic functions that have constituted the focus of several studies.

In her pioneering article, Zappavigna (2011) tackled the role performed by hashtags as technologically discursive tools. She described hashtags as ‘searchable talk’ since they promote ‘searchability’ as a community-building linguistic activity. By using a hashtag, it is assumed that other users will adopt the same tag, hence creating what is known as a ‘folksonomy’ or a virtual community that engages in collaborative tagging. She defined the concept of ‘searchable talk’ as “online conversation where people actively render their talk more findable” (Zappavigna, 2011, p. 804).

Tamara (2011) classified hashtags into informing and commentary hashtag (opinions/judgments) and found that around 71% of tweets on Twitter were informing hashtags. Zimmer
(2011), on the other hand, devoted special attention to the use of hashtags for irony, particularly “as a vehicle for self-directed sarcasm” (par. 3). He states that “the convention of the ‘hashtag’ has been pressed into the service of self-mockery” (par. 1). Furthermore, Zimmer (2011) recommended that these sarcastic hashtags, especially those involving race- and class-based self-mocking, be examined more thoroughly “to make way for a deeper self-examination” (par. 7).

Page (2012) classified hashtags into three categories based on the clause/content type surrounding the hashtag in use: declarative, imperative, and question. She also found that celebrities use hashtags for self-branding. They do this through two main types of posts: those related to professional identity and those related to national events, such that “search terms related to professional expertise tend to emphasize the tweet author’s identity as a practitioner within a particular field” (Page, 2012, p. 10). She suggests that celebrities employ hashtags as a sort of marketing strategy through which they persuade their audience to watch a show or purchase a product to promote their status in the offline world.

Wikström (2014) employed Speech Act Theory to analyze the communicative functions of hashtags and distinguished eight functions, such as playing games, parenthetical explanations, in addition to emotive, emphatic, and humorous usages. Shapp (2014), on the other hand, studied Twitter hashtags from a discourse narrative perspective, focusing on ‘commentary’ hashtags. These are used to provide an additional meaning (usually evaluative) to the semantic content of a tweet. He also distinguished hashtags that are syntactically included within the structure of a post from extra-sentential ones.

According to Goodwin (2015), the “hashtag quickly evolved from its primary function to being a way for people to provide social commentary, impart sarcasm, and other narratives on their social media posts” (par. 8). She suggests that hashtags represent a fast means of communication that facilitates rapid connections and caters for the needs of young generations who usually have a short attention span and seek instant gratification. “Using hashtags not only streamlines that process but further streamlines online communications and replaces more individualistic and well-thought out answers and narratives” (Goodwin, 2015, par. 16).

Baghirov et al. (2016), on the other hand, investigated gender differences in Instagram hashtags and found that females use more emotional and positive hashtags, as opposed to males who tend to use more informative and negative hashtags. Based on relevance theory, Scott (2018) also studied the use of spoken hashtags as a new way of communication in which a feature of written language, namely punctuation marks, has infiltrated into the spoken medium. She suggests that by labeling the topic, not only do experiential hashtags serve the searching function, but also perform a contextualization function by supplying the semantic field that should be used to interpret a given message.

Whereas the bulk of scholarship on hashtags has been dominated by Twitter, among the very few studies that tackled Instagram hashtags is Pasho (2017) who employed Actor-Network Theory to describe the performances and impacts of dietary hashtags. Through experimenting with the walkthrough method and an Instagram narrative model, the study examined discursive
associations in dietary-related Instagram content. The study concluded that food images along with dietary hashtags affect users’ consumption food patterns and dietary performances.

**The metafunctions of Language**

According to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), language is a system that involves communication through choices (Halliday, 1978). The structure and organization of language is affected on all levels by the various functions it is utilized to achieve. These functions, referred to as metafunctions, are enacted simultaneously and manifested as different layers in the structure of a given clause (Halliday, 1994). The main aim of this model is “to construct a grammar for purposes of text analysis: one that would make it possible to say sensible and useful things about any text, spoken or written, in modern English” (Halliday, 1994, p. 41). SFL has thus been employed as a theoretical framework for analyzing numerous text types ranging from literary work to advertisements and business letters.

The key concept in SFL is that language enacts three simultaneous metafunctions: an ideational function of enacting experience, an interpersonal function of negotiating relationships, and a textual function of organizing information (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The ideational metafunction is concerned with the content or proposition of a message. The interpersonal metafunction, on the other hand, involves the interaction between participants who express their own attitudes and opinions and attempt to influence others’ attitudes and opinions. Finally, the textual metafunction is concerned with the creation of a coherent text. These metafunctions should not be regarded as functions in the sense of language uses but rather viewed as modes of meaning which are present in every use of language as a semiotic system (Halliday, 1994).

Based on this model of SFL, Zappavigna (2015) attempted to investigate the pragmatic functions of hashtags. She thus posits that hashtags function as metadata in three ways: experiential (topic related), interpersonal (evaluative), and textual (typographic). Zappavigna (2015) suggested that “hashtags are able to construe a range of complex meanings in social media texts” (p. 274). Accordingly, she distinguished three main communicative functions of hashtags: “an experiential function of enacting experience, an interpersonal function of negotiating relationships, and a textual function of organizing information” (p. 5).

From the above discussion, it becomes apparent that most hashtag research has until the present time concentrated on Twitter as a social media network, leaving other social media networks such as Instagram under-researched in this respect. Very little research has also been conducted on hashtags in the Arab world to the researcher’s knowledge, let alone for hashtags written in the Arabic language.

**Methodology**

To investigate the use of hashtags on Instagram with particular focus on Arabic language hashtags, data was manually collected from posts on Arab and Egyptian celebrities’ accounts in August and September 2019. The first data set was collected from sportsmen’s accounts, especially football players (75 posts), whereas the second comprised other celebrities, mainly actors, singers and presenters (75 posts), amounting to a total of 150 posts. The accounts were checked and the first (latest) post was selected from each account. Only posts written in Arabic language were...
selected. When a post was not found to include hashtags, it was skipped and the next post on the same account was examined, and so on. It is to be noted that the sample is not intended to provide a quantitatively representative picture of hashtag usage on Instagram as a whole, but rather to identify and exemplify a wide variety of functions and forms related to the use of Arabic language hashtags.

To analyze the selected hashtags on the morpho-syntactic level, Caleffi’s (2015) taxonomy is adopted. Her model is based on what follows the “#” symbol, whether abbreviations, combinations of numerical characters or letters, and the symbols used to separate the words if any. The number of words in the hashtag, as well as its position in relation to the post are also considered.

To analyze the pragmatic functions of hashtags, the study draws upon Zappavigna (2015). Her classification for the functions of hashtags is based on the model of SFL, a social semiotic theory that investigates discourse in context with the aim of answering questions about how meanings function within the particular contexts in which they are made. The selected hashtags will be examined and classified according to Zappavigna’s (2015) classification outlined above in order to determine whether they indicate the topic of the post or add an evaluative comment. The textual function is simultaneously enacted by almost all hashtags as will become apparent in the course of the study.

Data Analysis
The sample Instagram posts were examined, and the hashtags included were extracted and analyzed. The total number of hashtags in the sample was found to be 625. The first section of the analysis is devoted to the morpho-syntactic characteristics of the hashtags, whereas the second discusses their pragmatic functions.

Morpho-syntactic Characteristics
This section tackles the morphological structure and syntactic features of the selected hashtags. The analysis encompasses the number of words in a hashtags, the types of characters used, in addition to the position of the hashtag within the post based on Caleffi’s (2015) model.

The number of words in the sample hashtags varies significantly, ranging from one to eleven words (see Table 2). The majority of hashtags consist of one, two, or three words. Very few hashtags exceed this number. This is in line with Caleffi’s (2015) recommendation that shorter hashtags are more favorable.

Table 2. Number of words in hashtags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of words</th>
<th>Example hashtag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># + 1 word</td>
<td>#الزمالك - #برامج - #موضة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 2 words</td>
<td>#منيع الفارغ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 3 words</td>
<td>#هيئة رجل الغراب</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 4 words</td>
<td>#فرعون راجع يحكم تانى</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 5 words</td>
<td>#طب والله زمان زمان والله</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 6 words</td>
<td>#جاي من الاكسبلور فلو يا غالي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># + 7 words</td>
<td>#يا رب يا علي انصر الأهلي الغالي</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding the type of characters used in the hashtags, both alphabetical and numerical characters were found in the sample. Some hashtags only included letters, others were formed only of numbers, while a third group combined both letters and numbers as Table 3 shows. This is against the constraints mentioned by Caleffi’s (2015) above which state that hashtags cannot start with digits or be formed entirely of digits. This observation may suggest that Twitter hashtag conventions are different from those for Instagram, which was also reported by Pasho (2017).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of characters (alpha/numeric)</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only letters</td>
<td>Most hashtags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only numerical digits</td>
<td>#2019 - #122 - #2019#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters + numerical digits</td>
<td>#مارس_2019 #حساب_2020 – #100_يورو_badge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few posts were found in the sample that were entirely formed only of hashtags; that is, the post did not include any further content. Figure 1 and 2 are examples of these posts.

Unlike English hashtags which abound with abbreviations (Caleffi, 2015), no abbreviations were found in Arabic hashtags (Arabic does not generally favor abbreviations). In all hashtags, words were almost invariably separated by the underscore symbol, unlike English where the underscore is optional (Caleffi, 2015). This is due to the cursive nature of Arabic script that necessitates the
underscore in order to separate letters, which would otherwise render the words in the hashtags unintelligible. This is especially true of letters that can be connected to the following ones (connectors), which constitute the majority of the Arabic alphabet. A few exceptions were found, however, in which two words occurred successively without being separated by the underscore symbol, e.g., #الحمد_له - #ماشاء_الله - #معاك_يامؤمن. The reason is probably that these words are usually treated as a single lexical unit.

Hashtags are syntactically flexible. They can occur either as adjuncts to the main content of the post, or be seamlessly embedded in posts. Three main positions of hashtags are distinguished by Zappavigna’s (2015):

1. Prefixes: Preceding a post
2. Infixes: Integrated within a post
3. Suffix: Following a post

Very few hashtags in the sample appeared as prefixes. In the few instances that were found, they functioned as disclaimers designating the type of post as indicated by Caleffi (2015), whether as an opinion (Figure 3) or an important announcement (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Prefix hashtag for opinion

Figure 4. Prefix hashtag for important announcement

Similarly, also few hashtags were found in the infix category. These integrate seamlessly into the clausal structure of the post and function as part and parcel of its syntactic structure and semantic content (see Figures 5 and 6). This ability of hashtags to work seamlessly inside social media texts is a novel property for metadata, subverting its traditional role in separating meta-information from primary content. According to Shapp (2014), these are included within the syntactic structure of the post, as opposed to extra-sentential hashtags that are usually attached to the end of a post.
Suffix hashtags or extra-sentential ones constitute the majority of the sample. These come after a post and are usually used to define the ‘topic’. Some occurred in the sample as long strings of words that may or may not be directly related to the topic of the post (Figures 7 and 8). These hashtag sequences do not conform to the recommendations of Twitter experts that the preferred number of hashtags in a post should not exceed three, since the excessive use of hashtags may cause confusion (Caleffi, 2015).

To conclude this section, Figure 9 displays the distribution of hashtag positions in the sample. The vast majority of the hashtags (89%) occurred as suffixes following the post, some of which included long strings of multiple hashtags, whether directly related or not related to the topic of the post. Few hashtags in the sample (10%) were infixes occurring within the posts and functioning as part and parcel of its syntactic and semantic content, whereas only 1% appeared as prefixes which preceded the posts.

---

**Figure 5.** Infix hashtags one

**Figure 6.** Infix hashtags two

**Figure 7.** Multiple suffix hashtag strings (one) (two)

**Figure 8.** Multiple suffix hashtag strings

**Figure 9.** Distribution of hashtag position in the sample
Pragmatic Functions

In this section of the analysis, the pragmatic functions of the sample hashtags will be examined. According to Zappavigna’s (2015), hashtags can be classified into three main types based on their function:

1. Experiential hashtags: These indicate the topic of a post.
2. Interpersonal hashtags: These facilitate an evaluative comment or stance.
3. Textual hashtags: These play a typographical function for organizing a post.

Even though both Page (2012) and Zappavigna (2015) found that the experiential function was much more frequent than the interpersonal function, it should be noted that these functions are not mutually exclusive. In particular, the textual function is achieved by almost all hashtags in addition to their primary function, whether they are classified as experiential or interpersonal. At a typographic level, the pound symbol acts as a kind of linguistic marker, indicating the beginning of a tag and its special status as metadiscourse. By using the ‘#’ symbol as a discourse marker indicating text division, a textual function is achieved. However, the same hashtag usually fulfils an experiential or interpersonal function simultaneously. That is why it is said that these functions can be enacted simultaneously.

Hence, the hashtags in the sample were classified either as experiential or interpersonal. Hashtags were classified as experiential if they merely indicated the topic of the posts, and as interpersonal if they were found to contribute an additional meaning to the post. To clarify this distinction, the same word, the name of a football club, for instance, can occur in an experiential hashtag that specifies the topic of the post, or in an interpersonal hashtag that makes an evaluative comment as Table 4 shows.

Table 4. Experiential vs. interpersonal hashtags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example experiential hashtag</th>
<th>Example interpersonal hashtag with the same lexical item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#الأهلي</td>
<td>#الأهلي فوق الجميع #معاك يا أهلي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#الزمالك</td>
<td>#بحبك يا زمالك #زمالك يا عمري</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#مصر</td>
<td>#اسير_مصر</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experiential Function

This is the most straightforward use of hashtags to integrate a post into a conversation on a given topic (Wikström, 2014). Several common topic classifications were found in the sample, including general topics, events, places, etc. (see Table 5). According to Zappavigna (2015), the ‘aboutness’ of hashtags is very sensitive to time. Therefore, it goes without saying that the topics appearing in the experiential hashtags revolved not only around topics related to celebrities’ accounts from which the data was collected, but more specifically around current events that were relevant or trending at the time of data collection.
Table 5. Common Classifications for experiential hashtags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Topics</td>
<td>#فيلم – #مسلسل – #موضحة – #ممثلة – #برامج – #رعب – #ادعية – #إعلانات</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#مشاهير – #أهداف</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>#مهرجان الفضائيات العربية – #ذكرى وفاة ممدوح عبد العليم – #مهرجان دبي للتسوق</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasions</td>
<td>#عيد ميلاد مستر بين – #أكتوبر – #رمضان 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places</td>
<td>#المسرح القومي – #الساحل الشمالي – #نايل سيتي – #مصر – #العراق – #النيل – #البكر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>#ليلي _ علوي – #أحمد عز – #سعد سمير – #وزيرة _ الصحة – #مصطفى _ حسني</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#نجيب _ محفوظ – #جمال _ البدري</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows/Channels</td>
<td>#قصيتي _ نصبيك – #صاحبة _ السعادة – #(SS) _ كوكتل – #ولاد _ الغلابة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#محور – #تيم _ سبورت – #النهار – #نجوم _ أف _ م</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zappavigna (2015) points out the semantic domain of experiential hashtags may range along a spectrum from broad to specific. Topic tags may be relevant to the public audience in general or only to individual participants and their particular followers (Shapp, 2014). Therefore, the experiential hashtags in the sample ranged from indicating that the topic of the post is about ‘media’ in general, ‘TV’, ‘programs/shows’, to designating a topic as specific as the name of a particular show (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Semantic specificity of experiential hashtags

In terms of experiential meaning, hashtags can take different experiential roles in clauses specified by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), including participant (noun phrases), process (verb phrases) and circumstances (prepositional and adverbial phrases). Table 6 provides examples from the sample for each role. It was noticed, however, that the participant role was the most frequent.
Table 6. Experiential roles of hashtags in clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiential Role</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant (noun phrase)</td>
<td>ـ#لinden_الشاي - #أقوال_العالمي - #الديب_العالمي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process (verb phrase)</td>
<td>ـ#تفاعل - #باصي_لعفيفي - #اكسبلور_ولايك _حلو</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances (prepositional/adverbial phrase)</td>
<td>ـ#قريبا - #في_الجنة_يا_أدهم - #بمنتهي_البساطة_جدا</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpersonal Function**

The second main function of hashtags is the interpersonal function. Interpersonal hashtags can often serve the phatic function by including commands inviting the audience to like, share or follow posts (Zappavigna, 2015). Several of these hashtags were found in the sample which abounded with transliterated social media terms. Some of these include interesting ways to persuade followers such as example 8:

1. #اكسبلور - #فولو - #لايك
2. #فولومي
3. #جاي_من_اكسبلور_فولو
4. #فولو_يا_حلو
5. لايك_جعلك_الجنة
6. #شوف_الستوري_يضده
7. لايك_تعلقناكم_تسعدنا_كلئرو_منها
8. #كويتناكم_تسعدن_لايك_على_الصور_التي_قبل_لاسعدوني_الله_يسعدكم

Some of these hashtags are so specific or so long that they are unlikely to be replicated by other participants (e.g., examples 7 and 8). These idiosyncratic hashtags are usually used for humorous effect. Users create these tags that are unlikely to be used as search terms and which instead seem to function to intensify the command made in the post (Zappavigna, 2015).

Most of the categories of interpersonal hashtags reported by Zappavigna (2015) were found in the sample, with the exception of questions and offers. It is noted that two further categories were quite abundant in the sample which are prayers and greetings, suggesting that Egyptian and Arab users of Instagram tend to employ hashtags frequently to achieve these functions, unlike English-speaking users (Table 7).

Table 7. Functions of interpersonal hashtags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>ـالصحاب_رزق #الكرة_للجماهير</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commands</td>
<td>#افتحنا_التنش #شوفلي_شقة_جميل_يا_سعد</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Linguistic Characteristics and Functions of Hashtags

Mahfouz

In fact, hashtags including religious references were also quite frequent in the sample, a category not previously mentioned in the literature. The cultural element was also apparent in hashtags that were composed of famous sayings or proverbs as displayed in Table 8. Another category of interpersonal hashtags that was obvious in the data is that of campaigns or slogans. These mainly occurred in the first data set and were mostly used to urge for the support of a certain player or advocate a given stance, e.g., reopening a team’s football field. The only slogan hashtag appearing in the second data sets was "#تحيا_مصر " “long live Egypt”.

Table 8. Culture-specific hashtags

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious hashtags</td>
<td>شاء الله – #الحمد لله – #الشكر لله</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#الله _ برك _ #اللهم _ بركه _ #لا #رب _ #اللهم _ بركه</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#جمعة _ مباشرة _ #,#焐كننا _ #رامية _ الله _ جمعة _ مباشرة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayings / Proverbs</td>
<td>ع流水 _ والمرة _ #الصحاب _ رزق _ #الشأن _ سبص _ #أهلا _ دس _ #أهلا _ ضال _ راجل _ #من _ جاور _ السعد _ يسعد</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigns / Slogans</td>
<td>#افتحونا _ اللتين _ #دعم _ مؤمن _ زكريا _ #الشيخ _ مش _ للإعارة _ ولا _ للبيع _ #الشيخ _ لازم _ يكون _ أساسي _ #معاك _ يا _ مؤمن _ #تركة _ خط _ أحرم _ #عبدالله _ ما _ يغش _ دكة _ #تحيا _ مصر</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conclude this section, Figure 11 shows a comparison between the number of hashtags and their functions in the two data sets. The first data set (sportsmen’s posts) was found to include more hashtags (332) compared to the second data set (posts by other celebrities) (293), with an average number of hashtags per post 4.9 and 3.9 respectively. Moreover, the first dataset also displayed a much larger percentage of interpersonal hashtags (approximately 28%) compared to the second dataset (only 6%).
The Linguistic Characteristics and Functions of Hashtags

Findings and Discussion

The above analysis has shed light on the characteristics of hashtags as newly emerging linguistic items, both at the morpho-syntactic and pragmatic levels. The Arabic hashtags examined display both differences and similarities from English hashtags exposited in the literature.

First, the morpho-syntactic analysis has revealed that in line with previous findings, most hashtags were composed of three words maximum, apart from a few exceptions where they reached up till 11 words in some rare cases. However, several posts included long strings of numerous hashtags in a row, which is against conventional practices for the maximum number of hashtags per post, especially that some were not topically related.

Both letters and numerical characters appeared in hashtags, whereas no abbreviations were found in Arabic hashtags, as opposed to English ones. Furthermore, whereas the underscore symbol is usually optional for the separation of words in English hashtags, almost all Arabic words in hashtags were separated by an underscore due to the cursive nature of Arabic script. A few posts were entirely composed of hashtags without further content. Most of the hashtags in the sample occurred as suffixes following the posts, fewer as infixes integrated within the posts, whereas prefixes were quite rare.

The hashtags examined were found to display all three metafunctions discussed by Zappavigna (2015). Whereas the textual function is simultaneously enacted by almost all hashtags, most of the hashtags in the sample displayed an experiential function. These experiential hashtags displayed much variation in their semantic specificity ranging from broad to specific at both ends of the spectrum. They also played different roles in clauses, including participant, process and circumstances, but with the majority occurring as participants.

By including the names of programs, songs, movies, events, etc. they are engaged in, celebrities use experiential hashtags as a sort of marketing strategy, which confirms the findings of Page (2012). It may thus be posited that celebrities make use of hashtags to persuade their audience to watch a show or purchase a product in order to promote their status in the offline world.
The percentage of experiential hashtags in the first data set was 72%, compared to an overwhelming majority of 94% in the second sample. Whereas the former figure is comparable to Tamara’s (2011) and Shapp’s (2014) findings that topic tags usually account for 71% and 75% of hashtags respectively, the results for the second data set reveal that it lags behind where the interpersonal function is concerned.

Interpersonal hashtags, on the other hand, were found to serve two main sub-functions, namely statements and commands. Although no questions or offers were found in the sample, this does not eliminate the possibility of these two functions occurring in other Arabic hashtags. Interestingly, however, two new functions were quite frequent in the sample that were not previously discussed in the literature, namely prayers and greetings. The cultural element was also very evident in religious hashtags in general, as well as in famous sayings and proverbs. It may thus be suggested that, Egyptian and Arab Instagram users tend to use hashtags for religious purposes as well as for socializing, which may not be displayed by English-speaking users. Sportsmen also made use of several hashtags to advocate campaigns and promote slogans, whereas this was quite a rare practice in celebrities’ posts.

The distribution of hashtags in the two datasets suggests that sportsmen not only tend to use more hashtags in their posts, but that they also use more interpersonal hashtags compared to other celebrities, including actors, singers and presenters. With the textual function enacted simultaneously by all hashtags through discourse marking, it should, however, be noted that it is not always a straightforward task to distinguish experiential hashtags from interpersonal ones. Sometimes functions overlap, and there may be no clear-cut distinction in some cases.

7. Conclusion

Though initially devised to classify messages and facilitate their searchability, hashtags have developed a range of linguistic functions, offering new ways of meaning-making. Due to their wide proliferation on different social media networks, the present study has attempted to investigate the morpho-syntactic characteristics as well as the pragmatic functions of Arabic hashtags using a sample of Instagram posts.

The findings highlight the fact that hashtags can serve a variety of experiential and interpersonal functions. Mostly serving the experiential function and occurring as suffixes, Arabic hashtags may not yet display the full range of functions achieved by English hashtags. This may be suggested by the absence of abbreviations, offers and questions, as well as the lack of interpersonal hashtags in some contexts. This may be either owing to the recency of their emergence or to intrinsic characteristics of the Arabic language. It may also be relevant to mention in this respect that whereas hashtags have infiltrated into everyday spoken English language, it is not yet a common practice to use spoken hashtags in Arabic.

It is thus suggested that future studies delve deeper into the unexplored aspects of these newly emerging linguistic items. More research would be needed to determine why someone would choose to add a comment using a hashtag rather than spell it out as a normal sentence, perhaps using interviews to explore user motivations. Further research is also recommended on
hashtags on other social media platforms, using larger samples in order to give a more comprehensive image of this phenomenon. It would also be useful to investigate hashtags on specific topics with the aim of revealing user attitudes and conducting more extensive examination of hashtags as technologically discursive tools.

About the Author:
Dr. Iman Mahfouz earned her PhD degree in linguistics from the Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University. She currently holds the position of associate professor at the College of Language and Communication (CLC) at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (AASTMT) in Alexandria. She has published a number of research papers and participated in conferences in the fields of Computer-mediated discourse (CMD) and Computer-assisted text analysis (CATA). ORCid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9080-2493

References


Writing for Journal Publications: A Case Study of Eight Computer Scientists in Algeria

Anissa Cheriguene
Department of Letters and English Language, University of Ouargla
Ouargla, Algeria
Department of English, ENS of Laghouat, Laghouat, Algeria

Kebbache Tayeb
Department of English, ENS of Laghouat, Laghouat, Algeria

Chaker Abdelaziz Kerrache
Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Ghardaia, Ghardaia, Algeria

Abstract
Journal publications written in English are a sine qua non condition for national and international recognition. Recent literature in applied linguistics and other fields has denounced the existence of some conventions and “rules” that govern a given research writing. That is, using a concise, clear and error-free language is demanded in order to increase accessibility and ease of understanding. With the aid of textual descriptive analysis, this paper attempts to review the most common linguistic reasons behind papers’ rejection. Eight papers of Ph.D. computer science students were collected and analyzed qualitatively in order to diagnose the main problems and challenges Ph.D. students face while writing for scholarly publication. Other than other linguistic lacunes, it is found out that the authors had problems mainly with using the right tone, choosing the correct words and the adequate tense use. Indeed, the results of this study are supposed to be of some use to writers who want to know what writing conventions, if there are any, are adequate for paper publication. Finally, some recommendations related to students’ problems in writing for scholarly publication are made.

Keywords: Scientific writing, linguistic conventions, journal publication, revisions

Introduction

Publication is a significant achievement in a scientist’s life. More than a personal achievement or a social gain, it is public knowledge recognition in the world of academia. Academic publications are usually perceived as given access to research world; currently, the dictum “publish or perish” has found its way as a top concern of a researcher’s priorities’ list. As a consequence, a computer scientist’s ultimate goal is not only to code and decode from scratch but to share with others what he has found. The more recognizable the journal is, the better. This implies that a computer scientist has to reach the maximum audience possible. This latter suggests that the language variable in a scholar communication is an indispensable tool for most researchers. Importantly, English has established itself as the publishing language of the scientific world and its mastery becomes a necessity for all knowledge-seekers. That is, inability to communicate in this international web preoccupied by English leads surely to paper rejection and exclusion. Yet, it is only when researchers feel the importance of getting a paper published that the need of mastering the language becomes a matter of survival.

As the dominance of English in international research has been becoming a significant issue in publication, this has made writing academic articles in English become increasingly indispensable. However, many Ph.D. students tend to focus on content and give less attention to language usage and proofreading.

Yet, because the primary goal of scientific research is to advance academic exchange among researchers, there comes a need to explore and understand how scientific communities and researchers are dealing with large issues in relation to international communication. The purpose of this study is to examine rejected papers after their submission in an attempt to identify the most spotted linguistic deficiencies by reviewers. We sought to answer the following questions:

1) What are the most common linguistic features that were identified by editors?

2) To what extent papers are rejected due to poor language use?

Literature Review

By now, English has established itself as a common language for scientific communication. The global spread of English has been reported for “quite a long-time probably since the British Empire was its greatest expansion” (Kaplan, 2001. P.9). The hegemony of English over the world of scientific research has become an undeniable fact, a truism.

Studies by Ammon (2011) on language use and international communication have shown that most of the world's research is documented in English. Thus, research presented and registered in English represents the lion’s share in all indexed papers. In this line of thought, it is evident that most of, if not all, the largest publishers of scientific journals (Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, Blackwell) use English as their in-housing publishing language; that most of recognizable journals in computer science (IEEE, Springer) are produced in English, and that most of editors or reviewers are natives or native like-speakers of the language. Illustrating these issues, Hamel (2007) reported hat in 2003, a journal named AILA reviewers declared to be an “English only” journal. In the same vein, Truchot (2001) stated that the most important databases are found in the USA, they are the most used and most influential. Truchot, (2001) also adds that 80% of the
international journals are run by “handful and powerful” Anglophones publishing houses which accept only works in English in their publications.

The fact that English has knocked out all other languages has created some controversy due to the fear of English becoming a monopoly (Hamel, 2007). It is likely that this “Linguistic Centrism” goes hand in hand with scientific knowledge as it declines other languages and excludes Non-Native Speaker (NNS) from scientific dissemination. Researchers from both sides may be deprived from each other’s sciences. On the other hand, scientific research published in any other language is likely to remain unread. On the other hand, non-English speakers might be marginalized because of “language barriers” and editorial prejudices.

This claim can be supported by many previous researches which were conducted in multiple non-native speaking countries from which we mention Algeria (Slougui, 2009), Vanzuela (Salager-Mayer, 2008); Korea (Cho, 2009), Turkey (Hasanuddin & Akhadiah 2019), Australia (Merga, Mason & Morris 2019), Spain (Plo Fergurson, 2001; Pastor & Mestre 2013). As Cho (2009) claimed, sentence structure and ideas expression were deemed as the most complex aspect in research writing for Korean Ph.D. students. In a similar attempt to shed light on how language hinders scientific communication, Slougui (2009) examined the case of Algerian scientists and concluded that rhetorical conventions that govern a scientific text are basically socially grounded.

Considerable empirical evidence has depicted that the use of second language in scientific writing places an extra burden on non-native researchers and constitutes an uneven scale that can be considered as “language injustice” (Hanauer et al., 2018; Yen & Hung, 2018). Yen and Hung (2018) explain that a part of this injustice is the inherent structural privilege that native speakers of English have in publishing. They show that “the low rate of presentation of non-Anglophone scholars in academic journals casually results from the linguistic disadvantages faced by these scholars” (p.17). Hanauer et al. 2018) maintained that the burden of producing a scientific paper for Mexican and Taiwanese researchers constitute a “linguistic injustice” and a barrier to science that should be reviewed by relevant constituents.

In an attempt to establish a unified, well established, and a structured format for publishing papers known as “IMRAD”: i.e., Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion, Cuschieri & Savona-Ventura (2018) suggest in their work some publishing style guidelines to assure a successful publication. These guidelines are supposedly the criteria that reviewers usually base their decision on; they can be summarized as follows:

1. The relevance, importance, timeless and prevalence of the problem under study.
2. The writing style quality (clear, easy to follow, logical and straightforward).
3. The appropriate, comprehensive and rigorous study design.
4. The thoughtfulness of the literature review as well as whether the literature review was up-to-date and focused.
5. The presence of sufficient sample size to avoid biases.

Until recently, while a lot attention has been given to enhance students’ ability in writing academic papers for international publications, there has been only a few on the errors to avoid and problems
the non native authors are facing. Cushieri et al. (2018) mentioned that the reasons’ behind papers’ rejection can be due to incomplete statistics, over interpretation of results, inappropriate description of results, inappropriate description of population, or poorly written paper. Hasanuddin and Akhadiah (2019) proposed the inclusion of blended learning in order to reinforce collaborative learning as it can improve the quality of scientific writing because in collaborative learning “students are very active, motivated and always intrigued by their hearts and minds to solve problems faced in the same group and they can compete competitively, and motivate other students to achieve the maximum learning outcomes” (Hasanuddin and Akhadiah, 2019, p.34).

In a different context, yet with the same concern, Merga, Mason & Morris (2019) performed a study in Australia in which they collected views from 246 Australian doctoral graduates who successfully finished their Thesis By Publication (TBP). As there is a demand to better understand the skills and attributes necessary to get a TBL, Merga, et al. (2019) asserted that while skills can be contended as acquired competencies such as reading; attributes are relative characteristics such as resilience. These key competencies as declared by the authors are needed to be adopted in the doctoral journey of every Ph.D. student as they will help in to develop their skills and attributes to successfully publish during their candidature.

Considering the existent literature, the study is of significant importance as it could fill an unoccupied research niche on topic of non native authors’ language problem in writing papers for international publication, and may serve as an initiating study for further research and discussions. More specifically, the work aims at answering the question of what language problems Ph.D. authors are facing when writing English academic papers oriented to international publications.

Methodology

The study counted mainly on document reviewing and analyzing. Major references, journals’ comments for authors, as well as online publications, were consulted by the author to come up with consolidated suggestions and recommendations for future research writers and authors for possible international publications. Eight papers that were rejected because of poor language use and other content reasons by Phd computer science students contributed to our data. The study is based mainly on a textual analysis in which rejected papers were compared to the corrected ones using the editors’ comments, students’ revision, and the final version of the article. The approach involved the provision of highlights that authors need to consider in carrying out the production of a journal-length article. Moreover, the descriptive method employed sought to underline the necessary guideposts as well as rudiments that would be of some use to potential authors of articles and also make it accessible to get the articles approved for publication.

In his article, Fahy (2008) lists some rules for a writing a scientific paper. These rules enable writers to “confidently apply” the skills of scientific writing (Fahy, 2008). They are restricted mainly to tense usage, lexical choice, articles, propositions, phrasal verbs and the tone of the author. It is based on these major linguistic features that we based our text analysis on. Skimming through our corpus, we found that the writer’s tone, tense use and lexical choice were the most frequently revised by editors.
Data Analysis

Tone Revision in a Scientific-technical Paper

Tone is generally defined as a literary technique that encompasses an attitude towards a subject or an audience. As far as scientific research is concerned, the scientific method requires that research can be carried as objectively as possible, including the observation phase, measurement and analysis. It should not contain promotional language as “good” or “bad” and should rather be used with standardized units of measure and equipment which are proved or disproved by mathematical and statistical configurations. Likewise, the results should be revealed in an objective manner. In this respect, Ober (2008) comments that “Tone in writing refers to the writer’s attitude towards the reader and the subject of the message. The overall tone of a written message affects the reader just as one’s tone of voice affects the listener in everyday exchanges” (p. 104).

The most troublesome part in using promotional language is in authors’ claiming the overall significance of a given research or a given results. They can claim the superiority of software or a concept, or over praise a discovery where the evidence does not entirely support it. In the corpus under study, most of revisions were concerned with the omission of hyperbolic language as shown in the table below:

Table 1. Suggested tone revisions that appeared in our corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Text</th>
<th>Revised Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relying on a third trusted authority enhances clearly the overall security</td>
<td>Relying on a third trusted authority enhances the overall security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And this is probably due to the discontinuities in the geometry</td>
<td>And this is due to the discontinuities in the geometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obviously, the number of equivalence classes can be at least one class</td>
<td>The number of equivalence classes can be at least one class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They typically compare exchanges database</td>
<td>They compare generally exchanges database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the existing works have chosen different architectures</td>
<td>The existing works have chosen different architectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The theoretical model of a coil, widely admitted is given in figure 3</td>
<td>The theoretical model of a coil is given in figure 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In addition, communication with the recent widespread UAV’s can also be possible</td>
<td>In addition, communication with UAV’s can also be possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly, they can give a large number of EM configurations.</td>
<td>They can give a large number of EM configurations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All recent research pointed that…..</td>
<td>Recent research pointed that…..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This sensor will be surely able to control the EM</td>
<td>This sensor will probably be able to control the EM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obviously, this will ensure data reliability</td>
<td>This will ensure data reliability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results will clearly lead to changes in the detection performance. The results might lead to changes in the detection performance.

The use of hyperbolic language is identified as a major problem by many editors. In the revision process, this tone was replaced by what is called in the world of linguistics as “hedging”. Hedges are defined as “words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy”. (Lakoff 1972, P.195 as cited in Clemen 1997, p.236). Hyland (1998) claimesthat, in academic writing, hedges “imply that a statement is based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge and allows readers the freedom to dispute it” (p.4). In this respect, writers are trying to produce a paper with conviction along with considering the role of the reader in the confirming knowledge. That is to say, hedges enable writers to adequately operate their claims allowing readers to participate at the same time with their in-text interpretation.

As far NNS are concerned, Hyland (1996) states that writers need to have control over this trait of academic discourse so that they will be able to “use language with subtly, to mean precisely and with discrimination” (Hyland, 1998 p.224). Along with the acquisition of a neat understanding of the linguistic knowledge of hedging devices, the importance of considering social and cultural context is highlighted (Hyland, 1996). Hence, ‘Seconal language (L2) learners’ inability to use hedges in their academic writing might stem from socio-cultural reasons and lack of awareness on disciplinary culture and appeals.

Lexical Choice in Scientific Writing

Recent literature has shown that NNS academic writing differs from the writing of a NS in both the product and process of composition (Fuentes, 2009). Jafarpur (1996) made an observation of L2 writing in which he compared it to a native composition with evaluating the NNS lexical, grammatical knowledge compared to its counterparts. Of course, NS writers did better. However, Jafarpur (1996) clarified that NNS writing demonstrated a better command of content than linguistic knowledge. This claim, supported by other authors (Stotch & Tapper, 1997) seems to justify the NNS prioritization of content and the text form, while the NS focus seemed to be first on form then content. In this line of thought, Thonus (2004) stated that, in the reviewing phase, one should make NNS writers aware of the necessity of structure revision. In addition, some linguistic features that appeared in L2 writing seem to have stemmed from one’s first language (L1).

The lexis of scientific research has been classified by Godman and Payne (1981) to two categories: technical terms and non-technical. Technical ones are “those for which there is a congruity of concept between scientists, whatever the language used”. Non-technical ones, however, “consist of all other terms occurring in the language of science (ibid). That is to say, non-technical terms involve general language terms such as propositions, phrasal verbs, and article. In this study, we will focus mainly on the second type.

Lexical revision thus, is any modification, substitution or omission that occurred to any non-technical term. After comparing our samples before and after reviewing, we will consider the
shades of meaning that the original words along with the modified version. Hereby, we suggest a classification that allows us to categorize these lexical errors into the following categories:

![Figure1. Suggested classification of lexical errors](image)

Traditionally, lexical errors have been divided into two categories, *interlingual*, which are related to L1 transfer; and *intralingual* lexical errors which are produced due to lacunas in the learning process. What has been added recently, however, are *the conceptual* lexical errors that stand for the errors caused by the failure of the writer to match an idea with its correct format (Pastor & Mestre, 013). Based on this classification, we performed an error analysis that could help, not only in the understanding of lexical errors, but as a source of knowledge that can be used to improve production in a second language.

**Interlingual Lexical Errors**

- *Calques*
  - The principle/the main idea is cross checking the plausibility of these two types of messages.
  - The system has also its inconveniences/disadvantages.
  - New conception/concept.
  - TFDD is proposed/suggested.
  - The result is obvious/clear because no connected components exist.

**Adoption of words/expressions from L1 to L2**

- The triangular forms allow *a great/high* flexibility on the desired shape.
- Where it show a strong inductive behavior with a phase *upper/superior* to 60°.
- *Since that/Since then*, several algorithms have been created.
- *After that/after*, Watson and Dacieuk designed a new minimized model.
- *Approach based cryptology/cryptology based approach*
At any time/ whenever an obstacle appears between two neighboring vehicles…..

After the verification/ after meeting the verification

In index 1/ at index 1

Update with / to the update the next level

To allow nodes to fast react/ reacting as quickly as possible against both inside and outside attackers.

Intralingual Lexical Errors

Erroneous Collocation

By analyzing historical past interaction.

In spite of preserving/ despite being able to preserve privacy

As future prospects/ in the future we plan to add other metrics

During the whole experiments’ time

Figure 5 presents our system functionality

Omission

cryptography/ cryptography
dely/ delay

Conceptual Lexical Errors

This document/ this paper

The size of the sensors elements might be selected to gain better/ optimize precision in the detection.

Mathematical model retained/ chosen.

The electronic field calculated at the front surface of the load displayed/ illustrated.

The EM field computation results reveal that this sensor is able to adapt/ control the EM field.

A sample of CERP shows its susceptibility/ capability to detect the plies orientations.

Complexity of this proposition/ algorithm.

Simulation results gleaned/ obtained.

It can defend against inside attackers that are arduous / not easily thwarted.

Our scheme utilizes/ uses.

We give a detailed account/ describe our model.

It is rigorous/ hard to see how groups can be formed based on heterogeneous entities.

To ensure a good/ adequate efficient message.

State / official vehicle.

Insuring data quality/ reliability.

Simulation results have depicted/ showed.

As it might be observed, conceptual lexical errors are the prevailing category. With every single correction, it can be seen that words and list of words were always replaced by more definite ones.
The texts were often shortened by native proof readers implying that the Algerian researchers seem to use more words than necessary to express themselves. Moreover, we assume that the frequent cause of lexical poor usage was due to using words with similar meaning in an interchangeable manner. This is signaled as an error because in many scientific contexts, one verb is adequate and the use of an inappropriate verb may cause distortion to the right concept. Therefore, most of the errors illustrated were produced as a result of having selected a general word that doesn’t serve the meaning desired. To a non-specialist, this does not make any difference, but in scientific writing, a word serves only the meaning for which it is intended.

**Tense Revision**

The use of present or past forms of verbs has a great impact on scientific papers. Correct tense use is derived from scientific ethics. The use of past or future is in a way or another indicator of the status quo of the work being reported.

Regarding tense use, because of these conventions, a scientific paper usually switches between present and past. An abstract or a summary refers primarily to previous work or unpublished results and uses the past tense. Most of the introductions tell about previous findings or set the background of research in the present. Both of the data and methods as well as the findings describe what the author reached using the past tense. Finally the discussion part finds a link between the authors’ results and previous literature. This section is considered to be the most difficult as it requires the writer to switch wittingly between past and present.

A thorough examination of our corpus shows a consistent pattern in the use of tenses. We noted the use of different tenses in abstracts and much of the introduction and results section were reported in the present. We also noted an unwitty use of present perfect mainly appearing in the conclusion. Whereas some papers were fully written in the past, with little or no use of the present, other papers were mostly in the present tense, using both present simple and present continuous interchangeably. The following examples taken from our papers show tense changes that occurred before and after revision:

**Table 3. Tense revision**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Text</th>
<th>Revised Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>It is more adapted to delay sensitive cases</td>
<td>It was more adapted to delay sensitive cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials and Methods</td>
<td>Our scheme used some content-based parameters</td>
<td>Our scheme use some content-based parameters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And the subjects range from high to low processes</td>
<td>And the subjects were ranged from high to low processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion and Results</td>
<td>The work labeled with entity-oriented category attempt to eliminate</td>
<td>The work labeled with entity-oriented category attempted to eliminate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our results show</td>
<td>Our results showed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As table 3 shows that, the main revisions that occurred dealt with the verb form (present and past) more than its aspect (perfect or continuous). We also notice an absence of the “ing” form. Moreover, depending on whether the author is referring to his own work or others’, the tense is chosen accordingly. In abstracts, not so many tense modifications were made.

As we have suggested, changes that were introduced to verb forms are essentially governed by the convention of scientific writing. The choice of tense use rests solely on scientific ethics and rhetoric considerations.

**Conclusion**

Writing a research paper can be a demanding, complex and a long process. Publishing a research work can be even more difficult. The “rules” of writing a scientific paper are rigid and different from any other kind of prose writing. Being ignorant of scientific ethics and attributes of scientific writing, namely precision and clarity may result in the paper’s rejection. After collecting and analyzing randomly selected rejected papers, we came to conclude that these papers were rejected because of some linguistic deficiencies (other than content reasons) as they had problems with regulating the right tone, using the correct tense and finding the exact correct word. As such, wordy language was always replaced by a simple and precise one.

Based on the findings disseminated from this research, it is suggested that more training and workshops are required at the university level to make students enhance their writing skill and raise awareness that the text format and language is as important as the content. Hereby, PhD students who are willing to publish are encouraged to read a lot and practice writing regularly like blogging or making a journal log.

On the whole, the findings from this study, we suggest, may open up areas for research on the effect of introducing writing strategies to scientific writers that might help them overcome their difficulties in writing in English.

**About the Authors:**
Anissa Cheriguene is a lecturer and a Ph.D. student currently at the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Ouargla, Ouargla, Algeria, and the Department of English, ENS of Lagos, Lagos, Algeria. Her research interests are mainly related to English as a Second Language writing for journal publications flipped classrooms, end educational technology.
Kebbache Tayeb is with the Department of English, ENS of Laghouat, Laghouat, Algeria. He received the Ph.D. degrees from the University of Sidi Bel abbes in 2018; His research interests are mainly related to English as a Second Language, and English literature.

Chaker Abdelaziz Kerrache is an Associate Professor at the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Ghardaia, Algeria. His research activity is related to Trust and Risk Management, Secure Multi-hop Communications, Vehicular Networks, Named Data Networking (NDN), and UAVs. He also serves as an Associate Editor is Elsevier Computer and Electrical Engineering and a Guest Editor, a reviewer, and TPC member for several international Journals and conferences. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9990-519X

References
Fuentes, A. (2009). A Case Study Corpus for Academic English Writing by NNS Authors. In A survey of corpus-based research [Recurso electrónico], Murcia (Spain) (pp. 7-9).


Academic Writing: Challenges and Potential Solutions

Manal AlMarwani
Department of Curricula and Instruction, School of Education,
Taibah University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract
This paper explored postgraduate TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) students’ perspectives on academic writing challenges and their practices to overcome them. The study is triggered by identified needs in literature and the empirical needs of postgraduate TESOL students in the study context. In-depth semi-structured focus group interviews were used to collect the data. The data analysis revealed that the difficulties they encounter are mainly filled into one of the following categories: language skills, academic writing skills, and source managing skills. At the same time, the study probed an intervention trial of using Google Classroom. Having explored students’ perceptions regarding the use of Google Classroom and its effect on their academic writing revealed the growing understanding of digital tools’ impact on encouraging independent learning and critical awareness that contribute to the enhancement of academic writing. However, with the advancements in technology, students seek support from online resources, but they still think that feedback from lecturers and supervisors is a crucial source of support; therefore, scaffolded feedback is recommended.

Keywords: academic writing, Google classroom, postgraduate, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages(TESOL)

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awj/call6.8
Introduction

EFL postgraduate students have to place themselves in academia with a proper level of critical thinking and academic literacy. Tardy (2010) propounded the challenges faced by EFL students to write formal academic text in English. According to Tardy (2010), students are required to select, evaluate, report, summarize, paraphrase, conclude, argue, select words and grammatical patterns, and avoid plagiarism. Nevertheless, students struggle to produce the required level of writing and to demonstrate critical thinking skills. However, there is a connection between what students read and what they produce in writing. Mudawy and Mousa (2017), also, raised similar challenges and argued that the success of postgraduate students depends on the ability to critically handle the words, ideas, and opinions of others to develop their own academic voice.

Enhancing students' academic writing skills is a concern for higher education institutions, even in English-speaking countries. Boyle, Ramsay, and Struan (2019) proposed a pedagogical justification of providing a compulsory writing skills program hosted on a virtual learning environment for both graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Glasgow in the UK. Such commitment to enhancing academic writing skills is much more in demand for EFL students. Higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia are liable to have different channels to enhance English writing skills like dedicated writing courses, English for academic purposes. In some institutions, there are academic writing centers such as the center for writing in English at King Saud University. Notwithstanding, these crucial skills remain an obstacle and a challenge for EFL postgraduate students.

Academic writing skills are often critical key indicators of successful experience in postgraduate TESOL programs. However, in a disciplinary course designed for postgraduate TESOL students, students are required to write with high-level construction skills by integrating disparate ideas, synthesizing perspectives, as well as a significant concern for accuracy, voice, and audience (Lavelle & Bushrow, 2007). The time limit of face-to-face classrooms is among the challenges a university professor is facing to develop discipline knowledge and address students’ needs to improve their academic writing. Schwenger (2016) claimed that “online learning can open up new possibilities for enhancing students’ learning” (p. 71). Therefore, considering digital tools, such as Google Classroom, to create a blended learning environment in a postgraduate course could allow for more personalization and learner autonomy, which meet students’ needs and enhance discipline knowledge at the same time. Bernard et al. (2009) asserted that the way blended learning is designed affects how student learning can be supported in a course. However, well-designed blended learning opportunities are a potential solution to develop academic writing skills.

Although some recent studies have investigated the challenges of academic writing, whether from the lecturers' perspective (Singh, 2019) or undergraduate students’ and lecturers’ perspectives (Mudawy & Mousa, 2017), but every research context is unique. Hence, the current study is an attempt to figure out postgraduate TESOL students’ perspectives on academic writing challenges and their practices to overcome them. Moreover, to explore postgraduate TESOL students’ perceptions regarding the use of Google Classroom and its effect on their academic writing. It aims to inform TESOL postgraduate program leaders in the context of the study (Taibah University) about these challenges and the possible solutions; and encourage the use of information and communication technologies to enhance academic writing.
Theoretical Framework

To understand student writing and literacy in academic contexts, Lea and Street (1998) unfold three models of student writing: study skills, socialization, and academic literacies. The study skills model assumes competence in academic writing mainly with the surface features of the language, i.e., grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling. The second model is an academic socialization model which assumes that mastering the ground rules of a specific academic discourse can ensure successful academic writers. The third model is academic literacies; and like the first two models, it is mainly concerned with meaning-making and identity; and views student writing at the level of epistemology rather than skill (Lea & Street, 2006).

On the other hand, reading and writing are reciprocal skills. According to Zamel (1992), "reading and writing work in tandem to promote and enhance one another" (p. 481). It is obvious that the more one reads, the more it will help in becoming a better writer. However, Stosky (1983) stresses the relationship between reading and writing and states that “better writers tend to read more than poorer writers, and that better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers” (p.16).

Using the academic literacies model, which focuses on student perspective of academic literacies rather than educators, and focusing on reading to develop writing skills, this study attempts to understand how students could develop a sense of academic voice and become effective academic writers.

Research Methodology

Basic qualitative study design was adopted that involved in-depth semi-structured focus group interviews. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), focus group interviews can stimulate participants to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not express if interviewed individually.

The study sample was all postgraduate TESOL students enrolled in the Researching Second Language Classroom course during the academic year 2018/2019 at Taibah University. All students are Saudi, receiving their undergraduate and graduate instruction in both English and Arabic. However, the English language was the most frequent medium of instruction and discussion with lecturers. Also, the English language is the primary language for most of the reading materials and assignments during their postgraduate program.

Students participated voluntarily in the study; their consent was obtained by signing an informed consent form.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was followed to answer the following research questions: What are the perspectives of postgraduate TESOL students on academic writing challenges? What are the practices of postgraduate TESOL students to overcome these challenges? What are the perceptions of postgraduate TESOL students regarding the use of Google Classroom and its effect on their academic writing? According to Creswell (2007):
data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organising the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (p. 148).

For coding, five themes emerged from the analysis of the transcribed data: students' experience of academic writing, difficulties students encounter in academic writing, support for academic writing, Google Classroom experience, and interdisciplinary issues.

**Findings and Discussion**

**Students’ Experience of Academic Writing**

The first section of the focus group interview was concerned with exploring students’ perceptions and experience of academic writing. In response to the first two questions about their experience with academic writing, students reported a low level of satisfaction. They felt constrained by the lack of academic vocabulary as it is clearly stated in the following excerpts:

S2: “I don’t feel satisfied about my writing process, I write a lot of unconnected ideas”
S4: “My writing process is organized, but still I am not satisfied with the level of academic writing”
S3: “I do feel satisfied to some extent, but I need more efforts to reach the desired level of writing”
S1: “My writing process is good in general, but I need to practice and read a lot to gain vocabulary because I find it difficult to express my ideas”
S5: “My writing process is organized, but I need to read more to improve my knowledge regarding academic vocabulary and structure”.

At this level, postgraduate TESOL, students are required to write assignments for assessment purposes in different courses, some in Arabic, but most of them in English. Academic writing often requires students to write from an expert position, even when they do not consider themselves experts on their topics (Tardy, 2010). However, students are expected to show the ability to produce a good piece of academic writing, but they are facing difficulties in doing so.

**Difficulties Students Encounter in Academic Writing**

Students reported that academic writing is a challenging task to do. They highlighted some difficulties that they encounter while writing their assignments and research proposals, as stated in the following excerpts:

S1: “I find it difficult to express my ideas. I have been told that I need to paraphrase, summarise, and integrate information from different sources, but I don’t know how. It is difficult to analyse ideas and prepare them to be communicated in an academic written text”
S2: “I think and prepare my ideas in Arabic and then translate my thoughts into English which resulted in very poor written English”
S3: “I jot down my ideas; they are good ones, but the structure and grammar are not good at all”
S4: “I find it difficult to generate ideas using a variety of academic vocabulary”
S5: “it is difficult to transfer my ideas into meaningful written text because of spelling, grammar, and lack of vocabulary. Also, I find it difficult to choose appropriate references and research articles”
Difficulties encountered by students fill into one of the following categories: language skills, academic writing skills, and sources managing skills. All these reported difficulties indicate the absence of systematic training and support for postgraduate students which resulted in making such an activity a highly challenging task. Furthermore, with their Arabic linguistic ability, which is more advanced than English, students are most likely affected by their sociocultural literacy practices (Kumar & Aitchison, 2018), which accounted for making academic writing in English more problematic.

Support for Academic Writing

After reporting their academic writing difficulties, students were asked in the focus group interview to report any kind of support they had to overcome difficulties and improve their academic writing. They mainly pointed out technology as a source of support as they stated in the following excerpts:

S2: “I use different online resources for spelling, grammar, translation”
S3: “I look for online forums discussing academic writing, it is really helpful”
S5: “I usually use proofreading websites to improve my academic writing”
S4: “I google my topic looking for published articles; and I learn to use English in the same way as those researchers do by following their writing style”.

With the advent of technology, students are finding support much more accessible via online resources. However, they still feel much more confident when they get feedback from their instructors and supervisors as one of them stated:

S1: "I mainly depend on feedback I got on my assignments to improve my academic writing."

Another student asserted the importance of feedback as the main source for support as it is stated:
S5: “Our instructors are busy most of the time; therefore, I look for native speakers to proofread my assignments and improve my writing style”.

From students’ point of view, feedback from supervisors is a key support contribute to their success at this stage. Through feedback they are informed if they met the accepted level of academic writing to fulfil their degree requirements.

Google Classroom Experience

Participants in this study were continuously exposed to online technology, i.e., Google Classroom, throughout an academic semester in which they were taught an educational research course. The course instructor was posting a question every week on a different topic of educational research methodology. At the same time, she was attaching the assigned reading and YouTube videos about the same topics every week. However, students were asked during the focus group interview about their experience with Google Classroom. All students reported that they read and watched all the attached learning materials. To check how effective the experience was, students were asked if they could guess why the instructor assigned the learning material and posted a question to answer and discuss online weekly. The following excerpts show their awareness:

S1: “at the beginning, I thought it is just to help us to answer the posted question, but by the end of the semester I realized that reading and writing on Google Classroom help me to improve my academic writing”
Academic Writing: Challenges and Potential Solutions

AlMarwani

S2: “I think it was to cover the topics that we discuss in the class, but we need to read more about it; also, to provide us with important and primary resources”
S3: “To finalize our knowledge about different educational research topics; and enhance our writing abilities”
S4: “To improve our knowledge related to educational research; and improve our writing skills”
S5: “I think it is just to help us to find the answer of the posted questions”.

They were involved in a collaborative group assignment in which they answer the posted question and comment on each other answers in which they incorporated information from references to argue their points of view. These activities influenced students’ abilities and skills to interpret and judge sources and critically evaluate and reorganize information. Students ascertained how useful their experience was with Google Classroom, as stated in the following excerpts:

S1: “It was good in general, and easy to share ideas”
S2: “It was really good experience with effective communication. The variety of resources (books, articles, videos) are useful, however, sometimes I feel it was overload to do”
S3: “it was difficult to deal with it at the beginning, but I finally master it and I want to keep it up”
S4: “It was beneficial and helpful to improve academic writing. Also, it is an interesting way of communication and getting feedback”
S5: “Google Classroom experience motivated me to read and participate, but it was difficult to manage my time to deal with questions and reading materials”.

The above analysis of students’ perception of Google Classroom value revealed the growing understanding, among postgraduate students, of the impact of digital tools on encouraging independent learning and critical awareness as needed during their postgraduate studies.

Interdisciplinary Issues

In reporting their thoughts on how they would complete their writing assignments and their theses successfully, postgraduate TESOL students referred to the feedback again as a crucial scaffolding technique to help them to complete their academic writing successfully. Students stated the following:
S1: “I hope to have instructors and professors who are willing to give feedback”
S2: “I think we need native speaker instructors to proofread our assignments and theses and provide us with feedback”
S3: “we need to communicate more with our instructors to get oral and written feedback”
S4: “we need to submit online and get online feedback”
S5: “not only feedback, we need instant feedback”

Postgraduate TESOL students demonstrated an awareness of their needs and suggested the following:
S1: “We need an academic writing club in which we could meet as postgraduate students to discuss and solve our academic writing issues with help from experts”
S2: “The department and school should provide us with opportunities to network in the academic field”
S3: “We need specialized training courses on academic writing”
S4: “I think highly professional academic writing courses could help us”
S5: “I need to know where to go and who to talk to when I struggle to finish my assignments. We don’t need only courses, but keen instructors and tutors for academic writing”

Students are looking for support as their academic literacy demands grow. It is unrealistic to leave it to be embedded in disciplinary subject courses. It is obvious that the class time of a subject course, even if it introduces research methods and skills, and academic writing for research purposes wouldn't guarantee mastering the essential skills that promote educational success, i.e., a well-written thesis. Schwenger (2016) asserts that “appropriate support at every level is essential for students to acquire literacy competencies and scaffold learning” (p. 73). Therefore, dedicated courses at every level should be provided.

Conclusion

This study is useful as it provided data about postgraduate TESOL students' perspectives on academic writing challenges and their practices to overcome them. Moreover, it shed light on postgraduate TESOL students' perceptions regarding the use of Google Classroom and its effect on their academic writing. However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations. First, even though the researcher had interviewed all students enrolled in the Master of TESOL program, but the sample is only from one higher education institution. Students at other institutions might experience different issues. Second, notwithstanding that qualitative study generates in-depth data about the case under investigation, but it is hard to generalize the results to other case studies. Third, even though that the data was collected as one-off inquiry of academic writing experience which might be developed and changed by time and experience, but the researcher had chosen the end of last semester to conduct the focus group interviews after postgraduate TESOL students had enrolled in different courses and exposed into the experience of academic writing in different subject courses. Despite these limitations related to the sample, but such a study could be essential because academic writing is a concern across all subjects and disciplines.

The academic literacies model, which was adopted as a theoretical framework, focus on making meaning and understanding institutional and academic constructions of knowledge (Boyle, Ramsay, & Struan, 2019). This model was useful to investigate students' perspectives on academic writing as it offers a comprehensive understanding of students writing experience.

On the other hand, TESOL students, as novice researchers, need to be enculturated into academia by obtaining academic writing principles. The academic department at the university should take the responsibility to engage students in an environment that leads to better academic writing. They should rethink the TESOL program and involve a specific course to enrich students' experience in academic writing both in language skills as well as academic writing skills such as understanding arguments and critical thinking. Furthermore, the use of always-on and connected technology like Google Classroom with interactive and collaborative features can enhance academic writing. However, such a technology would not guarantee better academic writing for postgraduate students; therefore, lecturers must intervene and provide constructive and scaffolded feedback.
Although the study’s potential implications are not exhaustive, they have a knock-on effect on the issue of academic writing and TESOL postgraduate students’ needs and concerns. Hitherto, with all the advancements in technology and the potential solutions they provide, students still think that feedback from their lecturers and supervisors are crucial for their success in academic writing.

About the author:
Dr. Manal AlMarwani is an assistant professor specialising in Educational Research and Development, with a focus on mobile learning, e-learning and ICT. Combines expertise in English education with a commitment to on-going development, including accreditation as a Prince2 Project Management Practitioner. Keen to share expertise and contribute to international educational projects. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0844-4485

References
Flowchart: Scaffolding Narrative Writing in an English as a Second Language (ESL) Primary Classroom

Melanie Selvaraj  
Faculty of Education  
University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

Azlina Abdul Aziz  
Faculty of Education  
University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract
Learning to write can be a nightmare, be it on the natives or second language. Various approaches, methods, and techniques were tested by researchers to improve the writing skills of learners with multiple issues in mastering the craft. Nevertheless, the standards of writing achievements among second language learners are remarkably frustrating. In Malaysia, teaching writing to the primary school pupils is one of the biggest concerns as pupils expected to compose narratives as assessment in the public primary education. Concerning this, this research aimed to measure the effectiveness of the flow chart to improve pupils' narrative writing and to investigate pupils’ achievement levels in each narrative writing component. Besides, it identifies the pedagogical strategies that lead to the scaffolding of narrative writing. Action research carried out with 12 intervention sessions in two cycles. Each Cycle involved three stages: planning, action, and reflection. A total of 25 Year Four urban primary school pupils participated in this study. The researcher obtained the data via pre and posttest, analysis of pupils’ narrative writing, and classroom observations. The findings showed that there was a significant improvement in pupils’ posttest scores and narrative writing assessment components. This study is essential to improve narrative writing achievement and benefit teachers who teach narrative writing in primary and secondary schools to enhance pupils’ performances. Studies in the future should include pupils from rural area schools with low proficiency levels to compare the findings in employing flow chart in narrative writing.

Keywords: English as Second Language, flow chart, narrative, scaffolding, writing assessments

Introduction

English Language teaching and learning comprise of four primary skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to Hanafiah and Yunus, (2017, p.830) “writing is the most important skill in fulfilling the summative assessment”. Writing is complicated as it is a recursive process. According to Flower and Hayes (1980), writing requires writers to harmonize a variety of skills, including cognitive and knowledge, including goal-setting, discourse comprehension, memory retention techniques, and socio-cultural understanding. Hence, to master writing skills, one needs to master both basic and advance levels. Unlike first language learners, second language learners face more significant challenges in learning these skills; linguistic incompetence and low language skills such as lack of vocabulary, incompetent in grammar usage, lack of knowledge on discourse markers resulting in producing a distorted composition and organizing ideas. According to Jusun and Yunus, (2017) “L2 learners have to bear the struggle of putting accurate grammar together to produce structurally-correct sentences”(p.469). Due to these factors, pupils find writing is boring, eventually hesitate to write narratives when it comes to “finding out, generating and translating the ideas in their brain into written language” (Manik and Sinurat, 2015, p.172). As a result, this attitude “teachers find the teaching of writing more difficult than teaching other language skills such as speaking, listening and reading” (Akinwamide, 2012, p.20). Above all, primary school pupils are novice writers; therefore, motivation is another factor need to be considered. The process of writing needs scaffolding to encourage the writing process as the pupils are inexperienced writers.

On the other hand, Yunus and Chien (2016) believed this “could be due to the teaching methods employed by the teachers, the types of responses students receive from books and instructors, the types of writing activities done in the classrooms, or lack of chances to practice writing.”(p.620). On the other hand, Kaur and Singh (2014), stated “the traditional teacher-centered approach is a method that has long been used in teaching and learning”.(p.4). This approach is currently still being practised by many teachers, even though a paradigm shift in teaching and learning strategy aligned with the 21st Century seen. This backdated approach leads pupils to be passive and fail to create an opportunity for pupils to stimulate and organize ideas to write a creative narrative story. Pupils asked to memorize a collection of narrative stories. Despite being taught to write English for more than six years, pupils are still unable to compose good narrative stories on their own due to the memorization and language deficiency factors. Hence, the second language learners have to master their writing skills as writing is the key in various disciplines in the real world. Lim (2014) emphasizes that it is “important for teachers to equip their pupils with writing skills to help pupils achieve success in national examinations, it is also important to prepare pupils to equipped for the workforce and the global economy”(p.43). Thus, ESL teachers have to use different approaches and techniques to guide pupils to scaffold and improve in their writing.

In Malaysia, pupils need to take the Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) at the end of primary schooling. One of the test requirements, pupils need to compose a narrative in a range of 80 to 100 words based on the stimulus given, which contributes 50 per cent weightage of the overall grade. For the task evaluation, pupils graded on writers capability to compose different sentence types which have various composition styles, usage of language functions for various purposes with good coherence and paragraphing. The paragraphing expected to consist of at least
five paragraphs, namely, the introductory paragraph, three paragraphs for three pictures provided and the closing paragraph” (Rahim et al. 2017, p.15467 ). Meanwhile, Firmansyah (2015) states that there are several main issues with pupils when composing essays, such as unable to generate ideas, problems with paragraphing and inappropriateness in using the correct terms due to vocabulary limitation. Therefore, it became a challenge for the average and low achievers of primary school pupils to compose a story. A study by Veramuthu and Shah (2020) revealed that “is a great challenge in the second language since second language learners are incompetent in writing because they do not learn as native speakers.”(p.55).On the other hand, Zakaria and Aziz (2019) stated the format of the paper itself contributes to high failures. (p.320).

The government and school authorities took various measures to improve this phenomenon like having answering techniques and workshops by the government and school authorities, yet it is not fruitful (Jalaluddin et al., 2015). The same issue noticed that 25 Year 4 pupils have average proficiency level face issues in composing a narrative story. The researcher noticed various language errors such as lexical, synthetical, punctuations and grammatical errors found in the writing product. Other than that, coherence and plotting, which are necessary for good narrative writing, were lacking. The pupils produced a distorted narrative. Since narrative composition contributes to a significant weight of the total marks, compared to other sections, it affected the overall score and added to failures. Hence, an unusual method is needed to motivate pupils to learn writing a creative narrative essay with good plots and coherence since the pupils have good command in English.

One of the prominent approaches in teaching writing in the 21st Century is using a mind map as a tool as it benefits pupils’ in promoting critical thinking, creativity and improving writing skills. Various studies have shown that utilizing mind maps contributed a positive impact on the process of teaching and learning (Suyanto 2010; Lachner, Burkhart, and Nückles (2017). Mind maps help to generate, envisage, structure and organize ideas. Unlike other studies, this action research employed flow chart to explore the effectiveness of the mind map in the scaffolding writing process. Further, it investigated pupils’ achievement level in each narrative writing components based on the assessment rubric. It analyzed the pedagogical strategies that led to the scaffolding of narrative writing through the use of the flow chart.

**Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. to measure the effectiveness of the flow map in improving pupils' narrative writing skills.
2. to investigate pupils’ achievement level in each narrative writing components based on the assessment rubric
3. to identify the pedagogical strategies that lead to the scaffolding of narrative writing through the use of the flow chart.

**Literature review**

Researches have tried many various means to improve the situation by introducing writing skills to primary schools’ pupils using web tools and games. Despite all the measures, the Director-General of Education Datuk Dr. Amin Senin states the “overall mastery in English subject
increased in 2017, except in the writing paper in national schools which showed a drop from 77.1 percent in 2016 to 73.6 percent this year” (The Star, 2017, para.8). It argued that teaching writing using web tools are thriving in urban areas where ICT facilities are available. But then again, using web tools alone doesn’t improve one’s writing ability without planning and mapping of the story as one needs to apply the steps in process writing to produce a good narrative writing. Therefore, a solution to cater to all pupils, regardless of urban or rural, is necessary to overcome these problems.

**Mind maps**

In 1993, Tony Buzan presented the mind map and described it as a two-dimensional note-taking technique. Relevant knowledge on the specific topic of the visual representation of thoughts creates a mind map. According to him, this technique permits one to organize facts and thoughts in the form of visual maps in which the keywords and the branches connected to the central theme. In other words, a mind map is a plan in graphic form to signify views and, ideas and this matter the thoughts.

**Flow Chart**

The flow chart is a graph or a diagram that portrays a process or framework systematically. It is used for reporting, thinking, planning, improving, and regularly imparting complex procedures in clear, straightforward outlines. A flow chart has a vital role in developing writing narrative writing skills. One of them is brainstorming. In writing, the flow chart used as a tool to assist authors in brainstorming and expressing their ideas even before they start writing. It is an essential technique to map the whole story to prevent authors from missing out on crucial points in the writing.

At present, many efforts made to facilitate teachers in employing 21st-century teaching approaches. One of them is the collaboration of The Ministry of Education Malaysia and Agensi Inovasi Malaysia (AIM) in introducing the i-Think program, which promotes critical, analytical, and creative thinking in the learning process (Yunus and Chien 2016). Thus, it is relevant for teachers to make a transformation in the pedagogy and increase and enhance the teacher's capacity aligned with what is a requirement, especially in teaching narrative writing.

**Narrative Writing**

Narratives defined as the “organization of a human’s experience and memories” (Bruner 1991,p.4). In another study earlier, it is defined as a socially and culturally conventional mechanism by which individuals organize and represent their past experiences (Bruner,1987). Students can express their thoughts and ideas through narrative essay. The type of narrative writing can be in different forms. To be accurate, it can be as brief as a phrase or as long as a novel. Narratives also assumed as literary fiction, fantasy, fictitious, or even a made-up story. Diaries journals, fictional stories, or letters are some of the examples of narrative writing.

**Types of Assessment in Narrative Writing**

The primary purpose of assessment is to give feedback to the writer, thus create prospects for students to improve one’s writing. It is not only viewed as a rating and providing scores solely, but also it helps teachers to reflect on the teaching and learning process. Dunsmuir et al. (2015), acknowledged two main assessment methods that one can employ in writing, holistic and analytical assessment. A holistic assessment once widely used for assessing narratives. A piece of
a story is evaluated based on the overall performance of a writer. In other words, evaluators read through the writing to get an overall impression of the work and rate the writing. The rating or the score referred to as a predetermined criterion or a rubric.

On the other hand, the analytical assessment had gained its popularity lately due to its effectiveness. Evaluators find it reliable for a few reasons, such as clearly defined and systematic and detailed scoring criteria (Hayes et al. 2000). Scoring criteria or rubrics is a crucial element as it identifies the quality of good writing such as creativity presentation of the story, reasoning, and other writing conditions measured in depth; thus, students get detailed analysis and feedback on their work. Feedback will be useful for learners as it is “critical in any assessment and provides an influence on the quality of student work.” (Martin and Ndoye, 2016, p.6)

**Past Studies**

A few studies were made international and locally in integrating and measuring the effectiveness of mind maps in ESL writing classrooms. Generally, most of these studies experimented with tertiary students. In a study conducted, Pratiwi et al. (2016) reported a mind mapping strategy to teach writing in IELTS preparation class improved participant’s knowledge in academic writing topic, building their critical thinking, and they were able to manage time well. Another similar study conducted by Rafii (2017) reported that “implementation of the Mind Mapping Technique in the teaching of writing descriptive text could develop the writing ability and improve the students’ motivation.” (p.155).

In another study, aimed to "investigate students' perceptions on the use of mind mapping strategy in their MUET (Malaysian University English test) writing" by Yunus and Chien (2016) reported that majority of the students had positive perceptions of the use of mind mapping strategy in enhancing their writing skills. Naqbi, (2011) in her study concluded that “mind mapping helped students plan and organize their ideas for writing tasks under conditions of examination.” (p.120)

Meanwhile, Lee et al., (2007) in their study noticed that “good writers should have the choice to mind map the ideas for the essay the author intends to write on one piece of paper while poor writers should have the option to map their ideas one stage at a time” (p.139). On the other hand, Negari (2011) reported that "mapping strategy had a positive effect on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' writing achievements”(p.299). Also, the teaching strategy employed contributed to successful writing achievement.

Bukhari, (2016) in her research reported that students in the institute improved in the cohesion and coherence; content paragraph structure and length of text in their writing agrees “mind mapping techniques used in the pre-writing process enhanced the EFL learners’ writings” (p.58). In a nutshell, using a mind map in scaffolding narrative writing among pupils bring improvements.

**Research gap**

Teaching pupils using the mind map strategy has not ventured in the primary school level widely. Other than that, most of the researches are mainly on the use of bubble maps in planning writing. Thus, it is crucial to venture the use of flow chart to primary pupils as, writing begins at the primary
school level, and pupils found to have difficulties in composing stories due to multiple reasons. Proper strategy and scaffolding are needed to execute the technique to see the effectiveness in improving pupils writing abilities.

**Research Design and Methods**
The research design identified for this action research is quantitative. The primary reason for conducting action research is to assist the researcher in transforming or redefine the current action through a research process and supported with critical reflection. Moreover, it permits the researcher to be engaged directly in the process of finding alternatives techniques to improve pupils’ achievement to overcome the issue; in this case the overcoming the narrative writing challenges. Apart from that, it allows the teacher to systematically and carefully examine their instructional practice using various research methods. In total, there were two cycles involved in the process.

**The Research site, Participants and Instruments**
The research performed in SK Tengku Mariam. A premier urban girls' school in the district of Batu Pahat in Johor, Malaysia. The reason to select this locality is to facilitate the researcher. The researcher is an English teacher in the schools and plays a vital role as the head of the English Language panel. In a total, 25 Year Four pupils were identified through purposive sampling method. Other than that, the selection of pupils based on their mid-term English Writing examination results which indicate their below-average performances in English Language Writing and their first language is not English. Before the intervention, pupils' and parental consent obtained. The instruments employed for this action research are Calkins Narrative Writing Assessment Rubrics for Grade 4 and a flow chart template.

![Flowchart: Scaffolding Narrative Writing in an English](image)

*Figure 1. The flow chart template*
Findings and Discussions
The data obtained from pre and the posttest were analyzed statistically to rectify the first research question on the effectiveness of the flow map in improving pupils' narrative writing skills, using the Social Sciences Software (SPSS) and the results are as shown in Table 1 below. The content in Table 1 exhibits the means and standard deviation based on the two variables, scores of pretest and posttest. In the Paired Samples Statistics table below, the mean for the posttest is 77.8. The mean for the pretest 25.5. The standard deviation for the posttest is 11.9; meanwhile, for the pretest is 12.8. The total number of participants in each test (N) is 25.

Table 1. *Paired sample statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>77.8000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11.92337</td>
<td>2.38467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>25.5200</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.80664</td>
<td>2.56133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. *Paired sample t-test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest - Pretest</td>
<td>52.280</td>
<td>12.1227</td>
<td>2.4245</td>
<td>47.2759</td>
<td>57.2840</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the above-generated analysis, the findings interpreted that there is a significant difference between the variables. The pre-test score (M= 77.8, SD 11.9) and posttest score (M=25.5, SD12.8) results (24) = 21.5, p =.000. The Sig. (2-Tailed) value in this result stood at 0.000. This value is less than .05. Therefore, it concludes that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean of pretest and the posttest after utilizing the flow map in the narrative essay writing. This result indicates pupils' have improved significantly in the posttest compared to the pretest administered. In other words, the data above proved that pupils obtained striking achievement in narrative writing when utilizing flow chart in their writing process. Therefore, utilizing a flow chart in scaffolding, a narrative essay was effective and resulting in pupils' improvement in composing a narrative essay.

Analysis of Pupils' Narrative Writing
The following findings presented in Table 3 are collected based on pupils narrative writing essay scripts from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 from posttests. The results were analyzed, compared and tabulated to show the mean score obtained from each component according to the narrative assessment rubric for Grade Four. Adapted from Calkins Narrative Writing Assessment Rubrics, nine narrative writing components evaluated, and the finding shows all the components showed significant improvement. The most outstanding development inclined towards the transition
component with the increase from 1.92 mean score to 3.28 mean score, resulting in a total of 1.36 difference. Two other significant elements noticed to have a tremendous spike in the mean scores are the Ending and Organization components with the mean score value 2.12 to 3.2 and the latter 1.88 to 2.96 which brought to 1.08 difference for both components resulting in a second-largest distinction. Another prominent significant difference made by the pupils is in overall essay production, has improved as it recorded an increment in the mean score to 3.44 points which makes an overall of 1.04 points difference. Next, the ability in applying crafting skills in the essay recorded some increase from 1.88 to 2.8 points. The spike shows a total of 0.92 points difference. Data indicates that the Lead component is next in the line, showing a good increase with a mean difference score of 0.84, which recorded 2.44 in Cycle 1 and 3.28 in Cycle 2. The skills of pupils to punctuate correctly strengthened in Cycle 2 when there was an increase of from 2.96 mean scores in Cycle 1 to 3.68 in Cycle 2. The total difference of increment for this component is 0.72. The component Elaboration demonstrates an enhancement of 0.68 points difference of Cycle 1 and 2. The last component, which is Spelling, recorded 2.72 mean scores in Cycle 1 and 3.28 in Cycle 2 totalling 0.56 points difference. Although not much of increment noticed, the pupils have managed to improve slightly.

Table 3. Pre-test and post test mean difference between the writing components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Components</th>
<th>Pre-test mean score</th>
<th>Cycle 1 mean score</th>
<th>Cycle 2 mean score</th>
<th>Mean difference (Cycle 2 - Cycle 1 Mean)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall Essay**
The overall essay component emphasized on presentation of a complete story when important moments highlighted with logical chronology. In this case, a narrative should possess five essential elements of narrative writing: characters, the setting, the plot, the conflict and, the resolution. The findings in the pupils’ writing show there is a significant difference in the scores obtained from the pretest and the posttest administered for these five elements. The mean score for this overall component in Cycle 1 in the posttest is 2.4, while in the posttest in Cycle 2 is 3.44. Therefore,
mean score differences between these two tests are 1.04. In conclusion, learners have improved the composition of a narrative story by meeting the primary narrative writing requirements.

**Figure 2.** Sample of overall narrative writing

**Lead**
In a narrative story, lead is a significant element. Lead is the opening of the narrative that is essential for the readers to engage. Introducing the story to the reader is vital as it provides the reader with hints about what happens succeeding. The finding shows this component has significantly increased with a 0.84 mean score, from 2.44 mean score to a score of 3.28. This increase demonstrates that most pupils understood the significance of this element and wrote a decent start. Therefore, the first concept of the flow chart and its function are comprehended well by pupils.

**Transitions**
Transitions are the use of linking words or discourse markers in writing. It helps to connect thoughts and demonstrate relationships around each other. They also illustrate patterns of organization to assist readers in continuing with good flow. In other words, it shows the coherence between paragraphs and linking sentence parts. Findings show there is a significant improvement in pupils writing in this component. The transition component recorded a 1.92 mean score in Cycle 1 and 3.28 in Cycle 2, with a total of 1.36 points difference. This elevation unfolds that most pupils have integrated the linking words into their writing as it is the most significant element to demonstrate a big difference in the mean score.

**Ending**
Ending in the narrative writing requires writers to end a story with a reasonable conclusion. Writers expected to complete by depicting a few points such as ideas or opinions the characters conveyed or realized something that came from what occurred in the story. Other than that, writers expected to offer a feeling of closure to readers. For this component, the mean score recorded 2.12 in Cycle 1 and increased to 3.2 in Cycle 2 and recorded 1.08 difference of increment in the total mean score. Hence, it depicts pupils writing a very decent closure based on the model of the flow chart that emphasizes moral value and lessons learned in the story's closing.
Organization
This component was evaluated based on the use of paragraphs, which used to separate different parts or times of the story to show the chronology of the events logically. The scores obtained by pupils show, there was an increment in the mean score of the tests, which is 1.08. Hence it explains that the participants managed to write their story in paragraphs, and most importantly, the timeline was chronically structured. It concludes that the arrows in the flowchart template led pupils to plan and organize their text chronologically well while using connecting phrases to bind the paragraphs.

Elaboration
In this context, elaboration means the ability of the authors to develop three main significant elements of narrative writing, setting, characters, and plot in the story composition. Therefore, it requires authors to be more descriptive. The finding for this component shows that pupils have improved their narrative writing skills by being more descriptive. The mean difference recorded from both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 is 0.68 points. This improvement indicates pupils have managed to elaborate their story in detail, resulting in composing a more extended narrative.

Craft
The craft factor evaluates the writer's potential in a few areas, such as the potential to assume and to boost the story logically. Besides that, authors required to keep the center of attention on the key message of the story and detailing them nicely. Other unimportant details summarized without losing its coherence. It is an art of blending and balancing the product. In other words, good flow and the mood of the story should be consistent. The findings for this component show the participants have improved moderately with the mean score of 0.92 points. The spike suggests that pupils had elevated crafting abilities when their stories developed without dropping the primary ideas. It can be seen in their end product when they provided more significance to the body of the story than the introduction and closure. In addition, usage of simple figurative language detected in the practices and the posttest.

Spelling
Spelling is essential to evaluate the author's awareness of phrase families and spelling guidelines to help produce accurate spelling and correct word choice. In this case, there is an improvement noticed as the mean score indicated 0.56 points difference between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. In Cycle 1, pupils made some spelling mistakes, especially in new and lengthy words, but improved in their Cycle 2.

Punctuation
Evaluation of the punctuation requires the authors to punctuate correctly, especially in the introductory parts of sentences. For instance, the use of commas, after the word and phrases like "Last night," "One day," in the introduction paragraph. Apart from that, awareness in the use of capital letters, exclamation marks, or question marks is the primary concern of this component. The findings show the participants have improved in the application the punctuations when writing their narratives. It shows there is a 2.96 mean score obtained in Cycle 1 and 3.68 in Cycle 2. Therefore, the total contributes to 0.72 points of increment.
Classroom Observation
This section demonstrates the findings based on classroom observation. The classroom observation recorded for the 12 lessons taught the intervention period to give feedback to the teacher to improve the instructional practices from the instructions in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 continuously to achieve the objectives set, scaffolding pupils with narrative writing. The observation focused on three main domains of the lesson, pre-writing, while writing, and post-writing stage. The observations recorded and thematically coded and detailed based on the teaching practices and the impact on the pupils’ improvement in producing a narrative story. The coding is categorized into five main points, setting pupils' prior knowledge, scaffolding, collaboration learning, the importance of corrective feedback and drawbacks.

Setting pupils’ prior knowledge
Selection of Videos
Based on the observations, the researcher noticed that, pupils’ prior knowledge on each theme chosen differed. Two main weaknesses identified at this stage are lacking vocabulary and minimal prior knowledge stored about the theme in all the themes selected except for Birthday Theme and Eid Mubarak Celebration Theme as it is closely related to them. Yet, the selection of video was a helpful to activate their knowledge. It helped them to recall their experience. Lacking these two crucial elements in writing will be drawbacks for pupils to progress in writing as they may fail to develop ideas to compose a narrative essay. Therefore, knowing these challenges, the videos were meticulously chosen at this stage to meet the purpose of setting the pupils prior knowledge about the themes. Hence, the set induction selected was not only interesting to engage the pupils but provided some prior knowledge which enables cognitive readiness in the writers to develop stories as writing process needs mastery of the concept.

Making connections
Participants used their memories from the video watched to familiarize themselves with the vocabularies and the visuals and transfer the memories into their writing. Besides that, participants seen quoting scenes from the video watched on the Holiday theme during the while writing stage. Participant 2 mentioned, “Kita boleh tulis lihat penyu bertelur”. (We can write about watching turtles laying eggs.) This scene not shown in the stimulus given, but participants made connections from the video to their writing. This scenario correlates with Vygotsky’s (1980) theory of cognitive, where learners develop novel theories or principles based on their present or previous experience. In this case, the participants construct new knowledge actively by having interaction with the stimulus by listening, watching, and responding to the video shown at the pre-writing stage. Therefore, the set induction selected seen to promote the attraction and helped to engage and motivate them.

Scaffolding
Set induction
The YouTube videos selected in the pre-writing stage also played a role in scaffolding pupils writing when they were able to use the words and the ideas shown to them. These videos employed to provide pupils with multimodal learning, as participants have different learning styles. Therefore, to scaffold the participants’ various learning, two or more multimodal modes such as styles, visuals, music, speeches, and illustrations were incorporated to support the learning.
Printed Materials
At the while writing stage, participants learning scaffolded by providing a list of vocabularies based on the pertaining themes, participants were also given a list of linking words, flow charts to guide the pupils to write. Other than that, prompting participants with questions verbally and in printed form assisted them. These steps incorporated during the intervention to produce good writing as past studies showed pupils face writing challenges in ESL classrooms due to lack of vocabulary, no coherence, and grammar errors. Thus, providing printed materials during writing enabled them to refer to the material from time to time to progress in their writing.

Brainstorming
Another scaffolding element noticed in the classroom was brainstorming. Brainstorming happened in various stages; the prominent stages were during pre-writing while writing during the presentation. Participants became aware of common mistakes that occurred in repetition and managed to rectify them. Hence, the higher the frequency of scaffolding in brainstorming pupils, the better they improve. Various types answers and ideas elicited during the brainstorming sessions. Brainstorming activity unlocked participants creativity when participants stimulated for the Happy Birthday and Celebration themes. These multiple scaffolding approaches had made the pupils became an independent writer when the application of the linking words and irregular verbs introduced in all the lessons done in the 2nd Cycle of the intervention. Apart from this; printed materials help better than verbal prompting as young learners have a problem in remembering all the words. Pupils became more independent in Cycle 2 after the printed materials given as a reference. Vygotoky’s notion is children learn independently when scaffolding takes place. Obviously, supporting materials and tools are crucial in scaffolding writing instructions at any stage of writing.

Collaborative learning
Collaborative learning employed in this intervention process based on the underlying theory, which is Zone of Proximal Development of Lev Vygotsky, where the theory believes in social support in children’s learning. Children learn better and solve problems when learning with peers. During the intervention process, all the participants assigned with collaborative activities. All 12 lessons required participants to discuss and complete the task in groups.

Sharing of authentic experience
A few significant scenarios observed and noted. One of the most prominent ones is participants shared own authentic experience and thoughts, which was a great help to group members who didn’t have much personal experience to become a competent writer. Every student contributed ideas based on their birthday celebration. Pupils with experience going on holidays have concrete and logic ideas as it came from their own experience. The knowledge and ideas shared in holiday and birthday themes enabled other group members to learn how to elaborate their composition based on the sharing.

Peer influence
Another vital element noticed was participants with a broader vocabulary, and proficient speakers contributed to significant development in crafting the story and structuring the sentences. These participants managed to influence other members in the group to use the correct tenses in writing their narrative writing. This development explains one of Vygotsky’s descriptions which is
someone with knowledge and skills guides another. Therefore, a group of multiple abilities supports one another’s learning process when they are working in groups.

**Active language users**
When pupils assigned with tasks, the group members worked on delegation of roles. Hence all pupils had to participate, and they became active language user especially when each and every one had the chance to present their drafts and products and the while writing stage when pupils share their thoughts. As explained by Vygotsky, this interaction occurred in collaborative learning, enabled participants to observe new knowledge, skills and practice them in their production of narrative writing. Other than that, collaborative learning reduces stress in writing especially among low proficiency participants. It is noticed some passive participants collaborated well and participated actively towards the end of the intervention.

**Corrective Feedback**
The corrective feedback practice in every lesson showed a significant impact on participants scaffolding process. Participants received formal and informal feedback from time to time. Mainly, the explicit corrective feedback happened in two ways, between teacher-student and between peers. In the process, corrective feedback occurred most during the collaborative activity, and during the presentation, both took place in while writing stage.

**Peer feedback**
It is perceived, advanced pupils could correct the weak the intermediate and low proficient participants in various aspects such as spelling, use of punctuations, sentence structures and grammatical errors. Participants also noticed to correct some factual ideas which did not fit the context.

The efficacy of the corrective feedback was notable in Cycle 2 when more participants volunteered in giving feedback to correct the product during the presentation. Constant repetition of corrections made in all the lessons in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 had enhanced the participants’ internalization of linguistic rules and structure. Pupils improved in a few necessary writing components such as spelling, punctuations and vocabulary.

**Teachers Feedback**
On the other hand, the teacher played a the central role in eliciting feedback from the participants and corrected the syntactic error and lexical errors. Sentence structures produced by participants are mostly directly translated from Bahasa Melayu. After a few repetitive corrections made and explained the rules during gallery walk session, the sentence structures improved. Hence, the use of constructive feedback during the lessons facilitated language acquisition among second-language young learners who do not have much exposure to the language.

**Drawbacks**

**Time management**
The findings from the classroom observation reflect the time management of the lesson. In Cycle 1, the lesson could not be completed within the stipulated time yet in Cycle 2, after some reflection some in this matter, to improve the situation, pupils are provided with printed materials to refer.
Without the printed reference, participants will waste time in asking around on how to spell and asking the past tense of some words. The time management noticed to be improved when pupils abled to anticipate the next stage as the intervention went on the same cycle in Cycle 2. Thus, not much time spent on giving instructions.

**Corrections**

In cycle 1, participants did not do the corrections after the feedback sessions as they had to do them at home due to the time constraint. Participants provided with the corrected version via Classroom Group WhatsApp, yet they did not make any effort to do. Therefore, in Cycle 2, participants given printed materials which saved time during the group work. Thus, and some amount of time saved to do the corrections in the classroom. At the end of the intervention, around 20 out of 25 participants managed to complete all in stipulated time. Hence, when corrections made, the writing product improved.

**Research Question 1:**

*How effective is the flow map in improving pupils’ narrative writing skills?*

The results obtained from the descriptive analysis indicated there was a significant achievement noticed in scores obtained in the posttest. The scores spiked significantly from the pretest to the posttest after two cycles of interventions. In the process of composing a narrative essay, the flow chart can be seen as an essential tool as it functions to guide pupils to write step by step following the sequence of the events. In this scenario, young learners need flow map than other types of thinking maps. Hence, employing the flow chart technique in the process of writing a narrative essay has high potential to improve primary school pupils writing skills, especially in composing a narrative essay.

**Research Question 2:**

*What is the pupils’ achievement level in each narrative writing components based on the assessment rubric?*

The document analysis of pupils’ writing showed a progressive improvement in pupils writing based on each narrative writing components. The writing components based on the narrative writing assessment consist of nine components, namely, overall writing, elaboration, transition, ending, craft, punctuation, spelling, lead and organization. The results showed pupils had improved tremendously in the use of the transition in the narrative essay. This rise is due to the flow chart template, which requires pupils to incorporate the transition word in the essay composition. The use of transition words in the essay played a vital role in improving the narrative essay as it connects each event in a logical sequence. However, pupils improved slightly in their spelling component due to less spelling mistakes made in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. Collaborative learning assisted pupils in developing their spelling skills. Other printed materials, which have wide range of vocabularies is another contributor to the improvement in spelling.

**Research Question 3:**

*What are the pedagogical strategies that lead to the scaffolding of narrative writing through the use of the flow chart?*
Prior knowledge strategies
Pupils involved in this research are second language learners who are average language users. A wide range of knowledge about the subject matter is crucial to be a good narrative writer. Therefore, developing appropriate instructional materials such as the selection of set induction is one of the most vital strategies not only to engage pupils but to provide prior knowledge to pupils.

Thematic vocabulary and questions
Thematic vocabularies and questions selected and provided based on the themes identified. The purpose is to scaffold pupils writing as one of the main issues for ESL pupils in writing is lack of vocabulary. The strategies allow pupils to refer, and at the same time, enrich their vocabulary for future use. Other than that, brainstorming for vocabulary meaning in the prewriting stage provides ideas and wide range of vocabulary for pupils to continue drafting in the prewriting phase. Besides, prompting with questions guides pupils to gain more insights, and this promotes pupils to construct new knowledge. In other words, the teacher is responsible for providing questions verbally and non-verbally to scaffolded writing.

Reference materials
By supplying handouts such as linking words list and the flow chart template, pupils can save more time than making their flow chart. Providing these materials is crucial due to their ability as a young learner. Besides that, by giving a list of linking words offers students a wide range of words to be chosen to fit their narrative essay. Thus, supplying reference materials helps pupils to perform the task, to motivate and to save time to scaffold primary students’ writing. Besides, by providing material support, pupils become independent learner when they do reference on their own. Hence, supporting materials are important to cater to the needs of different level of students in the classrooms (Martin et al. 2018). In other words, differentiated learning exercised.

Explicit Corrective feedback strategy
Students improved in various linguistics components during the feedback sessions. Constant corrections provided retention and mistakes in writing had reduced gradually. Hence, corrective feedback tailored in the pedagogical approach contributed to language acquisition in the ESL classroom particularly, (Sheen, 2010). Pupils showed engagement in the peer interaction in identifying and pointing out mistakes done by the group members. Also, students’ participation during the teacher correction sessions reflects the elements of scaffolding based on zone Proximal Development (ZPD) where the students were assisted by peers and teachers when there are unable to handle by themselves. Several factors are contributing to this achievement, such as peer cueing, teacher support, collaborative work (Isaacson and Gleason, 1997). Both teacher and peer feedback were effective in improving pupils writing. (Taweef et al. 2018: Saidon et al. 2018)

Collaborative strategy
Selecting the collaborative strategy to scaffold pupils narrative writing was impactful. Pupils get to share ideas, make corrections and support weaker peers. In other words, experts in the respective groups coach others who needs help. Gradually, weak students improved in various aspects such as in producing spellings, developing and exchanging ideas, knowledge and experiences to scaffold their narrative writing. This scenario contributes to active language learning as both the advance, and weak pupils benefits from this. Although working in groups takes a longer time as
discuss and interactions take place at the same time, after a few practices, time management handled effectively and delegation of work practised. (Ajmi and Ali 2014). Hence, the collaborative strategy is one of the vital pedagogy strategies to scaffold narrative writing.

Conclusions and Implications
To summarize, the study has indicated that the flow chart is an useful tool to scaffold primary school pupils in narrative writing. There are a few implications to the ESL instructors in the primary schools. The English language instructors in primary school are to adopt the flow chart technique in their writing classroom to teach narrative writing as flow chart guides pupils step by step with a logical flow. Next, to second language (L2) teachers, is recommended to adopt the teaching strategies to make the scaffolding process successful. L2 learners in primary schools are novice writers. Therefore, pupils need various types of scaffolding when planning the lessons. Besides that, this technique has significant implications on the pupils writing performances. Pupils can employ this technique and, exercise the correct writing skills. Using the flow chart in composing narrative writing allows pupils to practice the five writing stages in process writing.

However, this study is limited to urban school pupils, and it is limited to primary school pupils. Therefore, suggestion for future research is to focus on rural primary ESL pupils.

Acknowledgement
This work is an original work and is funded by University Kebangsaan Malaysia research grant. A sincere gratitude from the researchers to the university for the support.

About the Authors
Melanie Selvaraj is a Masters candidate at University Kebangsaan Malaysia and a full time English Language teacher in a primary school for 22 years. Her professional interest is in second language teaching methodologies.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0429-2296

Azlina Abdul Aziz is a TESL lecturer at the Faculty of Education, UKM. She has an Ed.D in Teaching of English from Teachers College, Columbia University, U.S.A. Her research interests are in the Teaching and Learning of Literature and Teacher Education in TESL. She is interested in how literary texts and personal narrative may be utilised to help students to examine the social, cultural and political issues in a particular context.
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7800-3688

References


Hanafiah, N. S., & Yunus, M. M. (2017). The Use of Facebook to Improve Writing in English Language among Primary School Pupils.


Beyond Language Classes: Semiotic Practices in PowerPoint Slideshows in Pharmaceutical English-Mediated Presentations

Noura A. Alghamdi
English Language Institute, University of Jeddah
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Abstract
Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has attracted considerable attention lately due to our increasing reliance on technology in education. This article contributes to educational research on CALL by considering the semiotic practices that surround PowerPoint slideshows. The article examines how a year-five female undergraduate in pharmacy designs her PowerPoint slideshow to represent and communicate knowledge in an English-mediated literacy event, i.e. pharmaceutical seminar presentations. While language plays an essential role in engagement in this event, the article seeks to highlight the role that visuals and writing plays in PowerPoint slideshows to help the presenter represent and communicate different aspects of meaning which reflect what she considers to be important for a successful engagement in a professional presentation. The investigation is carried out through a qualitative case study, using a social account of literacy and a social semiotic multimodal approach to meaning making. Though this investigation is not carried within a traditional language class, it is used to highlight some of the issues that can help inform language education by drawing attention to the potential benefits that lie in exploring situated practices of meaning making in different professional and academic settings.

Keywords: CALL, social semiotics, multimodality, literacy, qualitative research

Introduction

Researching CALL-related issues is generally directed towards examining the use of different types of computer programs which can be used to support language learning and teaching. Whether research is about CALL-specific software, generic software, web-based programs or computer-mediated communication programs, focus is usually directed towards the pedagogical practices in which teachers engage to facilitate the teaching of linguistic features in language classes more than investigating how people engage with computers in academic and professional settings beyond language classes. Among available studies, no adequate attention is offered to examine how people engage with technology to use language with other available semiotic resources as part of their meaning-making repertoire to represent and communicate knowledge.

This article uses a qualitative case study approach to investigate how a year-five university undergraduate in pharmacy relies on a commonly used generic software, i.e. PowerPoint to assist her while representing and communicating knowledge in an English-mediated literacy event, i.e. seminar presentations. The article specifically looks at PowerPoint as a semiotic technology which should be considered in light of the semiotic practices that shape its use in different contexts. While PowerPoint is a commonly employed software that language teachers and learners frequently employ in different settings, the investigation in this article highlights two specific points. First, the context in which the presenter uses this software is not a traditional language-learning context. It is an academic setting in which learners are expected to use English competently while embracing professional practices in different aspects of their education, including disciplinary meaning making. Second, the article adopts a multimodal perspective to meaning making to examine how the presenter coordinates the semiotic resources made available by PowerPoint to make her presentation.

Significance of the Study

Considering CALL as “any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language” (Beatty, 2003, p. 7), it is not surprising that many CALL studies tend to prioritize investigations of the effect of technology on developing mastery of linguistic features and communication skills among language learners (Underwood, 1984). Yet, such tendency overlooks the complex relation that language holds with a wide array of semiotic modes and resources in which people engage with “a full range of communication forms people use—image, gesture, gaze, posture and so on” to communicate with each other (Jewitt, 2009, p. 14). Although this investigation is not carried out in a language classroom, it draws on the growing awareness among specialists in language teaching and learning of “the need for students (and instructors) to become aware of disciplinary and genre practices outside of the language classroom” (Hardy & Friginal, 2016, p. 120). It can help to shed light on the contextualized practices through which language is used with other semiotic resources for meaning making. Knowledge of these practices is needed because it can inform pedagogical decisions in language classrooms and shed light on how language users engage with language for meaning making while using generic computer programs. Such knowledge can help enhance stakeholders’ awareness of different genres’ features and boundaries in which language is an essential meaning-making tool, but is not the only one (Morton, 2016). While these boundaries are without doubt connected to specific linguistic features, they are not limited to them because “[g]ood control of genre involves...
Beyond Language Classes: Semiotic Practices in PowerPoint

Alghamdi

an understanding of how different modes – visual, written and oral- interact” (Parkinson, 2013, p. 167).

Putting in mind that using PowerPoint slideshows has become an essential part of tertiary education around the globe (Zhao and van Leeuwen, 2014), examining these issues requires a move from a traditional literacy agenda through looking at learners as passive recipients of technical skills of reading and writing (Graff, 1995) to considering their situated engagement with reading and writing as social practices (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1993). In relation to slideshow design, learners should be looked at as authors whose slideshow design present a form of ‘new writing’ (Van Leeuwen, 2008). Thus, a slideshow represents a resource form meaning making that should be examined and analysed in order to understand how learners use language in combination with other available semiotic tools in order to inform pedagogical practices in language teaching and learning with relevant and situated materials.

Theoretical Background

To examine the semiotic practices associated with PowerPoint use, this study employs a social view of literacy and a social semiotic theory of multimodal meaning making. These theoretical views complement each other in examining the presenter’s slideshow design by shedding light on specific semiotic decisions in relation to the meaning maker’s interests and the contextual demands and constraints which shape and affect the meaning-making process. A social account of literacy views people’s engagement with reading and writing as social practices that can only be understood in relation to specific social and cultural contexts (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1993). Two important concepts are relevant to this investigation. The first concept is related to communities of practice which are defined as “the basic building blocks of a social learning system” (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). These communities are characterized by their members’ mutual engagement with other members in specific activities. They engage with a wide range of “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts” that form the repertoire of the community and distinguish it from other communities (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). Despite their shared nature, these elements are still open for new uses and interpretations and community members may choose to embrace or ignore them for a variety of purposes.

The second is related to identity construction. Within a community of practice, the identity that members foreground or background is crucial to their membership in the community (Wenger, 2000). Identity can be defined as “the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and spaces, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013, p. 4). Within educational settings, identity issues are important because they shape how learners engage with others (Preece, 2018). An important theoretical concept in identity is related to learners’ engagement with imagined communities and their associated imagined identities. Imagined communities refer to “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination” (Norton, 2013, p. 8). As these communities reflect the communities that learners aspire to join, “[a]n imagined community assumes an imagined identity” (Norton and Toohey, 2011, p. 415). This is because it may encourage learners to take specific decisions that would allow them claim membership in these communities. For learners, these imagined communities are as
real and as powerful as the real communities in which they engage and may even have a stronger impact on learners and their attitudes towards language use and learning (Norton, 2013).

To examine meaning making decisions in PowerPoint use in this study, a social semiotic approach is employed to pay attention to modes, semiotic resources and context as three important elements which shape how meaning is made in any multimodal ensemble (Kress, 2010). According to this approach, meaning making extends beyond the use of language alone to include a wide range of modes. A mode is “a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning” (Bezemer & Kress, 2008, p. 171). As modes are usually grouped in specific ensembles, they entail specific features and patterns of use which have been formed through culturally specific and regular uses in specific contexts (Kress, 2003). Semiotic resources represent the materials used to make meaning. They have “a meaning potential, based on their past uses, and a set of affordances based on their possible uses” (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 285). Meaning makers, thus, may choose to highlight specific resources over others. For example, within the mode of ‘colour’, a meaning maker may choose to highlight specific resources in this mode over others, such as differentiation, intensity or purity. Finally, context is an important concept in this theory because it “may either have rules or best practices that regulate how specific semiotic resources can be used, or leave the users relatively free in their use of the resource” (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 4). Meaning making is, therefore, closely connected to the specific contextual norms, expectations and demands of representation and communication and this appears in how meaning makers may choose to embrace, manipulate or resist specific choices according to their needs as active agents.

Methodology

This study draws on a doctoral study that is concerned with a specific literacy event in the College of Pharmacy within a major Saudi university. It relies on a number of ethnographically oriented qualitative data collection tools, such as observation, semi-structured interview, informal conversations, research journal and artifact collection. Because they facilitate access “to see how language practices are connected to the very real conditions of people’s lives” (Heller, 2008, p. 250), these tools are used to provide deep understanding of how the presenter under investigation uses PowerPoint as a semiotic technology to make an oral presentation and how specific choices help the presenter to strategically align with and deviate from common norms and practices in this context. For the larger study, ethical forms, detailed information sheets and consent forms have been given to different members of this community, including the presenter whose work is under analysis in this article. One interview has been conducted after presenting with this presenter who is called Layla (pseudonym) throughout this article and a copy of her slideshow has been obtained through email and has been discussed with her to examine her authoring decisions.

Analysis

This analysis starts by shedding light on the context, i.e the literacy event in which the presenter worked. After that, a brief overview of the presenter and her interests and priorities are discussed. Then, the analysis moves into looking at instances of textual practices in the presenter’s slideshow to examine scientific and underlying meanings in Layla’s presentation. These meanings will be discussed in relation to two specific modes in her slideshow: visuals and writing.
The literacy event

The literacy event under investigation belonged to a mandatory course, called Pharmacy Seminars 2 (PS2) in the College of Pharmacy at a major Saudi University. The course was offered to year-five pharmacy students. PS2 aimed at examining students’ abilities to give longer and more specialized academic presentations. It also aimed at examining students’ knowledge and professional practices at this stage of their development before graduating. Each PS2 presentation was carried out in English and was expected to last from seven to nine minutes. Presenters were expected to adopt formal semiotic choices that directly reflected the medically-oriented and academic nature of their course.

The presenter: Layla

The presenter whose work is investigated in this article, Layla, is a year-five undergraduate in the College of Pharmacy at the time of data collection. Layla chose to discuss substance abuse while specifically focussing on opioids dependence. Following the general guidelines in this course, Layla wanted to choose a topic that mattered to her audience. In addition to the teacher’s directions, she believed that it was their ultimate responsibility as pharmacists to serve the communities in which they lived and worked by choosing topics that mattered to people. She used her presentation to balance her current position as an undergraduate under assessment with her view of herself as a professional in the field of pharmacy. She used her discussion of opioids dependence not just as a way to demonstrate her developing professional knowledge as a pharmacist by discussing available treatment, but also as a platform through which she could fulfil her responsibility as a medical professional who recognizes and addresses urgent health issues in her society.

Layla’s topic represented an urgent issue in the society which, albeit its significance, did not seem to be well-understood. She believed that rather than being seen as patients who needed and deserved professional help, substance abusers were often stigmatized in the society as many families considered them as sources of shame that needed to be hid away, rather than acknowledged and properly treated. Layla felt that her colleagues in the College shared a similar attitude. Many considered this topic a depressing topic and they did not seem to appreciate its significance.

When I discussed it with the girls, ((she imitates her friends)) “Oh, God I don’t like these topics”. Everyone says “We don’t want to hear something like this. We don’t want to know”.

Although other presenters in this event often prioritized their colleagues’ opinions and avoided topics which their colleagues found disturbing or unacceptable or simply did not like, Layla insisted on her topic. Rather than choosing a more favourable topic, she used her presentation as a way to provide an informative and medically-oriented discussion of opioids dependence while working, at the same time, to address common negative attitudes about substance abuse and raise awareness among her audience regarding substance abusers.
To achieve that, Layla used her presentation to represent and communicate different meanings. First, there were the expected, scientific meanings which appeared in her scientific framing of the discussion in terms of offering the definition of her topic, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment plan. Second, there were other less common meanings that related to Layla’s reading of her audience view of the topic. Though these meanings were not usually discussed by other presenters in a direct way, they were important for Layla because they reflected issues that affected how the topic was to be seen and understood. Two particular meanings surface in this analysis: establishing the significance of opioids dependence as a socially significant issue and highlighting patients’ suffering and plight. Among the potentially unlimited semiotic resources to make meaning, Layla used PowerPoint to author her slideshow in a way that supported her discussion of these meanings while aligning herself with the textual expectations and practices in her community. Her decisions were well-received by the teacher who positively assessed her topic choice and the organization of her presentation.

**Layla’s slideshow design**

Layla’s PowerPoint slideshow consisted of twenty-seven slides that generally followed the basic common design in this event (Table 1). However, unlike the other observed presentations in this event, Layla displayed three extra slides after finishing her presentation. These slides, described as ‘coda’ in this analysis, were shown after the thank-you slide during her discussion with the teacher. When asked to explain how she approached her slideshow design, she talked about her preference to rely on visuals more than writing or speech because she believed that visuals provided better opportunities for representation and communication of various meanings. This view was sustained by the course guidelines which encouraged presenters to wisely choose discipline-specific visuals that supported their discussions while requiring them, at the same time, to avoid extensive writing on slides. Overloading slides with writing jeopardized presenters’ attempts to appear as professional speakers. This was also extended to the appearance of slideshow layout which was expected to align with the scientific nature of professional presentations in this academic context and avoid catchy images and clip arts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Constituent Elements</th>
<th>Number of Slides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting up the Presentation</td>
<td>Introductory Display</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outline / Logos</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing the Topic</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opioids Dependence Description</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brain Reward Pathway</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Dependence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Withdrawal Symptoms</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing Treatment</td>
<td>Introductory Display</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Available Treatment</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Distribution of Elements in Layla’s Slideshow
In Layla’s slideshow, semiotic choices related to visuals and writing generally aligned with common textual choices among other presenters in this event. Most of these choices were directly concerned with explaining the constituent elements of her slideshow. These choices were expected in this event in which representation of knowledge was directly assessed by the extent of its ability to explain discipline-specific information, such as definition, symptoms and medication’s dosages (Table 2).

These choices aligned with common textual practices in this event and sustained the discipline-specific nature of Layla’s presentation. For example, in stage 1, it was common among presenters to show the logos of the organizations and websites consulted while preparing their presentations, such as the World Health Organization and the Food and Drug Authority. Another example appears in stage 2 in which visuals helped to explain the definitions and symptoms of medical issues and show images of medications. In addition to offering a naturalistic display of information, visuals often offered an abstract sense of reality which is consistent with regular display of information in science (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996). They served to explain the scientific content in association with the presenter’s talk and the writing on each slide. These visual representations of reality were part of this professional community repertoire and that made them easy to read and understand by its members.

Table 2. *Examples of Discipline-Specific Use of Visuals and Writing in Layla’s Slideshow*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Outline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Drugs of Abuse Target the Brain’s Pleasure Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Concluding the Presentation**

1. **Concluding Statement**
2. **References**
3. **Thank you**

**Coda**

1. **Thank you**
2. **Concluding Statement**
3. **References**
Layla’s use of writing to support her discussion was also consistent with her colleagues’ use of this mode. As presenters were expected to minimize their use of writing on slides, writing served to offer a visual documentation of essential information. This documentation relied on condensed structures and key words to avoid overcrowding slideshows (Morell, 2015). Quantity was not the only important issue in writing. Consistency in colour, size and font was also important to support the scientific and academic nature of these presentations.

Yet, there were other semiotic choices that made Layla’s slideshow stand out among other slideshows because of their apparent deviation from common textual expectations and practices in this community (Table 3). Deviation in Layla’s slideshow did not result from lack of understanding of common norms and expectations in her community or a superficial desire to create a visually attractive slideshow. It was, in fact, an execution of specific, deliberate meaning-making decisions in her presentation that aimed to support her topic discussion. Concerned with the negative attitude that she observed among her colleagues in specific and the larger society in general, Layla adopted a series of semiotic choices that allowed her to address that negative attitude. She worked to prove the existence of the problem in the society, point out the drastic ramifications of not properly treating this issue and alleviate societal view towards substance abusers by presenting opioids dependence as a treatable medical issue while creating a more humane view of drug abusers.

Table 3. Deviating Use of Visuals and Writing in Layla’s Slideshow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Slide</th>
<th>Slide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Layla’s use of writing to support her discussion was also consistent with her colleagues’ use of this mode. As presenters were expected to minimize their use of writing on slides, writing served to offer a visual documentation of essential information. This documentation relied on condensed structures and key words to avoid overcrowding slideshows (Morell, 2015). Quantity was not the only important issue in writing. Consistency in colour, size and font was also important to support the scientific and academic nature of these presentations.

Yet, there were other semiotic choices that made Layla’s slideshow stand out among other slideshows because of their apparent deviation from common textual expectations and practices in this community (Table 3). Deviation in Layla’s slideshow did not result from lack of understanding of common norms and expectations in her community or a superficial desire to create a visually attractive slideshow. It was, in fact, an execution of specific, deliberate meaning-making decisions in her presentation that aimed to support her topic discussion. Concerned with the negative attitude that she observed among her colleagues in specific and the larger society in general, Layla adopted a series of semiotic choices that allowed her to address that negative attitude. She worked to prove the existence of the problem in the society, point out the drastic ramifications of not properly treating this issue and alleviate societal view towards substance abusers by presenting opioids dependence as a treatable medical issue while creating a more humane view of drug abusers.

Table 3. Deviating Use of Visuals and Writing in Layla’s Slideshow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Slide</th>
<th>Slide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While it was common among presenters to choose scientific visuals to introduce their topics in stage 1, Layla used a slide in which the mix of visuals and writing was not directly connected to their profession. The second slide in the table above shows a centrally positioned extract from a local, Arabic newspaper in which the arrest of a drug smuggler by the local police is reported. The extract contained two visuals: the first shows the smuggler wearing the traditional Saudi outfit for men, with his eyes covered, and the second shows an x-ray of heroin-filled intestines which he used to smuggle the drugs. The extract in the slide is surrounded by photographs which relate to the shape, use and distribution of drugs. Unlike many of her colleagues, the photographs in this slide did not draw on opioids dependence as a pharmaceutical issue. The newspaper extract and the surrounding photographs represented reality through complex modality configurations by combining the naturalistic photographs with the abstractness of the scientific x-ray to highlight the legal and societal nature of her topic. This representation is best understood in light of the meaning maker’s own reading of the societal attitude towards drug abuse which generally tended to dismiss the seriousness of the issue and question its gravity. As it was common among presenters in this event to prioritize their colleagues’ views of their presentations, Layla’s choices represented strategic decisions to ensure her ability to attract her audience and encourage them to consider the significance of this topic. For Layla,

> **الأهم شيء هنا جذب الانتباه اللي في البداية. بس أنا كنت أبغى أشير للجرائم اللي تصير بسببهم و المشاكل القانونية وفي أنواع. أهم شيء إنهم ينتبهو معايا في الشي اللي حأقوله.**

> The most important thing here is to attract attention at the beginning. I just wanted to point out the crimes that happen because of them and the legal problems and types. The most important thing is that they pay attention to what I am going to say.

While the meaning maker was against the negative attitude that substance abusers face in the society, she drew upon this negative attitude to introduce her discipline-specific discussion.

Another different, semiotic choice in the table above appears in Layla’s slideshow in stage 3 in which she used two introductory slides to introduce her discussion of treatment. This stage
follows Layla’s thorough scientific discussion of the definition and symptoms of opioids dependence in stage 2. While other presenters usually introduced this section by offering a list of available treatments, Layla created a multimodal ensemble that offered a sense of hope. In slide 11, a shining sun is shown in combination with a written title (How to overcome Opioid Dependence) in which the more commonly used ‘treat’ is replaced with ‘overcome’. While ‘treat’ reflects the pharmacists’ responsibilities in diagnosing and planning treatment, ‘overcome’ seems to place more focus on the challenges associated with this illness. This is further enhanced through the specific choices of font, type and size of writing which differ from other slides. While in earlier slides, the title was usually written in a smaller and more formal-looking font in orange, the title in slide 11 is written in blue with a larger size and various fonts. For Layla, these were necessary semiotic choices.

Why did I do this? You saw the photograph of the addicted man? After that, the image of all the symptoms, the pain of the physical dependence, and then the withdrawal symptoms, the bad visuals, all of these things were sad and depressing. At the end, there isn’t anything that we cannot overcome (.). There is sun, we look for a solution. That’s why, if I did that in writing, they would have ignored it.

These choices were necessary because of the messages that she needed to convey as a meaning maker to her audience. She felt that her earlier discussion of opioid dependence in stage 2 created a dim picture of the gravity of this issue, but that was a picture that she hoped to combat by creating visual connotations of hope.

In slide 12, Layla further builds on this idea by directly stating that ‘THERE IS HOPE’ ‘Hope’ was used instead of the more commonly used ‘prognosis’ in this event to complement her earlier choices. It is further enhanced by the two photographs shown in this slide. The photograph on the left shows a medium-shot, frontal angle of a faceless physician while the one on the right shows one of the local hospitals for treating substance abuse in Saudi Arabia. This photograph situates the discussion of ‘hope’ within the local context in which these presentations took place. This is further intensified by the writing of the Arabic name of the hospital ‘الأمل’ ‘Al-Amal’ which literally means ‘hope’ in English.

The photograph of the hospital with the Arabic script allows Layla to indirectly address her colleagues’ doubts about the existence of this issue in their community.

أنا في البداية قلت لهم على إحصائية في أمريكا........ بس نحن المشكلة عندنا في البلد، لكن كمان صح إنها موجودة بس في لها حل.

I told them at the beginning about statistics in America........ but we have this problem in the country. But although it exists here, there is a solution for it.
Rather than verbally stating this fact to her colleagues, Layla relied on these semiotic choices in her slideshow to draw their attention to what she viewed was essential in carrying out an informative presentation in this event.

Another uncommon semiotic choice appeared in Layla’s conclusion in slide 22. While almost all of the other observed presenters in this event concluded their presentations through summary of main points, list of references and a thank-you slide, Layla used an effective sentence instead of the summary while keeping the references and thank-you slide. In slide 22, she wrote (The Road of Recovery Will Not Be Easy, But It Will Worth It). The sentence echoes her earlier choice in slide 11 in terms of font, size and colour and it seems to complement the meanings of hope to combat feelings of despair.

Closely connected to Layla’s attempts to alleviate awareness among her audience regarding her topic are the three slides, i.e. coda that she displayed while discussing her work with the teacher (Table 4). These slides show scans of the treatment plan offered by one of the Saudi local hospitals to treat substance abuse.

Table 4. Coda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide 25</th>
<th>Slide 26</th>
<th>Slide 27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to their irregular display after the end of her presentation, the Arabic script in which this plan was written further enhanced Layla’s earlier choices. They supported her efforts to situate the discussion within the local community and drew her audience attention to the complexity involved and needed in treating substance abuse which extends beyond the knowledge or work of a single practitioner in pharmacy. When asked why she did not include these slides within the main body of her slideshow, Layla explained that she did that to avoid exceeding the seven-to-nine timeframe that governed presentations in this event.

Finally, examination of the semiotic choices in Layla’s slideshow cannot be concluded without considering a recurrent visual that appeared as part of the basic outline of most of her slides. Layla included a small drawing at the right, bottom corner of twenty slides in her slideshow (Figure 1). The drawing shows a patient kneeling down on the floor with an oversized drug bottle lying on his/her back. According to Layla,

هادي الصورة إنو الإدمان عبء عليكي

this picture shows that addiction is a burden on you
Many other presenters included specific visuals in their slideshow outline to create slideshows whose outline was visually consistent with their topics. These visuals represented a variety of issues, such as medications, laboratory equipment and body organs. In Layla’s case, however, the visual included in most of her slides helped her to further highlight patients’ plight and suffering.

Looking at this drawing through the lens of visual grammar, the person is portrayed through an oblique angle which suggests power to the viewer over the represented participant in the drawing. Though Kress and van Leeuwen point out that the “difference between the oblique and the frontal angle is the difference between detachment and involvement” (2006, p. 136), it seems that the angle in this case appears to echo the distance that usually separates medical professionals from patients in which professionals observe and diagnose patients without necessarily prioritizing their identity. In line with her earlier-discussed semiotic choices, this consistently-used drawing connected all the other choices to highlight patients’ suffering and agony. Thus, the small recurrent drawing in Layla’s slides can be seen as combining detachment by backgrounding the identity of the patient and involvement by highlighting his/her suffering and pain to the viewer.

**Figure 1.** A small drawing consistently used throughout Layla’s slideshow.

**Discussion**

This study hopes to contribute to scholarly research that work to “gain a better understanding of the way PowerPoint facilitates or constrains different knowledge structures and practices” (Zhao and van Leeuwen, 2014, p. 87). The analysis in this study approaches the presenter’s use of PowerPoint as a semiotic technology based on the assumption that “what the meaning maker takes as criterial then determines what he or she will represent about that entity, or
how he or she will represent that entity, in making the sign” (Bezemer and Kress, 2015, p. 44). This means that understanding how semiotic technologies are used requires looking at specific instances of practice to examine meaning makers’ decisions and understand the motivation behind these decisions and their significance in order to explore potential possibilities for their use in language classes.

While language was without doubt essential in the presenter’s slideshow design to engage effectively in this literacy event, the analysis highlighted how language was used in combination with other semiotic modes and resources to help the presenter represent and communicate her knowledge through coordinating available PowerPoint-enabled resources to highlight what was considered essential for her discussion. Meanings primarily included the common and expected scientific meanings that presenters were required to discuss in this community to prove their growing knowledge and experience which appeared in discussing the definition, symptoms and treatment of opioid dependence. Yet, there were other less common meanings which the presenter in this event worked to explain and highlight, not through speech but rather through the semiotic affordances made available through PowerPoint.

Using a variety of semiotic resources in relation to visuals and writing enabled the presenter to address the contextual constraints that she identified in discussing her topic. They allowed her, for example, to bring to light the common negative and dismissing attitude towards substance abusers by indicating the gravity of the issue and its existence in the society. Moreover, they allowed her to highlight an aspect of their professional practice that was not commonly discussed by other presenters in this event which appeared in her focus on patients’ suffering and plight. As doctors of pharmacy, presenters were often more concerned with recognition of physical symptoms of diseases and ability to offer appropriate treatment plans. Patients’ suffering and plight were rarely discussed in a direct way. To avoid breaking these common textual practices, the presenter in this analysis generally aligned her slideshow with common norms and expectations to support her speech and discussion of the topic.

Yet, at the same time, she used specific resources in her slideshow to bring to light what appeared to be criterial for her discussion. Her decisions in this regard were strategic to avoid jeopardizing the professional and academic nature of her presentation. In relation to language teaching and learning, Layla’s explanation of her meaning-making decisions puts emphasis on the importance of looking at our students as active agents, rather than passive recipients of automatic and fixed sets of rules and linguistic features. Since language learning represents an “interpersonal process situated in a social and cultural context and mediated by it” (Knowles, 2004, p. 2), it is important to look at how learners engage with available tools in different contexts, including the technologies associated with CALL. While it is important to continue experimenting with how CALL programs can be used to support language learning and teaching, it is equally important to seek to provide authentic understanding of how people engage with these programs in real life and to broaden our understanding of meaning making beyond language alone as we saw in this article.

One question here stands out in relation to language pedagogy: how can we benefit from such issues to inform pedagogical practices? There are many ways through which we can move engagement with CALL in language classes to providing a more integrated and meaningful use of
technology as a meaningful tool, not a fashionable toy (Bax, 2003). For example, we can work to develop awareness among different stakeholders that

‘language’ is just one among the resources for making meaning; and that all such resources available in one social group and its cultures at a particular moment ought to be considered as constituting one coherent domain, an integral field of nevertheless distinct resources for making meaning; all equal, potentially, in their capacity to contribute meaning to a complex semiotic entity, a text or text-like entity (Kress, 2011, p. 242).

Such understanding is important to provide authentic experiences to support learners’ language development by raising their awareness of how language is used with other semiotic resources.

We can also encourage critical thinking skills among learners to examine their meaning-making decisions. By giving them enough time to explore technological tools to come up with their own textual products and encouraging them to explain their decisions, learners can develop deep understanding of their contexts and their preferences in a way that allows them to analyse the required tasks and design their response to these tasks. This will eventually allow them to look at technology not as an end in itself, but rather as potentially invaluable tools while learning and using language.

Assessment practices in language teaching and learning should also be considered in using technology. While “the meaning of individual slides and relationships between adjacent slides cannot be interpreted in isolation from their interaction with the speech and gestures of the presenters” (Zhao, Djonov and van Leeuwen, 2014, p. 354), this analysis shows also that they cannot be adequately interpreted without considering their situated nature in specific communities and specific literacy events. As some of the presenter’s semiotic choices were not common in this event, these choices were understandable considering her interests and the situational needs she recognized. Most of the employed semiotic choices aligned with common expectations and practices and they were not negatively affected by the less common ones which did not seem to threaten the academic and scientific nature of Layla’s presentation.

In addition, these practices seemed to echo the many campaigns that students in medical colleges in this event participate in to alleviate awareness among the public regarding a variety of health issues and to improve the quality of health care in the society. In this case, while the presenter generally authored her slideshow as an undergraduate under assessment, the less common semiotic choices in her PowerPoint slideshow should not be seen as deviating from what she was expected to do. These choices should be seen through the meaning maker’s own explanation, i.e. strategic decisions taken to represent and communicate specific aspects of meaning which the meaning maker considered important and significant. These aspects can be seen as an indication of the identity stands that the meaning maker adopted while participating in this event which extended beyond direct engagement in her current community of under-assessment undergraduates to a more active engagement with her broader responsibility towards the society as a health professional and future responsibilities as a doctor of pharmacy.
In relation to technology use, pedagogical practices should be aimed at providing language learners with authentic and real engagement with meaning making. Learners should be encouraged to reflect upon and analyse their use of technology and reconsider the “the taken-for-granted idea that speech and writing have the capacity to make knowledge of all kinds ‘explicit’” (Bezemer and Kress, 2015, p. 65). Although it is not surprising that development of linguistic skills in relation to speech and writing are prioritized in language teaching and learning, this study suggests that they should be considered in relation to other available semiotic choices which meaning makers adopt to communicate with others. Rather than considering technology-enhanced semiotic choices as a way to create visually attractive texts or looking at them as a way to compensate for lack of mastery of the language as Morell (2015) points out, these choices should be examined as integral to the meaning making process that moves beyond language.

Conclusion
This article relied on a qualitative case study to examine how a female undergraduate used PowerPoint-enabled semiotic tools to represent and communicate knowledge in pharmacy. These tools were analysed to highlight the role that visuals and writing played in meaning making in a specific context in which language was not the only important meaning-making tool available to the presenter. While discussing how the presenter used PowerPoint-enabled resources to represent and communicate different meanings in this specific context, the article brought to light the benefit of examining how technological tools are used in different contexts and offered some suggestions to inform pedagogical practices in relation to language learning.

About the Author
Dr. Noura Ali Alghamdi is an assistant professor at the English Language Institute, University of Jeddah, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Her research interests include qualitative research methodology, literacy studies, multimodality, identity and computer assisted language learning.

ORCid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9294-1443

References
Beyond Language Classes: Semiotic Practices in PowerPoint

Alghamdi


**Appendex**

Transcription Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Bold</strong></th>
<th>Bold font is used to indicate a word that was spoken in English in the original talk.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>((  ))</td>
<td>Transcriber’s descriptions are shown within double round brackets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>A full stop between single round brackets is used to indicate a short pause.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Arabic Media Related Vocabulary through Twitter at the University of Alabama

Saad Bushaala  
The University of Alabama  
Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

Safa Elnaili  
The University of Alabama  
Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

Maysoun Ali  
Community Child Center/Headstart/ECEAP Program  
Pullman, WA, USA

Abstract
This research paper aims to investigate the effect of utilizing Twitter in a foreign language classroom and how it would affect students’ attitudes towards learning Arabic media related vocabulary. The researchers used qualitative and quantitative methods as a methodological approach to the study. The subjects of the study are American undergraduate students studying Arabic for their third semester, 11 participated in the study. The participants were asked to open Twitter accounts in order to practice reading up-to-date tweets from global news agencies. Participants took pre and post-tests, then were asked to take a questionnaire; a structured interview was also carried out along with reflections to have a better understanding of the students’ attitude towards the use of Twitter in the classroom. The data were gathered throughout the semester and analyzed qualitatively and the participants’ responses were coded for certain themes and then analyzed. The findings indicated that the students had a positive attitude towards the use of Twitter in learning vocabulary for specific topics -in this study media/political-related vocabulary- in the foreign language classroom. In addition, the quantitative data used as confirmation and showed vocabulary gains after the Twitter treatment. The study’s findings can be applied to any foreign language and can have important implications and recommendations for language teachers and educators in the field. The findings will add valuable recommendations on how to integrate social media platforms in a foreign language classroom.

Keywords: Arabic, Foreign Language Learning, Twitter, University of Alabama, Vocabulary learning

Introduction

The demand for teaching the Arabic Language in American higher education systems has increased in the past years, especially after 9/11 (Al-Batal, 2006; Brosh, 2013; Abu Melhim, 2014), and the political reforms in the Middle East and North Africa post the Arab Spring. Many American universities offer Arabic as minors and majors to meet their students’ needs for the language and in order to complement their fields of study. Students studying Arabic at the University of Alabama come from different specialties like: Political Science, International Studies, Religious Studies, Journalism, and History; their interest in the Arabic/Islamic world motivates them to learn the Arabic language. Arabic language teachers constantly look for the best methods to make their language learning experience motivational.

With the current situation in the Arab world, most students are interested in the political context. Their departments are preparing them to become politicians, diplomats, journalists, political analysts, and experts in their fields. Thus, in the Arabic program, they are taught Arabic through political texts especially in the intermediate and advanced levels. Students are introduced to media texts and news reports in Arabic to help them learn the language of media and politics. The curriculum includes printed news reports in textbooks, online reports from famous Arabic news channels such as Aljazeera and Alarabiya, and live streaming reports.

These media texts are rich in vocabulary, thus, posing challenges for the students to learn new words. It is crucial to empower students’ vocabulary knowledge in order to prepare them for reading and comprehending such complex media texts. Since most of these media texts can be long and dense, one way of simplifying the texts is to break down their density into shorter ones. Studies have shown that having learners engage with online short texts can help improve their linguistic comprehension (Lomika & Lord, 2016). This study aims to implement the use of reading online short texts for vocabulary learning. The goal is to help students recognize and learn the Arabic media related vocabulary and hence help them engage with and understand Arabic political news texts and their context. The suggested tool to apply this approach is through the use of Twitter. The study suggests students read tweets of political news from Aljazeera and Alarabiya news platforms on Twitter. The purpose of this tool is to motivate them into engaging with the texts - in this study the tweets, by reading the tweet, finding and recognizing the vocabulary to help them understand the tweet, that is the news piece, as a whole context. The study also investigates the effect of the tool on students’ attitudes towards the use of Twitter in learning Arabic media related vocabulary and how it would enhance their learning.

Integrating Social Media: Twitter

Language teachers, coordinators, and program directors are encouraged, more than ever, to provide variable and accessible materials to meet students’ learning needs and goals. One of the most demanding venues for teaching a foreign language is the use of social media. Several studies, including the ones discussed below, have investigated the effect of social media venues, such as Twitter, in supporting language learning outcomes; most of these studies argue that the use of Twitter can help, for example, engage and motivate learners in and out of the classroom and thus makes it a successful communicative and active learning tool. Bista (2015) argued that the use of Twitter in higher education created a positive atmosphere in the classroom “Overall, participants…reported positive experiences saw Twitter as a valuable tool to use in the classroom”
(Bista, 2015, p.98). A study by Drewelow (2012) concluded that Twitter contributed in creating a communicative atmosphere in the classroom, lowering student’s anxiety “Using a social networking tool also seemed to allow more shy or fewer confidant students to develop a voice within the classroom community” (Drewelow, 2012, p.139), as well as promoting their in-depth discussions and engagement in the classroom. Twitter also helps engage students in their learning activities and maintain their motivation for learning (Sekiguch, 2012). Studies also show that Twitter helped train students’ communicative and cultural competence through messages, it proved to be an active learning tool that is suitable in and out the classroom (Borau, Ullrich, Feng, & Shen, 2009). Twitter can lead to better engagement for students and even help increase their grades, as well as create a more active and participatory environment for the teacher (Junco, Heibergert, & Loken 2010). Studies, in addition, showed that using Twitter in language learning can serve in building a community among students when face-to-face learning is limited, a study by Lomika and Lord (2012) argued that Twitter proved to facilitate a ‘fun and interactive’ community for language learners.

As languages are encouraged to be taught and learned in a communicative setting, and with the development of social media technology, alongside the great demand for the integration of cyber venues in the classroom, there is no doubt that social media platforms, such as Twitter, are effective tools for language learning. Twitter creates a communicative environment for learners in and outside the classroom. It helps make language learning a social experience.

**Sociocultural Approach: Learning Media Related Vocabulary**

In the light of language learning and social/cultural context, Lomika and Lord (2016) argue that among the four theoretical approaches to L2 learning and social network, the sociocultural approach helps with language acquisition. The approach emphasizes learning language through interaction, “[t]his interaction can lead to developments in both identity and in relationships and can expose students to current real and meaningful language use for specific tasks” (Lomika and Lord, 2016, p. 228). In their discussion of incorporating social networking tools in the classroom, Lomika and Lord stated that these sites (i.e. social media) help students engage in their learning and improve their linguistic gains. These linguistic gains occur when engaging students with shorter texts, such as in Twitter texts: “Engaging students with shorter amounts of text, increased hashtags and pictures is something that can be appealing to the L2 learner” (Lomika and Lord, 2016, p. 236). They add that such short texts can encourage students to be more motivated in their learning. Baron (2015) has a similar perspective regarding using cybertext to stimulate language learning; her study results indicated that reading on-screen helps better in finding a specific word or passage. Baron’s discussion identifies the importance of technological advances in the pedagogical arena and that the onscreen reading is growing rapidly.

Within the previous context, this study aims to implement the use of Twitter in the L2 classroom for learning Arabic media related vocabulary. The Arabic program at the University of Alabama hosts students from Political Science, International Studies, Religious Studies (Islamic Religion), and Media; students from these fields of studies learn Arabic for their interest in the Middle East and the Arabic/Islamic world. In order to meet the students’ needs, a curriculum was designed for the intermediate and advanced level classes that introduces the Arabic language in a socio-political and cultural context. One of the required textbooks for the class selected for this
study is *Media Arabic: A Coursebook for Reading Arabic News* authored by Elgibali and Korica, (2007). The textbook is designed to expose learners to the language of Arabic media and news reports. Such complex and advanced texts are rich in vocabulary, thus, posing a challenge for the learners. In an effort to create a communicative and engaging learning environment in the classroom, this study aims to integrate the use of Twitter in the classroom as a complementary tool in learning Arabic media vocabulary. The purpose of selecting Twitter among other social networks is that Twitter has become one of the main venues for news search; a study by the American Press Institute found that 86% of Twitter users use it for news, and 74% of them use it daily. In addition, reading tweets is faster and accessible to students in and out of the classroom, and in order to make learning Arabic media related vocabulary a more engaging process, the study implements Twitter in the classroom to connect the students with the real world, and to expose them to the breaking news of the Arab world through recognized news agencies, such as Aljazeera and Alarabiya.

**Study Questions**
- How would using Twitter impact the attitudes of the participants in learning Arabic media related vocabulary?
- Would the participant’s attitude towards Twitter enhance their vocabulary gain?

**Study Methods and Procedures**

The study was conducted for the Arabic program at the University of Alabama throughout a six weeks period. The language component focused on in the study is vocabulary, in precise, Arabic media related vocabulary. A Twitter group was created specifically for the study named ArabicNewsGroup@ArabicNewsGroup1, where all participants followed to read the shared news pieces and tweets from Aljazeera and Alaribiya news. The Twitter activity was used alongside the textbook assigned for the class.

**Participants**

For the study, we used the Patton (2002) purposeful sampling approach. The participants of the study were the intermediate level students with a total of 11 participants, seven females and four males, ten white, one African American and, one Hispanic. Their ages ranged between 18-23. Their majors were in International Studies, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Journalism. Nine out of 11 of the participants never used twitter in studying Arabic before. Only one participant used twitter in studying languages other than Arabic. Therefore, the majority of the participants had no prior experience in using it for language learning.

**Procedures**

This is a multi-case study designed with multiple units of analysis. We used Yin’s (2014) four principles to collect data from multiple resources. The units of analysis were to find out improvement in learning Arabic media related vocabulary in a foreign language classroom and to explore the participants’ attitudes towards the use of Twitter in learning Arabic media related vocabulary. The tools used for this study were: a questionnaire, students’ interviews, and students’ reflections. Before using the tools for data collection, students were introduced to two treatments, a pretest, and a post-test.
The duration of the study was approximately six weeks. For the first two weeks, participants were introduced to the new vocabulary lists, and then they explored these new words through the reading texts provided in the textbook. The reading texts were news reports about political summits and meetings, accompanied by images. Participants learned the new vocabulary through class discussions then practiced learning the words and their meanings through the texts for word recognition, meaning, and text`s overall comprehension. Following the readings, the participants did some vocabulary exercises to help their learning. At the end of the second week, they were given a pre-test. The test covered the vocabulary they learned in the first two weeks and had questions of word match, word choices to fill in the blanks, and open-end questions.

In the third and fourth weeks, the participants learned new vocabulary lists; the topic was political conflict and terrorism. The number of new words introduced to them during the third and fourth weeks was similar to that in the first two weeks. This is to eliminate any factors that would affect the data results of the study, especially in the tests. The participants practiced the new words through class discussions, following that, the treatment (Twitter) was introduced in class. They were asked to read the tweets provided to them through the Twitter group created for the study. Tweets of news pieces from Aljazeera, Alarabiya, and BBC Arabic about terrorism and conflicts were shared in the group by the researcher. Participants were asked to read these tweets from their phone devices to recognize any of the words they have learned from the list and how much of the news piece they comprehend. Exercises of the same nature in weeks 1 & 2 were also given after reading tweets to help with the vocabulary intake. At the end of the fourth week, a post-test was given to the participants. The test was conducted similarly to that of the pre-test for more credibility. This data was coded later in the study using Saldana’s (2013) two-cycle approach.

**Questionnaire**

All the participants were given a questionnaire in the fifth week after their post-test. There were 11 open and closed questions related to demographic information and the participants’ experience with Twitter during the study. The questionnaire was conducted to obtain some data related to their attitudes towards using Twitter for vocabulary learning.

**Interviews**

After taking the questionnaire, the researchers conducted interviews with the participants. The interview was semi-structured and the participants were asked five open-ended questions. A voice recorder was used during the interview to record the data. Each participant was interviewed for a set of 5-10 minutes. They were asked about their opinion on the method of integrating Twitter in the classroom and whether they find it a motivating and beneficial experience. The value of the interviews in this study is to obtain more input from the participants and fill in any gaps or unclear points/answers.

**Reflections**

Reflections are great tools for recording the participants’ impressions and feelings about their lived experiences. The purpose of the reflections in the study is to complement the data collected in both the questionnaire and the interviews. Participants were given a prompt that asked the students to reflect on their experience during the integration of Twitter. The goal was to collect data that reflects their attitudes towards the treatment and to get an immediate description of their experiences; To describe, to judge it, and to state their opinions about whether they like it or not.
Pre- & Post tests

Despite the small number of participants in this study, researchers felt the need to implement these two tests to complement and support the qualitative findings in the other study tools, i.e. questionnaire, interviews, and reflections. The purpose of the tests is to examine whether the participants’ attitude growth impacted their vocabulary gain after introducing the treatment to them. The pre-test preceded the treatment and the post-test followed the treatment.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively, and qualitatively for confirmation. The tests and the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively by using thematic analysis suggested by Liamputtong (2009) and Gibbs (2007). We looked at main categories and subcategories and we created connections between them. The reflections and interviews were analyzed qualitatively. The reflections and interviews were coded and themes were generated with regard to the research questions. The results are presented in the following sections:

Questionnaire

The table below demonstrates data collected from the 11 participants’ questionnaires. The participants in general indicated that they are familiar with Twitter as a popular social media and use it in their daily lives. However, the majority of the participants also indicated that they had no prior experience in using Twitter in studying Arabic or any other language.

Table 1. Data gathered from the questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Ages</td>
<td>18-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>4 males &amp; 7 females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>Undergraduates</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>Majors</td>
<td>International Studies, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Journalism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>9 white, 1 African American, 1 Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Use of Twitter</td>
<td>Yes (4) No (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in the table, it was apparent that the participants rarely used twitter since only four of the participants indicated that they used it every day, three used it once a week, two used 2-3 times a week, and one participant used it 4-5 times a week. Only two out of 11 had previously used Twitter in learning Arabic. This means that the majority of the participants have no prior use of Twitter in language learning. As for the participants’ experience in using Twitter as a social media platform in learning Arabic, the questionnaire indicates that they had an excellent experience with the tool as a treatment in the study.

Questions B4 and B6 demonstrate that most of the participants lack experience in using Twitter as a language learning tool. This, as a result, will help set valid data for the last question of the questionnaire. Responses to question B6 show that the participants, in general, have enjoyed using Twitter in the classroom. This also indicates that the treatment had a positive effect on the students and helped them engage better in learning.

**Interviews**

Data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Saladana’s (2013) coding method. The participants in the interview voiced that the use of twitter during the study was helpful since it helped them in learning the target language. They also believed that Twitter motivated them and made learning the target language less intimidating. The following quotes from the students’ interviews show their positive attitudes about the use of Twitter during learning the target language. The following demonstrates examples of the transcribed data collected from the interviews.

### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Every day (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once a week (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3 times a week (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-5 times a week (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Using twitter in studying Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Yes (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No (9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Using twitter in studying any other language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>Yes (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experience using Twitter in the study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B6</td>
<td>Excellent (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very good (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the table, it was apparent that the participants rarely used twitter since only four of the participants indicated that they used it every day, three used it once a week, two used 2-3 times a week, and one participant used it 4-5 times a week. Only two out of 11 had previously used Twitter in learning Arabic. This means that the majority of the participants have no prior use of Twitter in language learning. As for the participants’ experience in using Twitter as a social media platform in learning Arabic, the questionnaire indicates that they had an excellent experience with the tool as a treatment in the study.

Questions B4 and B6 demonstrate that most of the participants lack experience in using Twitter as a language learning tool. This, as a result, will help set valid data for the last question of the questionnaire. Responses to question B6 show that the participants, in general, have enjoyed using Twitter in the classroom. This also indicates that the treatment had a positive effect on the students and helped them engage better in learning.

**Interviews**

Data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Saladana’s (2013) coding method. The participants in the interview voiced that the use of twitter during the study was helpful since it helped them in learning the target language. They also believed that Twitter motivated them and made learning the target language less intimidating. The following quotes from the students’ interviews show their positive attitudes about the use of Twitter during learning the target language. The following demonstrates examples of the transcribed data collected from the interviews.
Using twitter assisted and encouraged the students to activate their prior knowledge and assist in memorization and comprehension

“That was actually helpful to be able to see how it's actually written by people in real life instead of sentences sort of like a textbook. That aren't necessarily something I'm ever going to say in real life. So, I'd also like. It was. Good because I sort of already knew what was going on that might be in those tweets and so it was a lot easier to pick up on what was going on”

“I guess that it does help with memorization. I was able to remember that word later as opposed to just having a ton of words tumbling around in my head. So yeah I thought that worked well”

“There isn't as much of a grammatical focus on the Twitter aspect. It's very good for vocabulary and learning phrases and kind of memorizing them but maybe I make your grammatical sense there may be different from spoken as they're more concise”

Using twitter enhanced and supports language learning since it is concise, authentic, interesting, and simple

“So, I never used Twitter before. And so, I'm not very comfortable with social media but I thought that. Twitter is very short. And it's very to the point, which in Arabic sometimes is not very to the point just in the longer sentences. And so, I thought it was a good way to introduce vocabulary because you can see the vocabulary almost immediately in one of like 10 words. And so, it's easy to pick out the words it's easy to pick them out in context and understand what those words are without having to worry about all of the grammar or extra vocab around the words”

Using twitter provided a better learning experience and engagement.

“Sometimes people don't always study when they go home because you have to pull a textbook or whatever. But people always have their phones on them so would be very easy for them to study through their phones or through Twitter”

Using twitter made learning non-traditional, less intimidating, and motivational.

“I guess that it does help with memorization. I was able to remember that word later as opposed to just having a ton of words tumbling around in my head. So yeah I thought that worked well”

“Yeah yeah I would. And again, I think it's a lot more interesting and it's a lot easier to sit down and work on stuff like current events using Twitter. But actual humans like talking and you can read responses”

Reflections

Data from the reflections were first coded then divided into categories and themes as an attempt to give the best interpretation of the given data (Creswell, 2014). Data revealed that the nine participants found using Twitter was useful for improving their Arabic media related vocabulary.
They also preferred it to the traditional method of learning vocabulary, and they shared similar opinions on how it was helpful. For instance, the tweets provided authentic materials about current events of the world around us. That would, of course, make the learning process more interesting, engaging, and fun as opposed to the long reading passages as they indicated. In this sense, one of the participants said “I thought twitter was fun and interactive way to learn, not only the new vocabulary, but also about different news articles”. Some participants believed that reading about current events through the tweets made vocabulary learning more engaging. Regarding this, a participant stated, “The fact that these events are real news stories make the learning even more engaging.”

In addition, the participants found learning Arabic media vocabulary thought Twitter much easier than the traditional method. According to them, the short sentences used in the tweets made it much easier for them to digest and understand the vocabulary included, which in return, helped them understand the given piece of information in the tweets. Regarding this, one participant said “using Twitter helped to break down the sentences into smaller parts and analyze it while with the passages it was challenging to do so”. Another one stated, “The tweets were my favorite in that they broke down the material into more accessible and easily digestible pieces.” In relation to this, one participant confirmed “It was quicker to learn as opposed to passages which required more time to break down and which also seemed to be a far more intimidating task”.

To conclude, all participants had positive attitudes towards Arabic media learning vocabulary through Twitter, and they all recommended integrating it into classroom instruction to enhance students’ vocabulary learning. As noted earlier, they found learning Arabic media vocabulary using Twitter much easier, more interesting, engaging, and fun as opposed to the traditional method of learning vocabulary in the classroom.

**Pre-test and Post-test**

In this section, we demonstrate the participants’ pre- & post-test results and a discussion through tables.

Table 2. *Analysis of different percentages between post & and pre-tests*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pretest score out of 10</th>
<th>Posttest score out of 10</th>
<th>Different Percentages between Post &amp; Pre-tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>10.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>20.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.70 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.10 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table two shows the grades of both the pretest and posttest scores out of ten in the first two columns, and the third column shows the difference between the two tests. From the above table, 6 participants out of 9 showed an increase in their grades after the treatment. Only 3 of the participants’ grades dropped slightly in the post-tests. This indicates that the participants have performed better with the implementation of Twitter in the classroom, the differences range between 0.70 and 20.1 as seen with participant 2.

For example, a participant was unable to translate a verbal phrase in the pretest, i.e. matching a verb with the right noun: وجه دعوه sent an invitation, however, translated another verbal phrase in the post-test correctly الحق اضرارا cause damages in news context after the Twitter treatment, another example, a participant misused a word in context in the writing question in the pre-test i.e. تبادل القمة exchanged summit instead of تبادل الآراء exchange ideas but succeeded in using the correct word choice in a similar question the post-test, i.e. استهدف الانفجار the explosion targeted.

In addition, a non-parametric method, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, was used to analyze the data due to the small size of participants. We set the Alpha level to be .10. The results indicate that the difference between the pre-test and the post-test is statistically significant (p = 0.066). It suggests that participants’ post-test scores are significantly higher than their pre-test scores. See the below table.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.0333</td>
<td>1.77200</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.6944</td>
<td>1.89892</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. *Ranks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranks</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posttest - Pretest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Ranks</td>
<td>3a</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Ranks</td>
<td>6b</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>38.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ties</td>
<td>0c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Posttest < Pretest

b. Posttest > Pretest

c. Posttest = Pretest

Table 5. *Test statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Statistics</th>
<th>Posttest - Pretest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-1.836b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.066</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

**Discussion and Findings**

The data analysis collected from the study’s questionnaire, interviews, reflections and pre/posttests demonstrated that using Twitter in the Arabic language learning classroom is positively effective. Based on the coding of the data analysis, the study has found that most of the scores in the post-test were higher than the pre-test after the implementation of Twitter in the classroom. This indicates, and in accordance with Junco, Hebergert, and Loken’s, (2010) findings, that Twitter can help students increase their grades and learning outcome. Collected data from the
questionnaire also agree with Junco, Hebergert, and Loken’s (2010) findings that Twitter helped learners engage in class and gain a positive learning experience. Based on data collected from the interviews, the participants found that using Twitter assisted them with their language learning, especially with word comprehension and memorization. They also expressed how using this tool created an interesting experience and helped them engage more in the language through a more communicative venue, it also exposed them to the culture through reading tweets of native speakers. This finding is parallel to Barau-Ullrich, Fenf, and Shen’s (2009) study results regarding Twitter helping learners with their communicative and cultural competence. Data from participants’ reflections also support the use of Twitter in language learning as a great tool for enhancing learners’ motivation and classroom engagement, it also supports Drewelow’s (2012) study findings that Twitter can lower students’ anxiety by being a less intimidating learning tool and easy to use.

Within the framework of creating a communicative community in SL/FL classroom, findings in the data collected from this study show that Twitter, being an effective tool in promoting learners’ motivation in language learning, also motivates learning vocabulary related to specific contexts, in this case, media/political context. As language classrooms encourage the implementation of technology, the use of cyber communities has become a demand in language learning (Baron, 2015). Twitter, through several studies, has proven to be a motivational language-learning tool due to its accessibility, authenticity, and effectiveness.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be said that using Twitter in the classroom has helped to create a motivational atmosphere for the learners, which assisted them in recognizing the new vocabulary and comprehend them through their contexts in the tweets. Implementing Twitter in class also helped the learners engage in a more interactive learning setting; their access to Arabic news feeds on Twitter made learning Arabic media related vocabulary a more authentic and interesting activity. This study, thus, and as a humble addition to the field of foreign language learning in higher education, concludes that using Twitter in foreign or second language classrooms is effective for vocabulary learning for specific contexts, such as vocabulary of political contexts. The study’s findings can be applied to any foreign language and can have important implications and recommendations for language teachers and educators in the field. More research related to social media are needed in the field of language teaching. Students nowadays are more into technology and they use different social media and technology tools for information, school research, etc.

** Recommendations**

Twitter as a social media should be integrated into the teaching of vocabulary very often since it proved to be engaging and motivating for language learning. However, students should have some background in vocabulary and have taken at least two semesters of the target language. It is recommended that teachers practice Twitter in class with their students before using it since the participants’ responses to the use of Twitter indicated that Twitter was a new experience in studying Arabic and as a result of that more studies related to this are needed. Teachers also should spend enough time finding tweets that are relevant to the vocabulary taught. It would be challenging to use Twitter without knowing the subject matter. In fact, Tweets can be assigned as an after-school activity to increase students’ time during the learning of the target language.
Teachers should implement Twitter with other languages. It is motivating, easy to read, and interesting.

In addition, course designers should analyze the language used in social media and include the most frequently used structures. Some structures are more frequently used than others in social media, for instance, the passive is used more frequently; therefore, it is recommended that the students know the passive beforehand. Course designers should think of interactive ways to integrate Twitter into new textbooks. A Twitter account should be created and students need to follow it and participate. It is apparent that more studies are needed in the effect of social media on Arabic language learning.

For the study design, students with no experience with Twitter should be eliminated since their data will not be informative. A Large sample is recommended to have more data for analysis and a focus group would facilitate in-depth information about Twitter. Quantitative analysis with a large sample would help and make the data rich and sound.

About the Authors:
Dr. Saad Bushaala is a faculty member at the Modern Languages and Classics at the University of Alabama. He obtained his Ph.D. from the Instruction and Teacher Education Department at University of South Carolina. His research interests are Bilingual Education, Culturally Relevant Teaching and Pedagogies, Multicultural Education, Assessment, Qualitative research, Integration of Technology in Teaching, and Teacher Training and Development.
ORCID: 0000-0002-9675-2332

Dr. Safa Elnaili is an Assistant Professor of Arabic at the University of Alabama. She holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics and Translation from Louisiana State University. She has over ten years experience of SL/FL teaching in higher education. Her research interest are Arabic language, literary translation, Libyan literature, and Myths. She is currently working on her MFA in literary translation and creative writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts.
ORCID: 0000-0002-9371-3418

Dr. Maysoun Ali holds a Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning from the College of Education at Washington State University. Her research interest is enhancing language learning with the use of technology. She has experience teaching English as a second language at the University of Idaho and currently teaches at the Headstart/ECEAP, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program for preschool aged kids.
ORCID: 0000-0001-8825-6649

References


The Integration of Implicit and Explicit Vocabulary Instruction, Project-Based Learning, Multimedia, and Experiential Learning to Improve Thai EFL Senior High School Students’ Vocabulary Ability

Satit Somjai  
Language Institution  
Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand

Kittitouch Soontornwipast  
Language Institution,  
Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand

Abstract  
This study highlights the significance of the integration of implicit-explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning (PBL), multimedia, and experiential learning to improve Thai EFL senior high school students’ vocabulary ability. It aimed to investigate to what extent the integration affected Thai EFL senior high school students’ vocabulary ability and how their perceptions toward the instruction were. The study involved 45 tenth-grade students at a public high school in Bangkok, Thailand. A vocabulary pre- and post-test was used to evaluate the students’ vocabulary ability before and after the application of the integrated instruction. Additionally, students’ reflective journals (SRJ), a students’ perception questionnaire, and a semi-structured focus group interview provided qualitative data for analyzing the students’ perceptions toward the instruction. The findings revealed that all students’ test scores significantly improved and confirmed the effectiveness of the integrated instruction on vocabulary learning. All of the 45 students also reported positive perceptions toward the instruction. They reflected that the instruction was advantageous and practical since it facilitated their vocabulary learning, increased their self-confidence and improved their speaking skills. It also created a pleasant learning atmosphere, provided the students with more opportunities to participate in classroom activities, and encouraged the students to learn with technology.  

Keywords: experiential learning, implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, multimedia, project-based learning, Thai EFL senior high school students

Cite as: Somjai, S., & Soontornwipast, K. (2020). The Integration of Implicit and Explicit Vocabulary Instruction, Project-Based Learning, Multimedia, and Experiential Learning to Improve Thai EFL Senior High School Students’ Vocabulary Ability. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL (6). 171-190.
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.12
Introduction

Vocabulary is considered one of the essential aspects of language learning, especially in the field of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) since it helps with communication. Language users rely on vocabulary more than grammar when they communicate as Wilkins (1972) argues, “Without grammar, little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed” (pp. 111-112). From only a few words in a sentence, the listener or reader can guess what the speaker or writer wants to talk about. Even an individual word can imply what the speaker or the writer wishes to express.

Despite being essential in language learning, vocabulary appears to be a major problem among ESL/EFL learners, including Thai students (Waemusa, 1993). Sawangwaroros (1984) reports that Thai EFL students are weak in vocabulary knowledge, and the lack of vocabulary development correlates with the inability in other language skills, which leads to inefficient and unsuccessful use of English for communication.

Regarding the importance of and the poor development in vocabulary knowledge, a study about ways to increase vocabulary knowledge of ESL/EFL learners is recommended to find more effective and practical teaching approaches that facilitate ESL/EFL learners to master or improve their vocabulary ability.

The Factors Contributing to the Low Achievements in the Vocabulary among Thai EFL Learners

Learning English as a foreign language, Thai EFL students encounter various difficulties in acquiring the language for communication. Navasumrit (1989) indicated that one of the many problems in learning English of Thai EFL students is their insufficient vocabulary knowledge. Considering factors that are contributable to the poor English vocabulary knowledge of Thai EFL students, the following section introduces factors that affect Thai EFL students’ vocabulary knowledge.

Too Little Exposure to the Target Vocabulary

In Thailand’s educational context, a social environment does not enhance Thai EFL students to use the English language in their daily communication. They have very limited opportunities to receive English language inputs in real-life. Classroom sessions seem to be the only occasion that they have a chance to apply learned vocabulary words to converse with one another. The limitation in using English in conversational contexts makes Thai EFL students have little exposure to the intensive and extensive language practice. Therefore, their command of English skills is very poor (Lewis, 2002). Moreover, vocabulary teaching in Thailand does not receive much attention or emphasis during class sessions. Thai EFL students usually receive passive vocabulary knowledge rather than productive skills, and productive use of vocabulary both in conversation and writing lacks regular practice.

Keeping the mentioned problem in mind, EFL teachers have tried different approaches to help the students develop their vocabulary ability. Language exposure is one of the stated approaches. Graves (2006) proposed a rich and beneficial vocabulary learning strategy, which includes an experiencing strategy. Through the language experience strategy, teachers provide
students with an opportunity to be familiar with new words through various language experiences, such as reading aloud, independent reading, and oral discussions (Graves, 2006). When learning more sophisticated or academic vocabulary words, students are required to spend a considerable amount of time reading books or other written materials or having books read to them. Some studies indicate that reading aloud can significantly increase learners’ vocabulary (Lehr, Osborn & Hiebert, 2004); moreover, reading aloud combined with a discussion about the text is an effective way that helps to expand learners’ vocabulary size. At the same time, it promotes independent reading experiences (Cunningham, 2010).

*Insufficient Support from the Textbook in Terms of Vocabulary Learning and Teaching*

Most of the available textbooks used in EFL classes take a communicative approach that encourages students to learn vocabulary items through a top-down fashion and does not favor explicit vocabulary instruction. Moreover, the tasks or the activities provided in the textbooks do not support students to learn vocabulary effectively (Lee & VanPatten, 1995; Nunan, 1999; Shrum & Glisan, 2000). Most textbooks found in Thailand seem to lack effective tasks, such as analyzing word structure, using context to determine word meaning, and using a dictionary effectively. It is similar to what is said in the Teacher Reading Academy (Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, 2002) that the success of independent word-learning strategies should include the effective use of word parts, context clues, and a dictionary.

Teachers should find some additional activities or teaching techniques to fulfill what the textbooks lack to solve the previously mentioned problems. In these cases, the teachers can implement word-learning strategies, which are one of the four components of the vocabulary instruction of Graves (2006). Word-learning strategies include the identification and use of context clues, the appropriate use of word-part information, and the accurate use of dictionaries (Baumann, Edwards, Boland, Olejnik, & Kame’enui, 2003; Graves, 2006; Lehr, et al., 2004; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), 2000). Word-learning strategies are also the tools students can use to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words and increase their word knowledge. Direct teaching of word-learning strategies can help students become better independent words-learners (Baumann, et al., 2003; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000; Graves, 2006; NICHD, 2000).

*Insufficient Assistance from the Teacher and Vocabulary Teaching Methods*

Pookcharoen (2007) explained some causes of ineffective vocabulary instruction in Thailand. He mentioned that the problems had their root in the application of traditional teaching methods. These traditional methods usually emphasized vocabulary memorization by translating the target words into the learners’ first language. The teachers typically introduced the target words to the students individually and without contexts. The decontextualization of vocabulary instruction, in turn, resulted in little word retention.

Many studies suggested that target words be presented in a contextualized manner, and the learners simultaneously infer the words’ meanings from the contexts, owing to the abovementioned problems. This would enhance students’ vocabulary retention (Nation, 1982; Nation & Coady, 1988). McCarthy (1990) also claimed that a contextually learned lexical item was best assimilated and remembered. Similarly, Oxford and Scarcella (1994) reported that
decontextualized vocabulary learning may help language learners memorize vocabulary for tests, but language learners were more likely to rapidly forget the memorized words.

Consequently, EFL teachers should assist students to learn vocabulary more effectively by employing the explicit teaching of individual words. The explicit teaching strategy is one of the four essential components of vocabulary teaching proposed by Graves (2006). Teaching vocabulary explicitly will facilitate students to master vocabulary more appropriately, in terms of forms and usages, than using traditional vocabulary teaching, which emphasizes memorization and translation. The four strategies of explicit word teaching are as follows (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Graves, 2006; NICHD, 2000; Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 2008)

1. Provide a student-friendly definition.
2. Use the word in context and give contextual information.
3. Provide multiple exposures.
4. Provide opportunities for active involvement.

Lack of Interesting Vocabulary Teaching Leading to Lack of Interests to Learn Vocabulary

Jingjit (2015) also pointed out that inaction on interesting vocabulary teaching in Thailand, especially the lack of technology integration, decreased students’ interest, and dampened their enthusiasm for learning. As a result, the recent educational policy encourages teachers to utilize the potentials of new technology in the classroom. The same phenomenon happens worldwide in this digital age. Literature shows that a well-integrated technology in education could help learners learn a foreign language, especially vocabulary. Dhanasobhon (2006) explained that Thai teachers are required to teach effectively in challenging environments by making effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) in their teaching to cater to a variety of learning styles. In Dubois’ and Vial’s (2000) study, it was evidenced that the use of multimedia technology could help evoke learners’ memory in learning Russian vocabulary as a foreign language.

To solve the problems related to a lack of interest in learning vocabulary, teachers can use multimedia technology that helps get and hold students’ interest (Jonassen, Carr & Yueh, 1998). Recently, several studies have investigated the effects of presenting information using multimedia components, such as visual text, spoken text, graphics, and videos, on the second language (L2) learning (Al-Seghayer, 2001; Sun & Dong, 2010). Kost, Foss, and Lenzini (2008) found that EFL learners performed better on both production and recognition vocabulary tests when they were allowed to use a combination of visual text and graphics. Information presented in text, spoken text, graphics, and video formats can be integrated to create an authentic, attractive, and multisensory language context for EFL learners (Sun & Dong, 2010).

Due to the abovementioned reasons, the integration of these four concepts, namely implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning focusing on students teaching one another will not only enhance their advantages but also minimize their drawbacks. Furthermore, the students will be able to improve their vocabulary ability as the result. Therefore, this study aims at improving students’ vocabulary ability and
solving the problems contributing to the low achievements in the target vocabulary among Thai EFL students as mentioned above. Two research questions were as follows.

1. To what extent does the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning improve Thai EFL senior high school students’ vocabulary ability?

2. What are students’ perceptions towards the use of the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning on improving vocabulary ability?

Literature Review

Four Essential Components of Vocabulary Instruction

The current study focused on both implicit and explicit modes of vocabulary teaching supplemented with vocabulary learning strategies. The framework used in this study is the four essential components of vocabulary instruction, as proposed by Graves (2006), along with strategies proposed by Hulstijn (1997), which were appropriate and applicable as the framework of the study. According to Graves (2006), the four essential components of vocabulary instruction are providing rich and varied language experiences, teaching individual words explicitly, teaching word-learning strategies, and fostering word consciousness.

Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) emphasizes learning activities that are long-term, interdisciplinary, and student-centered. It is a pedagogical method that pays more attention to learners. In a PBL classroom environment, learners raise questions and try to address the posed questions through research under the instructor’s supervision and guidance (Bell, 2010). Regardless of a strict lesson plan, PBL investigates a topic that is worth learning more about (Harris & Katz, 2001). Learners are normally more autonomous over what they are learning, and PBL typically sustains learners’ interests and motivates them to take more responsibilities for their learning (Tassinari, 1996). Unlike traditional and teacher-led classroom activities, with the application of PBL, EFL students often organize their work and manage their time spending on their choice of learning. Moreover, project-based instruction differs from traditional teaching strategies since it focuses on students’ collaboration or individual artifact construction to represent their learning. Hence, PBL depends immensely on learning groups, student-centeredness, cooperation, and interaction (Moursund, 1999). Based on the concept of PBL, as presented in Donnelly and Fitzmaurice’s study (2005), the current study followed the five stages of PBL, namely planning, researching, the first draft, rewriting, and submitting the project, to enhance Thai EFL students’ vocabulary ability.

Peer Teaching

Peer teaching refers to the delivery of instruction by peers or classmates in an interactive classroom environment (Bradford-Watts, 2011). It nourishes the learning by allowing more experienced students to provide a body of knowledge to the other less experienced ones, yet under the supervision or guidance of the instructor. In the ESL/EFL field, peer teaching typically generates positive learning experience, builds cooperation among students and between the teacher
and students, develops students’ self-confidence in language mastery, and increases better language skill development (Bradford-Watts, 2011; Sunggingwati, 2018; Harutyunyan & Poveda, 2018). In the teaching of English vocabulary, peer teaching deems beneficial impacts. Mackiewicz, Wood, Cooke, and Mazzotti (2010) reported that peer teaching allowed learners to use new vocabulary socially in class, and the practice using new words in conversational contexts with peers and teachers, with whom the students felt acquainted, reinforced comprehension and increased learning relaxation.

**Multimedia**

Multimedia can be described as the combination of various digital media types, such as text, images, sound, and video, into an integrated multi-sensory interactive application or presentation to convey messages or information to the audience. Multimedia comprises different elements, and each element has its advantages. Velleman and Moore (1996) report that for any multimedia system to be successful these elements must be in balance. It means each component should be employed for what it does best and not letting one element dominate over the others. In the field of language learning and teaching, several studies also indicated that the use of technology had a positive impact on vocabulary teaching and learning (Agca & Özdemir, 2013; Suwantaratip & Orawiwatnakul, 2015; Solak & Cakir, 2015). It potentially increases students’ mastery of English as a second or a foreign language (ESL/EFL). Consequently, multimedia is beneficial and advisable in language learning and teaching, especially in the era that a wide variety of multimedia sources are ubiquitous since it facilitates ESL/EFL students to acquire English language skills.

**Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle**

Kolb (1984) claims that learning is the process of knowledge creation through the conversion of experience. He presents a cyclical model of learning that consists of four stages, which are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The proposed learning cycle explains the process of experience translation via reflection into concepts that guide active experimentation and enhances the choice of new experiences. The first stage of the cycle is where the learner experiences an activity, such as fieldwork, and the second stage is when the learner reflects on that encountered experience. The third stage is where the learner attempts to conceptualize a theory or model of what he or she observes. Finally, the fourth stage is where the learner tries to plan for a forthcoming experience.

Regarding the abovementioned literature, the current study integrated the four theories to develop Thai EFL students’ vocabulary ability. Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework of the study.
The present study adopted the mixed-methods embedded experimental research design (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this study to collect data for answering the two research questions. A one-group pre-test and post-test design were integrated to examine the impacts of the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning on improving Thai EFL senior high school students’ vocabulary ability.

Research Participants

The participants, selected via a purposive sampling method, were 45 tenth-grade students who enrolled in a compulsory English course in the first semester of the 2019 Academic Year. Out of the 16 classes of the tenth-grade students, the chosen participants were consistently the lowest and were academically among the weakest students. Considered to be low English proficiency students, their GPA was from 2.00 to 2.50, while the other students’ GPAs were ranging from higher than 2.50 to 4.00. Their Ordinary National Educational Test (ONET) scores in English were also low.

Instruments

Pre-Test and Post-Test for Vocabulary Ability

Before and after the learning through the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning, the participants took a pre-test and a post-test, respectively. The pre- and post-test aimed at assessing the participants’ vocabulary ability. In this study, vocabulary ability refers to the ability to match the vocabulary with the correct definition, recognize and use context clues to determine the meanings of new words, and apply new words to write short sentences. Therefore, the pre- and post-test comprised three parts, and each part attempted to assess the students’ vocabulary ability as previously mentioned. The contents of the test were as the following.

Figure 1. The theoretical framework of the study
The Integration of Implicit and Explicit Vocabulary  
Somjai & Soontornwipast

Part 1: Matching Word to Definition Test  
Part 2: Multiple-Choice Sentence Test  
Part 3: Short Sentence Writing Test

Students’ Reflective Journal (SRJ)
In this study, the students’ reflective journals (SRJs) were employed to elicit students’ perception towards the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning. The participants were assigned to write a reflective journal for three times after each stage of learning. Prompts, in the form of questions, were provided to help the participants focus on aspects that were relevant to the current study. Students were allowed to write their reflections in Thai to minimize any language problems. When analyzing the data, the researcher translated Thai responses into English, and the translated responses were rechecked by the experts.

Students’ Perception Questionnaire
The designed questionnaire aimed to elicit students’ perceptions toward the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning to develop their vocabulary ability. The questionnaire was adapted from Phisutthangkoon’s (2012), and it consisted of 17 question items formatted in a five-point Likert-type rating scale, ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree.’ Moreover, the questionnaire was followed by three open-ended questions, which were written in both Thai and English.

Semi-structured Focus Group Interviews
Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with 15 participants to obtain their perceptions towards the instructions and to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions in performing vocabulary ability assessment tasks. Participants were divided into three groups of five participants based on the levels of their vocabulary ability based on their mean score of pre-tests and post-tests vocabulary ability assessment. From all 45 students, mean scores, the highest mean score was 63, and the lowest score was 40. Therefore, the researcher divided the students into three groups of five according to their mean scores.

Table 1. The criterion for dividing students for the interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ Mean Scores</th>
<th>Students’ Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40-46</td>
<td>Weak Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47-54</td>
<td>Moderate Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-63</td>
<td>Strong Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Procedure
Table 2 presents the data collection procedures outlining what activities had been planned and what teaching methods would be used to help the students learn new target vocabulary words. The data collection plan covered the eight weeks of English teaching.
### Table 2. Data collection procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week No.</th>
<th>Class session</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 1   | First Meeting | - Introduction of the current research  
- Distribution of the consent form  
- Distribution of the English proficiency profile  
- Pre-Test |
|         | Second Meeting| - Teacher Model 1  
- The first demonstration and provision of class lecture, activity engagement, a project, and a PowerPoint presentation of the teacher  
- Teacher Model 2  
- The second demonstration and provision of class lecture, activity engagement, a project, and a PowerPoint presentation of the teacher |
| Week 2   | First Meeting | PBL Step 1 Planning  
- Group work assignment: Planning a project to teach ten vocabulary words to peers using PowerPoint presentation |
|         | Second Meeting| PBL Step 2 Researching  
- Assigning tasks to individual group member: Doing research for more information, reading related articles, visiting the library, using online search engines |
| Week 3   | First Meeting | PBL Step 3 First draft  
- Getting all ideas down on a paper  
- Writing a vocabulary project  
- Writing a student reflective journal |
|         | Second Meeting| PBL Step 4 Rewriting  
- Rewriting and editing the project based on the corrections and suggestions received from the teacher  
PBL Step 5 Submitting Projects  
- Submitting of the edited project |
| Week 4   | First Meeting | Peer teaching  
- Group 1 Presenting the project  
- Writing a student reflective journal |
|         | Second Meeting| Peer teaching  
- Group 2 Presenting the project  
- Writing a student reflective journal |
| Week 5   | First Meeting | Peer teaching  
- Group 3 Presenting the project  
- Writing a student reflective journal |
|         | Second Meeting| Peer teaching  
- Group 4 Presenting the project  
- Writing a student reflective journal |
| Week 6   | First Meeting | Peer teaching  
- Group 5 Presenting the project  
- Writing a student reflective journal |
| Week 7   | First Meeting | Peer teaching  
- Group 5 Presenting the project |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week No.</th>
<th>Class session</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|         | Second Meeting | - Writing a student reflective journal  
|         |               | - Peer teaching  
|         |               | - Group 6 Presenting the project  
|         |               | - Writing a student reflective journal |
| Week 8  | First Meeting | - Post-test  
|         |               | - Distribution of students’ perception questionnaire |
|         | Second Meeting | - Conducting of semi-structured focus group interviews |

The participants were also required to answer the designed questionnaire inquiring about their perceptions towards the intervention, followed by the semi-structured focus group interviews. There were three groups of five interviewees, divided according to their pre- and post-test mean scores. The interviews were recorded with the prior permission of the interviewees. Simultaneously, the researcher also took notes during the interview sessions.

**Data Analysis**

**Vocabulary Ability Scores on Pre-test and Post-test**

The quantitative data obtained through the pre- and post-test were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistic protocols. The data were calculated to find the mean score and standard deviation. The statistic comparison was to identify the significant differences between the pre- and post-test scores. Moreover, inferential statistical analysis was employed, and a dependent Sample T-test (2-tailed) was used to indicate if the discrepancy between the pre- and post-test scores were significantly different. Additionally, t-value and df-values were included to calculate the effect size to help validate the results.

**Students’ Reflective Journals**

The qualitative data were analyzed using the thematic coding, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2013). The data were categorized into themes regarding the frequency of repeated words and keywords. Similar information was grouped into categories with assigned and specific labels. Member checking was also assigned for triangulation, and independent observers examined the categories to ensure the consistency and creditability of the researcher’s analysis.

**Students’ Perception Questionnaire**

Students’ self-rating scores from the perception questionnaire were analyzed and calculated for the mean and standard deviation and interpreted into five levels as follows:

- 4.21-5.00 = very high
- 3.41-4.20 = high
- 2.61-3.40 = moderate
- 1.81-2.60 = low
- 1.00-1.80 = very low
Furthermore, all students were asked to respond to three open-ended questions. The responses were labeled and grouped to yield themes of perception. The data gathered were analyzed via open coding methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Semi-structured Focus Group Interviews**

Interviews were transcribed verbatim to capture the richness and in-depth of the data. Thematic coding was used to interpret the transcriptions of the semi-structured focus group interviews. The triangulation of qualitative data gathered from students’ reflective journals, a students’ perception questionnaire, and semi-structured focus group interviews intended to increase the credibility and validity of the study.

**Results and Findings**

The findings of this study are divided into two parts, namely 1) the impact of the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning, and 2) students’ perceptions toward the application of the integrated instruction to improve their vocabulary ability.

The impacts of the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning on improving vocabulary of Thai EFL senior students

This section demonstrated the effects of the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, PBL, multimedia, and experiential learning to improve the students’ vocabulary ability. Table 3 presents the students’ pre- and post-test scores before and after participating in the current study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>43.84</td>
<td>61.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>7.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>t</strong></td>
<td>41.32</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>p</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 3, the paired-samples t-test shows a statistically significant difference in the pre-test mean scores of vocabulary ability (\(\bar{x} = 43.84, SD = 6.17\)) and the post-test mean scores (\(\bar{x} = 61.77, SD = 7.10\)); t (22) = 41.32, p < .001. In addition, Cohen’s D (\(d = 2.69\)) indicates a large effect size, suggesting that the intervention had a large effect on language ability pre-test compared with post-test.

Students’ perceptions towards the integration of project-based learning, implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, multimedia, and experiential learning

Regarding the students’ perceptions toward the application of the integrated vocabulary instruction obtained from students’ reflective journals, a students’ perceptions questionnaire, and
semi-structured focus group interviews, it revealed that all 45 students had positive perceptions toward the instruction. They all reflected that integrated vocabulary instruction was advantageous and practical, and it helped to improve their vocabulary ability significantly. Moreover, they reported that they could learn new vocabulary faster and more easily, and their level of self-confidence also increased. With the improvement of vocabulary learning and self-confidence, the students mentioned that their speaking skills were also better. The instruction also created a pleasant learning atmosphere, which encouraged them to participate in classroom activities and use technology for learning. The students’ comments gathered from the interviews were presented as the following.

**Memorizing New Vocabulary Faster and More Easily**

*S29:* Activities and techniques of this course help me remember new words faster because I get more techniques to guess the meaning of new words such as looking at context clues and using prefixes and suffixes. These techniques are very useful for me to apply to guess the meaning of other words.

*S6:* The use of motivating and attractive PowerPoint presentations consisting of definitions, related pictures, pronunciation clips, and sample sentences helps me remember more easily.

**Increasing Self-Confidence**

*S29:* This course helps develop my self-confidence in using English to speak in front of the class because I practice presenting with my friends my times before the actual presentation.

*S1:* With the teacher’s support, feedback, suggestions, and assistance through this course, I have more confidence to present in English in front of others.

**Improving Speaking Skills**

*S41:* I practice presenting so many times that I can remember everything. Finally, I can do my job perfectly. It has given me much confidence in speaking English.

*S8:* From previous teaching and learning, I have very little chance to speak English and present in front of the class. This course allows me to speak more. I have developed my English speaking and presenting in front of others.

**Creating a Pleasant Atmosphere to Study**

*S26:* Instead of lecturing, using various activities makes my classroom more fun and interesting to study. I, therefore, enjoy this class the most.

*S1:* The implementation of many activities, such as Q&A sessions, pronunciation practice, and various fun games, make me enjoy the lesson and make my classroom environment more relaxing and interesting.

**Providing Students with the Opportunity to Participate in Classroom Activity**

*S9:* Having the opportunity to teach friends and study with friends encourage me to join the classroom teaching and learning a lot.
S32: Making a vocabulary project, a multimedia PowerPoint presentation, based on project-based learning procedures helps motivate me to be involved in the teaching and learning activities.

Encouraging Students to Use Various Kinds of Technology

S39: What I gained the most from learning this course is to use new technology beginning from making a project to teaching friends in class. Technology is involved in every procedure of the course.

S33: This course encourages me to use technology a lot especially in the process of making PowerPoint presentations because I have learned how to make, edit, and create an interesting and attractive PowerPoint presentation through this course.

Discussion

Even though very little previous research employed an integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning to improve EFL learners’ vocabulary ability, the researcher found, in the current study, this intervention advantageous and innovative in the field of vocabulary development. It can be an alternative teaching strategy for vocabulary. The researcher also found that the participants’ responses in the journals, questionnaires, and interviews presented a similar idea that the abovementioned intervention hugely improved their vocabulary ability. The following section explains how the course helps to enhance the participants’ vocabulary performance.

Reasons Why the Intervention Helps Students Improve Their Vocabulary

The Opportunity to Create a Project

When students were assigned to create a vocabulary project to teach 10 vocabulary words to their peers, students have to search, study, and understand all aspects of their assigned vocabulary. Besides, they have to find the example sentences, which include target vocabulary, pictures, and pronunciation clips related to the vocabulary. These processes encourage them to learn and remember vocabulary simultaneously. Furthermore, being responsible for searching for relevant information about the target vocabulary, such as definitions, meanings, example sentences, pronunciation, and related images, help them remember words more easily.

The Opportunity to Teach Their Friends

In this study, when students finished creating their projects, they have to use their projects to teach their peers. Having an opportunity to teach their peers and prepare their lessons enabled them to develop vocabulary ability. Besides, acting as a teacher, practicing presenting many times, and receiving feedback from the teacher greatly helped them increase their vocabulary ability.

The Opportunity to Learn with Their Friends

Apart from teaching their friends, students also have a chance to learn vocabulary from their friends. Peers’ teaching not only helped students to remember words well but also made the teaching atmosphere relaxing and not stressful. When students feel comfortable and enjoyed, they are active and willing to participate in classroom activities. When they do not understand, they feel free and ask and answer questions. This helps them to memorize vocabulary faster and more easily.
Practical and Useful Techniques

This section will discuss the practical and outstanding techniques used in this study, according to the students’ responses. Most students mentioned that peer teaching techniques and the use of multimedia facilitate their vocabulary learning as the following.

Peer Teaching Techniques
Peer Teaching Techniques Help Students Learn New Vocabulary Faster and More Easily.

Most participants in the current study reported that peer teaching helped them develop their vocabulary ability faster and more easily. This is in line with various studies that peer teaching increases the students’ knowledge of vocabulary acquisition (Kourea, Cartledge, & Musti-Rao, 2007), and peer teaching facilitates students to successfully master new English vocabulary words and their spellings (Greenwood, Arreaga-Mayer, Utley, Gavin, & Terry, 2001; Mackiewicz, Wood, Cooke, & Mazzotti, 2010). Since peer teaching requires students to use social skills and collaboration, students have more chances to interact with each other. Furthermore, students who are normally silent in the classroom will gradually be active and more verbal. As a result, the vocabulary retention rate will be higher, and students will acquire more vocabulary words (Malone & McLaughlin, 1997).

Peer Teaching Techniques Creates a Pleasing Classroom Environment

Most participants also mentioned that peer teaching helped create a pleasing classroom environment; moreover, it made the teaching atmosphere more relaxing and enjoyable. This finding can be supported by a study conducted by Gut, Farmer, Bishop, Hives, Aaron, and Jackson (2004) that students were more enthusiastic about their learning and enjoyed playing the part of the tutor or tutee. Besides, peer teaching seems to create a positive impact on struggling learners who find asking for help difficult. It also promotes positive feelings toward the subjects being taught, collaborative learning activities, and teachers (McDuffie, Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2009).

From the researcher’s observation, when the participants were taught by their peers, they got involved in their learning more. Moreover, peer teaching encouraged the participants to admit that they had problems understanding the lessons. This situation triggered discussions, inquiries, practice, and evaluation of the learning process with direct feedback. Consequently, peer teaching grants students more opportunities to practice what they learn by doing the required activities. The students’ awareness of responsibility and self-confidence also increases. The finding is in the same direction as the ones yielded in the studies of Brady, Holt, and Welt (2002), Tang, Hernandez, and Barbara (2004), Kenner and Kress (2004), and Weberschock, Ginn, Reinhold, Strometz, Krug, Bergold, and Schulze (2005) that peer teaching is an effective teaching strategy to develop students’ language and social abilities.

To conclude, peer teaching can be a wonderful gift in the classroom, providing a varied approach for both the teacher and the student in the learning process. However, the teacher should be creative, take the plunge, and organize some activities where the students take the lead, discussion groups, feedback, oral presentations, and brainstorming.
The Use of Multimedia to Facilitate Vocabulary Learning

Another essential aspect gained from most of the participants’ reflections is the beneficial use of multimedia to facilitate the faster and easier learning of vocabulary. Most participants reported that the use of text, sound, pictures, videos, and animations helps them learn new vocabulary more effectively in a faster and easier pace. The participants’ responses in the present study are consistent with some other previous research studies as the following.

Multimedia facilitate language learning and teaching (Nation, 2001). They allow learners to use multisensory elements, texts, sound, pictures, videos, and animations as they provide a meaningful and comprehensive learning context. Paivio (1990) stated that the more learners associated target words with appropriate nonverbal referents (pictures, objects, emotions, and events), the more meaningful their connections between verbal and visual would become. As a result, when learning new words verbally and visually, ESL/EFL learners have better recall and more appropriate use of the words, compared with when the words are either verbally or visually coded individually. Therefore, additional pictorial cues are efficient and effective, and they assist learners to associate words and pictures (Oxford & Crookall, 1990).

Furthermore, some researchers discussed the impacts of the use of multimedia to information presentation on L2 vocabulary acquisition (Akbulut, 2007; Kim & Gilman, 2008). The results of these studies showed that texts, along with videos, pictures, and graphics, promoted L2 vocabulary acquisition. The results of Akbulut’s (2007) study showed that students having access to word definitions, along with pictures and short video clips, achieved significantly higher vocabulary scores than those groups assigned to research only word definitions.

In summary, vocabulary development vitally influences the progress of language learning in every aspect. An integration of different modes of multimedia inputs, such as texts, sounds, pictures, videos, and animations, will yield effective English language learning procedures, not only for vocabulary teaching and learning but also for teaching and learning of other linguistic contents.

Implications

To effectively implement the teaching techniques used in this study, there are some aspects that interested teachers should take into consideration.

Firstly, teachers must have content knowledge of using a computer and various technological media since they have to give students advice and design vocabulary projects and multimedia PowerPoint presentations, as examples for students before assigning them to create their work.

Secondly, implementing implicit-explicit teaching, PBL, multimedia, and experiential learning aims to inspire students to create their projects and multimedia PowerPoint presentations to teach their friends in the classroom. The role of the teachers is to give advice, help students solve problems, boost students’ critical thinking skills, and support them to work in groups efficiently. The teachers, therefore, need to be creative, patient, resourceful, unbiased, open-minded, and flexible.
Thirdly, the duration of teaching and learning management of using the integration of implicit-explicit teaching, PBL, multimedia, and experiential learning is quite long. Consequently, interested teachers should study and manage the teaching and learning time well enough and prepare the teaching plan in advance to comply with the time limit.

Conclusion
This study investigated the impacts of the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning to improve Thai EFL senior high school students’ vocabulary ability. The findings indicated that the students who received integrated instruction significantly improved their vocabulary ability with higher test scores. The qualitative data analysis revealed that all 45 students showed positive perceptions of the instruction. They found that they could benefit from the integration of implicit and explicit vocabulary instruction, project-based learning, multimedia, and experiential learning in class because it facilitated them to learn and master new vocabulary faster and more easily. Besides, students reported that the instruction increased their self-confidence, improved their speaking skills, created a pleasant learning atmosphere, provided them with opportunities to participate in classroom activities, and encouraged them to use various kinds of technology in learning.

Recommendations
The present study recruited only one group of a small number of participants to participate in designed teaching plans within a short period. Thus, some further studies include two groups of a larger number of participants to examine whether the integration of implicit-explicit vocabulary instruction, PBL, multimedia, and experiential learning has different or similar impacts on the experimental group and the control group. Furthermore, intrigued researchers should conduct a research study applying integrated instruction with students in different grade levels or academic proficiency to identify if the instruction will yield the same or distinct findings. Finally, a delayed post-test is worth conducting to examine whether the positive effects of the instruction can help the students to retain their vocabulary ability.

About the Authors:
Satit Somjai is a full-time teacher at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School, Thailand. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Language Institute of Thammasat University majoring in English Language Teaching. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0692-6766

Assistant Professor Kittitouch Soontornwipast, Ed.D. is a full-time lecturer at the Language Institute of Thammasat University. His research interests include teacher training, instructional media, action research for English teachers, and teaching methodology. http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0461-7775

References


Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (2002). *Teacher reading academy*. Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin and the Texas Education Agency.


Using Blended Learning to Support the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language

Hebah Asaad Hamza Sheerah
English Department, Faculty of Language and Translation
Abha, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract
The recent development in the field of technology in education has led to renewed interest in blending traditional methods of teaching with technology which might enhance language teaching and learning. The purpose of this paper is to review the literature concerning the strengths and weaknesses of blended learning as a technology-enhanced pedagogical tool that combines online and face-to-face instructional activities, on the development of English skills, inclusive of its use in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Furthermore, this article sheds new light on how blended learning allows the learner to become autonomous and engaged in the construction the knowledge, rather than acting as passive absorbers. It is expected that this paper will contribute to enhancing the body of knowledge that exists in the area of blended learning, especially as it applies to the issue of the acquisition of experience in English as a foreign language. It can be concluded that the use of blended learning has the potential to support EFL learning and maximize EFL learners’ opportunities to practice the English language freely at their convenience. There are issues which need to be addressed and, or resolved, such as ensuring that the library facilities are capable of delivering this type of approach, online materials are suitably supportive of the students needed to access them, and the design of blended learning approaches take account of the preferred learning methods of students, and the workload required to be successful.

Keywords: blended learning, distance education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), face-to-face learning, flexibility, self-directed learners, technology-enhanced learning

Introduction

The rapid global technological progression has contributed to increasing the utilization of English as the language of communication on the Internet (Mohammed, 2018). At a time when modern technology appears to monopolize people’s time, whether it is being utilized for shopping, leisure, or work, it is vital to recognize the opportunities that it presents for those learning the English language. The use of electronic educational technology allows for adjusting learning programs and courses to individual learners’ needs, wants, and capabilities, which positively affects their performance and academic achievement.

In Saudi Arabia for example, despite the tremendous number of projects that aim to develop EFL curriculum, textbooks, and a variety of professional development programs, the level of English language competence among EFL students remains unsatisfactory (Alrabai, 2014). A key issue is that most traditional Saudi classrooms are teacher-centered; thus, students are not used to arguing, participating in open discussions, or questioning others. Instead, they simply sit, listening, and accepting whatever the teachers say (Al Rashidi & Phan, 2015; Alrabai, 2014; Khoshaim, 2017). Previous studies (e.g., Alkubaidi, 2014; Khoshaim, 2017) have indicated that the predominant teacher-centered approach has resulted in a lack of student engagement and attention. For example, some students talk with each other during the lesson, use their laptops or mobile phones, or fall asleep, so the lesson becomes quite dull.

A large-scale study by Alrabai (2014) found that most EFL school students in Saudi Arabia are anxious learners because they are used to being memorizers; as a result, they appear unresponsive to communicating in classroom conversations and unwilling to ask or even try to speak in English.

A lack of motivation also exists among EFL students. Saudi learners often show no interest in English classroom activities (Al Rashidi & Phan, 2015). Liton (2012) found that Saudi students in EFL classes suffer from a lack of enthusiasm and motivation. For example, long English class hours—up to five hours daily in some universities—with the same teacher and same class location to focus on only two language skills can result in demotivating students towards EFL. Similarly, Alhaisoni and Rahman (2013) pointed out that, although EFL in Saudi Arabia is presented as a mandatory subject from the fourth year in the elementary level (when learners are ten years old), there is a lack of motivation to help learners develop their English skills (listening, speaking, writing, reading) and change their attitude towards English.

As noted by Mohammed (2018), e-learning in general and blended learning, in particular enable students to practice their foreign language in a stress-free setting, which significantly contributes to their knowledge and proficiency. Second, as the use of blended learning is in its initial stages mainly in the Saudi educational system, the findings of this study could be used to promote the efficient implementation of blended learning by providing useful suggestions to address the challenges faced when implementing blended learning in the previous year in Saudi Arabia or another educational context.

In this paper, the term blended learning is used as a pedagogical approach to describe the integration of face-to-face instructions with computer-mediated communication (CMC), such as
virtual learning classes, online chats, and discussion boards, to help students use a range of online synchronous events (happening at the same time) and asynchronous activities (not occurring at the same time) that can enhance English language skills, activate learning, and facilitate communications.

**Technology in EFL Pedagogy**

In the field of English as a foreign language (EFL), however, pedagogy has long focused on constructivist principles and the importance of communicative competence (Forsman, 2010; Hymes, 1972), so the focus has primarily been on how technology can reduce the distance between teachers and students or encourage peer learning. This means that technology in EFL is much more precisely focused on technology as a tool to give students “access to a teacher or a curriculum in a single physical space” (Mihai & Purmensky, 2016, p. 300). This is most commonly expressed in computer-assisted language learning (CALL), which Warschauer (2000) helpfully described as developing in three stages since the 1970s. Bax (2003) linked each step to the dominant pedagogy of the time, such that mainframe technology was used in grammar-translation pedagogy for drilling and practice. PCs then developed in tandem with communicative pedagogy emphasizing communication exercises in the 1980s and 1990s before integrative pedagogy and discipline-specific communication developed alongside multimedia and Internet capabilities to give access to authentic learning materials. Thus, teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) literature draws close links among medium, pedagogy, and learning philosophy in a way that is arguably more broadly absent in the higher education literature.

It has been claimed that TESOL has an influential culture of innovation and experimentation, perhaps rooted in a tradition of action research, in which new approaches are more quickly tested and then normalized (Bax, 2003) such that “it is no longer a question as to whether... but how effectively” technology is used in EFL (Mihai & Purmensky, 2016, p. 302). An excellent example of this is in the technology used to aid with learning reading in English in Thailand. Technology more efficiently supports “coordinated utilization of multiple strategies to negotiate the meaning of the text” (Akkakoson, 2013, p. 423) to the extent that students taught using CALL were less likely to adopt the unhelpful bottom-up, and passive reading strategies overly focused on unknown vocabulary which is commonly associated with EFL reading strategies of Thai students studying in the US (Sitthitikul, 2011).

Similarly, innovation in teaching writing within EFL has used technology not just to find more authentic models, but also to produce multi-modal texts and writing in different formats, thereby implicitly focusing students on the need to consider an audience when writing (Edwards-Groves, 2012). At its most innovative, writing pedagogy in EFL has also integrated peer-learning, self-directed learning, or widening participation agenda in projects such as the student-led Open Textbooks (Gruszczynska, Merchant, & Pountney, 2013) which conceptualizes writing as part of a broader digital literacy.

Trinder (2017) points out that students have easy access to an array of different technologies they can employ for communication with others, entertainment, and research. She added that the Internet, with its facility to download and stream films and television series, provides exposure to English language usage in specific settings and contexts, which has
previously not been possible. Many people make extensive use of the internet, with much of the interaction conducted using English as the communication medium, making this a useful addition to formal classroom activities (Sockett, 2014). Young people spend more time learning and making use of the English language online than within the confines of the classroom (Toffoli & Sockett, 2015).

Keisling’s (2018) recent study found that it was not only teaching approaches that needed to be considered and, or modified to accommodate the use of modern technology as part of learning. His study examined the effectiveness of library services for university students. He stated that libraries need to employ robust user assessment programs to scale what they learn about their changing clientele to revise and enhance the services they provide within budget.

**Blended Learning**

**What is Blended Learning?**

The emergence and growing popularity of the Internet have significantly changed the teaching and learning processes (Ellis, Pardo, & Han, 2016). It is significant to recognize that this concept is in a constant state of flux and evolution, requiring continuous revision as technology improves (Tucker, Wycoff, & Green, 2017). E learning is commonly considered one of the most prominent trends to emerge from the Internet proliferation. According to Yalçınkaya (2015), at the same time, purely online courses and learning programs have been criticized for a low level of socialization as well as the lack of support benefits of traditional teaching styles and approaches (Güzer & Caner, 2014). This discrepancy has led to a blended learning approach that combines both online and offline instruction.

Given that the blended learning concept is relatively new, there is still no consensus among researchers and scholars on what constitutes blended learning. For example, Stein and Graham (2015) defined blended learning as “a combination of onsite (i.e., face-to-face) with online experiences to produce effective, efficient, and flexible learning” (p. 12). Although this definition provides the reader with the main idea behind the blended learning concept, it does not consider its focus on personalization. Therefore, in addition to the notion of time and place flexibility, blended learning provides students with ample occasions to attain actual personalized instruction (Harb & Krish, 2020).

Littlejohn and Pegler (2007) agreed that the nature of BL consists of contemporary learning that engages eLearning using information technology (IT) and interaction tools, such as online activities, where learners have the chance to communicate with the teacher and other students in the classroom. Accordingly, both traditional face-to-face (f2f) learning and e-learning settings are shared and combined to achieve the anticipated objectives. In assessing what is meant by the term blended learning, Oliver and Trigwell (2005) found that its definition varies markedly. Besides, the term is often misapplied to situations in which e-learning components are clumsily integrated into otherwise offline courses or where practice within the same session varies significantly among educators who have different attitudes toward digital education. For these commentators, a reconfiguring of digital education is required so that control over the social and interactive aspects of courses resides with learners rather than educators. With such control, the interactional aspects of teaching and learning can be fostered organically by students rather than...
being corralled or ignored per the approach of different teaching figures (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005). These commentators drew on variation theory, positing that, for learning to occur, “variation must be experienced by the learner. Without variation, there is no discernment, and without discernment, there is no learning. Discernment is at the core of our ways of experiencing the world” (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005, p. 22). Meanwhile, Garrison and Kanuka (2004) emphasized the effective integration of both types of learning: “thoughtful integration of classroom f2f learning experiences with online learning experiences” (p. 96). Therefore, BL is not just bringing technology into the classroom. It is not replacing textbooks with laptops or tablets. It is redesigning the instructional model, changing the way of working with students, and giving students more control.

Hockly (2018) contended that it is crucial that both researchers and practitioners consider the meaning of the term blended learning in the context of ELT as well as having an appreciation of why there is a necessity to offer blended learning opportunities in language learning. It is equally significant to recognize the reasons behind using technology for teaching and learning, ranging from looking at the use of specific technology or technologies used within a particular area or discipline (Papastergiou, 2009, cited in Kirkwood & Price, 2014).

Hockly (2018) concluded that a growing body of research exploring the notion of blended learning in languages falls into two distinct categories: comparison and non-comparison studies (Grgurovic, 2011d cited in Hockley, 2018, p. 98). She states that comparison studies look to compare the impact of blended learning courses and traditionally delivered courses. In contrast, non-comparison studies concentrate exclusively on blended approach, concerning themselves with issues of course design, the implementation of blended learning programs, and the attitudes prevalent for teachers and learners towards a blended learning approach. Hockly (2018) observed that the prevalence of non-comparison studies could be rooted in the issues that arise due to comparing two different attitudes towards the delivery of learning programs in a meaningful way. She reported that the findings of existing studies are mixed, quoting Aguilar (2012, cited in Hockly, 2018), who stated that some researchers had reported enhanced language learning as a result of exposure to a blended learning model. In contrast, others have concluded that there is no significant improvement compared to conventional teaching methods. Hockly (2018) also highlighted that some cultural considerations must be taken into account concerning the impact of blended learning; for example, studies by Zhu, Valke, and Schellens (2009, cited in Hockly, 2018) and Liu and Chiu (2016, cited in Hockly, 2018) indicated that students might be reticent to engage in written discussions on the Internet due to a genuine fear of making mistakes. The findings of these two studies suggest that the design of blended learning courses must consider a multitude of different factors that can impact language learning (Kessler, 2018).

It is generally agreed that the idea of blended learning rests on the idea that the technology should not displace the traditional knowledge, but should add a further dimension to the learning experience. Part of the value of blended learning is that mutual support engagements in the classroom and other offline contexts can transfer to the e-learning elements of the commitment and vice versa (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019).
explaining that universities in Pennsylvania and Chicago led the revolution of distance learning by presenting correspondence courses that provided students with broad access to essential skills to develop their knowledge. Casey (2008) indicated that the first university course adopted distance education in several developments; for example, regarding correspondence courses, the first one was the Pitman Shorthand training program in the United States. Panchabakesan (2011) listed four purposes of correspondence learning: students had specific circumstances that prevented them from continuing their education, students lived in remote areas, qualified students did not enroll because they could not find a place in universities. Some individuals had a desire to continue their education in a particular field of discipline. The majority of attendees in such courses were female. Following the advent of radio, lectures broadcast in the 1920s attracted many students, particularly Wisconsin’s School of the Air, as it was the first distance learning American program.

In the 1970s, educational television (ETV) was beneficial mainly in rural and remote areas. During this period, the use of technological methods was without interactions. In the 1980s, the Open University in the United Kingdom served as an example to shift to distance learning and improve the quality of teaching and learning. It mainly concerned adult distance learners. This stage uses two methods of communications media, video conferencing and the Internet, to enhance learners’ skills by increasing interactivity. Hoskins (2013) added that the evolvement of online learning dramatically changed the nature of education by improving communications to simplify collaborative interactions between learners: “the traditional sage-on-the-stage has been replaced with the guide-on-the-side” (p. 189). Besides, the widespread use of distance learning at the time resulted in the creation of some virtual universities, such as Jones International University (www.jonesinternational.edu), the first completely online university, and Western Governors’ University (www.wgu.edu), which aimed to develop students’ aptitudes (Olson, 2001). The following paragraph presents some definitions of distance learning.

An expansive definition of distance education from Sauve (1993) can still account for much of the technology-enabled learning pedagogy in use today. Sauve used the term distance education to refer to “an umbrella concept covering correspondence courses, televised teaching, radio-broadcast, open learning, computer-assisted instruction, individualized learning and self-learning” (p. 102). This definition considers the primary purpose of distance learning as a teaching method containing several technological communications. Similarly, Greenberg (1998) defined distance education to refer to a planned teaching-learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance and is designed to encourage learner interaction and certification of learning” (p. 36). This definition is close to Willis’s (1994) description of distance education as “[a] basic level... [and] takes place when a teacher and student(s) are separated by physical distance, and technology (i.e., voice, video, and print) is used to bridge the instructional gap” (p. 4). This means students and teachers are geographically distant, and learners work independently with the learning materials.

Distance education opened opportunities to women and persecuting minority ethnic groups, changing the culture of campus life. Distance and part-time learning opened up access to the professions. New competitiveness among students—mainly working-class and female students—rejected the “just getting by” study habits of the elites (Horowitz, 1988). Horowitz (1988) further argued that students studying at a distance or by occasionally coming onto campus
were setting new standards of student professionalism, hard work, and academic rigor that challenge the status quo.

Distance learning became more than merely offering students passive consumption; it was opening universities up to change. Casey (2008) argued that this had improved the quality of university education in general in countries such as the UK, Australia, and Hong Kong. At the individual student level, initial snobbery at students gaining degrees without physically going to university was similarly replaced by respect for those students demonstrating higher self-discipline, motivation, and self-management (Lowes & Lin, 2015). Unfortunately, this trend seems less prominent outside Anglophone countries. For example, online education is generally seen as less prestigious than campus-based instruction in the Middle East (Elango, Gudep, & Selvam, 2008), with a study of employers in Oman and Egypt indicating that the quality of such education was deemed inferior (Sadik, 2016). To some extent, Knight (2014) explained this as unfair stereotyping that non-native English speakers (NNES) take advantage of online education to cheat. This may also explain why online learning does not have this same stigma in these countries in subjects such as engineering (Ahmed & Zaneldin, 2013) and medicine (Masters et al., 2016).

Professional areas where English is a lingua franca or subjects where English is the language of instruction may not regard online learning as lacking prestige. Enthusiasm for online learning has similarly been linked to passion for innovation and student-centered learning (Randeree, 2006). The denigration of online knowledge in such countries may be more about traditional compared to current tensions or resistance to English-medium instruction rather than online education per se.

A particularly useful perspective on this tension is offered by Richardson (2000), who argued that the learning itself is similar, whether online or campus-based, and that differences are more about the backgrounds of students attracted to each mode. Richardson’s study used a sequence of surveys and inventories to look for differences in terms of study habits, student progress, approaches to study, and even the much-maligned concept of learning styles. As such, Richardson provided a strong rationale for looking at the kinds of students attracted to online study rather than expecting to find differences based on how students are taught. Richardson essentially claimed for a demand-side understanding rather than a supply-side understanding.

Such an approach has been further strengthened by a recent systematic review of longitudinal research (Asikainen & Gijbels, 2017) drawing on Richardson’s (2000) work to look at the development of deep approaches to learning (Entwistle, 2000; Marton & Saljo, 2005) in higher education—namely, online versus campus-based. Concluding that there was no consensus, Asikainen and Gijbels (2017) showed that deep approaches to learning were not stimulated more in one mode than another, and both could be done well or poorly. This supported Richardson’s (2000) earlier finding that distance-learning students “resemble older students at campus-based institutions and differ from younger campus-based students” (p. 178). Still, it seems that much of this has to do with older and more emotionally mature students being attracted to distance culture rather than distance education itself having a causal effect on student maturity. Such findings also highlight the criticism that online training is under-theorized (Garrison, 2000) and uses imprecise
terminology (Moore, Dickson-Deane, & Galyen, 2011), making it challenging to find rigorous explanatory frameworks for such findings.

**Technology-enhanced Learning and Distance Education**

Kirkwood and Price (2014) highlighted the fact several studies have attempted to provide a meta-analysis of findings from both quasi-experimental and experimental investigations into the effects of technology-enhanced learning (Tamim et al., 2011, cited in Kirkwood & Price, 2014). In contrast, others seek to explore the ideas behind educational practice (Hrastinski, 2008, mentioned in Kirkwood & Price, 2014) and investigate teachers’ motivation and aims (Jump, 2011, cited in Kirkwood & Price, 2014).

One such study, by Price and Kirkwood (2011, cited in Kirkwood & Price, 2014) noted that there were problems with the notion of enhancement and the evidence for this, which they felt required further investigation. Kirkwood and Price (2014) emphasized these issues and merged the two separate aims—that of changes like teaching approaches and modifications in how teachers teach and learners learn. Besides, they noted that many studies concentrated on the former, but not on how this teaching happens. They concluded that the potential for technology to have a transformational impact on teaching and learning has not yet been realized in research as most studies focus upon the reproduction or reinforcement of existing practice. They also highlighted the fact that research needs to be carefully targeted and indeed analyzed within a specific educational context to ascertain whether learning has been transformed.

One of the most influential organizations in distance education is the UK’s Open University, which has established a global reputation for distance learning from its origins as a correspondence school through cutting-edge online and blended learning opportunities (Daniel, 2015). Indeed, Daniel (2015) pointed out that the Open University initially lacked prestige because of its widening participation agenda—indeed, it still accepts many students without traditional qualifications—but the quality of education soon established its status.

With this rise in the status of a technology-focused university came the growth of the state of online education such that, today, world leaders in training, such as Harvard and Yale, now offer some of the best online, and even blended, learning opportunities (Lazaroiu, Popescu, & Nica, 2016). Indeed, these highly elite universities offer these courses free to anyone who wants to study them and in many cases also invite the public to campus or offer tutorials, thereby demonstrating the potential for online learning to democratize education (Voigt, Buliga, & Michl, 2017). However, the dominance of these English-speaking institutions has arguably led to idiosyncratic practices in distance learning, which neglect parallel innovation in Eastern Europe and Asia (Keegan, 2013).

Nevertheless, these examples of the Open University and the Harvard and Yale collaboration through EdX also reflect historical trends in distance education. Expanding participation becomes inextricably linked with very high-quality provision. Although some initial distance education provision was intended as a next-best alternative for those living in remote areas or otherwise unable to come to campus or find a place (Panchabakesan, 2011), widening participation soon showed just how many people could benefit from and enrich the university
experience.

The Rationale of Blended Learning

One explanation for shifting to the blended learning approach is that it allows for creating autonomous or self-directed learners. Blended learning permits the learner to become engaged in the construction and the use of the knowledge, rather than acting as passive absorbers. It is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by autonomy and self-directed learning. Little (1991) gave his definition of the former as “the capacity of detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action” (p. 15). Sriarunrasmee et al. (2015) provided another definition as a “procedure where the learner considers and decides on the learning topic based on his/her own interests and abilities” (p. 156).

In settings of blended learning, where the teacher is physically absent for a large part of the time, two essential issues must be considered: First, the design of materials and activities must be clear and purposeful; second, the teacher’s role is crucial in encouraging and supporting learners in their learning decisions and choices (Sriarunrasmee et al., 2015). This view is supported by (Terry and Reinders, 2008; Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019), who claimed that it is challenging for learners to exhibit autonomy without teachers’ intervention and guidance. Furthermore, it has commonly been assumed that learners, who can accomplish further efforts to develop their learning skills will only profit from the useful outcomes of self-directed learning. Supporting this view, Bhat, Rajashekar, and Kamath (2007) asserted that, when an institution decides to adopt self-directed learning (SDL) approach, they have to consider heterogeneity and individual skills differences between students. The authors conducted a research project in an undergraduate medical program in India to compare two groups of students in terms of their exam scores by using a t-test; the first group was taught by SDL as a part of their learning method whereas the second one was prepared using a conventional approach. The result indicated that not all students could benefit from SDL; only good students with excellent learning skills could become capable self-directed learners.

Trinder’s (2017) study of Austrian university students and their use of modern technology in independent settings led her to make the case that there should be a higher degree of attention given to online, informed methods of learning the English language. Her research indicated that online learning resources are of great value to students, not only in terms of the practical benefits to their language learning but also for improving their digital literacy and in encouraging self-directed learning, which will be essential for their future learning practices (Levy, 2017).

Much of the current literature on blended learning pays particular attention to the rationale for choosing it by large numbers of learners. Banditvilai (2016) experimental study set out to examine the efficacy of using BL to support self-directed learning within language skills among 60 undergraduate students in Thailand enrolled in a communicative business English module. In terms of academic listening skills, the results indicated that online supplementary materials provided in BL offered more positive advantages by supporting time flexibility, which allowed students to practice listening at any time convenient to them as well as take the responsibility for their learning, which students strongly appreciated.

The flexibility of time and place, where every student chooses the time and place that suits
him or her, is considered a vital. This is undoubtedly true in the case of adult learners who have to balance their jobs and families with their studies. Students who live far from the university or have other responsibilities that prohibit them from attending class illustrate this clearly. Such flexibility and approachability provided by blended learning have enabled more learners to access higher education, regardless of geographical location and culture.

Much can be learned from previous studies and experiences of utilizing online and digital language learning and blended learning. Gordon (2014) looked at how e-learning (or technology-enhanced learning) can support flexible pedagogies and provide enhanced choices for learners in terms of where they learn, the pace at which they learn, and their mode of learning. Each of these things can be supported through appropriate approaches utilizing modern computer technology on campus, at the workplace, or in the home. He observed that the use of technology in people’s lives is nothing new in the modern age. However, technology can enable the use of a diverse range of approaches in the delivery and assessment of courses.

Researchers have recently shown an increased interest in describing the role of blended learning in enhancing student engagement. Furlong and Christenson (2008) defined student engagement as “a concept that requires psychological connections within the academic environment (e.g., positive relationships between adults and students and among peers) in addition to active student behavior (e.g., attendance, effort, pro-social behavior)” (p. 365). This definition highlights the role of interaction among learners. This view is supported by Weaver, Spratt, and Nair (2008), who stated that: tertiary pedagogy is concerned with building meaningful learning relationships between learners and teachers and learners and their peers. It involves encouraging collaboration in learning as well as cooperation in learning for the promotion of innovative and interactive quality e-learning environments.

Using modern technology for learning can also encourage the notion of teamwork and learning with and from others. Cobanoglu, Yucel, Uzunboylar, and Ceylan (2017) examined blended mentoring practice (utilizing an online questionnaire methodology) in the learning of English and revealed that preservice ICT teachers thought of their English mentors as colleagues (team-mates) who supported, helped, and guided them in their efforts while also being a resource as experts in their field. Both mentors and mentees welcomed the blended mentoring practice, with all those involved in the study recommending that this type of approach be adopted for teacher education.

Learning outcomes are an important consideration when designing blended learning courses (Mugenyi, Zhu, & Kagambe, 2017) however, this must be viewed in terms of aligning factors such as student workload, assessment, and teaching and learning methods (Bralic & Divjak, 2018). The most essential of these factors is assessment in that appropriate vehicles for evaluation should be selected to ensure that students have the best possible chance of achieving the set goals (Hamad, 2017).

Thai, De Wever, and Valcke (2017) examined the role of the blended learning approach in student performance. Unlike many researchers in the field who focused on the precise nature of blends (Al-Alwani, 2014; Stein & Graham, 2015), Thai et al. (2017) explored how the flipped
classroom design impacted student outcomes. The flipped classroom is a particular type of blended learning, where students first attend web-based lectures before in-class sessions. By analyzing primary data obtained from 90 undergraduate students, Thai et al. (2017) concluded that, in the flipped classroom environment, the respondents demonstrated a higher level of self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and flexibility. These findings can be explained by the fact that, in such an environment, students can spend a significant amount of time reading, watching lectures, and preparing before attending face-to-face lectures (Ricci & Pritsch, 2015).

A highly relevant empirical study on the relationship between the blended learning approach and student outcomes was conducted by Alshehri (2017). The researcher investigated the level of satisfaction and commitment of 100 Saudi higher education students with a blended e-learning program. By employing both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, Alshehri (2017) found that those students who were enrolled in a blended education program demonstrated better academic results in terms of their grade point average scores as well as higher levels of commitment. Similar outcomes were produced by Zacharis (2015), who also found that participation in blended learning courses was positively associated with student performance and achievement. However, according to Alshehri’s (2017) empirical findings, not all students were satisfied with the online study courses, which negatively affected their willingness to stay in blended learning as well as to comply with its requirements. These outcomes can be partly explained by such factors as the educational approach taken by the instructor, the quality of the Internet connection, and students’ attitudes towards and perceptions of blended learning (Vasileva-Stojanovska et al., 2015).

Following, the holistic learning theory, the effectiveness of the learning process significantly depends on students’ characteristics, including emotions, imagination, and intellect (Al-Alwani, 2014). Each of these elements should be activated to ensure that the learning process is effective (Ricci & Pritsch, 201). As noted by Ellis et al. (2016), the significance of blended learning lies in the fact that it involves a broader range of learning methods and channels than traditional learning, more significantly contributes to the development of students’ skills, and can evoke positive emotions. From this vantage point, it is relevant to state that blended learning is more effective in activating the previously mentioned elements of students’ personality compared to conventional approaches to learning. At the same time, Suda, Sterling, Guirguis, and Mathur (2014) reported no significant difference in examination scores and course evaluations between those students who had completed traditional and blended courses. These findings may demonstrate that, although the mixed learning strategy can add to students’ ability to attain their course goals, its effectiveness and contribution depend heavily on the context in which it is implemented.

Potential Challenges of Using BL to Support English Language Skills Development

Recent research has tended to show that technology provides both opportunities and challenges for students and institutions (Ja’ashan, 2020 & Gordon, 2014). For students, the opportunity to use technology and a blended learning approach allows them to have an element of control over how, when, and where they learn while enabling them to personalize their learning to the extent that they can navigate their way through learning materials with the support of systems suited to their style of learning. This flexibility of education is also vital to settings which offer this type of
approach, particularly concerning part-time and, or distance learners, although challenges are faced in terms of the delivery of safe, collaborative learning environments allowing the maximum use of resources while also controlling and regulating the potential for plagiarism.

Students who are learning English as a second language also face challenges in terms of the use of the internet for supplementary reading. Hamdan, Mohamad, and Shaharuddin (2017) investigated the perceptions of second language learners (TESL undergraduates) towards TESL-related hypermedia reading materials and factors impacting their reading comprehension. Utilizing the Think Aloud Protocol, reflective notes, and semi-structured interviews as data collection methods, the authors identified a number of factors affecting students’ reading comprehension. Both the design and display of reading materials were found to be necessary, particularly in terms of long texts; the participants felt that it would help their reading comprehension if illustrations, diagrams, pictures, tables, videos, and audio materials were also made available with the text. They also highlighted the usefulness of glossaries to their comprehension. The participants noted being distracted by advertisements on websites, poor internet connections, and the easy accessibility of social media websites, which had a detrimental impact on their reading comprehension.

Another challenge identified by Kintu, Zhu, and Kagambe (2017) is matching students with appropriate courses to meet their specific characteristics and needs. The researchers looked at the effectiveness of a blended learning environment through an analysis of the relationship between individual student characteristics and background, learning outcomes, and design features. The results indicated that several student characteristics and design features were significant predictors concerning student-learning outcomes when utilizing a blended approach towards learning. Equally necessary to the successful delivery of courses utilizing technology is practitioners’ willingness to engage with it. Englund, Olofsson, and Price (2017) conducted a 10-year longitudinal study to examine practitioners’ conceptions of approaches towards the use of technology as part of their teaching and learning. This involved studying nine teachers engaged in an online Bachelor of Science course utilizing a phenomenographic approach. The findings identified apparent differences between experienced and novice teachers. Qualified teachers demonstrated almost no change in their conceptions, whereas novice teachers, who initially had more teacher focus conceptions, demonstrated more rapid changes in their attitudes. Englund et al. (2017) concluded that it was essential to support conceptual change as a part of practitioners’ Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities to ensure the most effective use of educational technology. Similar observations were made by Rivers, Richardson, & Price, (2014) who commented that practitioners’ concerns concerning using asynchronous forums to promote reflection and learning can be addressed by the adoption of protocols for online discussions, with an emphasis on the fact that discussion threads could be a resource for reflection in themselves in that they can track and illustrate student understanding of specific issues and learning.

Singh and Reed (2001) pointed out that one should “approach blended learning as a journey rather than a destination” (p. 7). This highlights the importance of creating an effective plan to ensure success in the BL implementation journey. Furthermore, Hamad (2017) reviewed the literature about the nature of benefits and challenges when using blended learning in the Saudi educational system. She indicated that the most essential factor for ensuring that students have the best possible chance of achieving the set goals was assessment. She also suggested a clear
understanding of challenges that may be faced before blended learning implementation would be useful as this approach is considered relatively new in the Saudi context.

Several studies investigating the challenges of BL have identified several problems faced by institutions, such as a lack of Internet connectivity, technical issues, workload, and confusing instructions in Blackboard (Al Zumor et al., 2013; Banditvilai, 2016; Guangying, 2014; Hamdan et al., 2017; Ja’ashan, 2015; Poon, 2013; Thang et al., 2012) as well as difficulties encountered by students, (Alshathri, 2016; Hamad, 2017; Ja’ashan, 2015; Thang et al., 2012; Vaughan, 2007) and instructors (Alaidarous & Madini, 2016; Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010; Badawi, 2009; Yang, 2012). Ja’ashan (2015) examined 130 undergraduate students’ perceptions toward challenges in BL in an English module. He noted that an inadequate number of computers, the absence of qualified and skilled instructors in IT proficiencies, and a lack of organizational maintenance were significant challenges to blended learning in many developing countries. Similarly, Al Zumor et al. (2013) used a survey to assess 160 male EFL undergraduate students’ effectiveness when using blackboard in a blended learning module. The study found that more than half of the participants were generally dissatisfied with the BL course. The problems stemmed from a lack of Internet connectivity as the most serious limitation, followed by ineffective synchronous and asynchronous activities in Blackboard compared with f2f interactions. Moreover, BL was not considered adequate by all students despite being hugely welcomed by the majority of students around the world. For example, students with limited IT skills might lack the enthusiasm to work independently, resulting in disadvantages in the BL environment. The study findings suggested that, to support the implementation of blended learning, technical difficulties should be resolved, and active online activities should be included. Furthermore, Poon (2013) interviewed nine instructors and surveyed 260 students to investigate their perceptions about the advantages and limitations of using blended learning in a university in the UK. The study indicated that the role of the institution and the student are significant factors in ensuring blended learning’s effectiveness. The study warned that a poor Internet connection and unclear instructions in textbook-based media might cause some frustration, especially among students with computer illiteracy, such as how to use virtual learning tools.

Although BL offered the opportunity for learners who are reluctant to participate with peers to exchange views in English, previous studies found that blended learning has drawbacks. Students reported some negative opinions, such as isolation, decreased real time to communicate with their teachers and peers, more time-consuming than f2f classes, and difficult instructions to follow in Blackboard. To better understand the difficulties that students encounter when using BL, in terms of the large number of assignments, Thang et al. (2012) interviewed 34 undergraduate students using nine focus groups to examine their perceptions about coursebook and online content of an English for academic purposes module used in a university in Malaysia. The study found that undergraduate students suffered from heavy workloads in written and reading tasks in both settings, which required an extra time commitment. Instructors needed initial preparation and training to become aware of the exact nature of mixing the two environments, which should include rethinking the teaching and learning experiences. The researchers argued that two serious challenges might hamper students’ progression in a BL environment: a slow Internet connection and a heavy workload. Students often have unrealistic assumptions about the nature of BL and expect less work to decrease class time (Garnham, Kaleta, & Sudzina, 2003; Vaughan, 2007).
However, other students reported challenges regarding managing their time in both settings, being active learners, and dealing with technological problems, especially undergraduate students who had recently transferred from high school to the university, where online activities are essential. Therefore, the study concluded that teachers must confront this challenge by enabling students to be autonomous and active in choosing which homework is appropriate for them.

Other studies suggested that training programs should be implemented to develop faculty members as well as students to create a successfully blended learning environment. For example, Yang (2012) examined problems faced by teachers in BL English writing courses in a university in Taiwan and found that lecturers’ lack of IT skills was a significant problem in transitioning to the blended learning approach. In other words, unskilful teachers who have not been trained to use computers and the Internet, for example, might lead to a lack of excitement for their teaching in the BL context. In this regard, Alebaikan (2010) addressed some practical issues raised by faculty members regarding the time they spent developing their course material as online content. Considering all of the evidence presented thus far, it seems that BL could raise challenges for students, teachers, and institutions. The lack of Internet connectivity, technical problems, a lack of efficiency among some teachers using blended learning, and training deficiencies are additional severe challenges. Although Poon (2013) focused on the delivery of suitable (technical, human) resources and appropriateness of technology infrastructure in universities as the most significant factors for effective BL implementation. Cobanoglu et al. (2017) were more concerned with the creation of clear institutional policy, the careful setting of strategic and operational plans, and efficient support to teachers and students. They confirmed that learning with recent technology could also encourage the notion of teamwork, engagement, and learning with and from others. They indicated that success in BL is highly dependent on a clear institutional policy and robust leadership. Besides, the identification of goals, costs, available human resources, and technical and administrative support is vital to sustaining the implementation of BL.

The studies suggest that practitioners must not only understand the reasons behind using modern technology to supplement and enhance teaching and learning, but also embrace this concept to improve their classroom practice and to enhance their delivery of the curriculum. Equally important is the balance between face-to-face and online activities and, or time to ensure that all students are catered. Some will prefer to work as an individual, alone at their own pace, whereas others will value the interaction that occurs in face-to-face encounters in the classroom. Some issues need to be addressed and/or resolved, such as ensuring that the library facilities are capable of delivering this type of approach towards the curriculum, that online materials are suitably supportive of the students required to access them, and that the design of blended learning approaches take into account students’ preferred learning methods, the assessment of their courses, and the workload required to be successful.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of modern technology as part of blended learning is not only desirable, but also useful in terms of learning English as well as developing computer literacy. Making use of online resources and the internet is a sensible course of action as it allows students flexibility in their studies and exposes them to practice English in a variety of contexts, in addition to the time that they spend interacting with their peers in the classroom. The studies suggest that practitioners
must not only understand the reasons behind using modern technology to supplement and enhance teaching and learning, but also embrace this concept to improve their classroom practice and enhance their delivery of the curriculum. Equally important is the balance between face-to-face and online activities and, or time to ensure that all students are catered to. Some will prefer to work as an individual, alone at their own pace, whereas others will value the interaction that occurs in face-to-face encounters in the classroom.

Some issues need to be addressed and/or resolved, such as ensuring that the library facilities are capable of delivering this type of approach towards the curriculum, that online materials are suitably supportive of the students required to access them, and that the design of blended learning approaches take into account students; preferred learning methods, the assessment of their courses, and the workload required to be successful.

About the Author:
Hebah Asaad Hamza Sheerah is currently an Assistant Professor in (TESOL) Teaching English to speakers of other languages at the department of English, Faculty of Language and Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia since 2019. In October 2018, she got a Ph.D. degree from Reading University, UK. She previously worked in Taiba University, Saudi Arabia for four years. Her areas of interest include blended learning, Language & Education, Teaching & learning, curriculum development, and collaborative learning. She has participated in many international conferences. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7775-4615

References


Using Blended Learning to Support the Teaching of English

Sheerah

Authentic.


Olson, J. (2001). Distance learning and the transformation of higher education. *The Reference Librarian, 35*(74), 221–232. DOI: 10.1300/J120v35n74_14


Effect of Using Whiteboard Animation in Project-Based Learning on Indonesian EFL Students’ English Presentation Skills across Creativity Levels

Fatimatus Suhroh  
Graduate Program in English Language Teaching  
Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia  
SMKS Kesehatan Yannas Husada, Bangkalan, Indonesia

Bambang Yudi Cahyono  
English Department, Faculty of Letters  
Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia

Utari Praba Astuti  
English Department, Faculty of Letters  
Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia

Abstract
Technology has big roles in this 4.0 era. It can be applied effectively in the teaching and learning process. This article examines the effect of applying whiteboard animation in project-based learning (PjBL) on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students’ English presentation skills, investigates whether the English presentation skills of EFL students who were taught by using whiteboard animation in PjBL differ significantly across creativity levels, and finds out whether there is interaction or not between the use of whiteboard animation and the students’ creativity levels on their English presentation skills. Fifty Indonesian vocational high school students from two intact classrooms were involved and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups by quasi-experimental design and factorial research design. The quantitative data were gathered from both groups through pre-test and post-test. The analysis showed that students who were taught through whiteboard animation in PjBL significantly outperformed those who were trained by using conventional media. It was also found that students’ creativity levels (little-c and mini-c) did not affect their English presentation skills. Then, there was no interaction between whiteboard animation in PjBL and students’ creativity levels on their English presentation skills. The findings of the study are expected to be useful for other English teachers especially those who want to apply the same method of teaching in order to achieve the students' capacity for critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Keywords: creativity levels (little-c & mini-c), EFL students, English presentation skills, project-based learning, whiteboard animation

Introduction

The 21st-century era is frequently seen as the technological age (Budhwar, 2017). Technology has a significant impact in various fields, including education. Accordingly, current research in education points towards the effect of technology use in education (Cloete, 2017). To realize the technological advantages entirely in our education system, educators must make effective technical use in their practice and provide real learning experiences (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Besides, English teachers, in particular, should enhance students' speaking skills and consider the context and enhance communication in English (Ali & El-Henawy, 2015). One approach that implements the role of students and teachers in an appropriate structure and helps to build many skills is the project-based approach to education (Işik & Gücüm, 2013). Project-based learning (PjBL) is an integrated approach designed to draw students' attention to real issues in learning and teaching in the classroom. (Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Goodman & Stivers, 2010).

The researchers would like to implement the new media, whiteboard animation, in the teaching and learning process. This media challenges the students' capacity to think critically, communicate, collaborate, and to be creative which are in line with the characteristics of 21st-century students. Hence, this study aims to analyze the students' English presentation skills after being taught by using whiteboard animation in PjBL as the final product of technology incorporation into English learning. Unlike traditional animations, whiteboard animations can creatively represent ideas without relying on narrative behavior (Türkay, 2016). In particular, it was assigned to the students to create a presentation on whiteboard animation by including various project components such as texts, images, sound, and moving animations.

Literature Review

Project-Based Learning

PjBL is a creative learning approach, which teaches many performance methods in the 21st century (Bell, 2010). Students learn and collaborate to study and build projects that represent their knowledge through inquiry. Trisdiono et al. (2019) stated that the teachers believe the model of project-based learning will strengthen the skills of students. Hence, ChanLin (2008) referred to the technological convergence into project-based learning that requires a strong commitment to actual scenarios. Students have to engage in different actions.

Some studies have been carried out to show the value of project-based learning with a priority on the speaking ability of students (Winasih et al., 2019). Ali and El-Henawy (2015) have carried out work to improve English oral skills by using PjBL. Research has depicted that students are indeed very optimistic about the advantages and the use of PjBL. Their verbal communication skills have also shown significant development. Practitioners are encouraged to use PjBL as an alternative way of teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), especially at the undergraduate level (Wahyudin, 2017). Furthermore, Astawa et al. (2017) added that the teacher's enthusiasm and satisfaction in teaching are encouraged by PjBL.

The related literature highlights the teacher’s role in the integration process of teaching environments with information and communication technology (ICT), including many different dynamics that need to be examined multi-dimensionally (Pilten et al., 2017). Furthermore, Eskrootchi and Oskrochi (2010) declared that computer simulation modeling could be easily
integrated into PjBL, but it involves a detailed plan and implementation. Teachers need pedagogical content knowledge that relates to understanding of how students learn from technologically-infused materials.

**Creativity Levels**

Hidayah et al. (2015) conducted research that tried to examine the increase in PjBL theoretical approach student creativity. The study result could be inferred that a project-based contextual learning method may be suggested for productive learning to improve creativity.

Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) created four creative categories to demonstrate the complexities of the different levels and types of creativity. The two primary grades for schools are little-c and mini-c creativity. Little-c creativity is all about “acting in every day with versatility, intelligence, and innovation” (Craft, 2005, p. 43), making something new with originality and sense (Richards, 2007). Mini-c is characterized as a modern interpretation of experiences, behavior, and events that are significant personally (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007). Mini-c is the type of creativity that teachers and parents can cultivate. It arises when someone displays “flexibility, creativity, and innovation” (Craft, 2005, p. 19).

**Presentation Skills**

Presentation skills refer to the qualities that improve the speakability in public (Widyastuti & Mahaputri, 2015). It is strengthened by Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem, and Taqi (2015) that oral presentation skills are recognized as one of the primary skills for higher education and future employment. In the view of many scholars, verbal communication is not merely a massage from the speaker to the listener; it also represents both the subject and the focus of his message (AL-Masadeh & AL-Omari, 2014).

Joughin (2007) stated that the oral presentation could be viewed from three perspectives: the presentation as a transfer of other people's ideas to a neutral audience with a low level of anxiety; the presentation as an imparting to the student's meanings the content learned from others’ views; and the presentation as an opportunity to be questioned and defended by convincing the audience. Sivadjati (2016) discovered those issues. These problems were classified into several groups: personal characteristics (speech, problem memorization, anxiety, expectations of teachers), an awareness of the subject, the organization of ideas and interest of the student; grammar issues; and external issues (time problem).

**Whiteboard Animation**

It is an increasingly common form of media in education. Karthigesu and Mohamad (2020) stated that interactive whiteboard (IWB) works as an alternative tool for teaching reading comprehension. Although recent studies into the creation of whiteboard animations are interesting, Türkay (2016) argues that learner interactions with this form of animation are not appropriately understood. Li et al. (2019) noted that whiteboard animation, an enticing learning device, consists of a series of manual images with voice-over storytelling that convey complex and abstract concepts. From their research, it was concluded that the whiteboard animation is a powerful and stimulating resource for fluent teaching in the GE (General Education) course. Bradford and Bharadwaj (2015) asserted that video products of whiteboard animation could be a sustainable and
Effect of Using Whiteboard Animation in Project-Based Suhroh, Cahyono, & Astuti

culturally appropriate way of transmitting research results in storytelling formats for indigenous communities.

**Conventional Media**

It is no doubt that the advent of digital media technology presents a major challenge to conventional media survival (Auwal, 2016). In terms of its meaning, relationship and distinction, the concept of ‘conventional media’ was argued by so many academics (Umar et al., 2019). In recent years, Rajendran and Thesinghraja (2014) informed that the dynamics of access to information has changed significantly. Since the new media exists, Hisham (2019) discovered attacks against traditional media have been growing. Therefore, the new media (re)written stories have an impact on particular conventional concepts very extensively (Odun & Utulu, 2015).

**Method**

**Design and Subjects of the Study**

This study used a factorial quasi-experimental design since students cannot be chosen allegedly as study subjects. The study was carried out in Bangkalan Regency, East Java, Indonesia, with 50 students from the twelfth grade of vocational high school. The students were placed by chance in the experimental \((n = 26\) students with 25 females and 1 male) and the control groups \((n = 24\) students with 21 females and 3 male) out of two whole classrooms. Both student groups were homogenous in their English presentation skills before the study was conducted. The independent variable in this study was the teaching method (whiteboard animation in PjBL vs conventional media in PjBL), and the dependent variable was the students’ English presentation skills. The level of creativity was also used as the moderating variable to separate students in smaller groups: little-c and mini-c students in the experimental and control groups.

**The Procedure of the Study**

The procedures of the study for both experimental and control groups are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pre-test administration: English presentation skills test.</td>
<td>Pre-test administration: English presentation skills test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Students were provided with lessons on the news items text and exercises.</td>
<td>• Students were provided with lessons on the news items text and exercises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They were introduced to whiteboard animation in PjBL and asked to work individually but collaboratively to think of the importance of news item text in the modern world. (Stage 1)</td>
<td>• They were introduced to conventional media in PjBL and asked to work individually but collaboratively to think of the importance of news item text in the modern world. (Stage 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 1 shows, there were six sessions to the study. Pre-test and post-test administration were used for the first and last sessions. In the second to fifth sessions, the experimental group students were taught using the whiteboard animation in PjBL while the control group students were taught utilizing the traditional media in PjBL. The PjBL was conducted at six stages: (1) formulating the key questions; (2) outlining the project plans; (3) determining a timetable; (4) asking the students to track and monitor the project progress; (5) evaluating the assessment result, and (6) showing the experiences of the evaluation (Harun, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students were requested to apply their draft orally. The teacher gave their oral presentations feedback. They revised their news item text, and like the project, <strong>were guided to make whiteboard animation</strong> based on their news item text. <strong>They continued working on their whiteboard animation outside the class period.</strong> (Stage 4)</td>
<td>Students were requested to apply their draft orally. The teacher gave their oral presentations feedback. They revised their news item text, and like the project, <strong>were guided to make the conventional media</strong> based on their news item text. <strong>They continued working on their conventional media outside the class period.</strong> (Stage 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The students present their <strong>whiteboard animation individually using an LCD projector.</strong> The students’ presentations and projects of whiteboard animation were scored by the English teacher and the raters using a scoring rubric for speaking and creativity. (Stage 5, continued)</td>
<td>The students present their <strong>conventional media individually using an LCD projector.</strong> The students’ presentations and projects of traditional media were scored by the English teacher and the raters using a scoring rubric for speaking and creativity. (Stage 5, continued)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The remaining students presented their whiteboard animation. (Stage 5) The students were asked to share their opinion about the whiteboard animation project implementation. (Stage 6)</td>
<td>The remaining students presented their conventional media. (Stage 5) The students were asked to share their opinion about the traditional media project implementation. (Stage 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Post-test administration: English presentation skills test and distribution of creativity questionnaires.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Post-test administration: English presentation skills test and distribution of creativity questionnaires.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 1 shows, there were six sessions to the study. Pre-test and post-test administration were used for the first and last sessions. In the second to fifth sessions, the experimental group students were taught using the whiteboard animation in PjBL while the control group students were taught utilizing the traditional media in PjBL. The PjBL was conducted at six stages: (1) formulating the key questions; (2) outlining the project plans; (3) determining a timetable; (4) asking the students to track and monitor the project progress; (5) evaluating the assessment result, and (6) showing the experiences of the evaluation (Harun, 2006).
The Instruments of the Study

There are four instruments used in the study. First, creativity tests which required the students to make whiteboard animation and the conventional media in the form of presentation. The researchers used two kinds of creativity rubric with four items in each. Second, a self-reported questionnaire was used to know they are in the levels of little-c or mini-c creativity. The researchers use 30 items of questionnaires that are answered by using a 5-point scale (strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree, and strongly agree). Then, the last is the English presentation skills test which required the students to present the whiteboard animation and conventional media project itself orally. Here, the researchers use an oral presentation checklist to measure the students’ evaluation on their English presentation skills.

To reach the construct validity, this research used English presentation skills test which requires students to perform speaking and scoring scale was utilized to assess the quality of students’ speaking performance. The validity of the questionnaire was achieved by involving the variable of mini-c and little-c creativity to get the accurate result of students’ creativity levels. On the other hand, content validity was obtained through the decision of involving news item text which was considered suitable to meet the aim of the study. The theoretical validation also acquired from the expert validation to validate the instruments used in this research. In this case, the validation of the English presentation skills test was performed by an ELT lecturer who has expertise in language teaching and learning. Moreover, the creativity test and creativity questionnaire were validated by another ELT lecturer to check the wording and the result of the translation of the questionnaire.

Then, by applying the interrater scoring technique in which three raters assessed the result of students’ English presentation skills test to see the consistency of those scores, this study is considered to serve the evidence of reliability. Hence, this interrater scoring technique can verify the preciseness of presentation skills test scores. Moreover, the SPSS 26 program was utilized to calculate the reliability of the creativity questionnaire.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data on the students' English presentation skills were gathered from the test scores collected from both pre-test and post-test, before and after the treatment, respectively. The students’ English presentation skills were assessed through three scoring rubrics in which the first scoring rubric was adapted from Brown (2001) containing several presentation skills checklist which evaluates the content and delivery of the presentation. Second, instead of scoring the aspect of grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, and task mentioned in Brown (2001: 406-407), for the third aspect, the researchers decided to include the subcategories of oral proficiency scores taken from Brown (2004). The scores of pre-test and post-test have been used to demonstrate students' improvements in the English presentation skills. The tests were also utilized to show the difference in the abilities of the students in little-c and mini-c subgroups of English presentation skills. Data on the students’ creativity level were obtained by spreading a questionnaire to the experimental and control groups. The questionnaire was proposed by Kumar and Holman (1997) and applied in developing the students’ creativity based on their expression, action, originality, diversity, and illumination within the teaching and learning process. Thirty (30) questionnaire items were arranged to represent variables of little-c and mini-c creativity levels.
namely: creativity as an individual and creativity as a product (little-c) and creativity as a process (mini-c). Based on the questionnaire data, the students were classified into little-c or mini-c students.

The data in the form of pre-test and post-test as primary data and the questionnaire as secondary data were analyzed quantitatively. The first step was analyzing the result of the pre-test score, then continued to analyze the result of the post-test score and the result of the creativity questionnaire. To determine the result of the research, preliminary statistical analysis of pre-test scores from both groups of experimental and control were performed to ensure that the requirement of the assumption of normality of the distribution and homogeneity of the scores was fulfilled. Normality testing was conducted to know whether the scores of English presentation skills were normally distributed by using Kolmogorov-Smirnov testing. On the other hand, the homogeneity test was conducted to find information about equality and homogeneity of the subjects in both groups by using Levene Statistic testing. If the two of these statistical assumptions were fulfilled, the independent t-test could be used to test the hypothesis of the next data to answer the research questions.

The criterion of acceptance and rejection of the null hypothesis is set at the .05 level of significance. If the result of the analysis by means SPSS 26 program shows that the obtained significant level (p-value) is higher or equal to the level of significance .05, there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, meaning that the null hypothesis is accepted. Conversely, when the p-value is smaller or equal to the level of significance .05, there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, meaning that the null hypothesis is rejected.

Results
The study results are summarized in the order of the answers to the three research questions.

*The Difference in English Presentation Skills of Students Taught Using Whiteboard Animation in PjBL and those Taught Using Conventional Media*

The review of the pre-test scores on the experimental and control groups was carried out to assess the outcomes of the investigations to ensure that the criterion of presumption of homogeneity and normality of the distribution of the scores. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results demonstrated that the students’ English presentation skills in the two groups were above 0.05 significance level. The values were also homogeneous because the Levene’s test showed that the pre-test results of both classes (p = .781) were more than 0.05.

Because there was no breach of the normality and homogeneity of both groups' pre-test results, a parametric statistical analysis of separate t-test samples was used to analyze the discrepancy in the students’ English presentation skills. The findings of independent samples t-test in pre-test presentation skills between the groups are displayed in Table 2.
Table 2. Comparison of Pre-test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>73.808</td>
<td>7.349</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>0.775</td>
<td>Not significantly different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>74.458</td>
<td>8.663</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( t = 2.010 \) (\( p < .05 \)) on the \( t \)-table

Table 2 demonstrates the comparability of pre-test results for the experimental and control groups. The mean of the experimental group is comparable \( M = 73.808 \) to that of the control group \( M = 74.458 \) at \( t = .287 \) which is smaller than \( t = 2.010 \), and the \( p = .775 \) is higher than 0.050 level of significance. Thus, it can be concluded that the students’ English presentation skills in the experimental and control groups were not significantly different. The findings were thus contrasted by using independent samples \( t \)-test for the post-test scores for both groups and described in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of Post-test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>81.462</td>
<td>7.495</td>
<td>6.874</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>Significantly different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>75.750</td>
<td>12.553</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( t = 2.010 \) (\( p < .05 \)) on the \( t \)-table

Table 3 depicts that the average of the experimental group students \( M = 81.462 \) is above the standard of the control group students \( M = 75.750 \). In addition, the discrepancy in the English presentation skills of the experimental and control groups after being subjected to treatment is apparent, as \( t \)-value \( (t = 6.874) \) which is greater than \( t \)-table \( (2.010) \), and a \( p \)-value \( (p = .012) \) which is less than 0.050 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that the use of whiteboard animation in PjBL has no effect on EFL students’ English presentation skills could be rejected. In other words, the treatment of whiteboard animation in PjBL positively affected the English presentation skills of the experimental group students, indicating an improvement over the English presentation skills of the control group students, who were taught using traditional media.

The Difference in Presentation Skills of the Little-c and Mini-c Students Taught Using Whiteboard Animation in PjBL and those Taught Using Conventional Media

Since the analysis of the data to address the first research question revealed that the students’ English presentation skills taught using whiteboard animation by PjBL and taught using traditional teaching media differed significantly, the study proceeded to test the assumption on the second research question. The null hypothesis notes that the English presentation skills for little-c and mini-c students who were taught by using whiteboard animation in PjBL did not differ substantially. The second hypothesis was also tested using an independent samples \( t \)-test. Based on data analysis, the questionnaire of creativity levels administered to 26 experimental group students, 17 little-c students, and 9 mini-c students were found to be in attendance. Besides, 11 Arab World English Journal

www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
little-c students and 13 mini-c students were found to be in the control group. Table 4 shows the outcomes of the post-test scores between little-c and mini-c students in the experimental and control groups.

Table 4. Comparison of Post-test Scores of the Little-c and Mini-c Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Creativity Levels</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>Little-c</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80.824</td>
<td>8.487</td>
<td>0.589</td>
<td>0.562</td>
<td>Not significantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mini-c</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>82.667</td>
<td>5.385</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Little-c</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>78.909</td>
<td>10.858</td>
<td>1.141</td>
<td>0.266</td>
<td>Not significantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mini-c</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73.077</td>
<td>13.671</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $t = 2.010$ ($p < .05$) on the $t$-table

Table 4 portrays that, in the experimental group, though the mean score for little-c students ($M = 80.824$) is lower than that of the mini-c students ($M = 82.667$), the English presentation skills for little-c and mini-c students in the experimental group were not significantly different since the $t$-value on the $t$-test ($t = .589$) was lower than the $t$-value on $t$-table ($t = 2.010$), and the $p$-value ($p = .562$) is greater than 0.05 significance level. Similarly, in the control group, the English presentation skills of little-c and mini-c students did not differ substantially although the mean of little-c students ($M = 78.909$) was more than mean of mini-c ($M = 73.077$). For, the $t$-value on the $t$-test ($t = 1.141$) was lower than the $t$-value of the $t$-table ($t = 2.010$), and its significance level ($p = .266$) was greater than the 0.05 significance level.

Therefore, the null hypothesis that the English presentation skills of little-c and mini-c students taught using whiteboard animation in PjBL had no significant difference is failed to be rejected. This suggests that the English presentation skills of little-c and mini-c students taught through whiteboard animation in PjBL do not substantially vary. It also indicates that the levels of creativity, particularly little-c and mini-c, did not contribute to the improvement of students’ English presentation skills.

The Interaction Between the Use of Whiteboard Animation in PjBL and the Students’ Creativity Levels on the Students’ English Presentation Skills

To see the relationship on the use of whiteboard animation in PjBL with the students’ creativity levels to achieve the students’ English presentation skills, two-way ANOVA was employed with SPSS 26 to deal with the third research question. The significance level used was $p < .05$. A description of the two-way ANOVA result is shown in Table 5.
Table 5. Result of the Interaction between the Use of Whiteboard Animation in PjBL and Students’ Creativity Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whiteboard Animation in PjBL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>391.827</td>
<td>3.750</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity Levels</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>47.111</td>
<td>0.451</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteboard Animation in PjBL* Creativity Levels (Interaction)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>174.411</td>
<td>1.669</td>
<td>0.203</td>
<td>No Significant Difference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in Table 5 the column factor p-value for the whiteboard animation in PjBL was 0.059, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that the significant values were higher than the 0.05 level of significance. That means that there was no substantial difference in the students’ English presentation skills taught using whiteboard animation in PjBL. In addition, the row factor p-value for the creativity levels (little-c and mini-c) was 0.505, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that the students from little-c and mini-c did not differ significantly. Moreover, the interaction p-value for the use of the whiteboard animation in PjBL and the creativity levels was 0.203, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. This means that there was no significant interaction between the use of whiteboard animation and students’ creativity levels on their English presentation skills. The use of whiteboard animation in PjBL does not substantially impact on the English presentation skills of little-c and mini-c students. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no interaction between the use of whiteboard animation and students’ creativity levels could not to be rejected.

Discussion

The findings have been presented in this section by referring to the three research questions and discussed in light of the existing theories and relevant research studies.

The Difference in Students’ English Presentation Skills Taught Using Whiteboard Animation in PjBL and those Taught Using Conventional Media

The results indicate a significant improvement in the presentation skills of the students who were trained using whiteboard animation in PjBL over those who were taught utilizing traditional media. Such a finding is in line with a similar study conducted by AL-Masadeh and AL-Omari (2014) that demonstrated the successful use of a project-based program to improve not only students’ oral performance as a whole but to improve their oral performance on each aspect of oral capacity (i.e., mechanics, culture, social regulations, and function). Similar findings were also obtained through the quasi-experimental research carried out by Winasih et al. (2019) who found that the use of PjBL in Indonesia has improved EFL students’ level compared to the students who were not experienced in PjBL. Likewise, Wahyudin (2017) proved that the students who have been educated through PjBL had outperformed students who have been educated through PPP (which is presentation, practice, and production). PjBL also has a high impact on comprehension and fluency, but the growth of student performance is less than comprehension and fluency in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and accent.
Moreover, the use of PjBL in the learning process has a surprisingly positive effect on the students’ speaking performance. They were motivated to be creative and collaborative. It is also consistent with research conducted by Astawa et al. (2017), which have shown that PjBL has a significant impact on the speakability of students. The students found that PjBL improves motivation, trust, creativeness, self-directed learning, and collaborative learning. Ali and El-Henawy (2015) carried out similar research success intending to see if project-based learning could benefit high school students in Port Said. The study findings revealed that student expectations about the advantages and effectiveness of PjBL were indeed highly positive. They had the joy of breaking the draw of traditional approaches, of being autonomous, self-organized, inspired, and imaginative. Their oral communication skills have also significantly grown.

Applying whiteboard animation as a project-based technology for oral presentation in this study has provided genuine assistance in generating new ideas for students, exploring their current knowledge, and interacting in an interesting way to accommodate their news item text. Whiteboard animation is one of the most common interactive teaching tools for educational media. In this study, Türkay (2016) found that the positive effect of whiteboard animation was retention, participation, and enjoyment. One of the reasons is that whiteboard animation provides students with a first-person experience of the involvement that models and facilitates both the building of awareness and the sense of interaction that fosters engagement (Pedra, Mayer, & Albertin, 2015, as cited in Türkay 2016). Then, Karthigesu & Mohamad (2020) have shown that by engaging whiteboard integration allows teachers to modify their software to make learning a language more enjoyable, engaging and energetic. Furthermore, based on the students’ perception on the research conducted by Li et al. (2019), the contents of whiteboard animation are interesting, animated and allowing the students to understand the details.

The Difference of English Presentation Skills across Creativity Levels Students Taught through Whiteboard Animation in Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

Concerning the second research question, the result of this study revealed that no significant difference was made in the English presentation skills of little-c and mini-c students who were taught using whiteboard animation in PjBL. The two most important groups for schools from four stages of creativity proposed by Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) are little-c and mini-c creativity. Nothing has been clarified that little-c is more effective and has been more flexible in verbal communication or vice versa.

Such a finding of this study could be seen as a contrast to the result of the research conducted by Hidayah et al. (2015) who showed that the model of the project-based contextual learning approach is efficient learning to enhance creativity. The growth in creativity has not only been seen in the general interest, but it is also expressed in the values of each aspect of creativity, such as fluency, versatility, originality, and elaboration. The faith of the students to make a presentation and assert a motivation to work during the learning was reassured by improved fluency. PjBL has been used to affect the creativity of the students in developing their presentation skills. When a student did a project using exceptional materials as loops, versatility emerged. Then, students of originality emerged as they maximized their creativity and expanded the creation of the project as far as they wanted to try new things. It can be inferred from the result that the use of
unique materials in the project will lead students to use English creatively in their presentation skills.

**The Interaction between the Use of Whiteboard Animation in Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and the Students’ Creativity Levels on the Students’ English Presentation Skills**

The last issue was to evaluate the relationship between the use of Whiteboard animation in PjBL and students’ creativity levels in their English presentation skills. The results of the findings show that the use of whiteboard animations in PjBL has no interaction with the students’ creativity levels related to their English presentation skills.

The results of this study have shown that mini-c has better presentation skills in the experimental group than little-c students. Nonetheless, little-c students in the control group had better performance than mini-c students in their English presentation skills. Such findings applied to particular literature. Richards (2007) said little-c requires practical action and can be built for a long time. When students pursue their discipline purposefully, then scholarly-age students will operate at the little-c level. Infrastructure was created by the Internet for little-c to prosper. Websites like Youtube, Instagram, and Etsy encourage creative people to share information and work. Mini-c creativity may characterize the achievement of a learner in discovering different ways to tackle the mathematical problem. It could also mean that establishing a new connection between their knowledge and a new piece of information enables them to understand the topic more fully. That is why in the experimental group, the mini-c students were stronger even though the number of them was lower than the little-c students. They could find various methods to complete their project and focus more on their creative process to achieve it. They collected information, took photos, and found news on the web-based on a project for a whiteboard animation. Thus, the experimental-group students obtained mini-c creativity characteristics.

In contrast, little-c students in the control group achieved better than mini-c students, while their number was close to that of mini-c students. Without the use of whiteboard animation, students from the control group were taught with the traditional PowerPoint media. Most of the little-c students created something new that had originality and meaning (Richards, 2007). This is why little-c students in the control group assumed that they were innovative with their products. They felt they were experts in PowerPoint, so they did not need a piece of information and expertise to complete their project. They then considered themselves to create a new project which uses a PowerPoint to achieve originality, value, creativity, versatility, and intelligence. Thereby the characteristics of little-c were proposed by the control group students.

**Conclusions**

This article has addressed the findings of the investigation of the effect of the use of whiteboard animation in PjBL on Indonesian EFL students’ English presentation skills across creativity levels. It is concluded that the English presentation skills between the students who were taught by using whiteboard animation in PjBL and those taught by using conventional media differ significantly. The treatment of whiteboard animation in PjBL showed that their English presentation skills were better than those in the control group. The presentation skills provided by whiteboard animation learning activities for the experimental group in PjBL have proven effective as compared to conventional teaching media in the control group so that students can improve the English
presentation skills despite their insecurity about expression and impairment of language. The results also showed no significant difference in the use of whiteboard animation in PjBL between the little-c and mini-c students. Little-c and mini-c students had an equal opportunity to improve their presentation skills test because there was not enough proof that the levels of creativity impaired the English presentation skills. This is possible because of the influences of the language classroom environment, intake, and performance of students, motivation, and culture. Therefore, other potential variables could be further found in the maximization of students' ability in their English presentation skills, instead of considering the student level of creativity. In addition, there is no connection between the use of whiteboard animation in PjBL and the students’ levels of creativity with their English presentation skills. This indicates that the use of whiteboard animation was not affected by the creativity levels of little-c and mini-c students.

It should be better for English teachers who plan to conduct the same research should be able to add more meetings in their research so that the students will be more comprehend in using whiteboard animation, have more time in designing the project, and have adequate time to overcome the occurrence of the possible obstacles. By recognizing the students’ needs in the process of teaching and learning, it will assist English teachers to understand and employ the factors that will influence their ability in presentation skills. To make the learning succeed, English teachers should implement another method which suits to the students’ needs including the choice of technology. It is claimed that it can help students improve the experience of presenting in English, discover technology by offering different types of speaking activities in English, and some technological tools. By integrating the methods or approaches in teaching and learning process with technology, it can elaborate the students’ capacity to think critically, communicate, collaborate and create something new which has originality ideas with a very creative quality ideas.

About the Authors:
Fatimatus Suhroh is a student in the Graduate Program in English Language Teaching, Universitas Negeri Malang, East Java, Indonesia. She works as an English teacher at Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Swasta (SMKS) Kesehatan Yannas Husada, Bangkalan, East-Java, Indonesia. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2258-7004

Bambang Yudi Cahyono is a Professor in Applied Linguistics at the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, East Java, Indonesia. He earned his M A in Applied Linguistics from Concordia University, Montreal, Canada and PhD in Linguistics and Aplied Linguistics from the University of Melbourne Australia. ORCID: https://orcid.org /0001-5210-5208

Utari Praba Astuti is a senior faculty member of the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, East Java, Indonesia. She earned his M A from University of London, England and Dr in English Language Teaching, Universitas Negeri Malang, East Java, Indonesia. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5910-7916

References
Faculty of Education, Port Said University, 412-428.


International Conference on Applied Linguistics (CONAPLIN 9).
https://doi.org/10.2991/conaplin-16.2017.9


Improving Paragraph Writing Skills of Saudi EFL University Students Using Flipped Classroom Instruction

Bala Swamy Chatta
Department of English
College of Sciences and Humanities
Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Al Kharj, Saudi Arabia

Mohammad Imdadul Haque
Department of Management
College of Business Administration
Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Al Kharj, Saudi Arabia

Abstract
The study aims to examine the effect of Flipped Classroom Instruction in improving the paragraph writing skills of Saudi EFL students. Level-1 Writing course (NAJM 163) students of Business College are the participants of the study. Two sections of the course were selected randomly, and control and experimental groups were formed. A mixed-method supported for the collection of data using pre and posttests for the two groups, a questionnaire, and a group discussion with the experimental group. The topics from the textbook were identified, and videos selected from YouTube are shared with the experimental group through the E-Learning portal of the university called Blackboard. The control group was taught using the traditional method consisting of classroom lectures and doing exercises and practice at home. The findings showed that there is a significant difference between the control and experimental groups statistically. The experimental group students wrote better paragraphs, and there is a considerable improvement in their writing. The students and the instructor showed a positive attitude towards Flipped Classroom Instruction. Therefore, the present study recommends that implementing flipped classroom instruction in the EFL university classrooms of Saudi Arabia improves paragraph writing skills of students.

Keywords: Blended learning, Educational technology, flipped classroom, paragraph writing, Saudi EFL students, technology-integrated learning

Introduction

Education and pedagogy continuously change and transform to suit the needs of students. In this digital age, where technology has come to the palms of the students and become an integral part of educational settings (Basal, 2015), learning a language should be enhanced and supported by the technical gadgets. Wu, ChenHsieh, and Yang (2017) say, “Technology, with distinctive features such as mobility, reachability, personalization, spontaneity, and ubiquity, is widely used to facilitate language teaching and learning” (p.142). Incorporating technology in the process of teaching language is the need of the hour in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Ministry of Education supports using technology in the language classrooms (Alresheed, Leask & Raiker, 2015). As the laptops, computers, smartphones, and various other gadgets are available to the students of Saudi Arabia, an EFL teacher should best make use of them in departing language skills. Yang (2017) opines, “In modern societies, people have grown up with technology, and they are very much in tune with using technology in their daily lives” (p.2). As the students use technology in their daily lives, they can use it to advance their learning. Wells, de Lange, and Fieger (2008) have opined that technology has changed the way students learn and teachers teach. It has made significant changes in the education field. Therefore, teachers are continually looking for opportunities to use technology to make students learn better (Koehler, Mishra, Hershey, & Peruski, 2004). As technology offers multiple opportunities for language teachers, they have been using technology in their classrooms as much as possible (Seljan, Banek, Špiranec, & Lasić-Lazić, 2006).

Flipped Classroom Instruction (FCI) makes use of technology in and outside the classroom. Wu et al. (2017) state, “In a conventional class, new knowledge is introduced in the classroom, usually via lecture, and students practice using the knowledge at home, via homework. Flipped learning reverses this paradigm, with information introduced to students before class using technology” (p. 142). They continue “the core of flipped learning is to provide a learning community where students develop knowledge through constructive learning experiences, peer interaction, and collaboration” (p.143). At present, the requirement is to make the lessons available to the students outside the class and let the students view the lessons at their speed and understanding. Flipped Classroom Instruction serves this purpose in the best manner.

Undoubtedly, writing a paragraph is the most vital skill among all other language skills. As writing involves thinking capacity, language proficiency, and trained memory, it is a test for the cognition levels of the writer (Kellogg, 2001). The awareness of concepts involved in writing such as topic sentences, supporting sentences, details, concluding sentences, cohesion, linking words, arrangement, punctuation, grammatical aspects lead to writing better paragraphs. In addition to all these, a writer has to review and edit what he has written several times, which makes writing a challenging process. EFL students of Saudi Arabia find it a difficult task to write paragraphs to fulfill the requirement of their courses. Not adopting technology into teaching stands as the primary reason for this difficulty among all others like using traditional methods, lack of motivation of the students, insufficient time available in the class for practice, and not being aware of the importance of English as an international language.

Considering the above aspects, the Flipped Classroom serves to make the paradigm shift in the activity of teaching and helps students solve their learning difficulties. The FCI provides a good number of opportunities for students by integrating technology into language learning.
The flipped classroom instruction is a new and emerging approach where lecturing happens at home with the use of technology and practice, and writing assignments happens in the class with the teacher and the peers (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000). The teacher makes the students write paragraphs in the class to solve their writing problems, and provides scaffolding. The FCI classroom becomes a stage for group discussion and problem-solving by encouraging learners to participate in classroom activities and games. (Triantafyllou & Timcenko, 2014). The flipped model encourages students to be autonomous in learning, solve problems, and discover their learning strategies (Şengel, 2014). As it is an EFL context in Saudi Arabia, classroom activities involving paragraph writing should happen in the class. The theory of writing can be taught to the students at home in the form of recorded videos. Instead of being passive listeners in the class, they could actively participate in writing activities in the class. The present study focuses on the influence of flipped classroom instruction on Saudi Arabian EFL students’ paragraph writing skills. The following research questions guide the present study:

1. Can the paragraph writing skills of EFL students be improved by following the FCI method?
2. As the teachers use traditional methods in one section and the FCI method in the other section, is there any difference between the paragraph writing skills of these two sections of students?
3. Do the language instructors and the EFL students have a positive opinion about the FCI model?

**Literature Review**

In the traditional setting, content delivery occurs in the class, and the application of this theory happens at home in the form of assignments. There is restricted and limited time for content delivery for the teacher. In this traditional method, the teacher becomes the center of the class. The learners may listen to the lecture again only when the teacher repeats it, and the students need to do the assignments individually at home. The FCI offers to solve this problem effectively, so it is appealing to many teachers (Gilboy, Heinerichs, & Pazzaglia, 2015). The teacher shares the videos of the lessons with the students to view them at home and understand the theory. They could watch the video number of times till they acquire the knowledge. Then, the students do the assignments and activities in the class with their peers and the teacher. In this method, the teacher performs the role of a guide making the students active participants. It becomes a student-centered class where they do the activity of writing paragraphs.

In the traditional setting, teachers impart lower-order thinking skills by making the students listen, understand, and memorize. In the FCI model, a student has to apply, analyze, synthesize, and create doing higher-order thinking skills. So, flipped classes incorporate both lower, and higher-order reasoning skills and encourage the learners to have higher-order reasoning skills (Qader & Arslan, 2019). As the learner involves in the creative process, he has his classmates and the teacher available to help him.
Marcy and Brint (2012) have conducted a study for introductory biology classes to compare FCI with conventional methods. The experimental group scored higher marks on the quizzes and tests than the control group who have undergone traditional teaching methods.

McLaughlin et al. (2014) studied the effect of FCI in a pharmaceutics course with 162 students and found an increase in students’ learning. The students who have undergone the program are positive towards FCI.

At a State University in Turkey, Basal (2015) has implemented the FCI in an English language class to obtain the perceptions of 47 prospective English teachers. The findings of the study show that pre-service teachers have a positive attitude towards FCI. As he feels, FCI offers four benefits, such as learning as per the students’ comfort, and speed, preparing for the classes in advance, avoiding limitations of class time, increasing students’ participation in the class.

Egbert, Herman, and Lee (2015) have used flipped instruction in English language teacher education. They have conducted a design-based study in a complex, open-ended learning context. The study has the purpose of filling several gaps in the literature of FCI and provides principles for the design of teacher education courses.

Blair, Maharaj, and Primus (2015) have conducted a study at a university in the West Indies for the students of Material Technology. In that context, FCI has made a little difference to the exam performance of the students. Nevertheless, teachers like to continue to use FCI as it provides more time in class to work with individual students.

Yu and Wang (2016) administered a study for undergraduate English writing course students of Business. The study proved that FCI brought better academic achievement and improved the writing skills of the students than the traditional method.

Wu, ChenHsieh, and Yang (2017) have conducted a study in central Taiwan for 50 English-majored sophomores. They have examined how an online learning community in a flipped classroom impacts the oral proficiency of EFL students. The research has proved that the flipped classroom model has improved the students’ verbal ability and made them more active in learning activities, such as storytelling and class discussion.

Kurt (2017) has studied the impact of FCI in a higher education institution in Turkey. He flipped a classroom management course in a pre-service English teacher education, which has 62 pre-service teachers. The findings of his study revealed that the experimental group students learned better, displayed autonomy in learning, and possess a positive attitude towards FCI.

The study conducted by Yang (2017) involved 57 students from two secondary two classes in a band three secondary school and two teachers. This study shows that FCI is suitable for English Grammar class. The students of the experimental group are, in general, positive towards the flipped classroom.
Ayçiçek and Yanpar Yelken (2018) have carried out a study in the English course for four weeks in a secondary school, Hatay city. The teachers taught the experimental group by using FCI, but they trained the control group using the traditional methods. The study has shown a significant difference between the pre and posttests of the experimental group. The control group students’ scores are similar in pre and posttests.

Qadar and Arslan (2019) have examined the influence of the flipped classroom instruction on the writing skills of EFL learners in Iraq. The study included 66 students of the English Department of College of Languages from Salahaddin University. By employing a mixed-method, the researchers have proved that the experimental students have written better than the control students. The students’ attitudes are positive towards flipping the class.

Rahman, Yunus, and Hashim (2019) did an overview of the flipped classroom learning studies in Malaysia. They have identified 19 studies on flipped classroom instruction. Their findings show that most of these studies have revealed significant results of the students and the teachers having positive opinions towards the FCI. They conclude that the FCI should be implemented in every discipline in the education system.

Abdullah, Hussin, and Ismail (2019) applied a flipped classroom model on 27 undergraduate students of advanced communication skills course. The researchers used a combined method which involved pre and post oral tests, observation, and group interviews. The results showed that the flipped classroom model was very useful in the EFL speaking classroom. The FCI played a significant role in increasing the students’ participation in English speaking tasks and their commitment to learning.

Ali, Yunus, Hashim, Hidayat, and Zaman (2019) view the students as digital natives and consider that it is challenging to confine their engagement only in the classroom. They explored the effectiveness of the flipped learning approach in improving the students’ participation in an ESL context. They gathered the opinions of 18 experts by an online questionnaire using the fuzzy Delphi method. The experts were positive towards the FCI.

Chew, Jones, and Wordley (2018) investigated the experience of engineering students on flipped classrooms in a private university, Malaysia. Using the action inquiry method, the researchers implemented the FCI in an engineering subject. The findings show that the FCI transformed the classes from passive lectures to active learning by engaging them in reflective communication and collaborative discourse. The participants of the study exhibited positivism towards the FCI.

Raman, Rathakrishnan, and Thannimalai (2019) did a study with B.Ed undergraduates to identify their self-efficacy levels. They divided 35 students into the control group (17) and the intervention group (18). They exposed the control group to conventional teaching, and intervention group to the FCI using Padlet website. The study exhibited that the experimental group acquired better results than the control group.
Conduction of FCI in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Unfortunately, researchers have done very few studies in Saudi Arabia in the area of flipping classrooms. Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) claim, “However, one promising approach that uses technology in teaching, the flipped classroom strategy, had not yet been studied in the EFL Saudi Arabian context” (p. 60). And they continue, “While the flipped classroom strategy has shown success elsewhere, it had never been tried in the context of Saudi culture and the Saudi education system” (p.61). It gives a strong reason for the researchers to conduct the study in KSA.

Alsowat (2016) has investigated the effect of FCI on graduate students’ higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), engagement, and satisfaction. The study involved 67 female graduate students at Taif University, KSA. It reveals that students’ achievement is very high during FCI, and a significant relationship exists between HOTS and student engagement and satisfaction.

Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) have applied FCI in teaching English Grammar to secondary school students. The researchers uploaded the video lessons on the Edmodo site before classes for the experimental group students. They taught the control group in the traditional method. The posttest results of the experimental group are higher, and students’ attitudes are positive towards FCI.

Yu and Wang (2016) have observed that despite the vast availability of literature on the flipped model, very few studies have concentrated on Business English Writing Classroom. So, the researchers have decided to apply the FCI in Business College for the Writing course students. The purpose of conducting this study in Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University Level 1 College of Business Administration students is to bridge the gap between theoretical classes and writing assignments at home. The writing course (NAJM 163) is delivered in the classroom using a smartboard. Q: Skills for Success, Reading and Writing, 2nd Edition, Special Edition, Series Number 1 is followed. Ninety (90) hours are allocated for the course. The theory is delivered in the class, and students write assignments at home. To help students write better paragraphs in their assignments and to solve their writing problems, FCI is adopted.

Methodology

The research involved quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. This eclectic method was appropriate to find out the impact of the FCI on paragraph writing skills of students. In the context of a classroom, using a mixed-method is suitable to influence thoughts about issues and problems and practicing the activities of learning and teaching. The researchers could analyze the results of pre and posttests using quantitative data. It helped to find out the students’ attitudes towards FCI. The group discussion conducted for the experimental group found out the effect of FCI on students and their reaction. The quasi-experimental method was employed. This method helps to identify the impact of any specific treatment on selected learners (Creswell, 2009). The method involved a pretest for both groups, conduction of experiment to the experimental group, and posttest for both control and experimental groups.
Participants

The Level-1 Writing Course (NAJM 163) students of Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University for the academic year 2019-20 participated. The control group had 32 students, and the experimental group had 31 students. Table one displays the sample selection of both control and experimental groups.

Table 1. Control and experimental groups sample selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Students’ age</th>
<th>Frequency of Students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>17-18 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18-19 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19-20 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental group</td>
<td>17-18 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18-19 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19-20 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one depicts that the age group of the participants is from 17 to 20 who willingly consented to participate in the experiment. The total number of participants is 63. They are all native speakers of Arabic. They all had similar exposure to English as they are from in and around Al Kharj and Riyadh. The two sections of the Level-1 Writing Course (NAJM 163) from Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University were randomly selected. They were all homogenous. The researchers designated one group with 31 students as the experimental group, and the other group with 32 students as the control group.

The teachers taught the control group using traditional methods. For the experimental group, they applied the FCI. Video is the best tool for teaching among all other technological mediums (Hartsell & Yuen, 2006). So, the teaching videos selected from YouTube were uploaded in the university E-Learning portal, which is known as Blackboard.

Table 2. Writing course flipped class videos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Number</th>
<th>Topics in the Unit</th>
<th>YouTube Video URLs Uploaded in Blackboard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>Writing the main idea and supporting sentences</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JS29h3ABBqs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JS29h3ABBqs</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject + like / want / need +infinitive / noun phrase</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-w5kT1kCfAo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-w5kT1kCfAo</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>Writing compound sentences with ‘but’ and ‘so’</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrEmPZg81DY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrEmPZg81DY</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple past with regular and irregular verbs</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtAYUaRWnnI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtAYUaRWnnI</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative forms of the simple past</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table two depicts the list of the videos according to the topics of each lesson. The students viewed those video lessons at home and prepared for the classes. In the classroom, the group did the exercises of the lesson and wrote homework. In case of any doubt, the teacher did the scaffolding. The instructor played the role of a guide and helped students in the activity of writing paragraphs. The researchers conducted a group discussion for 12 students at the end of the study.

**Tools for Collecting the Data**

The researchers collected the required data through pre and posttests, a questionnaire, and a group discussion.

*Pre and posttests*: A pretest was conducted for both the groups before applying the FCI method. The question paper included writing a paragraph and identifying topic sentences, supporting sentences, details, and concluding sentences. The topic of the paragraph was, “What is an ideal job for you?” After experimenting, the researchers administered a posttest to both the groups with similar questions. The topic of the posttest was: “What makes you or someone you know laugh?” To evaluate the answer scripts, the researchers used a custom-made rubric that had the criteria: topic sentences, supporting sentences, concluding sentences, organization, and the use of transitional words, language, and vocabulary. Each of these five parts received 0 to 2 marks. Four other instructors evaluated the paragraphs using the same rubric to check reliability and validity. As the given scores were similar, the researchers considered that the rubric is valid and reliable to assess the pretest and the posttest.
**Questionnaire:** A questionnaire was prepared and translated into Arabic. It was given to the experimental group students after completing the program to determine their attitudes towards FCI. It had 15 questions with a five-point Likert scale that ranges from ‘Disagree’ (1) to ‘Strongly Agree’ (5). These questions reveal the response of the students towards FCI.

**Group Discussion:** At the end of the program, the researchers conducted a group discussion in the experimental group. A total of 12 students volunteered to participate in the discussion. It was conducted mainly to understand the students’ unique experiences and problems while doing the program. The discussion was recorded and analyzed by the researchers. The students discussed many points, such as the best thing I like about FCI, the worst drawback of FCI, the most challenging problem of the program, and my response to exercises and practice in the class.

**Materials and Procedure**

The researchers conducted the program in Level-1 Writing Course (NAJM 163) with 63 students. The textbook for the course is Q: Skills for Success, Reading and Writing, Special Edition, Series Number 1. The main objective of the writing part of the textbook is to teach topic sentences, supporting sentences, details, and concluding sentences. Writing a paragraph is the ultimate goal of all the lessons of the book. For the control group, the teachers delivered the lessons of the textbook using the traditional methods in which students listened to the lectures in the class passively and did exercises at home.

For the experimental group, the researchers identified the teaching videos from YouTube as per the topics of the lessons, and shared with the students through Blackboard. The students of the university use Blackboard daily for all the courses. So, there was no problem for the students to download the videos and view them at their homes. The video lessons were given in a flash to two students who don’t have proper technical support at home. The students prepared the lessons at home and did the exercises of the book and practiced writing paragraphs in pair work and group work activities. The instructor provided help as a guide and did the scaffolding.

**Data Analysis**

Before experimenting, the researchers conducted a pretest in both control and experimental groups. The researchers, following the rubric, evaluated the answer scripts and took the average of the evaluations as the final score. After experimenting, the researchers conducted a posttest in both the groups and evaluated the scripts, following the same rubric. The average of the evaluations was taken as the final score. Using the SPSS 16, the researchers conducted an independent t-test to check whether there is any significant difference between the scores of control and experimental groups.

After the conduction of the program, the experimental group students answered a questionnaire to exhibit their attitudes and reactions to the FCI. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic to eradicate the language barriers. The items were analyzed, taking the percentage of each item.
The researchers conducted a group discussion for 45 minutes with the 12 students who volunteered to find out the students’ attitudes in an in-depth manner. This qualitative data helped the researchers to understand the personal experiences of students.

**Findings**

The FCI played a significant role in developing the paragraph writing skills EFL students. The researchers calculated mean and standard deviation to describe the scores, as in table three. The first hypothesis to be tested is:
Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the control group pretest and the experimental group pretest.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the control group pretest and the experimental group pretest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.904</td>
<td>.369</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.17944</td>
<td>.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>60.283</td>
<td>.17944</td>
<td>.203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table three shows, an independent sample t-test was conducted. The results show that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the control and experimental group before holding the flipped classroom method. It is essential to have a homogenous group for experimenting.

**The difference between the teaching methods**

The researchers did a paired sample t-test to determine the difference between the writing skills of the control and experimental groups before applying the FCI. The second hypothesis to be tested is:
Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the control group pretest and the control group posttest.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the control group pretest and posttest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6.4375</td>
<td>.84003</td>
<td>-1.299</td>
<td>.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6.7188</td>
<td>.92403</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table four demonstrates that there is no much difference between the writing skills of the students in control group pretest ($\bar{x} = 6.4375$, $SD= .84003$) and posttest ($\bar{x}= 6.7188$, $SD= .92403$) and $t= -1.299$ and $p= .203$. 
If we observe, both the groups exhibited similar skills in writing paragraphs before attending the FCI. The researchers calculated a paired sample t-test and p-value to determine whether there is any difference in writing ability after doing the FCI.

The third hypothesis to be tested is:
Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental group pretest and the experimental group posttest.
Alternate Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental group pretest and posttest.

Table 5. Difference between the pretest and posttest experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.2581</td>
<td>.72882</td>
<td>-10.258</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.0645</td>
<td>.85383</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table five depicts that after conducting the FCI in the experimental group, the students have improved their writing skills significantly. A substantial difference exists between the mean scores of pretest (\(\bar{x} = 6.2581, \text{SD}= .72882\)) and posttest (\(\bar{x} = 8.0645, \text{SD}= .85383\)) of the experimental group. The t-value is -10.258 and p-value is .000. The t-test shows that the posttest scores have a considerable improvement in the experimental group (p <0.05). The difference came only because of the implementation of the FCI program.

**Experimental group students’ responses towards FCI**

The researchers calculated the frequency and the percentage of each item in the questionnaire as presented in the following table six to determine the students’ attitudes towards FCI.

Table 6. The students’ attitudes towards FCI from the questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Can’t say</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>FCI enables me to apply the concepts learned at home and makes me write better paragraphs in the class.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I prepare well for my exams and answer paragraph writing questions comfortably.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>FCI allows me to prepare the classes in advance.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FCI makes me confident in asking questions in the</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Along with the questionnaire, a group discussion was conducted with 12 volunteers from the experimental group to determine the individual unique experiences of the students. During the discussion, the students revealed the following observations.

Table 7. Responses of students towards FCI from Group Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Items Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The strengths of FCI</td>
<td>Lessons are available all the time.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 &amp; 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table six reveals that, 84% of students believed, when they answered the item one, that FCI enabled them to apply the concepts learned at home to write better paragraphs. In the group discussion, ten students supported this finding. Two of the participants stated:

“It was fascinating for me to come to classes and write my ideas in the paragraphs with my classmates.” (S1)

“I learned the lessons at home through the videos and wrote good paragraphs in the class.” (S3)

Concerning the items two and three in table six, 65% (Item two) and 77% (Item three) students responded that they prepared well for the classes and exams, and wrote paragraph writing questions comfortably. Eight students support this finding. One student stated:

“The lessons are always available on the Blackboard. I watched the videos again and again. I wrote well in the exams. I got good marks for my paragraphs.” (S7)

As demonstrated in table six, when responding to items four and five, about 65% (Item four) and 71% (Item five) of students believed that FCI made them confident in asking questions in the class and clarify their doubts. Four students supported this finding. Two students said:

“I can always ask questions, and the teacher is free to explain to me.” (S4)

“I feel confident to learn in the class because I can ask the teacher to help me and clear my doubts.” (S8)
As seen in table six, when responding to item six, about 84% of students liked the scaffolding provided by the teacher in the paragraph writing activities. Six students support this finding. Two students said:

“My teacher helped me whenever I felt difficult to write paragraphs.” (S5)
“One best thing in writing class is the teacher helps us to write paragraphs in the class. I like it because I can ask him many questions.” (S2)

As table six shows, 61% of students said, when responding to item seven, that they became responsible for their learning due to the introduction of the FCI. Three students in the group discussion support this finding. One student stated:

“I depended on myself to write in the class. I learned well because the lessons were available, and I had practice in the class.” (S6)

The students responded to items eight, nine, and ten positively. 94% (Item eight) of students said they had enough time to understand the lessons through the videos, and 58% (Item nine) of students felt that they could participate in the group activities by becoming good team players and 48% (Item 10) have developed a sense of belonging to the group. Around eight students support this finding. Two students responded:

“For other courses, we can’t rewind the lesson, but for Writing Course, lessons were always there in the Blackboard to watch. I can see them until I understand.” (S9)
“I am doing well in my team. We are learning well on our team.” (S10)

Items 11, 12, and 13 focused on comfort working with the teacher and their classmates. 94% (Item 11) of students said that they are comfortable working with other students, and 58% (Item 12) of students felt that they could explore new concepts with the teacher and felt respected. 84% (Item 13) of students felt that the classmates and the teacher respected their ideas. Five students support this finding. Around six students said in the group discussion that they were comfortable in the class to deal with the teacher and their classmates. The comment of a student shows it:

“I feel that the teacher is my friend. He always helps me. My peers also cooperate with me well.” (S11)

The responses for the last two items, 14 (51%) and 15 (58%), show that students were in support of FCI because it helped them understand the lessons better and practice well. A student said:

“I don’t have the burden of listening to the long lectures in the class. I don’t miss any lessons in FCI. It helped me a lot to write well.” (S12)

As table seven portrays, sometimes, students faced some technical issues. However, the problems were temporary. The Blackboard was not accessible occasionally due to some technical issues. This problem lasted only for a few minutes. Some students couldn’t understand the pronunciation used in the videos. This problem was solved when the teacher reviewed the lesson in the class, and the students got used to the pronunciation eventually.
Two students expressed at the beginning of the experiment that they were not provided computers with the internet at home. So, the researchers offered the lesson videos in a pen drive to these students. Only one student said that he didn’t have much time at home as he was doing a part-time job. The instructor paid special attention to him in the class and reviewed the lessons to make him understand. The instructor and the researchers provided clarity and encouraged the students to participate in the program, as they are not used to this method before. Within no time, students were into it and benefited from it. The students felt that they could not spend much time on videos during the exams as they have to prepare for them at home. At that time, the instructor focused on group activities that involved writing practice.

Discussion

The study demonstrates that after applying the FCI, the students became more active, motivated, and enthusiastic. The grades of the experimental group’s posttest show that they made a drastic improvement in paragraph writing. Thus, the first research question gets answered positively. The posttest results show that the students have improved their writing skills. The paragraph writing skills of the control group have not improved much as the mean scores of pretest and posttest are similar. Thus, the second research question gets answered that there is a little improvement in the writing skills of control group students. In contrast, the experimental group students have made a drastic improvement in their writing skills. After analyzing the questionnaire and the group discussion, the researchers understood that both the experimental group students and the instructor have a positive opinion about the FCI. Thus, the research question three gets answered positively.

These results align with Yu and Wang (2016), who flipped the English writing course for the undergraduate students of Business. The experiment group students have better academic achievement, and wrote better than the control group students. The scores of the experimental group are higher, and the students are positive towards the FCI. Similarly, they agree with the results of Qadar and Arslan (2019), who studied the effect of FCI on Iraqi EFL learners. In this study, the students of the experimental group have written better paragraphs than the control group.

The results of the present study show that the FCI contributed to the development of EFL students in Saudi Arabia. It is similar to the study of Alswat (2016), who concludes that the female graduate students of Taif University in Saudi Arabia displayed higher-order thinking skills when the teachers flipped the classes. Accordingly, a study conducted by Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2016) who have applied FCI in teaching English Grammar to Secondary School students. The scores of the experimental group are higher, and the students’ are positive towards FCI. Students of the FCI give positive feedback because of its easy to view lectures, a facility for review, self-directed learning, and availability of the instructor. The teachers find more time for guiding the students and providing feedback individually.

The studies are also in accordance with Basal (2015), Egbert et al. (2015), and Kurt (2017), who flipped the classes for pre-service English language teachers. The experimental group students displayed autonomy in learning, became responsible for their growth, and possessed a positive attitude towards the FCI.
In the present study, the students of the experimental group improved their scores by writing well in the tests just like the experimental group students of the studies conducted by Marcey and Brint (2012) for biology classes, McLaughlin et al. (2014) for Pharmaceutics classes, and Ayçiçek and Yanpar Yelken (2018) for English course in a school. In all these studies, the scores of the posttests were higher than the pretests.

The study conducted by Yang (2017) shows that FCI is ideal for English Grammar class. The present study also proves that the FCI is suitable for a Writing Course as the students of the experimental group improved their writing skills and are, in general, positive towards the flipped classroom.

The studies done on engineering students on one of their subjects (Chew et al., 2018), B.Ed undergraduates to identify their self-efficacy levels (Raman et al., 2019), and undergraduate students of advanced communication skills course (Abdullah et al., 2019) reveal that they align with the present study in terms of teachers’ satisfaction, and students’ active participation in the class. Out of 19 research studies identified by Rahman et al. (2019), most of the studies match the results of the present study. Similarly, the 18 experts consulted by Ali et al. (2019) expressed their positivity towards the FCI. The same is the case with the teachers and the students of the present study, who exclaimed that they possess positive opinions about the FCI.

In the traditional method, the instructor has time constraints to deliver the lecture in the class and make the students do the exercises. The students also experience boredom to listen to long lectures every day and find themselves helpless while doing the exercises at home. In this context, FCI impacts learners to be motivated and to take personal responsibility while improving their writing skills. Instruction should provide an ample number of chances for learning, but it should not be a hindrance.

The FCI provides enough time to prepare for the classes by watching the videos and practice the rules of writing in their classes. The learners’ acquisition improves with the change of methodological instruction. If the instructors fulfill the academic requirements of the students, they develop their writing skills quickly and comfortably. The students of the experimental group could improve their writing skills by memorizing and remembering the concepts for a long time. As a whole, the researches in many contexts prove that the FCI brings excellent results in improving the learners’ writing abilities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Technology plays a crucial role in advancing various aspects of society, especially education. Language instruction using technology is the present trend across the world. The results of this study confirm that FCI makes students write better paragraphs than traditional education. The FCI model provides a huge victory for the students and the teachers (Critz & Knight, 2013). Unlike the traditional method, with the teacher-centered class, the FCI enables student-centered classes. The learners become autonomous and employ their learning styles in acquiring knowledge. The outcomes show that in FCI, students become more active and learn with enthusiasm. The students shoulder the responsibility of learning and involve themselves totally in...
the classroom activities. As per the students’ feedback, they have become motivated and cultivated an interest in language acquisition.

In traditional instruction, the instructor does the theoretical explanation in the class and expects students to apply it at home without assisting. In contrast with this, in the FCI, students have an opportunity to understand the concepts at their will and apply the knowledge in the classroom activities taking the help from the teacher, and coordinating with their peers. In this method, students can watch the video lessons number of times until they understand and internalize the content. They also have sufficient time in the classes to practice what they have already learned. In this way, they learn actively, independently, and collaboratively. In contrast, the teacher always has the burden of time constraints in the traditional method. In FCI, the instructor gives feedback individually, corrects mistakes, and clarifies doubts. Classroom time is managed and employed more efficiently, contributing to the growth of every student personally.

The current study proves that implementing FCI in the EFL university classrooms of Saudi Arabia improves paragraph writing skills of students. The researchers can do further studies on the role of teacher’s feedback in the school and the motivation levels of students to write paragraphs. The researchers did the present study only in the writing course (NAJM 163). The researchers recommend that similar analysis should be done for other skills such as listening, speaking, and reading. If all the skills of language are imparted by following the FCI, it may create a high impact on the overall improvement of the language. The students’ classroom participation increases if the teachers implement the FCI for all the language courses of the university.

The researchers also recommend that the university encourages all the language instructors to get trained in the FCI. For this purpose, the university may conduct workshops and seminars. The researchers recommend the university to take the additional responsibility of providing technology and solving the technical problems involved in the FCI for better growth of students.

The present study proves that students improve their writing skills through FCI. However, it is undertaken for only one section and 31 students. So, studies conducted in the future may employ more number of students at various levels. Since the researchers conducted this study for tertiary-level EFL university students of Saudi Arabia, the teachers can apply it to various other departments for a large number of students.

About the Authors:
Bala Swamy Chatta is a lecturer in Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al Kharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He has 15 years of experience in teaching English in various colleges and universities. He is an expert in English literature, teaching LSRW skills and Grammar. He has published around ten research papers in various international journals in the areas of literature and ELT. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7269-2649

Dr. Mohammad Imdadul Haque is an Associate Professor and Head of the Management Department, College of Business Administration at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. He has published more than thirty-five research papers in journals of international repute.
and awarded eight funded university projects to his credit in the last 12 years of his teaching and research experience. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6323-032X

References


E-Teaching in Higher Education: an Innovative Pedagogy to Generate Digitally Competent Students at King Khalid University

Shadma Iffat Rahmatullah
Department of English, College of Science and Art, King Khalid University, Abha, KSA

Sufia Sultana
Department of English, College of Science and Art, King Khalid University, Abha, KSA

Ghazala Sultan
Department of English, College of Science and Art, King Khalid University, Abha, KSA

Abstract
The education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is on the verge of digital advancement. Primarily, this research paper aims to examine how a digitally competent teacher can help the institution and its learners to achieve high-level competency in digital and academic learning, as well as to develop critical thinking. It also intends to focus on the characteristics of e-teaching and the consequences of learning competency with its implication in female undergraduate colleges of King Khalid University. For the data collection, both the qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed. Several teachers were interviewed on their experiences with the utilization of digital sources, whereas, a large group of students from distinct study areas responded to a questionnaire to provide their feedback on their e-learning experience. The analysis indicates the necessity of appropriate trainings for e-teachers to handle the unexpected situations that occur during the teaching or evaluating process. Despite being a challenging task, they found it very useful to make students engaged with varied activities. The results also demonstrate that the e-teaching experience with digital media enables the teachers to assess their digital competence and teaching efficiency.

Keywords: digital technology, e-teaching, e-learning, higher education, teacher’s digital literacy

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.16
Introduction

The dominance of digital technology in the pedagogical discipline seems to take over the traditional educational approach on account of its overgrowing favor and recognition. The students’ expectations from their instructors are reasonable if they demand a “consistent quality of learning and teaching” (Steel, 2007, p.947). The prevailing pedagogy with the integration of computers is more conducive to learners than for teachers (Bangs & Cantos, 2004). It enables the learners to make progress at their own pace. The strategic objectives of the university require the appropriate utilization of technology in building a knowledge-based society while balancing the prospects of the institution’s output and the job market requirements. In the entire system of education, the responsibilities for developing competent students count on the higher education system to achieve the desired educational goals.

The incorporation of digital technology in many education systems has become an in-demand study for the researchers. This exploration intended to focus on the e-teaching aspects for the delivery of knowledge for the development of students’ digital competencies in future generations. This research wants to ascertain the teachers’ technical and experiential challenges they come to encounter during the teaching process through a digital environment. In Saudi Arabia, the prospect of online teaching and learning has been into a trend and viewed as the path to the development of higher education system, which is in a progressive direction to be a significant part of flexible learning (Al-Ajlan, 2016). However, it has been quite challenging for the instructors to administer the e-learning method in different scenarios.

The competency of an e-teacher is based on the achievement of students’ learning. The students’ clear understanding of the subject matter through digital activities and the completion of students’ educational, cultural, and professional development is the institution’s priority. The ability to handle digital media responsibly also shows the competency of the faculty members, which results in the achievement of students’ skills in the digital world. This achievement reflects their diligent performance in the teaching process. The e-teacher is required to understand the digital development and how to assess the students’ learning through digital media. There is a need to increase awareness of the digital developments that influence the society globally (Kelentrić et al., 2017), and to make the proper use of digital technology to organize the entire scenario of the e-learning program as well.

Though various cybernetic platforms and the online and blended learning approaches in the education system help create collaborative environments for the students’ learning development, these environments are not satisfactory in terms of students’ competencies. Several universities are making efforts to enable their faculty and students to be competent with advanced technologies. In many developing countries, the institutions follow the objectivist theory that adheres to the teacher-centered approach, contrary to the constructivist approach. There the digital divide is a prominent issue that affects the learning process through a computer. Many scholars defined the digital divide as a gap between the developed and the developing nation; however, within the developed countries, it is considered as a digital ability and its readiness to integrate the information technology in its education system. It also refers to the cultural, social and economic differences, and the differences between those who have the accessibility to the digital technology and have its use of competency, and those who are devoid of these competencies and availability.
The learning achievement can be attributed to the appropriate use of technology. This notion is supported by Gilly (2005), who ascribed the successful learning to “well-supported and focused human intervention, good learning design or pedagogical input, and the sensitive handling of the process over time by trained online tutors” (p. 203).

**Digital Learning: An Essential Educational Provision**

Digital education has emerged globally, with a new wave of innovation in the learning process. It has brought multifold changes in distance education. In particular, when we talk about female education in Saudi Arabia, the accessibility is provided to students in remote areas through the distance learning programs, making the students take courses from a university at their convenience (Yamin, 2015; Alahmari, 2017). The development of learning through technology “allows distance education programs to provide specialized courses for students in geographically remote areas with increasing interactivity between students and the teacher” (Al-Fahad, 2009, p.112). Amid the challenges both the teachers and students face during the distance learning process, it is hoped that this digital learning system “opens a world of possibilities for higher educational institutes” (Aljabre, 2012, p.26).

The students’ digital competency depends on the teaching techniques implemented by the teachers to make students more engaged and involved in the critical study themselves with collaboration and transparency during their learning process. On the contrary, teaching in a traditional classroom, students are less active; hence, they prefer to memorize the content without analyzing them critically. They are usually forced to listen to the lectures and read the prescribed textbooks or relying on the handouts provided by the teachers for the sole purpose of passing the exams with good grades. As mentioned earlier, online teaching does not encourage valuable teacher-student interactions and cooperation, which resulted in making the e-learning approach “an individual and isolated” (Hole et al., 2010, p.304). Digital literacy is required for both teachers and learners to understand and practice to successfully navigate the dynamic digital panorama (Eric et al., 2013). It is a matter of consideration when both teachers and students lack digital competency while learning through technology. The incompetency in the teaching arena with the lack of digital understanding may lead to the poor performance of the students.

**Digital Pedagogical Approach**

Numerous investigations have been executed to identify innovative strategies in higher education using a virtual classroom system. Moreover, there is an increase in the availability of learning materials online. A similar increasing number of students are initiating to take up the online courses, leading to challenges for the intuitions to train the instructors to conduct online classes. With the emergence of advanced digital technology in the higher education system, such as the use of computers, overhead projectors, other hand-held devices, and smartboards, etc., both the e-learning approach and the traditional face-to-face learning environment have to encounter with the significant transformation in pedagogical strategies (Akbar, 2016). The implementation of digital technology in educational pedagogy is a great help to transform the education system, specifically, distance education.

Though the learning resources can be supplied through websites, the interaction between teacher and students is abating. The teachers are using the current advanced software programs
with modern technologies and find difficulties while handling some unexpected situations. They face challenges such as using unique, effective techniques for imparting multiple types of information and the amount of content to the students learning from a distance. The teaching through digital technology needs to design the course curriculum with flexibility, considering the unfolding technological advancement. In many institutions, faculty members and the students prefer the virtual learning environment (VLE) to substitute the traditional way of learning. Gilly (2005) referred to some VLEs as “flapped learning—an attempt at transference of existing pedagogy (p.202).” However, in implementing the e-teaching strategy, it overburdens the teachers who are forced to be “content experts and pedagogical and technological personnel” as well (Phan, 2017, p.4).

Though the e-learning or online teaching-learning system has been the favorite topic of the researchers, there have been inadequate research works on e-teaching competence. This study endeavors to find ways to conduct e-teaching with effective teaching strategies resulting in effective e-learning, and how these strategies could be implemented to put them into practice.

After reviewing various studies, it is observed that the e-teaching competency is the fundamental feature to establish a productive learning environment and to generate the fruitful achievement of learning outcomes in all domains. It supports the constructive learning approach, in which knowledge is constructed through various activities (individual and social) by exploring rather than received and transferred by the teachers in a uniform pattern (Biggs, 1996).

Regarding language learning, the digital system of teaching is comparatively more flexible and convenient. Furthermore, it familiarizes the teachers with new pedagogical tools to interact with students in a timely way (Bush, 2008). Hereof, a Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) program equips the learners with the awareness of the advanced world, and it would become helpful for their outlook of prospects (Gündüz, 2005). Many Saudi universities are sustaining the developments in digital learning arena, through the implementation of Information Technology in the higher education systems. Several institutions already decided to integrate computer-assisted learning techniques into their courses either in a blended mode of learning or in full e-learning mode replacing the traditional methods of face-to-face learning with more advanced digital technologies. Recently, Catherine (2019), in her study, argued that the digitalization of the teaching procedure works well with the influence of government externally, through funding the institutions for the application of information technology in higher education. In her exploration, she made it evident that the internal and external digitalized process may influence teaching and learning in higher education with innovations in the learning environment (Catherine, 2019). On this ground, what students expect from their teachers is to be proficient in their subject and provide the students with all that need to know.

How are digital technologies used in the teaching-learning process? It is rather challenging to have a good insight into the use of computers in language pedagogy and its effects on higher education with vast development in the digital mechanisms for teaching and learning. The primary reason for the majority of university faculty members’ resistance to bringing changes into their pedagogical approach is because of their lack of clear understanding of how and why Information Technology should be ingrained into their teaching process (Lai, 2011). In his study, he also
discussed the use of digital technologies in the teaching-learning process that supports a shift of cultural practices to fulfill the learners’ requirements in the higher education system.

**Digital Literacy of E Teachers**

Teachers, who lack proficiency in Information technology skills, find it difficult to cope with the teaching process, yet they find it valuable for the future generation. In her study, Karpati et al. (2008) discussed the importance of Information Technology skills as ‘building a team spirit.’ His research revealed that the group tasks assigned to students would be more productive and engaging as ‘computer-based tasks’ teaches various management skills. The bottom line is the successful development of a teacher training course in digital technology should focus on a teacher’s personality and professional development (Karpati et al., 2008; & Mwalongo, 2011). The teacher is required to make the proper use of digital technology, teaching materials, and digital learning resources to achieve the targeted learning competencies to ensure the students’ desired academic progress.

Guri-Rosenblit (2018) in her article, highlights the importance the digital literacy of e-teachers in many universities, says that most of the teaching faculty are inept in guiding students in “developing the digital competencies they need.”(p.95) Corresponding with her evidence, it is apparent that the faculty member lacks confidence in utilizing the advanced digital technologies affecting the teaching-learning process in several higher education systems.

The teaching scenario in the virtual environment provides relevant information on how to embed digital technologies as educational tools in typical higher-education teaching situations. Suitable materials are presented through media technology to learn online. The universities in Saudi Arabia made the use of the LMS as mandatory, which make them inevitably “(hyper)textualized” (Al-Mahmood, 2011). The Blackboard, as the Learning Management System (LMS), is a virtual learning environment (VLE), a vast repository contains several features that allow the “integration of information systems and authentication protocols” (El-Zwaidy, 2014, p.142). The successful implementation of the virtual learning program revolves around the students’ need and their motivation level, the use of innovative teaching methods, clearly described learning outcomes, the format of subject presentation, and the support from the university. The Blackboard learning system integrates practical assessment mechanisms, virtual classrooms, discussion boards, and web conferencing sessions that enable students to view recorded files and other external academic resources at their convenience.

**E-Readiness of E-Teachers**

The advent of a virtual classroom will remove most of the barriers such as distance, age, cultural and economic barriers. To implement the online teaching approach successfully, it is significant to design effective teaching strategies. For this implementation, the aspect of e-readiness emerged to be the most significant in higher education programs. To a certain extent, managing online courses has been a challenging task for the teachers for their vital role in adopting basic techniques for the teaching-learning process. One of the significant barriers that create challenges for the teachers is their lack of technical and theoretical knowledge of information technology for its implementation into their teaching process (Lee, 2000). These challenges are very crucial as the shift from the traditional face-to-face learning environment to the virtual learning environment
also requires changes in course designing, course delivery, and applying innovative teaching methods.

The result of the study conducted by El-Zwaidy (2014) on the faculty members at Taif University indicated that a significant part of the faculty found a considerable difference in learning while using technology in their teaching process. In contrast, a low number of members needed intensive training to implement digital technology that shows their lack of digital awareness. The anticipated outcome of integrating digital technology into teaching for its quality improvement is related to the learning flexibility for students and tutors. The teachers’ technophobia (Anas, 2018) hampers the proper utilization of required advanced technology in their pedagogical process.

**E-Resources for Contemporary Learning**

Our teachers acknowledge the need for new resources for students’ enhanced learning in various fields. Any higher education system takes pains to assist students in gaining awareness with a variety of interactive learning sources that can be used by learners to get programmed guidance and feedback (Oliver & Herrington, 2001). Though the e-versions of printed textbooks are available in many subjects, they appear to be less effective than the original form of written works. He emphasized on using different mechanisms, such as digital magazines and video streaming, etc. to apply for various distinct purposes. To increase active participation in the online discussion forums, which is one of the mechanisms for online learning, the teacher needs to encourage students with the relevant topics that suit the students’ cultural dimension. These activities provide the learners with sufficient time to think, discuss the facts, and to put them in writing without any error (Hole et al., 2010).

The E-sources (such as e-books, online databases, websites, e-journals, etc.) necessary for e-teaching, need to integrate the required material to comply with the cognitive domain of learning outcome that focuses on the constructive approach. The e-teaching materials require the designing the students’ learning activities considering all the domains, specifically, the cognitive domain, for the attainment of the teaching and learning goals (Yachina et al., 2016).

In terms of Blended learning, the online forum helps students understand the concept presented in the traditional classroom environment, and helps the instructors to “readjust the subject matter” (Singer & Stoicescu, 2011, p.1531) which facilitate the learning more conveniently. Using Blackboard Collaborate, a synchronous tool for learning online, the teacher conducts live classes with students where they can have study sessions and informal discussions. The primary function of the LMS is to accumulate the learning content, with an extended interaction between teachers and the students synchronously and asynchronously (Hussain, 2011). Students prefer to be engaged in more outdoor and interactive activities rather than ‘indoor’ events held in traditional classrooms or in computer labs (June, 2006). The use of Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) in second language acquisition proves to be very influential. It enables the e-teachers to provide sufficient but helpful feedback to the learners. The learners find the digital mode of learning more motivating than traditional face-to-face learning. It also facilitates the prompt responses by instructors and students. The online discussion forums, a tool in the Blackboard system used commonly by learners to share the current information, promote a more reflective communicational mode of learning. It was invented “in a ‘generic format’ to represent the typical
structure and interface features found in many similar ‘off-the-shelf’ computer-based threaded discussion tools” (Thomas, 2002).

**Methodology**

The present research appraisal is based on qualitative and quantitative approaches to probe into the various perspectives on teachers’ competency level, examining their attitude towards e-learning while integrating digital technology into their teaching process. The participants of the study consist of faculty members and students from the female colleges of King Khalid University, one of the prominent universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A set of open-ended questions were asked through telephonic interview sessions with a number of 20 teaching faculty members, who belonged to different departments. After experiencing the online teaching, they provided their valuable feedback as well as their worthwhile personal responses that depict their level of digital competence and the performance of their teaching efficiency. Their opinions were based on their attitudes for e-learning, their views on e-readiness, Pedagogical skills, lesson planning, and designing the course format, Technology competency, and their willingness to take online teaching.

For the data collection of the quantitative approach, a survey questionnaire was administered online to get students' valuable and feedback on their e-learning experience and whether their experience with digital teaching was effective or ineffective. The questionnaire consisted of a set of five questions based on five points Likert scale.

**Discussion**

The first analysis describes the perceptions of the participant teachers, who have been indulged in E-teaching and analyzing students’ formative and summative assessment using Blackboard Collaboration. Their responses were obtained through the interview method, which acknowledges their attitude towards e-learning activities. The majority of them claimed as time-constraint contrary to the usual traditional in-class assessment methods. After reviewing the responses, it is anticipated that this new learning paradigm needs rigorous digital training for the teachers before the course taking to assure the readiness of the faculty.

For using Blackboard tools for the appropriate delivery of the course content, almost 40% of the instructors claimed that they were forced to upload the chunks of the course materials, handouts, and the extracts from the recommended texts. Doing this for the utmost convenience of students’ preparation for exams, they seldom realize its negative impact on students’ motivation level, learning achievement, and their critical ability. On this account, their learning is restricted to limited information. On the contrary, when they are provided with self-analytical assignments or encouraged for using Discussion Forum, blogs, and wikis for the brainstorming sessions, the result might be reverse.

It is figured out that many teachers consider the utilization of some productive tools on the Blackboard, such as the Course Calendar and the tracking facility, as worthless. The majority of them even ignored the most important tools, i.e., communication tools, such as chat and forums. Responding to the question, whether the current e-learning approach is sufficient to meet the required program learning goals of the university, there were mixed and uncertain views. They
claimed to have met with various challenging situations that they perceived to be ineffective for students’ long-term learning goals. Almost 25% of those members, taken as the study sample, found incompetent in digital literacy, which is evident with what they claimed to have asked for help from their colleagues at every stage, from conducting a virtual class to assessing the students learning. Three distinct findings emerged from this qualitative study are: (1) The faculty members need proper digital training with the appropriate utilization of digital teaching-learning tools; (2) The teachers seem to take the responsibility to encourage students and motivate them to the utmost; (3) Teaching or learning from home does not mean the relaxation period. Instead, it just eases the teaching-learning process with a variety of convenient and exciting tools, making the teaching more fruitful.

The e-learning program is required to have a structured learning environment specified the use of available digital resources that comply with the subject matter. The faculty of the participant university, teaching in different colleges demonstrated the least awareness regarding the existence of Blackboard toolkits, showing unfamiliarity with these valuable sources. A majority of participant teachers complained of the scarcity in proper training sessions; however, the trainings they received, as they claimed, were conducted online as Webinars that were not efficient and as profitable as anticipated by the institution.

The obtained result reveals that the teaching faculty, specifically, in the language department faced some crucial problems such as heedless writing of the answers by the students without putting attention on the correct usage of punctuations, grammar, or syntax. In writing an assignment, they either fell to plagiarism or lack the clarity of ideas, which is basically due to their least participation in the digital forums available on their LMS. In this regard, the poor performance of the students may be related to the students’ low level of learning, as well as to the teachers’ ineffective way of teaching, which shows students’ inefficiency of using digital sources effectively. The following figure is displayed to analyze the feedback of the faculty members on the specific aspects of digital tools available on the LMS (the Blackboard). It exposes the frequency of effective utilization of these digital resources.

![Figure 1: Using Blackboard toolkit (by faculty teachers)](image)

The figure one indicates either the teacher’s incompetency in utilizing the various useful sources or being resistant to encourage students to use them. Many teachers disclosed the students’
perspectives regarding the multifold activities that the latter are unwilling to be indulged in extra activities other than their usual restricted methods of learning and assessment.

Are these what e-teachers are expected to be performing? The fundamental role of an e-teacher is to guide their students for their active participation in learning activities using digital resources for the development of students’ critical ability and problem-solving skills. Consequently, it is required on the part of a teacher to have an explicit and deep understanding of how digital literacy positively impacts on the academic and professional development. It is essential to develop a particular set of skills and a positive attitude towards the appropriate use of digital media. The results indicate that the online grading system and computer-mediated communication are quite motivating for students. On the other hand, the teachers felt for the same as more time-consuming in comparison with the face-to-face interaction in the classroom.

Concerning the faculty member’s attitude towards the e-learning approach, Hussain (2011) researched on some of the prominent universities of Saudi Arabia. His study finds King Saud University on top of six universities, with a higher number of digitally competent faculty. The result of his study also indicates that the faculty members using JUSUR display sufficient knowledge of the E-learning system and how to implement digital technology in the teaching process, which represents a very encouraging sign for the pedagogical progress of faculty members in using LMS.

However, the findings of this investigation reveal that the richness of the teachers’ digital performance is missing. The faculty members show reluctance in changing their mindset in terms of using digital pedagogy, without realizing its supposed negative impact on the quality of learning and its consequences on the achievement of learning outcomes.

One of the teachers came with the opinion that “approximately 25% of students complained of the weak server issues, affecting their performance in online activities. While taking an online quiz, about 15% of students protests for the time duration allotted for the test, preventing them from completing the test, thus, resulting in the re-opening of the quiz or extending the duration”. Other teachers related the delayed performance of the students to “the miserable condition of the server, heavy network traffic, and unclear instructions given for the assessment.”

The subsequent analysis (figure-2) is based on the data received from the students through a Likert scale questionnaire (1=Strongly Agree, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5). The result is displayed in the form of the mean value for each statement. The statements dealt with the students’ learning experience during the e-learning process.
Figure-2: Students’ feedback on e-learning experience.

Altogether, a number of 78 students responded to the questionnaire. The mean age of the participants is 22 years. Approximately 41% of participants are from junior levels (1-4), while 59% belonged to senior levels (5-8) of studies. A majority of participants expressed their satisfaction on working at their own pace. Though the result reports the satisfactory response of the students on the delivery of course materials; the result reveals their dissatisfaction on the teacher-student interaction during the e-learning process. However, it seems apparent that the digital way of learning appears to be more convenient for most students (M=2.3). Though it can afford more convenience and facilities to the learners; it does not provide an attentive and accommodating interaction between the teachers and the students (M=3.23).

**Conclusion**

It is noticeable, that, blending the digital technology with the teaching-learning process is on acceleration into the higher education system of Saudi Arabia. Considering the digital incompetency of teachers, as the present study indicated, it is requisite for a teacher to enhance their digital awareness with a highly efficient and innovative form of training, to be skilled in her field of study and to contemplate the appropriate use of teaching techniques, to generate digitally competent students. Without a competent e-teacher and programming expertise, no Virtual learning environment can prove to be sufficient to produce active learning. The outcome of this study makes it inevitable to review the course curriculum for the new digital technologies such as forums, wikis, and social media, etc. to be incorporated into the teaching practice. Moreover, the concern over the necessity of the faculty members’ training in the usage of the LMS is raised, as the new generations of learners adopt more advanced technologies in a more creative approach.

Currently, the e-learning approach has become prevalent; hence, it is anticipated to grow farther. The digitally advanced pedagogies are more engaging with collaborative activities to bring teachers and students together for a more advantageous interactive learning. Accordingly, it is recommended to the imminent researchers to delve deep into the e-teaching aspect to widen the digital awareness in the realm of the education system.

**About the Authors**

**Dr. Shadma Iffat Rahmatullah** is an assistant professor of English literature at King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. Her Research interests include literature and Language studies, educational technology, educational psychology, and pedagogical development.
Sufia Sultana is a lecturer in the Faculty of English language and Translation at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. She has M.phil degree from Alagappa University, TN, India. She has been teaching in faculty of language at King Khalid University for the past 11 years. ORCiD ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8331-810X

Ghazala Sultan is a lecturer in the Faculty of English language and Translation at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. She is postgraduate in English Literature from the University of Balochistan, Pakistan. She has been teaching in faculty of language at King Khalid University for the past 7 years. ORCiD ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5136-9885

References
Al-Fahad F. N. (2009). Students' Attitudes and Perceptions Towards the Effectiveness of Mobile Learning in King Saud University, Saudi Arabia, The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology – TOJET, 8(2).
Anas, I.; Musdariah, A. (2018). Being an E-Teacher: Preparing the ESL Teacher to Teach English with Technology, JELTL (Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics), 3(1) DOI: 10.21462/jeltl.v3i1.102


Perceptions of Saudi Students to Blended Learning Environments at the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia

Ammar Anas
Department of English, College of Sciences & Arts
University of Bisha, Al-Namas, Saudi Arabia

Abstract
In this study, a survey is conducted to examine learners’ perceptions and satisfaction towards blended learning environments designed around the transactional and transformational approaches of learning theories in a blended course in the College of Arts & Sciences, Al-Namas, the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The study aims to evaluate students’ perceptions and preferences towards the three components of a blended learning environment: multimedia learning materials, assessment, and interactive activities. A mixed-method of research design is used to collect the data. Quantitative data is collected in the form of 12 Likert items in which 22 Saudi students are asked to evaluate their learning experiences in three categories of the blended learning environment. These categories are multimedia learning materials, assessment, and interactive activities in a blended course on Blackboard, a virtual learning platform used by the University of Bisha to support on-line learning. The researcher’s observation is used to decode, and explain the responses of the participants qualitatively. The result reveals that learners prefer illustrated text materials to video, plain text and audio materials, flexible assessments to non-flexible assessment, and embedded communication tools like WhatsApp, blogging, wikis, collaborative activities, and discussion forum.

Keywords: blended learning, instructional design, learning design, learning environment, Saudi students,

Introduction

The exponential growth of technology and its integration in the regular lives of people have altered the context of learning. Blended learning (BL) is a pedagogical approach that has its origin in the development of educational technology and digital learning. There is no single definition that all scholars can agree upon but the basic notion of BL is to use educational technology in a traditional classroom and combine face to face learning or face to face teaching with on-line learning and on-line teaching. BL is used to deliver digital on-line materials along with traditional print-based materials. BL may include a variety of learning spaces like on-line environment, face to face classroom or a combination of both. It is a flexible approach that enables learners to access digital learning materials, learning activities and even lectures on-line from any place at any time synchronously and asynchronously. Such flexibility in a learning environment is making BL attractive among learning professionals around the world.

Integration of BL in higher education is a recent development in Saudi Arabia. Developed countries had stable education system a century before the Saudi government assumed the resources in the mid-20th century to undertake massive challenges (Almalki, 2011). The Ministry of Higher Education of Saudi Arabia introduced BL as its preferred approach in 2006 to promote professionalism, leadership and quality education in public and private universities (National Centre for E-learning, 2010, cited in Almalki, 2011). Furthermore, it established the National Centre for E-learning and Distance Learning to fulfill the needs of Higher education in the Kingdom (National Centre for E-learning, 2010, cited in Almalki, 2011). Currently, 90% of universities in Saudi Arabia use Blackboard as an e-Learning platform to impart digital education in the university curriculum (Aldiab, Chowdhury, Kootsookos, Alam, & Allhibi 2019) at three levels:

Supportive e-Learning
All classes are taken face-to-face in classrooms and e-learning is used to support the learning process without making it a part of formal assessment.

Blended Learning
Some of the face-to-face classes are replaced by blended learning on Blackboard. The proportion of blending goes between 20% and 75% of the course.

Full e-Learning
All the face-to-face classes are replaced by e-activities on Blackboard except for the final exam and the limited face-to-face sessions decided by the faculty and the teacher.

The learning context in the University of Bisha is a kind of hierarchical individual learning environment where Saudi undergraduates take their assigned/applied courses to gain a bachelor degree. Teachers play the role of content experts and provide learning to the students using textbooks, blackboards, and some digital resources. Supportive level e-Learning is compulsory for all the faculty members to use their courses. Courses in BL is conducted by those faculty members who are trained and have experience in BL. Full on-line learning had been a part of the institution’s policy, but it has been widely practiced during COVID-19 pandemic.
This study investigates perceptions of Saudi learners about the design of learning environments built around transactional and transformational view of learning in a blended course. The study extends the contribution of previous studies from the effectiveness of BL to the issues of the design of the learning environment in the Saudi Arabian context. Alzahrani (2017) cited several studies in support of the view that students’ achievements are better in blended learning environments than in the traditional learning environment and even better than in the e-learning environment. Alzahrani (2017) also cited some other studies which show that students’ satisfaction in blended learning environments is higher than the traditional learning environment. Overall, the studies reveal that Saudi students have positive attitudes towards BL but at the same time, there are some problems and challenges in the implementation of BL in Saudi Arabian educational system. In his Ph.D. thesis, Almalki (2011) has described some of them:

a) The notion of BL is not clearly understood in the Saudi Arabian universities.
b) Faculty members require more skills in pedagogies, and on-line instructional designs to implement BL effectively.
c) Course design lacks functions that can enable students to contribute to the course content and share ideas with their classmates.

Almalki (2011) has shown that instructors have misconceptions about BL. According to him, they require skills in pedagogical and instructional design and competency in creating learner engagement and interaction. In the context of issues raised by Almalki (2011), this research looks into how the Saudi students perceive their learning in a blended learning environment, what components in learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered learning environments of the course design are preferred, what are the various notions and properties of BL, and what is the role of new pedagogies in designing a blended learning environment. The study extends the process of investigating students’ perceptions from a positive attitude, and effectiveness of BL among the Saudi learners to the level of design of learning environment, organization of contents, and learner engagement in assessment and interaction. The research collects students’ responses into three areas: (1) multimedia learning materials, (2) assessment, and (3) on-line interactive activities. The study aims to evaluate students’ perceptions and preferences in a blended course that provides exposure in learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, community-centered environments designed through applying transactional and transformational theories of learning to facilitate in developing high order skills, engagement and effective learning. This study will be useful for BL designers, BL instructors, and e-Learning institutions. This study mainly focuses on three questions:

1) What kind of digital learning materials do students prefer in a BL course?
2) What kind of assessments do students find more interesting in a BL course?
3) What kind of activities do students like to use for interaction and collaboration in a BL course?

Literature Review

There are a lot of ambiguities and confusions in defining what BL exactly is. According to Smith and Hill (2019), BL has been in practice in higher education for twenty years but it is still developing and is not yet fully embedded and institutionalized in higher education institutions. Traditionally BL is considered as combining traditional learning with technology or face to face
teaching /learning with on-line teaching and learning. While describing different notions of BL, Smith & Hill (2019) cite Garrison & Vaughan (2008) that BL is ‘thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and on-line learning experiences’ but this definition is purposefully broad and does not specify the scale and nature of that fusion, making it hard to see the essence of BL, when it can relate to almost anything (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005, cited in Smith & Hill, 2019). In subsequent paragraphs, some definitions of BL are reviewed.

Hartman, Dziuban, & Moskal (2007) define BL as courses that combine face-to-face classroom instruction with on-line learning and reduced classroom contact hours. Chan & Koh (2008) cited Fox, 2002 that BL is “the ability to combine elements of classroom training, live and self-paced e-learning, and advanced supportive learning services in a manner that provides tailored learning (Fox, 2002 cited in Chan & Koh 2008, p. 85). Beatty (2010) described blended learning as “…some combination of textbook, on-line learning, and traditional classroom interaction are all used (p.197).”

Sharma (2010) cited the work of Oliver and Trigwell (2005), which enlisted three kinds of definitions/ perspectives of BL. The first perspective is that BL is “The integrated combination of traditional learning with web-based on-line approaches (p. 456).” Sharma (2010) termed the first definition as a classic definition of BL. According to him, ‘Traditional learning’ here refers to classroom teaching or ‘face-to-face’ language lessons. The delivery of the on-line part of the course is usually made through learning technologies using a virtual learning environment such as Blackboard or Moodle and synchronous and asynchronous electronic tools such as chat and bulletin boards respectively (p. 456).

Sharma (2010) cited the second perspective of BL by Oliver and Trigwell (2005) as “the combination of media and tools employed in an e-learning environment” (p.456). According to him, the second definition is as a typical example of a distance learning course, where no face-to-face lessons occur. Communication between the learner and e-tutor may occur through any number of technologies, such as email and internet telephone.

Sharma (2010) cited the third perspective of BL by Oliver and Trigwell (2005) as “the combination of a number of pedagogic approaches, irrespective of the learning technology used” (p. 456). He elaborated this perspective as a course that combines ‘transmission’ and ‘constructivist’ approaches that would fit into the category of blended learning, such as one involving elements of a present-practice-produce methodology as well as task-based learning (p. 456).

Briefly, following six notions of BL can be derived from the above-given definitions:

1. Combining traditional learning/ face to face with technology
2. A fusion of face-to-face and on-line learning experiences
3. Combining face-to-face classroom instruction with on-line learning and reduce classroom contact hours
4. Providing tailored learning
5. Combining textbook, on-line learning, and traditional classroom interaction
An integrated combination of traditional learning with web-based on-line approaches

Combining media and tools employed in an e-learning environment

Combining pedagogic approaches, irrespective of the learning technology used

All the above definitions somehow deal with the use of technology in education but they don’t outline how BL extends learning potentialities through the use of technology. Conceptualization of BL by a MOOC “Blended Learning Essentials: Getting Started” by the University of Leeds (2019) provides a comprehensive and practical definition of BL. According to the MOOC, if technology adds value to the teaching-learning process, it will be called BL, and if doesn’t add any value, it should not be considered as BL. To illustrate BL in practice, it uses an activity in Week 1 (1.4: What is blended learning?), in which it shows that any routine job in the teaching-learning process that does not add any value to teaching and learning process cannot be called BL. For example, students in the classroom are taking notes on a laptop, or a learner is browsing on-line content just for a better understanding of a concept without their teacher’s recommendation. In both examples, the use of technology isn’t adding any value to the teaching-learning process. Therefore, it will not be called BL.

According to the MOOC, BL aims to achieve certain pedagogical properties like flexibility, active learning, personalization, learner control, and feedback in the teaching-learning process. For example, learners use virtual simulation to prepare for a practical session using the same equipment or, they use their smartphone to record data in a workplace to present as a graph in the project report. In these examples, the use of technology exhibits value addition of accessibility, interactivity, personalization and flexibility to the learning process. Therefore, it will be called BL (University of Leeds, 2019). The course instructor, Laurillard, defines BL as:

“Blended learning … is a mix of traditional and digital technologies that are blended together in a way that helps learners learn more productively. They use their time better; they achieve more. Blended learning has value right across the vocation and education sector and to get a sense of where blended learning adds value for both learners and teachers” (University of Leeds, 2019, Week 1).

Professor Laurillard enlisted four properties of digital technologies that BL should exhibit in BL practices:

**Storage:**
Digital technologies store information and data very efficiently. Efficient storage means digital versions of videos, animations, and documents can be provided at a far lower cost than their physical equivalent and can be made available for thousands of participants at the same cost.

**Access:**
Learners have access wherever and whenever they want it. Learners have a flexible schedule without any restriction of time and location.
Multimedia:
Digital technologies can present material in a variety of different media formats. Learners can watch videos to get a better sense of ways it might work for them. Multimedia with remote access brings digital learning to every classroom, every field trip, and every study room at a time of learner’s choosing.

Personalization:
Digital technologies respond to what learners need based on the data they put in. For teaching and learning, technologies are always used for storage-like paper, dictionaries, and libraries - or for easy access- catalogues, indexes, content lists - and for different media - books, videos, maps, diagrams, but personalization is something new that was not possible before. Personalization means enabling learners to make decisions in their digital learning like which activity to do, to interrupt a video, to explore activities for later in the week, to browse what is in the Wiki, and to do the interactive exercises. Thus, learners control a very large amount of content and receive feedback on their decisions.

(The University of Leeds, 2019, Week 1)

The University of Leeds (2019)’s BL approach emphasizes the use of technology to add value to the teaching and learning process and to empower students through providing a learning environment in which students can acquire deep learning. Designing a learning environment and enabling students to acquire deep learning are issues related to new theories of learning like Constructivism, Social Constructivism, Connectivism, Communities of Practices, Activity Theory, Zone of Proximal Development, Scaffolding, Self-Regulated Learning, Collaborative Learning, Problem-Based Learning, and Project-Based Learning. Old theories of learning are based on instructionism which is unable to address the educational challenges in the 21st century. Instructionism refers to those pedagogies in which instructors transmit facts and procedures to students. Learning achievements are determined if students have acquired a large collection of these facts and procedures. In contrast, new theories of learning illustrate how students acquire a deep conceptual understanding of complex concepts and develop the ability to work creatively to generate new ideas, new theories, new products, and new knowledge. They learn how to critically evaluate what they read, how to express clearly both verbally and in writing, and how to understand scientific and mathematical thinking. New theories of learning prepare students to learn integrated and usable knowledge, rather than compartmentalized and pieces of de-contextualized facts. They make learners responsible for their continuing lifelong learning (Sawyer, 2014).

Similarly, this BL approach demands from BL practitioners to apply new theories of learning and design engaging and innovative learning environments. Traditionally, BL courses are designed by applying Instructional Design (ID). Especially, most of the instructional designers use the ADDIE Model to design the courses. Instructional Design (ID) has its roots in educational technologies and system approach to understand and improve methods of instructions (Reigeluth 1983a; 1983b, Seels (1989), Jonassen (1988) cited in Levy (1997). It encompasses a set of interdependent phases including analysis of learners, contexts and goals, design of objectives, strategies and assessment tool, production of instructional materials, and evaluation of learner performance and overall instructional design efforts (Chen, 2008). Like behaviorism, the origin of
instructional design is also rooted in the traditions of military training and has been guided by behaviorist and cognitive theories of learning (Chen, 2008). The focus of the instructional design is often on content (Subject matter) (re) organization rather than the learner, learning, and knowledge application (Sims, 2015).

Under the exponential growth of technology in recent years, the contemporary learning context and the learning process have significantly changed. The contemporary context of learning is technologically rich and increasingly learner-centered, while the learning process is emerging and created through the actions of participants in the learning network (Sun, 2017). BL approach demands from BL practitioners to design a learning environment in which learners can flexibly personalize their learning. They can process multimedia learning materials and can apply high order skills like enquiring, exploring, analyzing, synthesizing and collaboratively constructing their knowledge from the variety of tasks, resources, social configuration or tools to achieve their intended learning outcomes (Mor, Craft, and Maina, 2015). In addition to the objectives of the learners, courses, and institutions, learning theories play a significant role in determining the design of a learning environment. Similar to Instructional Design in which instructionism structures learning resources, learning activities, and assessment in the line of behaviorism and cognitivism, new theories of learning also conceptualize learning environments that can meet the needs of the knowledge economy and develop deep learning. National Research Council (2000) has illustrated the design of learning environments from four perspectives. They are as following:

Learner-Centered Environments

A learner-centered environment is a design that engages students and allows them to construct their meaning by applying their beliefs, understandings, and cultural practices. The instructor facilitates in building the bridge between the subject matter and the student with empathy towards their previous knowledge and ability to build new knowledge.

Knowledge-Centered Environments

A learner-centered environment focuses on learners’ ability to construct knowledge while the knowledge-centered environment requires well-organized bodies of knowledge that support planning and strategic thinking. In addition to students’ initial preconceptions about the subject matter, it focuses on the kinds of information and activities that help students develop an understanding of disciplines. It fosters an integrated understanding of discipline instead of disconnected understanding. The instructor believes that memorization doesn’t contribute to deep leaning. It only promotes surface learning.

Assessment-Centered Environments

An assessment-centered Environment uses formative assessments to provide feedback to learners on their learning so they can revise their learning. The instructor facilitates students in developing self-assessment mechanism, higher-level thinking, and deep understanding, not just assessing facts and procedures. Assessments should match the learning goals.

Community-Centered Environments

A community-centered Environment focuses on connections between the school environment and the broader community, including homes, community centers, after-school programs, and
businesses. This environment is good to extend learning out of class as students spend a relatively small amount of time in school compared to other settings. Activities in homes, community centers, and after-school clubs can have important effects on students’ academic achievement.
(National Research Council, 2000)

**Blended Learning in Saudi Arabia**

While evaluating BL in Saudi Arabia, it is needed to have a comprehensive framework and effective design to provide BL experiences to students. Many research findings confirm that BL in Saudi Arabia has a positive impact on the quality performance of the students and they have a positive attitude towards the use of BL. For instance, Alzahrani (2017) found that blended learning has a positive effect on Saudi students’ achievement and they exhibited satisfaction towards BL in their studies. Sajid, Laheji, Abothenain, Salam, AlJayar, and Obeidat (2016) discovered that the application of BL and flipped classroom enhance Saudi students’ satisfaction and encourage them for independent learning in addition to increased engagement in classes more than traditional lecture methods. Al-Madani (2015) conducted an experimental study in which he compared the effect of a blended learning approach with the traditional learning approach on fifth-grade students’ achievement. He found that the experimental group using the blended approach of learning outperformed the control group using the traditional approach in terms of achievement and the development of verbal creative thinking skills. According to Al Zumor, Al Refaai, Eddin, & Al-Rahman (2013), Saudi students perceive that BL has performed a positive role in broadening their reading opportunities and enriching their English vocabulary. Blackboard that is being used as an e-Learning platform in Saudi Arabia’s universities to deliver blended learning has also received a positive perception among Saudi learners and instructors. Ali (2017) affirms that using Blackboard motivates students to work harder and learn better than traditional methods of learning, and students believe that Blackboard is a motivating factor in their learning.

Simultaneously, some studies reveal problems in the implementation of BL in Saudi Arabia. Almalki (2011) in his Ph.D. thesis identified three important issues related with the implementation of BL in Saudi higher education: (1) insufficient definitions of BL, (2) lack of skills in pedagogical and on-line instructional designs and (3) inability of websites’ designs and functions in increasing students’ contribution in course content and interaction among the students (Almalki, 2011). From Almalki (2011)’s study, it is revealed that faculties in Saudi Arabia are unfamiliar and untrained in using BL as a pedagogical alternative. They are not proficient to use a learning-centered design for engaging students in a digital learning environment. Aldosemani, Shepherd, & Bolliger (2019) enlisted several problems that instructors face in their practices of BL. Based on their findings, they recommended training for faculty members in BL, instructional design, e-learning strategies, content creation, use of learning management system, and student assessment (Aldosemani, Shepherd, & Bolliger,(2019). Lack of training, poor e-Learning infrastructure, overconsumption of time, poor design of activities, lack of communication in blackboard environment, poor quality of content in the course, poor accessibility, and barriers in personalizing learning are some other problems found in the studies of Al Zumor et al. (2013), Ja’ashan (2015), Ali (2017), Elbasuony, M. M. M., Gangadharan, P., Janula R., Shylaja J., & Gaber, F. A. (2018) and Aldiab, A., Chowdhury, H., Kootsookos, A., Alam, F., & Allhibi, H. (2019).
Once in an interview, Steve Jobs, the founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Apple (technology company)’ said, “What’s wrong with education cannot be fixed with technology” (Thomas, Reinders & Warschauer, 2012, p. 2). Job’s statement means a problem in digital learning can be corrected by applying authentic theories of learning not just by employing state-of-the-art technology. BL practitioners need to realize that the full potential of the technology cannot be materialized by applying an instructional design that looks at learning as an end product. They should apply new theories of learning like constructivism, social constructivism, and connectivism that will enable students to apply high order learning skills in the learning process. They should employ these theories in designing learning environments so they can provide learner engagement and genuine learning experiences to their students. As some learning environments are mentioned above, teachers should explore numerous other ways of designing learning environments and using them in their courses. In this study, learner-centered environments, knowledge-centered environments, assessment-centered environments and community-centered environments are employed to let the students construct their knowledge and achieve their learning outcome themselves.

In this research, Saudi undergraduates are offered BL experiences in multimedia learning materials, assessment and interactive activities. In the knowledge-centered environment, students are provided duly coded multimedia learning materials. In the assessment-centered environment, students are offered flexible and non-flexible, synchronous and asynchronous assessment activities aimed to engage students in the learning process. In the community-centered environment, students were provided with collaborative and interactive involvement through Google docs, WhatsApp communication, discussion, blogs and wikis. Purpose of designing such a learning environment was to provide engaging, interactive and learner-centered learning experiences to Saudi undergraduates. This study is an attempt to record students’ perceptions and attitudes towards BL at the level of design and learning environment.

Research Design

Context of the Research

The research was conducted in the department of English in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Bisha, Al-Namas in Saudi Arabia in the academic session of 2018-19. 22 Saudi male undergraduates between the age group of 17 to 23 years participated in the study. Participants were enrolled in English 312: Language Learning and Technology, a course in English Bachelor's program. The semester consisted of 16 weeks in which the course had three credit hours a week. Participants took face-to-face classroom two hours a week. The instructor used one hour on-line to conduct a review of weekly learning activities, providing feedback, and on-line lectures. Blackboard was used as an e-Learning platform, while other digital tools and resources like Wikipedia, Google Docs, WhatsApp, and Web resources were integrated. At the end of the semester, the researcher conducted a survey to evaluate their perceptions towards the learning environment in the BL course. The researcher used his observation as a qualitative tool to explain the perceptions and attitudes of the students.

The Procedure of the Study

The research collects quantitative data in the form of a survey of 12 Likert items. In the survey, 22 Saudi students were asked to describe their learning experiences to 12 statements in three
categories of the blended learning environment: multimedia learning materials, assessment, and interactive activities at Blackboard. The researcher used his observation to explain the students' responses qualitatively. In the first category of the survey, students were asked to express their preferences to a variety of digital learning materials. This category represented a Knowledge-Centered Environment in which a variety of digital materials, web resources, and open-learning resources were organized to let the learners access and construct their knowledge. The materials included text materials (MS Word, PDF, and PowerPoint), video materials, audio materials, and illustrated text (a combination of visual and verbal materials). The second category represented an assessment-centered environment. In this category, students were asked to describe their responses to formative tests. There were four kinds of formative tests: non-flexible synchronous tests (tests taken in real-time without referring back to any learning resource), flexible synchronous tests (tests taken in real-time with option to refer back to digital and non-digital learning materials), asynchronous tests (tests taken in different times and places), and task-based tests (tests like video recording and digital albums). Students had multiple attempts to take each test. Category three is for a community-centered environment. In this category, students had opportunities to collaborate their learning and interact with their peers as well as the course instructor through Google docs, on-line discussion boards, blogs, and WhatsApp.

Research Methodology

The study uses a mixed-method design of research to investigate the perceptions of Saudi students who have attended the course. There are 12 statements in which the students are asked to respond. They have a Likert scale survey with 3-scale points: 'Agree,' 'Neither Agree nor Disagree,' and 'Disagree.' They choose the option as per their learning experiences and preferences in the course. It is the most widely used approach to scale the responses in survey research. The researcher chose 3-scale points Likert scale because it is simple for the students to decide if they like or dislike, it minimizes their confusions, and it is easy to measure. Quantitative data of the survey is explained by the qualitative tool of observation. As the researcher is the instructor in the course, he uses his observation to explain and interpret the responses of the learners. At the end of the study, the researcher makes findings and recommendations for other researchers interested in further research in BL in Saudi Arabia.

Data Description

Table 1. Category 1- Types of learning materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of learning materials</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text materials</td>
<td>77.2% (17)</td>
<td>9.1% (2)</td>
<td>13.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video materials</td>
<td>72.7% (16)</td>
<td>13.6% (3)</td>
<td>13.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio materials</td>
<td>50% (11)</td>
<td>27.3% (6)</td>
<td>31.8% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrated materials</td>
<td>86.3% (19)</td>
<td>9.1% (2)</td>
<td>4.5% (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage and number of (participants) in the survey

Category one in Table one is related to multimedia learning materials. Text materials consist of MS Word, PDF, and PowerPoint. Video materials cover a variety of videos like personality-driven, content-driven, community-driven, and presentation-driven. Audio materials refer to MP3 files recorded by the teacher or taken from web resources. Illustrated materials are dual coded materials.
that combine verbal materials with visuals to make it comprehensible. In the blended course, the researcher used these four kinds of learning materials to deliver course content on Blackboard. In category one, there were four statements aimed to elicit students’ responses:

1) On Blackboard, I prefer to access learning content in the form of MS Word, PowerPoint, and PDF.
2) On Blackboard, I prefer watching videos posted in the lecture section.
3) On Blackboard, I love listening to lectures in an audio file.
4) On Blackboard, I like when educational concepts are illustrated with texts and images.

According to the data in table one, illustrated materials are the most preferred learning materials, i.e., 86.3%. The second and the third preferred choices are text materials and video materials, i.e., 77.2% and 72.7% respectively. The least preferred choice is audio materials, i.e., 50%. Audio materials significantly remain the least preferred materials as 31% of students dislike it, and 27.3% of students show neutral responses. Fewer students dislike illustrated materials, text materials and video materials, i.e., 4.5%, 13.6 and 13.6 respectively. Similarly, a small group of students express neutral responses to illustrated materials, text materials, and video materials, i.e., 9.1%, 9.1%, and 13.6%, respectively.

Based on observation of the students’ digital practices in the classroom, illustrated materials seem more preferred than video materials or text materials because it is easy to comprehend, precise, and demonstrative than other materials. The observation suggests that learners’ accessibility experiences to video materials on Blackboard are less facilitative than videos at YouTube, so students seem preferring image materials over video materials. Text materials are also popular among students. They are conveniently downloadable and printable for non-digital use in self-reading, tests, and examinations. According to Motteram (2018), video materials are found as the most popular among the Indian students, but findings here suggest that illustrated materials are more preferred to video materials. In the context of digital learning in India, video materials are used as digital content at a large scale but little attention is paid on dual coded and illustrated materials. Another reason is video materials at YouTube provide better learning experiences than video-watching experiences at Blackboard. These choices of the learners show that the selection of a learning platform is also a crucial factor in enhancing accessibility and engagement of the learners in learning materials. Audio materials involve listening skills. Listening to audio materials requires deliberate efforts and competence in listening comprehension. Therefore, it seems, the students do not prefer it much.

Table 2. Category 2- Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 2: Assessment</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synchronous tests (Non flexible)</td>
<td>54.5% (12)</td>
<td>13.6% (3)</td>
<td>31.8% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synchronous tests (Flexible)</td>
<td>100% (22)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronous tests</td>
<td>90.9% (20)</td>
<td>4.5% (1)</td>
<td>4.5% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task based tests (Asynchronous)</td>
<td>36.3% (8)</td>
<td>27.3% (6)</td>
<td>36.3% (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage and number of (participants) in the survey
Category two in Table two deals with on-line assessments on Blackboard. There are four kinds of assessments delivered in the course. All four tests are formative assessments with multiple attempts. Learners receive automatic feedback in tests 1-3, and they get manual feedback in test 4. Synchronous Tests (non-flexible) are those tests, which are conducted in e-Learning lab in real-time. Students are asked to complete the test without taking the help of any kind of learning resources. Synchronous Tests (Flexible) are another kind of tests in which learners take the test in e-learning lab in real-time, but they are allowed to complete the tests by referring back to learning materials. Task-based tests are tests where students record videos with language tasks. The main purpose of these tests was to measure learning outcomes, to provide feedback on learning, to develop an ability to use high order skills (analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and researching) and involve in the process of knowledge building and knowledge management. In this category, there are four items on which the learners responded:

1. On Blackboard, I prefer to complete the tests in the e-Learning lab in real-time without looking into learning materials or web resources.
2. On Blackboard, I prefer to complete the tests in the e-Learning lab in real-time while consulting questions and their answers from learning materials or web resources.
3. On Blackboard, I prefer to complete the tests in which I get the freedom to take the test out of college without any restriction of time.
4. On Blackboard, I prefer to complete a project or a task given by the teacher.

According to the data in table two, synchronous tests (flexible) are the most preferred kind of assessment. All of the students, i.e., 100% agreed on this form of tests. Based on the researcher’s observation, the availability of digital resources in the lab, and flexibility of referring back to learning materials and web resources make the students motivated and reduces anxiety. Second, the students prefer to take the test as a tool to get feedback on how much they have learned and what they further need to learn. This observation is also supported by the second most preferred asynchronous tests, i.e., 90.9%. Differences between synchronous tests (flexible) and asynchronous tests are insignificant as both offer flexibility in referring back to learning resources. The data reveals that synchronous tests (flexible) are preferred to asynchronous tests. It seems that synchronous tests (flexible) are slightly more preferred because it offers the technological facility, instructors’ guidance and physical presence of their classmates in the lab while other one lacks devices and instructor’s facilitation. Significantly, the least preferred tests are the task-based tests, i.e., 36.3% followed by synchronous tests (non-flexible) 54.5%. Similarly, task-based tests (asynchronous) are the least preferred tests, i.e., 36.3% after synchronous tests (non-flexible), i.e., 31.8%. As far neutrality of the students to different tests is concerned, 13.6% students remained neutral to synchronous tests (non-flexible), none of the students participated in expressing neutrality towards asynchronous tests (non-flexible), 4.5% students remained neutral towards asynchronous tests and 27.3% students remained neutral to task-based tests (asynchronous). Based on the observation, this pattern of preferences confirms that students dislike anxiety in the assessment. Synchronous tests (non-flexible) and task-based tests (asynchronous) share similar features. Synchronous tests (non-flexible) have restriction of time and place along with no flexibility of consulting learning materials while task-based tests require self-regulation, creative involvement and skill performance. Lack of preferences for both tests seems due to being challenging, less flexible, and causing anxiety among the students. Students’ responses in table
two support the view that assessment should be flexible in blended learning. Either a test is synchronous or asynchronous, it is less important for the students.

Table 3. Category 3- Interactive Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborative activities (wikis and Google docs)</th>
<th>agree 81.8% (18)</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree 4.5% (1)</th>
<th>disagree 13.6% (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion forum</td>
<td>agree 81.8% (18)</td>
<td>neither agree nor disagree 4.5% (1)</td>
<td>disagree 13.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging</td>
<td>agree 63.6% (14)</td>
<td>neither agree nor disagree 27.3% (6)</td>
<td>disagree 9.1% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp communication</td>
<td>agree 90.9% (20)</td>
<td>neither agree nor disagree 9.1% (2)</td>
<td>disagree 0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage and number of (participants) in the survey

Category three in Table three deals with the students and teachers as a learning community and evaluates students’ responses in the areas of collaborative and interactive activities. Some of these interactive options are inbuilt in Blackboard, for example, wikis, discussion forums, and blogs. Some of these interactive options have been integrated into the course, for example, Google docs, and WhatsApp. In this category, there are four items about which the learners were asked to respond:

1) I enjoy writing activities in the group as you did in Google docs and wikis.
2) In the discussion forum at Blackboard, I like to read threads, contributing my comments, and responding to others’ threads. I find that my participation helps me in understanding course content and performing well in the exam.
3) On Blackboard, I like creating blogs, and I find that it helps in my study and exams.
4) The use of WhatsApp in the course kept me informed about the updates in the course. It helped me to communicate with other class fellows and share learning materials.

According to the data in table three, almost all students responded positively towards interactive activities. WhatsApp communication, collaborative activities on Google docs and wikis, and discussion on Blackboard are the most popular interactive activities, i.e., 90.9%, 81.8%, and 81.8%, respectively. The least preferred interactive activity is blogging, i.e., 63.6%. Table three reveals that 27.3% of learners are neutral to the blogging, the highest neutral response compared to WhatsApp communication, i.e., 9.1% while collaborative activities and discussion forums responses are 4.5% and 4.5%, respectively. Table three shows that 13.6% of students perceive collaborative activities and discussion forums negatively, while 9.1% of students do not find blogging as an effective factor in their learning. Significantly, none of the students responded negatively towards the use of WhatsApp for interaction and communication among themselves.

Students’ responses in this category show that students prefer an interactive environment in the blended course. They are comfortable using digital tools for interaction. They share their learning resources, collaborate in resolving learning challenges, and inform each other about updates in the course. Based on the observation, the researcher finds students used WhatsApp actively in the course not only for interacting with other students and teachers but also for sharing learning materials, discussing difficult concepts, and issues related to examinations and assignments. They
worked in the WhatsApp group as distributed collective carrying issues of their learning in the course themselves.

The researcher also found that contents in blogging and discussion are plagiarized, but blogging and discussion forums enabled students in researching and paraphrasing their answers for their examinations and assignments. Students also feel that their participation in blogging and discussion forums enabled them to prepare for the exams.

**Findings:**

In response to the first research question, i.e. the most preferred multimedia learning materials, the result shows that dual coded learning materials (illustration and combination of verbal materials with visual materials) are the most preferred kind of digital learning materials among the learners. Video and plain text materials are followed by dual coded learning materials.

In response to the second research question, i.e. the most interesting assessments, students’ perceptions reveal that they want flexible assessment in which they have options to explore learning resources, little restriction of time and places and low anxiety along with the corrective feedback. Synchronous tests (flexible) are preferred to asynchronous tests, synchronous tests (non-flexible), and task-based tests (asynchronous). It simply means students prefer to take the assessment in BL as a scaffold to process learning materials and a tool to reinforce their learning.

In response to the third research question, i.e. the most preferred interaction and collaboration activities, a regular and external digital tool like WhatsApp is more preferred than a formal tool of interaction in the virtual learning platform. They are quite positive to the integration of external digital tools in the blackboard and the course. They like interactive and collaborative activities like Blog, Wikis and discussion but language proficiency seems an obstacle. They turn to plagiarized content from prescribed learning materials and web resources.

**Conclusion**

The findings of this study confirm that design for the learning environment makes a significant impact on learners’ interaction and engagement in BL courses. In Knowledge-Centered Environment, Saudi learners prefer when learning materials are dual coded and combined. Illustrated materials (combined verbal materials with visual materials) top learners’ preference followed by videos and plain text materials. In an assessment-centered environment, they prefer flexibility and low anxiety. They want a flexible choice to scaffold assessment with learning resources. They want active participation and interaction using apps that they use in their regular life. The study reveals scope for further research in how flexible and non-flexible synchronous as well asynchronous assessment can be used to add value to teaching and learning process and how dual coded and illustrated materials can distinctly provide better learning opportunities than other kinds of multimedia materials.

**Recommendations**

Based on students’ responses and the researcher’s observation, following recommendation can be made for blended learning designers and on-line instructors:
1) Design for BL courses should be the top priority for institutions and BL practitioners.
2) Awareness of instructors in new pedagogies and learning design should be raised.
3) Multiple learning environments should be incorporated into BL courses to make learning more natural and realistic.
4) Integration of digital tools into BL courses ensures enhanced accessibility and engagement of the learners.
5) Learning materials should be more engaging and should represent different learning experiences of diverse group of learners.
6) The assessment process should be flexible and focused on developing higher-order skills instead of memorizing facts and procedures.
7) Formal and non-flexible assessment activities in Blended courses should be reduced.
8) Teachers’ awareness should be raised regarding the role of technology in dealing with students as a community and each student as a participant in developing engagement, enhancement, independence, and participation in learning.

Limitations
The study has limited participants (Saudi male undergraduates in the department of English). Blackboard is used as the leading platform for course delivery. Findings of the study may vary in other regional or infrastructure context. The findings of the study may also change if the participants are other than male ones or from any other country than Saudi Arabia.

About The Author:
Ammar Anas is a lecturer in the College of Arts & Sciences, University of Bisha in Al-Namas, Saudi Arabia. He holds a master's degree in ELT and a CELTA certificate. Being a blended learning practitioner and a learning designer, he supervises the e-Learning Unit at the College of Arts & Sciences Al-Namas. His area of specialization is instructional designing, digital learning and on-line pedagogies. ORCid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6828-1879

References


Al-Madani, F. M. (2015). The Effect of Blended Learning Approach on Fifth Grade Students’ Academic Achievement in My Beautiful Language Textbook and the Development of


Collaboration through Online Discussion Board: A Discourse Analysis of CALL in a Normal University in China

Cheng Hsu
Department of Education
Jiangsu Normal University, P.R.C.

Abstract
Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic, all students take courses online in Mainland China at the beginning of the semester. The discourse for communication online is important for a successful course. In this study, the online discussion board assignment of a college graduate course was analyzed for the discourse patterns based on Vygotsky’s Cultural-historical theories that are more pragmatic than linguistics (Wertsch, 1990) and miss communication between students (Forman & McCormick, 1995). The course was taught and communicated in all-English. Participants are first-year graduate students in one Normal University in Northern Jiangsu Province in China. Data were generated based on a discourse analysis qualitative research and analyzed using the histogram and qualitative discourse pattern analysis. Findings for the histogram showed a late assignment submission, while more than half of students submitted during the final three days while having 11 days to finish. Patterns of responding were discussed in "questions with most responses" and "questions with no response." The open-ended questions allow respondents to utilize knowledge previously acquired as mediation for further discussions, while close-ended questions received a pattern of the contribution of degrading. Questions with no responses were mostly posted during the final two days. The discourse pattern of online discussion boards, thus manifested itself as a mediation tool for idea exchange not only online for peer evaluation but also self-evaluation.

Keywords: CALL, Cultural-historical Theory, EFL, Online Discussion Board, Vygotsky

Cite as: Hsu, C. (2020). Collaboration through Online Discussion Board: A Discourse Analysis of CALL in a Normal University in China. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL (6). 278-289. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.18
Introduction

Learning Online becomes a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic for most of the students everywhere in the world. According to the “United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),” about 1.2 billion students have been out of school due to school closures over 150 countries globally wide (UNESCO, 2020). It is a wake-up call for Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to be used for online courses in such a magnitude. Locally, teachers have been trying hard to generate their online learning material and procedures for student's learning needs. As all universities were closed in China for an extensive time during the COVID-19 pandemic, students have taken courses online as well through a variety of platforms and methods. This study investigated student's discourse through an online discussion board of a whole English graduate online course.

When students communicate for an online course, they do not communicate with a single platform, app, or method. For instance, the graduate online course was designed to be taken face-to-face but redesigned online a week before the semester began. The content of the course and class activities had to be justified in the online environment. For instance, ZOOM was used for real-time, audio-visual lectures and break-out room collaborative activities during normal class hours. After the class hours, students work on assignments announced in a learning management system (LMS) called the Yuketang (or Rain Classroom) developed by Tsinghua University in China. The class discussion board was utilized to share their ideas and findings and demonstrate their understanding of content knowledge.

Literature Review

As CALL stands for computer-assisted language learning, some scholars tend to use this term as using computers in EFL learning as a scoop described by Chapelle and other scholars at the establishment of the term. (Greenleaf, 2011; Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013) The Behaviorist's beliefs of early computer-assisted learning evolved gradually, and the meaning of CALL changed from time to time accordingly to the advancement of technologies among language learning of non-native speakers.

Discussion Board

The Discussion board used to be designed and utilized as an integrated part of online learning platform systems; however, because of the flipped classroom pedagogy becoming popular nowadays, it is an additional communication tool for face-to-face classes. The strategy of using an online discussion board becomes a significant tool in a course learning design. There are types of responding styles in previous studies, such as asynchronized discussion through CMC without a moderator. (Kadir, Maros, & Hamid, 2013) Learners use linguistic features such as repetitive writing, online-based acronyms, copying of letters when collaborating with other learners online. Jonassen & Remidez Jr (2005) explained types of discussion as threaded and constraint-based. The threaded type “shows the list of all the messages with headings” (p. 115), while constraint-based discussions “are prestructured forms of conversation systems,” and “discussion leaders supply the values for the attributes.” (p. 116)
This study utilized a discussion board as a means for communication; the mediational function of it is essential to the whole discussion sequences. However, there was a moderator, the teacher, and all discussion posts were in a traditional treaded type.

Dimensions of CALL

Computer Assisted Language Learning, CALL, was getting its popularity after Computer-Aided (Assisted) Instruction, CAI, in conjunction with the trend of educational pedagogy. CALL has been understood as the process of tools being utilized in the process of English teaching. (Donaldson & Haggstrom, 2006) CALL is also implicated as a pedagogy for effective language learning in the context of blending traditional face-to-face classroom with online nonlinear communication technologies (Bahari, 2019). It also allows students to learn better in vocabulary by using CALL instruction (Shokrpour, Mirshekari, Moslehi, & POPESCU, 2019).

CALL used to be discussed according to different aspects such as "technology, English-teaching paradigm, view of language, the principal use of computers, and principal objective." It is also classified into "Structural/behavioristic CALL, communicative CALL, and Integrative CALL," according to the stages (Yang, 2010, p. 909). In other words, CALL has been used and applied in different perspectives and become a common term for any type of computer and information and communication technology-related.

In this study, one type of online discussion board activity was investigated for students' online discourses through teacher's theme questions answering, question generating for others, and responding to others.

Methodology

The data generation is based on a discourse analysis qualitative research with Cultural-historical perspectives. It consists of online discussion board posts and interactions of synchronized cloud video conferencing for the student’s best learning experience possible with exciting technologies. This study first clarified the contextual, theoretical framework based on Vygotsky’s Cultural-historical theories and raised research questions within the context, and With the framework and research questions raised, data was generated from the context. Answers of students to the teacher’s theme question, questions raised by the students to other students, and answers from students to other students were collected. Data were analyzed and reduced by “selecting, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10) and generate a transcript to “freeze the discourse” (Forman & McCormick, 1995, p. 152). Data was sorted, coded, and indexed to show the pattern of the discourse. Finally, data interpreted and discussed based on was analyzed for the discourse patterns based on Vygotsky's Cultural-historical theories that are more pragmatic than linguistics (Wertsch, 1990) and miss communication between students (Forman & McCormick, 1995); therefore, research questions can be answered for this study.

In the Cultural-historical discourse analysis, Gee et al. (1992) asserted that there are some assumptions for the study of educational processes:

1. Human discourse is rule-governed and internally structured.
2. It is produced by speakers situated in a sociohistorical matrix, whose cultural, political, economic, social, and personal realities shape the discourse.
3. Discourse itself constitutes or embodies essential aspects of that sociohistorical matrix. (p. 228)

The research was conducted through four phases for detecting students’ interactions by using an online discussion board. The first phase is to clarify the theoretical foundations and beliefs within the context and denote research questions. The second phase is to generate data from the education context with a naturalistic approach. It is also to maintain contextualization as essential to qualitative research (Forman & McCormick, 1995). The third phase is to analyze data generated from the context and reduce data by “selecting, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10) and generate a transcript to “freeze the discourse” (Forman & McCormick, 1995, p. 152) The last phase is to interpretative data based on the theoretical framework. Research questions answered for this study (Forman & McCormick, 1995).

The online discussion board is a platform for idea exchange based on a given theme from the instructor—students’ responses to the theme question according to the time sequences.

Procedure
The study was based on a graduate-level online course of "Curriculum and Instruction," a whole English course. Students not only studied the content knowledge of curriculum and instruction design but also acquired specified English in the education field related to their major. In this study, the researcher focused on the online discussion board in certain ways that manifest the discourse of learning in their language acquisitions using the online discussion board in the learning management system.

The design of this particular online discussion that this study investigated was in the AQ2A sequence. That was one theme question from the teacher to all students, one question from a student to other students, and two answering from a student to any other two students. Because of the time sequence of a student's responding time, the discussions will be like a solitaire; thus, we used it to detect the Cultural-historical events within the discussion discourse. The procedures were as follows in detail.

1. Answering the Theme Question
   Before the instructor assigned the discussion, students received a reading material as pre-knowledge for discussion. This knowledge in large was introduced in Chinese in other classes but in English the first time. The reading material was two electronic journal articles regarding "connectivism" and "constructionism."

2. The question to Other Students
   Students were asked to make a question for other classmates to answer.

3. Two other students’ Questions to be Answered
   Students had to answer two other classmates' questions posted on the discussion board before their posting.
Participants

51 Graduate students of the School of Education Science of a University in Northern Jiangsu Province. Those graduate students are from two majors: curriculum and instruction and elementary education. The course was "Curriculum and Instruction (Learning Design and Technology), and the following technology was employed for the benefit of students.

1. Online synchronized communication by using ZOOM.
2. Online asynchronized discussion by using Rain Course, as shown in Figure one.
3. Online Social Chatting by using Tencent QQ.
4. Online Media sharing Tencent V.QQ.
In this study, data were generated from the asynchronized discussion by using Rain Course.

Results and Discussion

This study generated data from the online discussion board and did discourse analysis based on Vygotsky's Cultural-historical theories. The discussion will be followed in two sections, "making connections of others" and "making meanings out of the discourse." The assigned discussion was posted on March 29, and students had time to finish this assignment from March 29 to April 9, 11 days in total. The assignment was stated as follows:

Week 6: Q&A Please read the two articles (regarding Constructionism and Connectivism) provided to you. 1. Please provide one of your favorite quotes (one sentence) from the readings. 2. Ask ONE question regarding those two articles. 3. Answer TWO questions from other classmates. The assignment is due on 4/9. Please take your time. (discussion board T#1)
First, students were required to read and quote their favorite sentences from those two articles. In this task, students were acquiring new knowledge against what they have learned from other classes. Another reason for this reading assignment was that “constructionism” and “connectivism” were not familiar terms if compared with classical education paradigms or theories, such as behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. While those two were closely related to instructional design and technology, students need some background knowledge for further discussion in the process of this class.

Second, students had to generate one question for other classmates. After the readings, students were required to give out questions according to their readings. In generating questions, students' cognitive capacity was utilized for better presenting and enhancing "learners' metacognition to promote reading comprehension” (Khansir & Dashti, 2014, p. 39).

Last, students were asked and encouraged to answer two questions from others. Question-asking-answering has been one of the established strategies for students’ self-evaluation. While self-questioning, we brought the idea of collaborative learing and interacting with the more knowledgeable other (MKO) from Vygotsky’s Cultural-historical theories (Vygotsky, 1978). The evaluation process goes through three stages as self, peer, and teacher (Panahandeh & Asl, 2014, p. 1413). However, to investigate the discourse of learning on the discussion board, we utilized it as self-peer relation within an online course context.

**Making Connections of Others**

In Vygotsky’s theories, the More Knowledge Other (MKO) is one of the most important components in the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The discussion board was meant for production for students to make connections to the content knowledge as well as the use of English as a tool for communication on the platform. The frequency of responding among students was organized in Table one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>time posted</th>
<th>responses</th>
<th>time posted</th>
<th>responses</th>
<th>time posted</th>
<th>responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020/3/30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2020/4/7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2020/4/9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:24</td>
<td></td>
<td>9:49</td>
<td></td>
<td>10:13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/3/30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2020/4/7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2020/4/9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:38</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:53</td>
<td></td>
<td>10:24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/3/30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2020/4/7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2020/4/9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:37</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:56</td>
<td></td>
<td>15:33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/3/31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2020/4/7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2020/4/9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:21</td>
<td></td>
<td>14:04</td>
<td></td>
<td>16:07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/4/3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2020/4/7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2020/4/9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:43</td>
<td></td>
<td>14:33</td>
<td></td>
<td>16:37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/4/3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2020/4/7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2020/4/9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:43</td>
<td></td>
<td>15:45</td>
<td></td>
<td>17:13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/4/3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2020/4/7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2020/4/9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:20</td>
<td></td>
<td>17:37</td>
<td></td>
<td>17:17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table one, responding to student’s original posts was shown in chronological order. The frequency of responding was analyzed according to the posting dates. Students’ responses were displayed in time sequence. Responding posts over five were highlighted in red while posts of one and zero were heightened in green and yellow.

![Histogram of postings distribution over time](image)

Figure 2 Histogram of postings distribution over time

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
The histogram's central tendency in Figure 2 shows the center is from April 7 to April 9. Most values in the dataset are close to those days with around ten posts each. The histogram is left skew, for most posts were done in the latter days. The histogram shows that most of the postings were posted during the last several days during the 11 days for students to complete their assignments. According to the cumulative percent, about 60% of the posts were done by the last three days from April 7 to April 9 and one overdue post on April 10. The frequency and cumulative percentages are shown in Table two below.

Table 2. Frequency of postings according to dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-MAR-20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-APR-20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-APR-20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-APR-20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-APR-20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07-APR-20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-APR-20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09-APR-20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-APR-20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discourses in Questions with Most Responses

Within the context, discourse manifests its mediational nature for discussion from the past to the future. This study investigated the second level of students' posts who received more than five responses. Questions were asked were sorted in time sequence as follows:

1. What does Driscoll define learning? (discussion board ST#1)
2. What are the principles of connectionism, and what are their implications for you? (discussion board ST#5)
3. What are the principles of connectivism? (discussion board ST#12)
4. How can we continue to stay current in a rapidly evolving information ecology? (discussion board ST#16)
5. What impressed you about the principles of connectivism, and why? (discussion board ST#17)
6. Gredler (2001) expresses behaviorism as being comprised of several theories that make three assumptions: what are the assumptions? (discussion board ST#28)
7. How can we better combine math learning and activities in math teaching? (discussion board ST#29)
8. According to Driscoll (2000), how can we explain "learning"? (discussion board ST#31)
9. What are the limitations of behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism? (discussion board ST#34)
10. Which do you think is more important, knowledge or ability? why? (discussion board ST#45)

While looking at those questions, the study found that factual questions were often asked with "what/which" type in student participants ST#1, 5, 12, 17, 28, 34, and 45. Even ST#8 used "how"
type of question, and it was asked for the definition of "learning." Definitions and principles were asked the most among those questions received most answers from other classmates. However, ST#17 and ST#45 asked "why" at the end for reasons of answering. Students ST#16 and ST#29 asked "how" regarding information ecology and teach models in math teaching.

For the pure factual type of questions, answers are based on the reading material with slightly additional information from postings before their answers. Participating student ST#1 asked for Driscoll's definition of learning. Answers are as follows:

Driscoll defines learning as "a persisting change in human performance or performance potential...[which] must come about as a result of the learner's experience and interaction with the world." This definition encompasses many attributes related to behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism -- that is, learning is a state of lasting change (emotional, psychological, and physical (i.e., skill) that is the result of experience and interaction with content or other people. (discussion board ST#24 to ST#1)

A persisting change in human performance or performance potential must come about as a result of the learner's experience and interaction with the world. Learning as a lasting changed state (emotional, mental, physiological (i.e., skills)) brought about as a result of experiences and interactions with the content or other people. (discussion board ST#23 to ST#1)

Driscoll defines learning as "a persisting change in human performance or performance potential, which must come about as a result of the learner's experience and interaction with the world." Learning as a lasting changed state (emotional, mental, physiological) brought about as a result of experiences and interactions with the content or other people. (discussion board ST#22 to ST#1)

Continuous change in human behavior or behavioral potential must be a result of the interaction between the learners’ experience and the world. (discussion board ST#15 to ST#1)

Learning as a lasting changed state (emotional, mental, physiological) brought about as a result of experiences and interactions with the content or other people. (discussion board ST#2 to ST#1)

As the study observed, the first posts to a question established a fully developed communication while the latter decreased their words for communication gradually. The content of the response is according to the original assigned text, while the additional secondary information was included selectively. The sentence, which mediates their ideas to the second level questions, became limited. A similar pattern of responses was found in others as well. Participating student ST#31 posted the following question: According to Driscoll (2000), how can we explain "learning"? (discussion board ST#31)

a persisting change in human performance or performance potential...[which] must come about as a result of the learner's experience and interaction with the world (discussion board ST#44 to ST#31)
"a persisting change in human performance or performance potential...[which] must come about as a result of the learner's experience and interaction with the world," according to Driscoll (2000). (discussion board ST#40 to ST#31)

According to Driscoll, learning can be defined as "a persisting change in human performance or performance potential...[which] must come about as a result of the learner's experience and interaction with the world" (discussion board ST#37 to ST#31)

Driscoll (2000) defines learning as “a persisting change in human performance or performance potential...[which] must come about as a result of the learner's experience and interaction with the world” (discussion board ST#32 to ST#31)

For the "how" type of questions, other classmates' answers were more opened with creativity in their discourses. For ST#16, the question was about ways to stay current with information ecology. Answers from other classmates used strategies of clear orders to the response.

To develop in a rapidly developing contemporary society, we must first learn and master the necessary modern survival skills. Secondly, education is also very important for individuals' development, according to the individual situation as much as possible, to receive school education, job training, and so on. Thirdly, cultivate their own ability to adapt to social development, such as self-study ability, professional field skills, and try to be better than others. Finally, teamwork is also an important way to ensure that it is not eliminated by society, learning from each other in the team, helping each other, and improving the learning efficiency. (discussion board ST#18 to ST#16)

In this quote from ST#18, the response was quite organized, with logic consisted of the whole response by using orders. Those ideas were not directly from the readying, but because of the question raised by ST#16, ST#18 generated the response accordingly. The mediational function of the level 2 self-questioning became crucial for further development of the English language use in a teaching professional ESP context. There were also answers short that may not bring very meaningful mediation.

Establish a connectionist learning theory and apply it to practical education. (discussion board ST#14 to ST#16)

In this response, ST#14 did not depict how to make "stay current" feasible but just gave out a term for satisfying for homework grading purposes. To sum up, questions with open-ended style may bring some meaningful discussion through student's creativity, but there were still responses without mind.

**Discourses in Questions Receive no Response.**

While most students received answers from other classmates, few of them did not get any responses. Except for the one who posted the first level overdue, five out of six received no answer when they had their first level post on the last day on April 9. Questions asked of no response are as follows:
1. The paper mainly researches how to connect the constructivism to other useful theories in the applicable area like mathematics due to its characteristic of thinking, but how to enlarge its effects into the literary subject? (discussion board ST#3)
2. What do you think of connectivity and networking? (discussion board ST#37)
4. What do the three theories of behaviorism cognitivism and constructivism have in common? (discussion board ST#46)
5. How to combine learning and activity better in the process of mathematics teaching? (discussion board ST#47)
6. How can we better teach mathematic materials by constructionism theory? (discussion board ST#48)
7. How to apply educational concepts to practical teaching more effectively? (discussion board ST#51)

According to the responses, most of them were later ones; therefore, we can presume that those discussions threads would draw less attention from peers. Even the instructor began the discussion with vivid instructions of AQ2A, discourses between students were rather scanned through time sequences. Discussions through CMC without a moderator, as Kadir et al. depicted (2013), would bring some confusion, but the issues raised by students would be essential to the discussions to roll.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the online discussion board assignment of a college graduate course was analyzed for the discourse patterns based on Vygotsky’s Cultural-historical theories that are more pragmatic than linguistics (Wertsch, 1990) and miss communication between students (Forman & McCormick, 1995). Data were generated based on a discourse analysis qualitative research and analyzed by using the histogram as well as qualitative discourse pattern analysis. Findings for the histogram showed a late assignment submission, while more than half of students submitted during the final three days while having 11 days to finish. Patterns of responding were discussed in "questions with most responses" and "questions with no response." The open-ended questions allow respondents to utilize knowledge previously acquired as mediation for further discussions, while close-ended questions received a pattern of the contribution of degrading. Questions with no responses were mostly posted during the final two days. The discourse pattern of online discussion board thus manifested itself a mediation tool for idea exchange not only online for peer evaluation but also self-evaluation.

About the author

Dr. Cheng Hsu is an associate professor of the Department of Education at Jiangsu Normal University. He has taught a variety of technology and English education courses such as CALL, CAI, multimedia English, and EFL undergraduate courses, as well as graduate-level curriculum and instruction courses. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3867-1240
References
The Effect of Using Conjunction as Cohesive Device on the Undergraduates’ Quality of Writing in Argumentative Essays of Jordanian EFL Learners

Rawhi Yousef Salman Al Shamalat
Department of English, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Che An Binti Abdul Ghani
Department of English, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract
The goal of this research was to investigate the effect of use conjunctions on the overall quality of argumentative writing of Jordanian English as foreign language (EFL) learners. This mixed-method research included sixty (n=60) undergraduate students at the Department of English Language and Literature at Mu’tah University in Jordan. The participants of the research were selected using purposive sampling method. The data of the research were collected using written essays and interviews. The data was analyzed using SPSS. The data was collected using analytical scale Jacob et al., (1981) to measure the quality of argumentative essays. The result of this research showed that there was a weak negative but irrelevant correlation between writing quality and the frequency of conjunctions as cohesive devices. This correlation indicates that the frequent and general use of devices in the writing of Jordanian students did not contribute to the quality of the writing under any conditions. Also the finding revealed that there is an extremely negative but irrelevant correlation between the use of conjunctions devices by Jordanian EFL students and their writing quality. Therefore, the correlation was negative and insignificant for Jordanian EFL students. More specifically, the result shows that the frequencies of conjunctions were not found as an indicator of good writing quality for Jordanian EFL students. This research is significant for providing a considerable number of pedagogical implications for further research that will offer great contribution to the field of teaching writing in EFL setting in Jordan in particular and English as second language (ESL) context in general. Moreover, the research has shown a better understanding of cohesive devices / conjunctions by Jordanian EFL students at Mu’tah University.

Keywords: Argumentative essays, conjunction, cohesive device, English as a foreign language, Jordanian undergraduate

Introduction

English teaching methodology especially for writing skills in second language (ESL) settings has undergone various stages of development in the last few decades (Mirhosseini, 2009). In the process of its development, specific models of writing were assumed the most successful at the various stages of development (Yang, 2007). One previous model emphasizes the mastery of the mechanics of grammar to create errorless written essays without much consideration to the manner a text is written. This has resulted in the judgment and evaluation of such written texts in terms of the number of errors and not in terms of the significance of text or on the element of logic (Gangemi & Presutti, 2011).

Alkhotaba (2015) admits that textbooks do not provide students whether in English as a second language (ESL, hereafter) or English as a foreign language (EFL, hereafter) context with adequate introduction to the depth and diversity of coherence features which are essential in the production of a good piece of writing. Therefore, many EFL textbooks present sentences according to the grammar item which just teaches students to provide supporting examples and details without investigating the multitude of coherence features (Alkhotaba, 2010).

Halliday and Hasan (1976) criticize the focus on the grammaticality and mastery of sentence structure. They argue that such focus results in the neglect of discursive aspects, to little or no transfer to use in actual written essays with the effect that it might develop into an inhibiting rather than enhancing factor in a written product.

Klimova and Hubackova (2014) also criticize the emphasis of conventional methods on the correct word usage, grammar, spelling and punctuation. He argues that these methods do not provide much awareness to extra-textual features that contribute to the process of constructing coherence in a written text. In addition, the principal goals of these traditional methods were to endorse knowledge of the language system and to develop students’ competence by means of controlled performance (Aryadoust & Liu, 2015).

This was so because they believed that when learners are taught how to relate to the formal elements of the language system, their competence will develop automatically (Asassfeh, 2015). For this reason, sentences were treated as self-contained units and many believed that mastery of proper sentence structures would lead to an improvement in competence and performance. Such a practice was more like teaching to write sentences in a vacuum, since they do not specifically target a particular audience or a particular situation (Coker, Jennings, Farley-Ripple & MacArthur, 2018).

Calkin (2018) argue that there was an assumption that foreign language learners can advance from the sentence-level to appropriate essays writing without sufficient preparation, basically because learners can produce an effective written essays in their native language. In fact, this is still one of the beliefs that many English language teachers and learners in Jordan adhere to.
Literature Review

In the tertiary level of education, students who study English as a foreign language attend various classes, such as literature, history, speaking, listening, or essays. In the writing classes, it is demanded from them to show skills in writing in a foreign language. Therefore, academic writing requires students to have linguistic abilities as well as discourse knowledge as they are expected to demonstrate a conscious “effort and much practice in composing, developing, and analyzing ideas” (Myles, 2002, p. 1).

Grabe and Kaplan (1998) explain the nature of writing in terms of the rhetorical triangle” which comprises textual structure, cognitive processing, and social contexts. Therefore, writing is described as an interaction between writer, reader, subject matter, and text; thus, writing is the synthesis of cognitive, social, and textual factors (Grabe & Kaplan 1998).

Accordingly, a skilled writer needs to possess content knowledge where he/she manifests the knowledge of concepts involved in the subject matter; context knowledge; language system knowledge where he/she indicates the skills of appropriate use of lexis and syntax; and writing process knowledge (Zhao, 2018).

Therefore, among all four skills that EFL students need to acquire proficiency in English, writing is regarded as more complicated because it tests not only the student’s ability to use language but also to express ideas (McKinley, 2018). Writing in a foreign language requires the writers to demonstrate skills both in the form and in the function of the English language (Marshall & Marr, 2018). Because of that, writing is considered as a process of discovering and creating meaning where ESL skilled writers show the ability to explore and clarify ideas and are capable of attending to language-related concerns primarily after their ideas have been delineated. Writing is a thinking process where decisions are made by the writer on lexical choices, structural options, and possible organization of information and ideas. The writer “is always purpose- and goal-guided” as he or she is involved in planning and advancing the written discourse. Consequently, the writer needs to select and arrange words and sentences with caution so that “cohesion and coherence can be achieved through various semantic, syntactic, and contextual ties”. Hence, “writing is regarded as a dynamic process; and the construction of a text involves links at various levels-lexicon, grammar, and organization” (Kuo 1995, pp 47-48).

In academic settings, writing skills are practiced in the form of essays. Composing involves combining structural sentences units into a more-or-less unique, cohesive, and coherent larger structure. A piece of writing which implicates composing contains surface features that connect the discourse and underlying logic of organization which is more than merely the sum of the meanings of the individual sentences. Composing consists of two kinds of writing: the writing as telling or retelling, and the writing that involves transforming. The former contains narrative and descriptive writing, and the latter expository and argumentative writing (Grabe & Kaplan 1998). Therefore, it is stated that “academically valued writing requires composing skills which transform information or transform the language itself” (Grabe and Kaplan 1998, p 17).

Even though EFL undergraduates have been learning English for years, it is estimated that writing in a foreign language still can cause some obstacles, namely some students fail to recognize...
and appropriately use the conventions and features of academic written prose by producing vague and confusing essays with an improper structure or by writing essays that are too personally involved (Hinkiel 2004:4). Other discourse-level difficulties of EFL writers are poor topic continuance, inadequate use of examples, limited vocabulary, and incorrect or limited use of cohesive devices (Meisuo 2000:61). Many studies have been carried out on cohesion devices and revealed the importance of cohesion in ensuring the quality of texts. Jalififar (2008) investigated the Iranian junior, senior and MA students’ essays, majoring in TEFL, and found that there was a direct and positive relationship between the quality of the essays and the number of well-functioned discourse markers. The results also revealed statistically significant differences between the use of discourse markers and essays quality in the groups. All these researchers clearly stated that the higher number of DCS and the higher variation of DCS the topics used in their essays, the better the overall quality of their essays will be.

Likewise, Kalajahi and Abdullah (2015) aimed at finding out the relationship between use of discourse connectors and cohesion of writing one in the writing samples of Malaysian school students. 90. Argumentative Writing chose from the Malaysian Corpus of Students’ Argumentative Writing (MCSAW, Version 2).

Although the rubric checks for five components, including content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics, to address to the purpose of the research only “Organization” marks were taken in to account since it is an only component that measures cohesion of essays. The result revealed that there was a weak negative insignificant correlation between writing quality and the frequency of the DCS in the writing of Malaysian ESL students. The lack of relationship between writing quality and DC use can imply that DCS has not been used effectively and appropriately by the Malaysian ESL students (Jacob’s et al., 1981).

Moreover, Sanchez, (2019). Examined the Use of Discourse markers in Argumentative essays by Learners of Spanish as a Foreign Language. A mixed-method approach was used; a total of 64 essays from 5 levels of proficiency were analyzed to identify connectors, discursive operators, and metatexual connectors, following Calsamiglia and Tusón’s (2001) classification of discourse markers. Findings revealed that there is a statistically significant increase in the number and the variety of discourse markers used from beginners to advanced levels. The accuracy in the use of discourse markers decreased as the proficiency level increased. Furthermore, discourse markers were shown more essential for the quality of the essays at the advanced levels; a higher number and a wider variety of discourse markers correlate more strongly with quality scores at the higher levels.

In Jordan, English is instructed at all educational levels as a foreign language. Learners are expected to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills of writing in English. However, the students encounter problems when it comes to writing particularly in generating an appropriate argumentative writing. They find it problematic to create a well-developed argumentative writing. This is due to the lack of understanding of the different structures of English and writing processes (Al-Khotaba, 2015).
Statement of the Problem
In recent years, more complaints have been voiced out by Jordanian language instructors regarding undergraduates’ poor writing. Instructors commented that most students faced difficulty when they attempted to produce a piece of writing. They misused cohesive devices in their writing as they lacked the appropriate vocabulary and knowledge of coherence in writing (Obeiah and Bataineh, 2016).

Also, the students are not able to produce unified, integrated, and coherent essays. They lacked the necessary and important techniques in producing well-developed essays. They do not use appropriate cohesive devices to show their creativity and critical thinking skills in argumentative writing (Rababah & Melhem, 2015). For instance, the students tended to use simpler lexical repetitions and fewer complex lexical repetitions in their writing. They tend to avoid the use of complicated words when attempting to produce a piece of writing (Al Khotaba, 2010). Despite, the years of learning writing, many Jordanian undergraduates are still incompetent and unable to produce coherent writing. They produce disconnected and isolated sentences which result in incoherent and sometimes meaningless written texts (Al Natsheh, 2007; Al-Zuoud, 2013; Al Jeradaat, 2008). The undergraduates writing problems are due to many reasons such as the writing curriculum imposed by the Ministry of Higher Education in Jordan which requires EFL students to follow specific traditional methods used in the teaching of writing (Obeidat, 2006).

The use of cohesive devices in the Jordanian undergraduates investigated by many researchers (Alsawalha and Chow, 2012; Al Khotaba, 2010; Al- Natsheh, 2007; Al-Jeradat, 2008; Shatarat, 1990). For instance, Alsawalha and Chow (2012) explored the relationship between writing proficiency and writing process of English language and literature students at a local University in Jordan. Writing methods were seldom used among the students. Also, English proficiency affected the writing methods used among the students.

Methodology
Search Design
This research employed quantitative design to investigate the use of cohesive devices in argumentative essays produced by 60 undergraduate students majoring in English language and literature at Mu’tah University in Jordan for the academic year 2017/2018. According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) using quantitative design in a research study helps a researcher cross-validate the research instruments of the study and the findings of the research.

Participants of this research consisted of sixty Jordanian students, who were selected using purposive sampling method to participate in the present research. The sample consisted of 21 females and 39 males. The number of subjects in this research was similar to the number of participants recruited in previous studies by Nawal (2014) and Al-Khoresheh (2010). The subjects’ ages ranged from 21-22 years old. All the subjects speak Arabic as their first language. They have studied English for 12 years at schools and four years at a public Jordanian university.
Instruments
The instruments that were used in this study were: 1. ESL Essays Profile and 2. Cconcordance Software. These instruments are described in the next section.

ESL Essays Profile
This profile was developed by Jacob et al. (1981) which has been used extensively (Ting, 2003; Meisuo, 2000; Sasaki, & Hirose, 1999; Perkins, 1983). The ESL Essays Profile divides writing into five components with various percentages, i.e. content (30%), organization (20%), vocabulary (20%), language use (25%) and mechanics (5%). Each component has a set of criteria ranging from “excellent to very good” to “very poor” with a specified range of scores.

Analytical Tools: Concordance Software: AntConc 3.4.4m (2014)
Recently, with increasing interest in the area of corpus studies, the above software will be used for this research. As Paltridge (2006) stated, almost all texts collected in corpus studies are generally saved and analyzed electronically. To determine how and where the specific features of language were located in the discourse, researchers mainly use the concordance to analyse the occurrences of that specific features of language in the corpus.

Procedures tried to conclude whether or not such a connection could be found in the writing of the Jordanian EFL students. To this point, a total number of 60 purposive sampled pieces of writing from tertiary education level at Mu’tah University in Jordan, was selected and scored by two raters. Using Jacob et al. (1981). Scale, the raters first scored the quality of the writings. Then, they calculated the frequency counts of different examples of conjunction devices in each writing.

Then, the researcher succeeded in successively using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient test to determine how the quality of writing was correlated with the use of cohesive devices.

The Research Objective
The current research intends to achieve the following objective:
i. To examine the effect of the use of conjunctions on the overall quality of writing.

Research Question
This research addresses the following research question:
i. What is the effect of the use of conjunctions on the overall quality of writing?

In this regard, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient test was used to determine how the quality of writing was correlated with the use of cohesive devices. In the next section, Table 1.1 indicates the overall correlation of the writings across the sampled writings and Table 1.2 exhibits the correlation between the use of conjunctions devices and the quality of the writing of the Jordanian students’ written essays.
As can be viewed, there was a weak negative but irrelevant correlation between writing quality and the frequency the use of conjunctions as cohesive devices \( r(90) = -0.02, \ p < .001 \). This correlation indicates that the frequent and general use of devices in the writing of Jordanian students did not contribute to the quality of the writing under any conditions. Consequently, it is possible that frequent and extensive use of cohesive devices will reconstruct the quality of the writing.

Table 2. Correlations between Writing Quality and the Frequency Use of Conjunctions in the Jordanian EFL Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Frequency of DCS</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two presents that there is an extremely negative but irrelevant correlation between the use of conjunctions devices by Jordanian EFL students and their writing quality \( r(30) = .23, \ p < .001 \). Therefore, the correlation was negative and insignificant for Jordanian EFL students \( r (30) = .23, \ p < .001 \). More specifically, the findings show that the frequencies the conjunctions were not found as an indicator of good writing quality for Jordanian EFL students.

This study was the first research to investigate the correlation between frequency the use of conjunctions devices and quality of the essays in an EFL setting. The findings of the research showed that it is possible that students’ argumentative writing with more coherent devices will seem more coherent to the writer. Negative and insignificant correlation in Jordanian EFL learners may suggest that these EFL students attempted to include more coherent devices in their writing basically because they believed in the use of ‘how’ as conjunction.

It may also infer that they favored not to attempt to use some of the unfamiliar conjunctions. It may also assume that those cohesive devices are not being applicably and methodically addressed in the teaching resources they were officially shown to. It may be the case that the teaching materials and methods might focus more on the accuracy of language and give insufficient...
attention to the language elements that allow students to connect effectively and adequately in English.

However, findings of the present research do not agree with the results of the studies that report a high and sometimes significant degree of correlation between the use of conjunctions and overall writing quality such as Kalajahi and Abdullah (2015) and Sanchez, (2019). It may be impressive to show that there are relevant studies with findings contrasting with the results of the current research. For example, Jalififar (2008) explored the Iranian junior, senior and MA students’ essays, majoring in TEFL, and found that there was a direct and positive relationship between the quality of the essays and the number of well-functioned discourse markers. The results also revealed statistically significant differences between the use of discourse markers and essays quality in the groups.

All these researchers clearly stated that the higher number of DCS and the higher variation of DCS the topics used in their essays, the better the overall quality of their essays will be. Relating the findings of the present research with those discussed earlier in this research, it can be argued that the text quality cannot be just a function of conjunctions. There appear for the other components (e.g., lexical reiteration, collocation pattern, reference, etc.) that enhance the consistency, coherence and quality of the texts. Additionally, this relationship can be affected by the type of the text and whether or not the writer is a native speaker.

Discussion
This research found that there is significant relationship between the use of appropriate conjunctions with quality of essays. It is significant to examine relationship between the Jordanian EFL students’ use of conjunctions and their writing quality. These findings agree with previous research on the use of conjunctions such as Martínez, (2016) and Sanchez, (2019), who stated that proper use of conjunctions contribute to the development of students’ writing quality. The quality of argumentative essays were measured by use of analytical scale Jacob et al. (1981) It gives an overall quality score depending on a general impression of argumentative writing, considering syntactic and organization quality. Since the use of conjunctions is associated to the developed text organization, analytical valuations of the students’ essays were measured for appropriate scoring technique. The possible presence of a correlation between different types of cohesive ties, particularly conjunctions devices and writing quality has been investigated widely since the publication of Halliday and Hasan’s (1976), Cohesion in English. In general, no formulated correlation has therefore been tabulated for the writings of native speakers (Tapper, 2005), past research has witnessed many studies tried to discover such association in the script of non-native speakers of English in an ESL/EFL background. In relation, the researcher was impressed to establish a correlational analysis for the Jordanian EFL students’ writing since the findings of past research were inadequate and it was, in fact, insignificant to restate it.

Consequently, the findings of the research showed that investigating the use of conjunctions is essential for both EFL learners and teachers provide them with solutions for writing-quality based problems in one hand. On the other hand, the result of the research is also helpful for curricula designers to consider incorporating conjunctions in textbooks and classroom materials.
Conclusion
The research concluded that students used different types of conjunctions devices in their written essays including additive, adversative, causal and temporal. These conjunctions or devices were main blocks in the textual organizations found in the students’ argumentative writing. These textual organizations were the results of the text cohesion brought about the use and frequencies of the different types of conjunctions in the written essays produced by Jordanian English as foreign language students at Mu’tah University.

The result revealed that the presence and absence of any of the conjunctions affected the overall cohesion of the written essays. Also, the result revealed that a written essays that has a high frequency in the use of cohesive devices provided meaningful written text to the readers while a written essays had a low frequency in the use of conjunctions did not provide its readers with a coherent and meaningful summary. For instance, written essays such as T21–High Group, T5- High Group, T4- High Group, and T6- High Group, respectively used varied types of conjunction including also, but, first of all, secondly, on the other hand, in addition, and, to sum up in which the percentage in the use of conjunctions by 26 texts produced by Jordanian students showed 74.72%.

Consequently, these written texts appeared meaningful and unified due to the dense use of conjunctions devices. This made the written essays meaningful and coherent to their readers because their sentences are well-connected and organized with one another, whilst written essays that contained lesser number of conjunctions devices such as T15- Low Group, T22-Low Group, T29-Low Group and T30-Low Group were not well-connected with one another and did seem meaningful due to the low percentage in the use of conjunctions recording about 4.53%.

On the other hand, written essays that contained many conjunctions along with other lexically connected sentences were able to provide the readers with a brief summary the theme of the topic. However, sentences that contained many conjunctions and cohesive devices assisted in making a written text more coherent and meaningful. This means that there is a positive correlation between the quality of writing and the frequent use of cohesive devices in the writing of Jordanian students it does not only contribute to the quality of the writing under any conditions but it may work otherwise.

Moreover, it is possible that frequent and wide use of cohesive devices will reconstruct the quality of the writing. Interestingly, it was revealed that students’ argumentative writing with more coherent devices will seem more coherent to the writer, cohesive devices are, therefore, by no means the only confirmation of a unified and cohesive text.

About the Authors:
Rawhi Alshamalat is PhD candidate at Universiti Putra Malaysia. He holds a M.A in linguistics from The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Baroda /India and a lecturer at University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia. His research interest includes fields in language linguistics. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5683-1987
Dr. Che An Binti Abdul Ghani is affiliated to the Department of English, Universiti Putra Malaysia, where she is currently working as Senior Lecturer. She has numerous publications within the specialty and published in reputed national and international peer-reviewed journals. She is actively associated with different national and international societies and academies. Dr. Che An Binti Abdul Ghani is been appreciated by several reputed awards and funding support. Her primary research interest is in studies related to English Studies, Translation, Academic and Professional Writing. Language in Contexts, Children Writing. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4992-4426

References


Sanchez Sanchez, S. (2019). The Use of Discourse Markers in Argumentative Essays by Learners of Spanish as a Foreign Language. (Master thesis), University of Alberta, Canada.


Using Pedagogic Video to Enhance English for Specific Purposes Teaching Program (ESP) for Saudi University Students: A New Prospective Approach

Ali Albashir Mohammed Alhaj
King Khalid University
Abha, Asir Province, Saudi Arabia

Mohammed H. Albahiri
King Khalid University
Abha, Asir Province, Saudi Arabia
Corresponding Author: Mohammed H. Albahiri

Abstract
The optimized use of authentic videos is integral in language classrooms. However, the research concerning the use of videos for developing audio-visual reception, four language skills, and vocabulary are found to be lacking. This study, therefore, reviews the developments related to the use of video in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The main question of this study is: how does the pedagogic video contribute to improving English learner’s language skills? This study is beneficial for university teachers who teach content courses to Saudi students using specialized online video courses, science animations, presentations, and online video lectures. The review suggests that teachers must engage in continuous proficiency development as well as self-discovery for overcoming the challenges that impair their learning and development. The use of videos is important as it can increase students’ retention ability, through visual support and comprehension of the spoken discourse. ESP should not be regarded as an important aid to the teaching, rather it should be used as a component of an integrated skills package. Based on the findings, it has been reviewed that there is a need to integrate a collaborative strategy for teaching that assists in overcoming the learning issues based on the ESP course teaching. Teachers can monitor their speech to ensure a logical flow in the overall ESP content and its viable presentation. Keywords: English for specific purposes, ESP context, pedagogy, Saudi EFL students’ video, vocabulary learning strategies

Introduction

The use of technology as a part of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) software has enhanced student’s language learning opportunities (Heriyanto, 2018; Kabooha & Elyas, 2015; Shaari & Morat, 2016). Primarily, there is an increased prevalence of online videos in the classroom; although, it involves expensive projectors in darkened and acoustically isolated rooms. The main aim of the teachers is to promote active and contextual aspects of the students’ meaningful learning along with positive emotional involvement in the learning process (Diab, Matthews, & Gokool, 2016). Videos can make the learning/teaching process more effective and aid in certain circumstances among certain students. It is important to distinguish between whole-job, major-job, and minor-job operations (Corder, 1966).

In the major-job operation, video is used as a support for inadequately-trained teachers or teachers with a weak command of the language, presenting the material they would be unable to teach themselves. This approach could be useful in English for specific purposes (ESP) programs as video programs not only supplement lack of linguistics skills, rather it nurtures the lack of knowledge of the content area. Both native and non-native teachers often feel insecure when teaching the scientific and technical texts. However, the cost-effectiveness of using video must be realistically assessed. The money spent in the production of such a video, might be better spent while providing the teacher with more in-service training, more textbooks and relatively cheap aids such as tape recorders (Policy, 2017). Video is usually used, when the teacher cannot either perform or performs poorly. It is considered as an aid to a teaching program, not as an independent program, rather its usage should be carefully integrated with other materials which have been used in a course (Cleary, 1995; Savignin, 2018). These criteria indicate to the minor-job operation, which was used with experienced and trained teachers as a teaching device in a course (Savignon, 2018).

Several studies have highlighted the benefit of videos for language learning. Such as Jalaluddin (2016) reported the benefit of videos for the understanding of grammatical and functional structures for improved speaking and listening abilities. Natsev, Hill & Smith (2010) stated that student’s concentration and attention improves with the use of videos. Omer (2017) indicated that pedagogical videos improve students speaking skills. Abdulrahman, Basalama & Widodo (2018) and Takaesu (2013) noted videos as an effective tool for language skill development, while Zhang, Gao, Zhang, & Jia (2016) and Kusuma (2017) notes its benefits for oral presentation skills. Most studies also confirm its benefits for stimulating language learning motivation among the students (Li, Gao & Zhang, 2016; Wang, 2018; Ahluwalia, 2018; Bianchi & Marenzi, 2016). Comi, Argentin, Gui Origo & Pagani (2017) demonstrate that videos help improve student’s achievement ratio as well as educational quality, whereas, Montero Perez, Peters & Desmet (2018) note its effectiveness for improved vocabulary acquisition.

Concerning the teaching strategies in ESP, Lesiak-Bielawska (2015) highlighted that ESP teachers help to exploit authentic discipline-specific materials for bringing the relevant language experience for the students. Such as the University of California and Yale provide lecturers with audio and visual copies of the lecture which are used in language classrooms. Ilin, Kutlu, and
Kutluay’s (2013) study showed that grammar of the ESP students improved with the use of technology. Davoudi-Mobarakeh, Eslami-Rasekh & Barati (2014) also noted that ESP courses which are taught by the content specialist are generally ineffective. The study reasons that, this might be due to the lack of background information, concerning strategies, lack of clarity of pedagogical techniques and lack of linguistic competence for teaching English.

Most of the traditional models of language teaching are inadequate to fulfill the challenges of the present era due to constant and rapid developments in the world of professions. Musikhin (2016) favored the model of ESP that mainly emphasizes the acquisition of professional expertise. It is also associated with the integration of disciplinary knowledge and professional practice in complex and dynamic manipulation of different social situations. This has resulted in a significant increase in the exchange of up-to-date technologies and scientific ideas. Individuals from all the professions, specifically teachers need to develop necessary language skills to be active and contribute to the competitive world (Musikhin, 2016).

ESP is a pedagogical movement in applied linguistics devoted to creating research-based English language materials and instruction for adult students with specific language learning goals. The goals of these students are directly related to their current or future academic, professional, or vocational lives and contexts. The language needs and academic and professional goals of the students, need to be examined before designing a course for them. ESP is often contrasted with teaching English for no apparent reason, because of focused research and curricula that is followed (Woodrow, 2017). The instructions provided in English are not based on a careful assessment of a group’s specific language learning needs and target situation, rather it intends to cover the presumed fundamentals of the language (Al-Jarf, 2012).

Some of the previous studies have exhibited frequent non-optimal uses of authentic video in language classrooms (Hobbs, 2006; Kaiser, 2011; Jurkovic & Mertelj, 2015). Teachers should make use of the best teaching resources for providing optimized language learning outcomes, where the use of video is found to be substantial. None of the previous studies have considered the use of authentic video in conventional and virtual language environments in the field of teaching and learning ESP. This determines a need to explore the role of authentic video in developing audio-visual reception, four language skills, and vocabulary. Increased awareness is required to organize events for ESP teachers for using video as innovative teaching within the classroom setting as flipped learning. Further studies are needed to discover the communicative abilities and aspects required by the learner in the real-life situations for which he is being trained by the language teacher. The materials should reflect the learner’s needs as closely as possible. The learner’s terminal goals are taken as course aims and serve as input to the design of the materials which are often based on authentic data. The success of the ESP program will then be measured by the ability of the learner to professionally develop. It exposes them to new vocabulary and its integration in the real-life situation.

This is particularly true for Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, where the government has
initiated various efforts for improving student’s language competence and bringing in-line with international standards. Despite the substantial evidence concerning the use of videos for language development, its integration for ESP students remains inadequate. Such as previous researches that have been conducted was limited to the use of video in the general Saudi classroom and targeting one skill. For instance, Kabooha & Elyas (2015) studied the students’ vocabulary development skills, Khalid & Savkin (2012) on teaching literature, while Alwehaibi (2015) and Eissa (2019) on the content learning and speaking skills development, respectively.

In a similar context, the study aims to investigate various skills to observe the extent to which video can contribute towards student development. It reviews the developments taking place in the use of video in ESP and suggest ways in which video equipment might enhance ESP teaching program. Moreover, it also motivates the power of video and improvement in learning and retention to show how video could be used to improve a learner’s ability to read and write. The present study is significant for university teachers to teach content courses to Saudi students using specialized online video courses, science animations, presentations, and online video lectures. In particular, the present study portrays how specialized online videos can be used in helping freshman students’ learning, understanding, retaining, and applying fundamental knowledge in specialized courses. It further shows how online videos can be utilized for covering the specialized knowledge, improving the knowledge of technical terms, and developing advanced listening skills for students.

This study is significant in its setting as it is the first time that students of Saudi universities are involved in a discussion related to students’ language needs. It is assumed that their perceptions will assist in emphasizing their language needs. It is also significant concerning its potential effect on the process of syllabus design for ESP programs in Saudi universities. It is assumed that the findings of this study will be beneficial for the enhancement of language teaching in different departmental settings. Following research question was constructed based on the objective:

Main Question: How does the pedagogic video contribute to improving English learner’s language skills?

• Sub-Question 1: How does the use of video pedagogy help in improving students’ communication skills?
• Sub-Question 2: How does the use of video pedagogy help in improving students’ learning and vocabulary development skills?
• Sub-Question 3: How does the use of video pedagogy help in improving students’ listening skills?
• Sub-Question 4: How does the use of video pedagogy help in improving students’ reading skills?

The study integrates a qualitative research design. It uses review approach to discuss about the developments that are taking place through the use of video in ESP and suggests ways in which video equipment might enhance ESP teaching programs. Research instrument plays an important
role in obtaining the result of a study, as it is a set of methods which are used to collect the data. In this study, two researchers as they spend a great deal of time reading and exploring the data. The collected data was analyzed by them as per the study problem concerning the ESP strategies in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia is selected.

**Teaching Strategies used in ESP**

Assessment is an essential component that helps teachers to fulfill their teaching tasks. The process of collecting information regarding the influence of teaching practice on student learning, interpreting, and analyzing this information, reacting to and acting on the outcomes is significant for different reasons as a substantial part of ESP course design (Çelik & Topkaya, 2016). Firstly, they are a means for producing appropriate feedback, with which teachers can improve the quality of instruction. Secondly, they are helpful as instructors can review how others explain their teaching methods to enhance their instruction (Wei, 2006). Thirdly, the information can further be utilized by administrators for making summative decisions and formative suggestions. To be precise, ESP course assessment, as suggested by most of the researchers (Rahman 2006; Momeni & Rasekh, 2012), is an essential measure to make decisions on documenting events, clarifying the objectives, identifying unintended and intended consequences, measuring cost-effectiveness, and curriculum modifications (Fatmawati, Gani & Samad, 2018). Evaluation is an important phase of any ESP course and inseparable aspect of course design and is based on syllabus design, selection of methods and activities, along with implementation, materials and preparation, needs analysis, and assessment whether formative or summative (Momeni and Rasekh, 2012).

Summative assessment takes place at the end of the course to determine if the course fulfils its designed criteria whereas formative assessment takes place throughout the course for giving clues to practitioners regarding effectiveness of teaching methodologies and activities, participation, grades, motivation of learners (Mohanty, Gretes, Flowers, Algozine, & Spooner, 2005; Stieger & Burger, 2010; Momeni & Rasekh, 2012). The significance of collecting data to understand how learning requirements are addressed generally disregard the approach to assessment. Course assessment can be conducted by an outsider or insider evaluator. On the contrary, both evaluation forms have benefits and drawbacks (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The sense of being assessed may cause a risk for both teachers and learners even though the outsider might be objective. However, insider assessment may not offer appropriate data for administrative decisions, which might be done by teachers. Thereby, both type of assessments can be carried out for validating the outcomes. Lastly, course evaluation can be done through the use of a number of data collection techniques including formal or informal talks, observations, checklists, interviews, a summary of responses to questionnaires or surveys since there is no single means for conducting course assessment.

**English for Specific Purposes (ESP): Historical Background**

In the twentieth century, the languages for specific purposes (LSP) has increasingly become ESP, as English became the predominant global language (Otilia, 2015). According to Grosse (1988), the modern ESP movement began in England in the 1920s and has continued apace, especially in the British colonies and presently throughout the world. Needs analysis is the key essence of ESP. The early years of ESP can be divided into at least five stages (Hutchinson &
Register analysis: In the 1960s and 1970s, the aim was to identify the grammatical and lexical features of the target discipline (e.g., electrical engineering) and then develop teaching materials around the linguistic features identified.

Discourse analysis: This stage moved beyond the sentence level as ESP practitioners used discourse analysis to examine the textual patterns in the targeted discipline. For instance, they were interested in how a biology text is organized in terms of description, definition, classification, causality, and so on.

Target situation analysis: This stage was characterized using target situation analysis and needs assessment to identify and elucidate learners’ needs and wants. By the 1980s, the focus expanded to include not only the language that ESP learners needed for a target situation but also the thinking processes that underlie language use (Adams-Smith, 1980).

Skills and strategies: An emphasis on skills and strategies led to the development of materials that assisted learners to acquire strategic reading skills, such as guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary from context and looking at how meaning is produced in spoken discourse.

Learning-centered approach: This stage moved beyond the different conceptualizations of language, used in the earlier stages by offering a broader focus on understanding the processes of language learning.

Hewings (2002) indicated that much of the need assessments that are published and target situation research has dealt with the written discourse that is important for students’ academic success, particularly in the sciences. ESP researchers have increasingly turned to the term ‘genre’ for their discourse analyses to acknowledge that written and spoken discourses should be viewed as situated, purposeful, contextualized, and communicative actions, that have been taken by a speaker or writer. For instance, there are purposeful academic genres (e.g., research articles, proposals, abstracts, and lab reports), professional genres (e.g., legal briefs, business letters, and resumes), and vocational genres (e.g., application forms, accident reports, and work schedules).

Pedagogic Videos and ESP Teaching Program in Saudi Arabia

Generally, it is assumed that Saudi individuals who are proficient in speaking English will have a benefit to acquire and sustain acceptable employment. Significant efforts in developing the textbooks have nurtured a slight opportunity in the effective delivery of English as a communication platform despite the widespread lack of English proficiency. In particular, the number of international schools and English-language institutions proliferated dramatically due to increase in demand of individuals to enhance their English.

Al-bassri (2016) investigated the ESP needs of business international students in Saudi universities to determine how subsequent tutoring can address their expressed needs. It showed that students need assistance with their business English skills, specifically in vocabulary. Thereby, English language instruction should be modified to help learners enter their targeted field, which will improve their success and save time in their academic field or occupation. Alghamdi (2019) explored the ESP needs of business major students at the undergraduate level in Saudi Arabia. It was observed that the Saudi students required greater control over the English language for their
future careers, but the level of English language programs adapted in colleges/universities were not fulfilling the language needs of students. The study has also indicated that the program objectives were not followed completely and the academic and language needs of the students were disregarded.

Al-Roomy (2017) reviewed the need for ESP in different schools, universities, and colleges in Saudi Arabia for determining the current developments and recommending new research directions. The study has identified that the ESP teachers failed to fulfill the needs and requirements of students in all educational settings. The use of pedagogic videos also lacks expertise; therefore, teachers failed to train students about pedagogic videos. Alzaharani (2016) has emphasized the causes that impact learning experiences, attitudes, and self-esteem of Saudi students towards ESP and the use of pedagogy videos. The study has revealed that the experiences of Saudi students vary from their self-esteem and attitude. Students were also in need of obtaining pedagogy education through videos or interactive learning platforms as they found complexity in learning the English language through traditional methods.

Fadel and Rajab (2017) have determined the ESP needs of the female students that were enrolled in the Faculty of Computing and Information Technology at King Abdul-Aziz University. The study has identified that students lack pedagogic knowledge and education, which should be provided based on their needs, wants, and requirements. Therefore, the ESP course designers and teachers should consider these requirements by emphasizing all the language skills, particularly speaking and writing skills. Khan (2011) reviewed that teaching factor is among the most important issues related to pedagogy as it directly affects the instrument of change. Therefore, a teacher has to be well-equipped to investigate linguistically the type and nature of complexities, and evolve some beneficial strategies for pedagogic learning.

Given the sustainable development goals of the country, Saudi Arabia witnesses a substantial development across various fields including technology, health affairs, science as well as the economy, which help the country in achieving its determined Saudi Vision 2030 (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Alhaison, 2013; Ur Rahman). For the development of the education sector, the Saudi government has allocated substantial budget, aimed for inaugurating new school buildings, introducing new university initiatives, improvising the teaching practices, and developing the educational curricula that are in line with students’ needs and leads to labor market configuration. Studies have highlighted the significance of English for the educational sector of Saudi Arabia (Al-Roomy, 2017), which has undergone substantial changes concerning its objective, contents, and development. As a part of its development, the Ministry of Education implemented the English Language Development Project (ELDP) for general education development (Tayan, 2017). However, the use of video for the development of students which has been studied, remains limited to the developed nations. To bridge this gap, the present study assesses the use of pedagogic video to enhance English for specific purposes teaching program (ESP) for Saudi university students.

Similarly, the present study has assumed that video would be an aid to the ‘normal’ situation of learner-centered but teacher-directed operations. However, the potential for video in the development of self-access materials appears very real with the advent of video-cassette recorders, which are reliable, compact and simple to operate. Nowadays, a language laboratory
filled with video equipment is expensive, but costs will no longer be so prohibitive as video production increases. Listening comprehension materials could benefit enormously from the addition of a visual element and one of the problems associated with language laboratory materials.

The study has portrayed an optimistic picture of the use of video in ESP programs. Interested and motivated teachers are developing techniques and materials using video equipment in a situation for the needs of their students. In the fields, things look reasonably healthy. However, there is little research being conducted into video and its application (the Aston Video Research Group being an exception). Video equipment is costly and mechanically complex; therefore, certain conditions should be satisfied before embarking on programs that involve video. The most important are summarized below:

- Facilities and personnel must exist for the maintenance and repair of equipment.
- Facilities must exist for making and showing programs.
- If a TV/Video unit is to be responsible for the technical production of programs, the technical personnel must be willing and able to co-operate with the teachers in a team effort. The technician and teacher should be prepared to learn from one another and understand the problems of each other.
- Teachers must be trained in the use of video equipment or should be willing to make programs their own and must be able to exploit video as a teaching aid, not as a substitute for the teacher.
- The use of video should arise from the needs of the learners, the syllabus and the materials.

Contribution of Pedagogic Video in Improving English Learner’s Language Skills

Communication Skills. The main aim of video recording is to develop skills since they can present authentic situations and show interaction of individuals. However, its usage in practicing oral skills is limited now; although, it can present two-way communication. However, a viewer cannot practice interaction with screen characters. Video participation tends to take the form of non-reciprocal activity as observed in the sections on note-taking and listening. Whereas, the essence of the spoken mode is as it is a reciprocal social activity which can be shown to viewers, without their ‘on-line’ participation (Sherrington, 1991).

Knight (1989) reported the successful use of video in a course of spoken English at the tertiary level. The study has commented on the influencing power of video and improvement factor in learning and retention. It has been noticeable here that how well students remember language and behavior when it is presented in a life-like video program. Video recordings have not been included as part of the course designs. Nevertheless, it is accepted that ‘social’ English should play a part in an ESP program and several projects that exist for developing the oral skills of overseas students. This is regrettable since video could play a valuable role in helping an overseas student to overcome communication difficulties with landlords/police/travel agents/booking clerks/lecturers/fellow students. Research also indicates that many EFL students experience great difficulties in seminars. Materials as those described by Goh (2013) could be usefully supplemented by illustrations of seminars, along with both successful and unsuccessful examples of communication. The importance of eye-contact in communication is already known during
social interaction. People look at each other in the eye, repeatedly but for short periods (Argyle & Dean, 1965).

Rogers (1977) confirmed the existence of difficulties that were faced by overseas students and concerned with their speaking skills. Problems included their reluctance or inability to take an active part in discussions, difficulty in opening and closing conversations and changing topics, and lack of understanding the visual signals of non-verbal communication. Short television documentaries are also produced by the students themselves on problems that were experienced by overseas students or on topics related to their subject area. There are great advantages to approach the teaching of communication skills in this way. The students are, on the one hand, being trained to analyze discourse in a non-technical but highly relevant way and at the same time using language and expressing themselves in very real situations.

The process of participation by the learner, in his learning situation is emphasized in the materials and methodology of the Lancaster Study Skills Program (Candlin, Kirkwood, & Moore, 1978). The videos of overseas students while interacting in seminars are shown to the course participants and discussed. These three phases are just part of an integrated program of listening to lectures, reading comprehension, and language laboratory pair work. Therefore, they form an integral part of it, rather than existing independently from the study skills package. Learning and Vocabulary Development Skills. Karami (2019) studied the implementation of the videos for the vocabulary development of ESP students. The findings of the study showed that video-based material helps to enhance the vocabulary understanding of the targeted language. Salem (2019), on the other hand, revealed that the use of videos, precisely TED talks as an ICT (information communication technology) helps to enhance oral presentations of students that have the subject of business as major. It also revealed that this practice makes students more enthusiastic, motivated and energetic while reducing their stress and anxiety level.

, Rajab, & Sindi (2019) suggested that videos augment the students’ knowledge, given its integration of the updated knowledge as most of the course content and material are outdated. It advises the ESP teachers to integrate learner-centered activities, which encourage students for participation. Another study of Kustini, Suherdi, & Musthafa (2019) note that assimilation of the multiliteracies pedagogies makes learning more conducive, engaging, meaningful, motivating, yet challenging. It shows that the inclusion of the videos in the ESP context facilitates students learning. Nguyen & Boers (2019) also demonstrated the use of videos for developing student’s language competence and the use of new words.

Listening. In talking about note-taking skills, the study has already introduced the topic of listening. One of the major advantages of video in ESP is that it can be presented to a learner as a student follows a subject specialty i.e. engineering, physics, etc. The organization of discourse included markers of enumeration, exemplification, parenthesis, hesitation, digression, self-corrections, and repetition. They reported that the addition of the visual and non-verbal features of discourse was made available through a video that simplifies the understanding skills of the learners as compared to those who recorded on audiotape merely.

can also present information visually which would be accessible in written form or through
stills. For instance, an industrial process or heavy industrial or scientific equipment. In these cases, both linguistic and scientific content can be presented and explicated together. Adams-Smith (1980) used film for team-teaching sessions between language teachers and subject specialists through a welcome moving towards integration of language and content. During the first show of the film, language points were raised and clarified by the language teacher. However, during the second display, a subject specialist joins the group and discusses its content with the students, answering their technical rather than linguistic questions.

Reading and Writing. It is difficult to see how video could be used to improve a learner’s ability to read and write. The training of these two abilities involves exposure to large units of discourse in texts and practice by decoding and encoding their rhetorical structure. Video cannot provide exposure of this sort to a large body of the text. However, more ‘mechanical’ reading skills such as those mentioned by Ewer & Latorre (1969) may be trained using video. Many non-native readers have difficulty in-hand manipulation and left-to-right eye movement in the early stages of reading and writing. Sherrington (1991) recommended techniques for training these skills. For instance, roller captions can be used to increase reading speed and the ability to skim and scan for information. Subtitles used with a visual presentation are compulsive reading, which could be exploited for training reading skills.

Note-taking is a study skill, which is difficult to be adopted by many EFL students in the course of their studies at English-medium colleges and universities. Additionally, the video can be used to present a stimulus, in the form of a description of a process, an experiment, or a lecture, to which the student responds by taking notes. Notice that the role of the video is not to teach note-taking skills, but to present a realistic verbal and non-verbal context in which the activity of note-taking may take place. While bearing in mind about above-mentioned integrative methodology for teaching skills, a learning cycle might take the following form:

- Listening to/watching a video-taped lecture/talk
- At the same time taking notes or
- Completing various note-taking exercises
- Follow-up discussion of the notes in pairs/groups
- Possible writing-up of notes into a full report.

The integrated approach was followed by Kennedy (1979) illustrated the integration of video in a learning/teaching sequence while exploiting various skills at different times within the teaching unit. A topic is selected for the unit e.g. Rural-Urban Migration. Students approach the topic through introductory readings, then listen to/watch videotaped lectures and take notes. Further reading follows the information the students have gained because of their reading/listening/note-taking is then exploited in a seminar-type discussion. McGovern (1983) suggested a similar integrated methodology with the usage of technical films for listening, note-taking, writing, and discussion. Note that these programs involve the active participation of the students.

Limitations and Implications

Based on the review findings, it is observed that for ensuring the effectiveness of ESP teaching, the institutes should provide their utmost support. This includes offering various
development courses that facilitate the professional development of teachers. The review highlights the prerequisites to devise a competent ESP pedagogy and to execute it as a part of the ESP curriculum.

Primarily, communication skills should be prioritized as well as responding to their needs. The students must be provided with a structured model for enhancing communication and expanding their vocabulary thesaurus which helps to sharpen students’ listening and reading skills. The findings suggest the need to integrate into the collaborative strategy for teaching which helps to overcome the learning issues that surround the ESP course teaching. This collaborative strategy can be implemented through two instructors such as one teacher can observe the language while the other provides the relevant content. This helps in ensuring that optimized learning occurs for the students which assists them to overcome their language learning barriers.

Similarly, teachers themselves can monitor their speech for ensuring a logical flow in the entire ESP content and its comprehensible presentation. It also emphasizes recognition of the exercise and expertise, which is necessary to be presented among the teachers for achieving optimized learning results. The review suggests that teachers must engage in continuous proficiency development as well as self-discovery for overcoming the challenges that impair their learning and development. Also, students can be assigned video-related assignments for its improved integration as it leads to unconscious learning development.

Although, the study presents several new findings, the results are limited. This limitation exists in terms geography as the study merely focuses on the region of Saudi Arabia. The focus of the study on Saudi is limited, given the segregated education structure and male dominance. To further enhance the study scope, more researches are required in different regions, using different methods that help conclude results which can be easily generalized. Also, the future studies can empirically investigate the impact of the culture, and can expand the study’s findings.

**Conclusion**

The study has examined different skills for observing the extent to which video can contribute towards student development. The study has reviewed the developments that have been taken place in the use of video in ESP and suggested in which video equipment may improve ESP teaching program. The study has shown that video can enhance ESP teaching programs. ESP should not be regarded as a substitute for the teacher but as an important aid to the teaching. Moreover, it should be used as a component of an integrated skills package. It needs trained teachers to handle effectively, while pointing towards teacher-training courses in the mechanics and methodology of video. Materials should be designed so that students can actively participate and respond to video recordings. ‘On-line’ participation is difficult to achieve, especially in the teaching of oral skills since the video is limited to presenting aspects of communications.

Varied and motivating exercises are designed to develop ‘off-line’ participation. It has been observed that video is particularly useful in developing study skills such as note-taking, listening to lectures and participating in seminars. Additionally, it has great potential as a valuable aid in both academic and social life in an ESP situation. However, more basic research is needed so that teachers can confidently use video at maximum efficiency. The recent approaches in the educational field are needed to undertake for the sake of identifying the ever-changing gaps
between what is taught to the students and what are the pedagogical practices followed in the current era. It is believed that teachers would willingly implement new practices after receiving support as they try them within the classroom. The professional development needs of the students should be loomed while considering the needs of target language and pedagogy to improve and maintain the proficiency of the teachers and gain skills for teaching language.

It is important to be noted that students can upload or download digital videos based on the topics to be covered in their courses from internet websites such as Learners TV and YouTube. On the contrary, watching an online video will not fulfill the requirements of significant learning for students because learning skills majorly rely on the way videos are utilized as a part of the overall learning environment. For effective and significant online video learning, it must be constructive and individual, contextual, collaborative and conversational, active, guided, and emotionally motivating and involving.

The present study has recommended that each university develop a specialized digital video repository, integrating MPEG-4 encoding, high-resolution streaming, synchronized multimedia integration language, and full-text indexing. As these features will enable quick and easy access to specialized digital videos on the internet for students and instructors. In addition to it, the specialized digital video repository will allow instructors and students to search, retrieve, and store cataloged streaming of specialized digital video content to be used for instructional objectives. This is assumed to improve learning and teaching in Saudi English-medium universities.

Acknowledgements
The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Khalid University for funding this work through General Research Project under grant number [grant numbers R.G.P.1/66/40, 2018].

About the authors:
Pro. Ali Albashir Mohammed Alhaj, Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
Department of Curriculum & Instruction, College of Education, King Khaled University  
Abha, Asir Province, Saudi Arabia  Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8050-1053

Prof. Mohammed H. Albahiri, King Khaled University, Abha, Asir Province, Saudi Arabia

References


Fadel, S., & Rajab, H. (2017). Investigating the English Language Needs of the Female Students at the Faculty of Computing and Information Technology at King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia. *English Language Teaching, 10*, (6), 70-82. DOI:10.5539/elt.v10n6p69


The Use of Social Media Platforms to Enhance Vocabulary Developing in Learning a New Language: A Review of The Literature

Meshari Alharthi  
School of Education, College of Arts, Law and Education  
University of Tasmania, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia

Andy Bown  
School of Education, College of Arts, Law and Education  
University of Tasmania, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia

Darren Pullen  
School of Education, College of Arts, Law and Education  
University of Tasmania, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia

Abstract  
Social media platforms (SMPs) are widely used by many users worldwide in different fields, including business, politics, education, and personal enjoyment (Kapoor et al., 2018). However, the use of SMPs for English language vocabulary learning is still under-researched, particularly in a Saudi Arabian context. Alzahrani (2016) and Alqunayeer (2016) have underscored the scarcity of research exploring the use and effect of SMPs on Saudi learners’ vocabulary development, and as these platforms are highly favored in Saudi Arabia, the paucity of research makes the current study timely and pertinent. Furthermore, recent studies in Vietnam and Indonesia have recommended that further research should be conducted regarding the use of SMPs for English language vocabulary learning and indeed for learning English as a second language (Indari & Putri, 2018; Tran, 2016). This paper aims to review the research concerning the use of SMPs for vocabulary learning from 2014 to 2018. Out of 50 peer-reviewed articles, only 15 studies were relevant to SMPs and vocabulary learning. It has been recognized that SMPs are effective in improving learner engagement, motivation, and vocabulary development, suggesting that SMPs can be valuable tools and resources to facilitate learning. The authors have also proposed a definition for the term social media, as one has not been agreed upon in the educational literature, this is not surprising given that the social media phenomenon is still a new and rapidly evolving field of practice and study.

Keywords: English language, learning, Saudi Arabia, social media, vocabulary.

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.21
Introduction

The English language is acknowledged as the lingua franca of languages, and within the last decade, much attention has been paid to the use of social media platforms (SMPs) in language learning, whether through computers or mobile devices such as mobile phones or tablets (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012; Fischer, 2013; Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013). However, as the concept of social media has only been around for the last few decades, it can be viewed from a historical perspective to be a relatively new form of communication. As such, its impacts have yet to be adequately evaluated, and many research gaps exist regarding its effects on language learning (Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2014; Zourou, 2012).

As stated by Richards (2015), multiple studies have presented substantial evidence that social media has become a favored learning environment for the learning of language skills, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL). Richards’s (2015) work has been supported by Ma (2017), who indicates that how learners learn an additional language may be affected by how they use social media. More recently, Puspa (2018) found that vocabulary knowledge usage was enhanced using SMPs more than other forms of technology such as CD-based or web-based learning platforms. In SMPs, English has become the dominant language of programming; however, 80% of social media users do not speak English as their first or primary language (Christison & Murray, 2014). Given that English is the lingua franca of the internet, variance in English language usage increases, with English being no longer the exclusive domain of native speakers. As such, cross-linguistic communication in SMPs provides a casual or ad hoc learning context in which the conversational qualities of the English language are being explored by EFL and ESL users.

It has been found that different SMPs have unique educational benefits and can be used as tools for facilitating learning, provided they are used with appropriate guidance and support (Connolly, 2011). The use of SMPs for education has become popular within the last decade (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012; Fischer, 2013) because they are instrumental in knowledge sharing and communication, due to their ubiquity and ease of use (Pavlik & McIntosh, 2018); thus, they may also facilitate vocabulary learning (Schwartz et al., 2013). One significant characteristic of SMPs and vocabulary learning which is of particular interest is how SMPs change the conditions for language practices of linguistic repertoires which is due to the hybrid nature of the texts, which fuses oral, written and spoken communication with other multiliteracy elements such as sound, color, and symbols (Cole & Pullen, 2010). However, although social media’s potential for enhancing the development of language skills has been widely studied, its use for vocabulary learning is relatively under-researched or is not the primary focus of the research. To address this gap, this paper reviewed the literature to investigate the potential role of SMPs in vocabulary learning, focusing on EFL learners’ perceptions and practices.

Main Concepts

Vocabulary

It is widely claimed that vocabulary learning is one of the most crucial aspects of learning a language (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000; White & Kim, 2009). Vocabulary plays a decisive role in developing reading and other language skills among non-native learners (Carlisle, Beeman,
The Use of Social Media Platforms to Enhance Vocabulary

Alharthi, Bown & Pullen

Davis, & Spharim, 1999). It is one of the fundamental components which connects reading, writing, listening, and speaking; therefore, vocabulary learning helps learners master their additional language and use it effectively in different contexts and scenarios (Grosseck & Holotescu, 2008). This premise is supported by Wilkins (1972): “Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (p. 111). Within second-language learning, the success or failure of second-language acquisition (SLA) can be determined to some extent by the processes of vocabulary learning (Gu, 2005; Nation & Newton, 2008).

It is also imperative to know that vocabulary learning is determined by the frequency of use and exposure to various situations, scenarios, forms, and contexts (Nation, 1990; Schmitt, 2000). However, because by their very nature, SMPs offer users different reasons for use, ranging from study through to work or pleasure, there is no general linguistic discourse, and the users’ purpose for using the SMPs and the social media platforms themselves offer differing contexts. The differing contexts provided by SMPs allow learners to expand, confirm, experiment, and develop their vocabulary (Takac, 2008) formally and factually through to a more colloquial discourse. These different contexts, situations, and scenarios are more likely to be found in SMPs than in traditional settings such as school environments (Alqunayeer, 2016; Lomicka & Lord, 2016), due to the lack of space and time limitations. These contexts will be defined, examined, and their various aspects discussed in this paper.

EFL and ESL learners acquire vocabulary through different vocabulary learning strategies, ranging from using visuals—“a picture is worth a thousand words”—through to labeling objects, e.g., placing a label with the word “desk” on the actual desk. Several researchers have attempted to categorize them, such as Gu and Johnson (1996), Schmitt (1997), and Nation (2001). The taxonomy proposed by Gu and Johnson (1996) includes metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation strategies, whereas Schmitt (1997) presented discovery and consolidation strategies. These two strategies involve subsets of strategies: determination and social strategies under the discovery category, and social, cognitive, memory, and metacognitive strategies under the consolidation strategies (Schmitt, 1997). Finally, Nation (2001) proposed three main taxonomies: planning, sources, and processes, each of which has different subsets.

Social Media

Defining social media is quite complex as the medium itself is still developing and evolving rapidly. In the past, social media may have been limited to email and similar communication forms, whereas now it includes videotelephony and moving past that to avatars in virtual chat rooms and virtual environments. Even though there is no agreed definition or concept of social media, researchers have proposed differing definitions. Dewing (2010) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) perceive social media as the groups of internet-based and mobile applications and services in which users are engaged in online activities, such as creating content, joining communities, exchanging information, and interacting with others. According to these authors, users can create their profiles through which they can connect with others and send/receive instant messages (Dewing, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) added that users could also share and post information in different forms, such as text, audio, photos, videos, and links to

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
other resources. These various forms might fulfill all learners’ needs and encourage them to develop their language learning, including vocabulary, as they have different characteristics of learning styles, such as being visual or auditory learners.

On the other hand, Burke (2013) described social media as the content uploaded by users to social networking sites (SNSs), whether that includes videos, pictures, text, or other multimedia formats. She added that SNSs involve being engaged in a community by creating relationships and communicating with others. Cohn (2011) agreed with Burke’s definition, adding that social media helps people connect, whereas SNSs enhance their connections.

Based on these definitions, and to avoid disagreements, the term social media platform (SMP) is used in this paper to refer to any application or site that enables its users to create a profile—whether public or private—through which they can interact, post, or view using any form of media, including text, pictures, videos, live streaming, or links to any other resources. Likewise, the term social media is used to refer to any forms of the content found on SMPs, as proposed by Burke (2013). The following SMPs are discussed in order of their original launch dates: Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), Instagram (2010) and Snapchat (2011):

**Facebook**

Facebook allows its users to connect, interact, and build friendships with other users, who can also get involved with various societies and communities and share resources and information within user-created networks (Gonzales & Vodicka, 2010). Facebook was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, and there were about 2.23 billion monthly active users as of 30 June 2018 (Facebook, 2018). The number of Facebook users in Saudi Arabia is about 22 million (Global Media Insight, 2018), which is about 66% of the Saudi population.

**Twitter**

Twitter was founded by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams in March 2006. Its users post and interact with messages called tweets, which were initially limited to 140 characters each but doubled to 280 characters in November 2017. Users can tweet different forms of media, such as text, video recordings, pictures, links, and live videos. According to Twitter (2018), there are approximately 336 million monthly active users. In Saudi Arabia, there are about 17 million users on Twitter (Global Media Insight, 2018), representing 51% of the population.

**Instagram**

Instagram is a platform that is used to share photos and videos. It was founded by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in October 2010 and then sold to Facebook in April 2012. The uploaded photos and videos can be edited by different filters in the platform and labeled with various tags and location information. The posts can be shared in public or only with pre-approved followers. Instagram’s users can post, like others’ posts, follow others, and send private messages. There are 800 million monthly active users on Instagram worldwide (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2018). However, in Saudi Arabia, there are about 18 million monthly active users (Global Media Insight, 2018), 54% of the total population.
Snapchat

The Snapchat platform was founded in September 2011 by Evan Spiegel, Bobby Murphy, and Reggie Brown. Snapchat is only available as a smartphone application where users can upload pictures and short videos lasting a maximum of 10 seconds. These are stored for 24 hours, and then they become inaccessible. According to We Are Social and Hootsuite (2018), there are 255 million users on Snapchat globally, and about 13 million users in Saudi Arabia (Global Media Insight, 2018), which represents 39% of the population.

Social Media and Vocabulary Learning

For this literature review, several academic databases were explored (i.e., the University of Tasmania Library, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and ERIC) using the following keywords in each database, resulting in about 64 search entries: Vocabulary Learning, Vocabulary Acquisition, Social Media, Social Networking, Social Network, Social Networks, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Fifty academic articles were found; however, only 15 of these met the inclusion criteria. The search was limited to items published from January 2014 to December 2018, as the field of social media research is relatively new and is rapidly changing. Similarly, Golonka et al. (2014) reviewed over 350 studies published up to 2012, but they did not find any studies on the use of SMPs for language learning. However, the authors came across some related studies (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012; Khany & Monfared, 2013; McDermott, 2013; Warschauer, 2002; Zourou, 2012), and they are referred to in this section.

Regarding the exclusion criteria, articles on YouTube and WhatsApp were excluded for many reasons, including their mechanisms and principal uses. For example, the primary purpose of YouTube is to share videos rather than posting and uploading various forms of content. Regarding WhatsApp, users must have a phone number to create an account and can only interact with individual users whose phone numbers are saved, or with other users who are members of the same WhatsApp group. Besides, unlike other SMPs (i.e., Twitter and Facebook), WhatsApp users cannot search for other users’ profiles, locations, and posts, as user accounts are not public and can only be accessed via phone number. Therefore, WhatsApp is considered more of an instant-messaging application rather than an SNS. For a platform to qualify as an SNS, user profiles should be the backbone of social media sharing (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

In the last five years, several studies have been conducted on the use of various SMPs for EFL and ESL vocabulary learning (Al-Tamimi, Al-Khawaldeh, Natsheh, & Harazneh, 2018; Al Mubarak, 2017; Indari & Putri, 2018). Some researchers recognized the effectiveness of SMPs in improving learner engagement and motivation (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012; Ventura & Martín-Monje, 2016; Zourou, 2012). Ventura and Martín-Monje (2016) further found that the use of SMPs has helped learners progress in their vocabulary learning. This evidence suggests that SMPs have the potential to be valuable tools and resources for learning.

The platforms investigated include Facebook and Twitter, as well as social media in general. The database searches revealed three studies regarding the use of Twitter for vocabulary learning (see Table one), eight studies on Facebook (see Table two), and four studies on social
media in general (see Table three). To the best of the present researcher’s knowledge, however, there are no previous studies regarding the use of other SMPs to this effect, such as Snapchat and Instagram.

Table 1. List of studies on the use of Twitter for vocabulary learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ESP Vocabulary and Social Networking: The Case of Twitter</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>20–27 years</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Learning Vocabulary via Twitter</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>University students (adults)</td>
<td>Quan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Impact of Teaching Through Twitter on Students’ Vocabulary Learning</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>University students (adults)</td>
<td>Quan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. List of studies on the use of Facebook for vocabulary learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Impact of Social Media on Vocabulary Learning; Case Study – Facebook</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>University students (adults)</td>
<td>Quan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enhancing Students’ Vocabulary Knowledge Using the Facebook Environment</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>University students (adults)</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learning Specialized Vocabulary Through Facebook in a Massive Open Online Course</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>University students (adults)</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Self-Directed Vocabulary Learning in Facebook: From the Perspective of Social Presence (forthcoming)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>University students (adults)</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Use of Social Media Platforms to Enhance Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Effect of a Facebook Game That Requires English Vocabulary Knowledge on Students’ English Vocabulary Development</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>10–14 years</td>
<td>Quan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Training Learners to Use Quizlet Vocabulary Activities on Mobile Phones with Facebook</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>University students (adults)</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Effect of Using Facebook on Improving English Language Writing Skills and Vocabulary Enrichment Among the University of Jordan Sophomore Students</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>University students (adults)</td>
<td>Quan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sudanese Students’ Perceptions of Using Facebook for Vocabulary Learning at University Level</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>University students (adults)</td>
<td>Quan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sabater and Fleta (2015) presented a paper on using Twitter for learning specialized vocabulary in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). They examined students’ confidence and communication in using ESP vocabulary through a blended learning approach, combining online digital media with conventional classroom methods, which included face-to-face and online meetings. They found that students’ participation and communication in the classroom and beyond were enhanced after using Twitter (Sabater & Fleta, 2015). Despite that, there were no perceived positive effects with regard to vocabulary learning (Sabater & Fleta, 2015).

Alqunayeer (2016) conducted a study on the impact of teaching through Twitter on students’ English vocabulary learning in a Saudi university. She divided 160 participants into two groups: experimental and control, with 80 participants in each. The control group was taught in the traditional method by using flashcards, pictures, hints, gestures, or simple explanations, and the experimental group was taught by using the social media platform Twitter over eight weeks. She found that the experimental group, which was taught vocabulary items through Twitter, demonstrated significantly higher vocabulary knowledge than those in the control group. This was measured by the results and analysis of a pre-test and a post-test for both groups. She also reported that not only vocabulary improved but also writing and researching skills. Alqunayeer (2016) concluded that since “integrating social networking sites is a new trend in Saudi Arabia, researchers need to investigate the aptitude of Saudi students in using and integrating such technology” (p. 42).

In contrast, another study conducted by Santana, Garcia-Santillan, and Pozos-Texon (2014) in a Mexican university found that there was no significant difference in learning outcomes between acquiring vocabulary via Twitter or via the traditional way inside a classroom. The researchers argued that Twitter was not a particularly useful method for vocabulary learning, because any new vocabulary contained in tweets was not brought to the learners’ attention and therefore not interacted with. In other words, the learners were not exposed to these items frequently enough to affect their language learning through interactions on Twitter. Santana (2014), in her sole-authored paper on the same study, claimed that learners should be exposed to more words every day to ensure that they will acquire them.

A study of the use of Facebook to improve students’ vocabulary knowledge found that most of the learning occurred when the students interacted and socialized with fellow students and other Facebook users, particularly those who were native speakers of the target language (Kabilan & Zahar, 2016). The researchers argued that Facebook might be an effective learning tool, as it can motivate students and increase their engagement, interaction, collaboration, and confidence.
Tran (2016) similarly pointed out that Facebook had the potential to increase student participation and engagement.

A study by Guvendir and Gezgin (2015) examined the effect of a Facebook game on students’ vocabulary development, finding significantly positive outcomes. The same results were found in a study conducted on the use of SMPs (i.e., via Facebook) for vocabulary learning among schoolchildren (Indari & Putri, 2018). Tran (2016) also reports that “learners had a positive view towards mobile learning and towards using social networking to support their learning” (p. 54).

In contrast, Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014), who limited their study to Facebook use in Romania, found no significant differences between students who were exposed to target vocabulary through Facebook and those who were not; however, they did find that students who used Facebook were more engaged and motivated to learn. This absence of improvements and developments in this study and other similar studies might be attributed to its methods. The researchers in this study attempted to test the effectiveness of SMPs on vocabulary learning in just a short period by employing pre-test and post-test designs where the participants’ voices were not emphasized and not taken into account comprehensively. While every situation is unique and the participants’ perceptions and interpretations are significant and unique as well, which constitute each transaction and situation, especially in education and social science research (Pring, 2000). Therefore, methodological gaps have been revealed by reviewing these studies.

Among the researchers who studied SMPs in general, Bouhami (2016) concluded that SMPs are helpful and effective in improving EFL students’ vocabulary knowledge. Similarly, Khan, Ayaz, and Faheem (2016) found that SMPs play an influential role in vocabulary learning, as the SMPs trigger learners’ interests and present vocabulary in different forms, including text, pictures, video, and other online media.

Al-Tamimi et al. (2018) and Nikbakht and Boshrabadi (2015) highlighted that learners in their experimental groups excelled in learning the target vocabulary compared to learners in their control groups, concluding that SMPs play a decisive role in vocabulary learning. It is worth noting that participants in these two studies were studying English at different proficiency levels. Participants in Al-Tamimi et al.’s (2018) study were undertaking a Bachelor’s Degree majoring in English, and in Nikbakht and Boshrabadi (2015), they were doing a Master’s Degree in Applied Linguistics. Therefore, each cohort was studying English for different motivations and purposes, but they yielded the same results toward utilizing SMPs for vocabulary learning.

Conclusion
This review of literature has shown that the use of SMPs for vocabulary learning is comparatively under-researched, particularly in a Saudi Arabian context. The focus of most studies is on the use of SMPs in controlled groups and classroom environments where the students are invited to use those social media tools for language learning. This reveals a stark limitation, as the students might have participated in the studies only in order to pass the course or please the teacher/researcher. It is recommended that future research is conducted to fill these gaps in the
The Use of Social Media Platforms to Enhance Vocabulary  
Alharthi, Bown & Pullen

literature and research, where the researcher is an independent observer. It is also crucial to focus on investigating and explaining EFL and ESL learners’ perceptions and practices, which are vital in the use and application of SMPs in language learning (Khany & Monfared, 2013; Warschauer, 2002). Besides, most studies have not provided enough information about SMPs’ employment or sufficient details and data about the experiments. This shows another constraint, which is the absence of a thick description that is defined by Geertz (1973) as providing a rich, clear, complete, and detailed description of the research.

Moreover, Davis (1995) reasoned that there should be three components of the thick description: general, interpretive, and particular. The particular description refers to providing representative data instances. Thus, the credibility and the transferability of these studies are decreased due to their lack of a thick description (Brown & Rogers, 2002), which makes drawing conclusions noticeably problematic.

This review of the literature on SMPs and language learning has highlighted a paucity of studies that have considered why individuals are using SMPs for language learning and how SMPs can be used for that learning. By highlighting these studies, this paper’s authors intend to research how adult Saudi English language learners are using their current SMPs to acquire vocabulary. This understanding may then enable others to understand that second language learning and vocabulary learning may occur in formal and informal ways through the use of social media platforms.

About the Authors:
Meshari Alharthi is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Tasmania. He received a bachelor’s degree in the English language with a minor degree in Education from Taif University in Saudi Arabia and an MA in TESOL and Applied Linguistics from the University of Salford in the UK. He is interested in language learning and social media platforms. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9155-2131

Dr. Andy Bown is a Lecturer in Languages and TESOL at the University of Tasmania, Australia. He has a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from Macquarie University, and his research interests include second language reading and the use of technology in language learning. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3735-7006

Dr. Darren Pullen is a lecturer at the University of Tasmania, where he teaches undergraduates and graduate students in the disciplines of health science and technology. His research interest is in the interactions of people and technology-humachine. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8033-614X

References
The Use of Social Media Platforms to Enhance Vocabulary

Alharthi, Bown & Pullen

DOI: 10.24200/jonus.vol2iss1pp170-176


The Use of Social Media Platforms to Enhance Vocabulary

Alharthi, Bown & Pullen


White, C., & Kim, J. (2009). *Putting the pieces of the puzzle together: How systematic vocabulary instruction and expanded learning time can address the literacy gap*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.


Quizlet: An Online Application to Enhance EFL Foundation Students’ Vocabulary Acquisition at Rustaq College of Education, Oman

Moza Abdullah Al-Malki
Rustaq College of Education
Oman

Abstract
Due to the advance of technology a number of tools have emerged for the purpose of language learning. Quizlet, a language learning tool, aims to help students learn vocabulary. This study aims to investigate the impact of Quizlet on English for Foreign Language (EFL) foundation students’ vocabulary acquisition at Rustaq College of Education in the Sultanate of Oman. Specifically, this study answers one research question: How does the use of Quizlet influence EFL foundation students’ vocabulary learning at Rustaq College of Education in Oman? The foundation students were exposed to a series of Quizlet study sets containing certain topics taken from their prescribed curriculum. Within these, they learnt a number of vocabulary individually and collaboratively. Pre- and post-tests were implemented to gauge foundation students’ performances and acquisition in vocabulary. Additionally, focus groups were also conducted to investigate their vocabulary learning experience pertaining to integrating Quizlet into EFL classrooms. The findings revealed that the foundation students’ performances in vocabulary acquisition significantly increased. Although Quizlet has created a challenging and collaborative learning environment, more language skills should be incorporated in Quizlet to help students to learn vocabulary faster and in an interesting way. This study is significant as it can contribute to the English Language Teaching (ELT) literature pertaining to the innovative and technological tools that can enhance students’ language skills in the 21st century. It is also important to English teachers and their students in finding various ways of teaching and learning vocabulary in and outside classrooms.

Keywords: CALL, EFL foundation students, Quizlet application, Rustaq College of Education, vocabulary, Sultanate of Oman

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.22
Introduction

Lexical items are the means for carrying the basic information load of the meaning a human being communicates with. As Nunan (1991) asserts, we cannot achieve comprehensible communication without vocabulary as interlocutors might easily be misunderstood if they use vocabulary incorrectly or if they cannot grasp the meaning of new vocabulary they have not seen before. Thus, it is the same case with second language learners who have traditionally been introduced to new vocabularies through their prescribed curriculum. Second language learners might know and use the word heart, for instance, in their daily life but the probability of using the word heart in the following sentence: he wears his heart on his sleeve, is low unless it has been put in a text where second learners can understand it in a meaningful way. In this situation, idiomatic expressions might be introduced in their curriculum with no authentic text, thus a learner might learn it but will encounter a challenge using it effectively. According to Cohen (2012), in order to comprehend text, learners must have both a strong literacy background and strong vocabulary knowledge.

In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, technology and its educational tools have emerged for the purpose of using language learning in an effective and sustainable way. Most importantly, educational tools support the learner-centred notion that learning is dominated by the learners and a teacher functions as a facilitator. Quizlet, a language learning tool, aims to help second language learners learn vocabulary in an effective way. On the Quizlet website, both teachers and students have an opportunity to create a ‘class’ and share sets of vocabulary from different units or create their own customised vocabulary sets.

There are two parts in Quizlet: ‘study’ and ‘play’. In the ‘study’ part, Quizlet users can learn vocabulary by being given the definition and being asked to choose and type the vocabulary word, read the words and definition aloud that might be of importance. Moreover, they can write and spell the missing words. At the end of the session, they can test their knowledge of the learnt vocabulary. All these activities can be done without the teacher’s presence. In the ‘Play’ part, there are video game options where the learners can interact with the vocabulary. The video game options are like ‘match’ where learners are asked to drag the word to its correct definition. Also, there is ‘gravity’ which is offered as easy, medium and hard levels. The definitions slowly fall from the sky towards Earth and the learners are asked to type in each word as fast as possible. A third engaging feature on the Quizlet video game is ‘live’ which provides engaging opportunities for learners to collaborate and compete in learning the vocabulary. Learners need to work in teams and communicate effectively to win by choosing the correct answer to move forward in the game. Overall, Quizlet with its two parts is designed to scaffold learners in learning vocabulary independently.

This study investigates the experiences of EFL students when exposing and learning vocabulary through Quizlet in their EFL foundation program at Rustaq College of Education. The foundation program has been designed to comply with standards set by the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) where students are required to demonstrate satisfactory achievement of learning outcomes in English, Study skills, Mathematics and Computer Skills. Omani foundation learners who major in English must reach a satisfactory level equivalent to 4.5 Academic IELTS with no component/language skills less than four in order to successfully enrol
for Year One of their degree program. This means the students are required to learn and acquire effective English language skills, thus it is of significance to integrate various up-to-date tools and ways to enhance students’ language skill development. This study was conducted to investigate ‘How does the use of Quizlet influence EFL foundation students’ vocabulary learning at Rustaq College of Education in Oman?  

This study into the effect of using Quizlet on English foundation students’ vocabulary learning is reported by firstly situating the research in its theoretical context by reviewing social constructivism and its implication on learners. Then, the review of relevant literature in relation to the use of Quizlet in Foreign Language (FL) contexts is presented. Following this, the approach that framed the study is rationalized and explained before describing the research methods used to collect and analyze the data. The research findings are outlined and discussed with an emphasis on the sociocultural context in which the research has been conducted. The article concludes by examining how the results of the study can inform improvements to the foundation program courses across Oman in order to prepare quality English students equipped with technological skills to be aligned with Fourth Industrial Revolution skills.  

Literature Review  
Zone of Proximal Development and Vygotsky’s theory  
Research on language development has proven that effective learning occurs in a social constructivism environment. Vygotsky (1978), a founding father of social constructivism, believed in social interaction as an integral part of learning. Learning, as Vygotsky postulates, is part of psychological and physical development, which takes place within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky, ZPD is a tool or mechanism that enables learners to achieve their best performance under guidance and collaboration with more capable adults and peers (Wood & Wood, 2009). The ZPD is seen as scaffolding, which is a structure of ‘supporting points’ to perform an action. Within a classroom, scaffolding can consist of activities provided by teachers to support learners as they are led through the ZPD (Wood, Bruner & Rose, 1976). Thus, this view of learning and development takes into account learners’ social interactions and social participation within the learning environment to lead to the greatest learning gains.  

In fact, Vygotsky’s seminal work entitled ‘Mind in Society’, published in 1978 and based on his original work in the 1930’s, argued that “every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level, first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)” (p. 57). Drawing on Vygotsky’s lead then, we can construe that sociocultural research may be used to understand the social processes that support learning, and this cognitive perspective is used to understand the mental processes of the individual that seemingly are socially embedded. Shepard (2006), who focuses her work on this perspective, highlights that the individual development of reasoning and expectation is carried from the social world. Consequently, this perspective views human learning and development as a transaction between the individual and the environment, such as schools and universities, which are culturally and socially specific.  

The implication of this culturally and socially specific context, is noticed through the shifting role of teachers and learners and the range of vocabulary learning strategies. With regard
to the shifting roles, the teacher has become more a facilitator and a guide to the learner who becomes an active part of language learning. By doing so, the teaching and learning process is student-centred. Accordingly, the teacher’s function is to facilitate and provide up to date vocabulary strategies that cater for individual learners. Teachers and learners of foreign languages are always seeking for the best techniques and strategies that can be implemented in teaching and learning vocabulary in the classroom. Yunus and Saifudin, (2019) recently confirmed that the correct application of vocabulary learning strategies is the biggest contributor to learner’s success rate in learning vocabulary and most importantly in their learning progress. In the area of investigating English vocabulary learning and teaching strategies, there has been a shift towards integrating computers and technology. An elaboration of this point is provided in the following section.

**CALL and MALL in Language Teaching Vocabulary**

The shift towards integrating computers and technology into vocabulary learning has been due to the pedagogical values of digital devices for learning vocabulary. In comparative studies literature, learners’ academic scores in vocabulary increased when Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) was implemented in learning as opposed to traditional methods. This evidence was clearly shown when Sonobe and Ogata (2017) compared learners’ scores on their vocabulary tests when using traditional methods such as a notebook, a pen, paper and a dictionary in semester one and using software for previewing vocabulary homework in semester two. In Bakla and Çeklc’s study (2017), not only did learner’s scores and their receptive lexical knowledge increase, but also the acquisition of productive knowledge was improved. Therefore, integration of online flashcards websites with EFL learners’ vocabulary learning can have an influence on EFL learners’ performance in vocabulary. For example, emphasis on how technological devices and strategies such as watching movies scenes, and playing video games have been demonstrated to be preferable among Romanian EFL learners (Cristeaa & Fărcaşiub, 2015).

This study aims to shed light on understanding the use of Quizlet, a teacher/student-friendly online application and a website on Omani EFL learners’ learning vocabulary. A number of studies (e.g. Chien, 2013; Chien, 2015; Kose, Cimen & Mede, 2016; Anjaniputra & Salsabila, 2018; Setiawan & Wiedarti, 2020) have focused on Quizlet and its merits for EFL learners’ vocabulary learning and the findings of these studies were significantly positive. The following section discusses previous research in relation to learners’ vocabulary performance and acquisition.

**Studies on Quizlet Application**

Chien’s study (2015) investigated L2 Taiwanese freshmen learners’ perceptions toward three online vocabulary flashcards websites namely Quizlet, study Stack and Flashcard Exchange. Through case studies, the research showed that EFL Taiwanese learners regarded the online vocabulary websites as helpful as it motivated them to learn English vocabulary, improve and increase their vocabulary abilities and knowledge. However, the study affirmed that Quizlet was most liked by the participants and Study Stack was the least liked. Quizlet, as the study revealed, was “user friendly” (Chien, 2015, p. 119) and the participants’ preferable vocabulary activity was ‘Spelling’ as this exercise assisted in reviewing spelling and meanings. This study concluded by
suggesting pre-tests and post-tests for future studies to examine whether these online vocabulary websites could lead to significant improvement in EFL learners’ vocabulary learning. Similarly, a study conducted by Kose et al. (2016) explored pre-intermediate and intermediate EFL learners’ perceptions at a private university in Turkey regarding the use of Quizlet for vocabulary learning. In response to Chien’s (2015) recommendation, this study conducted vocabulary quizzes before and after the use of Quizlet. In addition, classroom observations, interviews and student records were part of data collection process. Despite the fact that few learners showed dissatisfaction with the use of Quizlet because it lacked sample sentences, pictures and examples associated with the activities, the majority of Turkish learners deemed it helpful as it assisted them to “learn the definitions of the words, synonyms, and pronunciation through repetition” (Kose et al. 2016, p. 371). Thus, based on the findings of Kose et al. (2016) study, such online tools like Quizlet should be integrated in language preparatory programs.

Believing in the issue of technology integration in the classroom, Anjaniputra and Salsabila’s (2018) study deployed classroom action research at the tertiary level in Indonesia to investigate what really occurred while Quizlet was implemented. The findings of the study revealed the positive effect of using Quizlet in learning vocabulary. EFL learners in Indonesia admitted that they had been provided with enjoyable learning due to various features on Quizlet which added fun and different ways of learning. In addition, Quizlet was deemed to generate learners’ autonomy as they could use the tool inside and outside the classroom because it was easily accessible. Finally, the findings showed that learners’ persistence and engagement in the learning process had increased. The learners acknowledged that they determinedly memorized vocabularies shown on Quizlet to reach the best score. This determination was associated with being more active in the classroom. This study recommends future studies to further investigate if Quizlet can improve learners’ motivation and achievement. Building on this recommendation, Setiawan & Wiedarti (2020) conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of using Quizlet Application to increase students’ motivation in learning vocabulary by dividing 65 students into experimental and control groups. The findings showed that students who used the Quizlet application had higher motivation than those who did not use it. Also, the findings indicated that students who used Quizlet “felt more enthusiastic, did not get bored, and had high interest when learning vocabulary” (p. 93).

Furthermore, Dizon (2016) study also examined whether Quizlet promoted EFL learners’ vocabulary development. Through pre-and post-tests and a questionnaire, comparable to previous studies, the findings were significantly positive. Firstly, the learners’ scores increased from the pre-test to the post-test. Secondly and in alignment with Anjaniputra and Salsabila (2018) research, the learners showed their preference in using Quizlet as a tool to study vocabulary inside and outside the classroom. In the same year, Lander examined Japanese elementary EFL learners’ attitudes to using Quizlet over a period of two 15-week semesters. Similar to Dizon’s (2016) finding, the study revealed a definite approval of Quizlet from learners. From a different perspective, Jackson III (2015) examined the role of first language L1 (Arabic) in L2 vocabulary learning with two mobile learning applications namely Quizlet and Educreations videos. Based on the Second Language Acquisition premise that L1 is a resource to be drawn upon when learning a second language, the learners in the study implemented Quizlet Arabic and English translations outside classroom as preparation for exam. L2 vocabulary is seen and heard (a key feature of
Quizlet) and the L1 translation is induced to confirm learners’ understanding of the word. The findings of Jackson III’s (2015) study, similar to the findings of the above-mentioned studies, indicated that Quizlet in Arabic/English is the preferred method of exam preparation for EFL learners. However, no studies have been conducted in Oman in relation to the use of Quizlet in EFL classrooms. Thus, this study investigated ‘How does the use of Quizlet influence EFL foundation students’ vocabulary learning at Rustaq College of Education in Oman?’

Method

The study was exploratory in nature to understand the use of Quizlet on EFL foundation students’ vocabulary learning. It took place over a five-week period at Rustaq College of Education, Sultanate of Oman. The tutor was teaching a course entitled General English Skills for pre-intermediate foundation English learners. In this course, learners were introduced to different topics related to everyday English, Reading, Speaking, Listening, Writing, Grammar and Vocabulary. The vocabulary was incorporated in the curriculum in each unit in a repetitive way. Therefore, instead of teaching the vocabulary in the traditional way, the tutor created a Quizlet class and shared it with the students engaged in learning sets of vocabulary from different units during college activity hours. The tutor also customised the vocabulary sets to accommodate the learners’ needs. The following sections describe the participants and the data collection and procedures.

Participants

Twenty Foundation English language learners aged 18 and 19 years old participated in this study. They were pre-intermediate in the Foundation Program, which means they were in Level B. However, before they were accepted in Level B, they were required to undertake a Placement Test which measured their language knowledge, Reading, and Writing. Students were taught English language, Information Technology (IT) and Mathematics when they were in Foundation Level B.

Data collection and Analysis

The data for this study were obtained through 1) pre- and post-tests; 2) four self-reflection tasks after each Quizlet class, 3) classroom observations; and 4) focus groups conducted with the students after the final session of using Quizlet. Further, a Google classroom application was used to assist in following up with what the student was learning and to add them in the researchers’ remarks and notes.

The pre-test was the students’ Placement Test for the foundation English program; a nationwide test evaluated by assessment coordinators across Colleges of Applied Sciences (CAS) and Rustaq College of Education. The participants’ Placement Test results were collected and the target vocabularies used in the Writing part of the test were counted and recorded. Then, the target vocabularies, which were taken from the prescribed curriculum, were introduced through Quizlet. A post-test, which was also a Writing Test, was conducted after the 5 weeks and the process of counting vocabularies were repeated.

The study was carried out over a five-week period and focused on the vocabulary in Job descriptions; Hot verbs-take, get, do and make; -ed/-ing/ adjectives; Collocation (1) and
Collocation (2). The students learnt the vocabulary individually and collaboratively. The procedures for using Quizlet during the five-week period of the study Quizlet were as follows:

Table 1. The procedures for using Quizlet during the five-week period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task/Weeks</th>
<th>Quizlet study sets/learning activity</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>What is after it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1: Piloting</td>
<td>Vocabularies in ‘Job descriptions’</td>
<td>The lesson piloted how Quizlet could be used in the classroom. Students were oriented about Quizlet and how it was used. Then, students spent time in signing up for the Quizlet Website and learning the targeting vocabularies regarding job Description. Plus, any problems with internet connections was recorded and the timing of the lesson was changed so that it would not affect the plan of the curriculum.</td>
<td>Self-reflection task was handled to students regarding:-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Likability of the session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Understanding the vocabulary without the teacher’s explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Is Quizlet a good tool?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2:</td>
<td>Hot verbs-take, get, do and make make</td>
<td>The students were studying in a lab where the internet problems were solved. They were also studying during activity hours in College. They were given the link to the Quizlet study set through Google Classroom. Students immediately opened the link and started learning. The tutor facilitated the process of learning, monitoring the class. The learning process took two hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3:</td>
<td>-ed/-ing/ Vocabularies adjectives in Unit 10 from ‘New</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
The student were given the link to the Quizlet study set through Google Classroom. Students immediately opened the link and start learning. The tutor facilitated the process of learning and monitoring the class. The learning process took two hours. The ‘test’ feature was assigned as homework. They needed to send the score through Google Classroom. At the end of the lesson, students handed the Self-reflection task where they reflected on the session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4: Vocabularies in Unit 10 from ‘New Headway: Pre-intermediate’</th>
<th>The ‘test’ feature was assigned as homework. They needed to send the score through Google Classroom. At the end of the lesson, students handed the Self-reflection task where they reflected on the session.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 5: Vocabularies in Unit 10 from ‘New Headway: Pre-intermediate’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the five-week period of study, observations were conducted in the classroom by the researchers to examine the students’ interactions with the Quizlet website. Each week, the researchers observed how students interacted and communicated with the vocabulary individually and also how they collaborated to understand the meanings of the vocabularies without instructor interference. Patton (2002) supports this practice when claiming that observations enable researchers to directly observe the actions and behavior of people, rather than asking participants about their views, feelings or attitudes. Field notes were kept to document the observations of students’ interactions in the classrooms while using Quizlet website. After five weeks of studying through Quizlet, focus groups were conducted to investigate participants’ vocabulary learning experiences pertaining to integrating Quizlet into the classroom. The twenty participant students were divided into four focus groups and the interviews took thirty to forty five minutes. The interview questions are provided in Appendix (C). The interview data were analyzed to identify similarities and differences in the students’ experiences. The following section discusses the results of the study.

**Results and Discussion**

The findings revealed that the use of Quizlet significantly improved EFL foundation students’ vocabulary learning at Rustaq College of Education in Oman, in particular -ed/-ing/adjectives and Hot verbs- take, get, do and make. Eight of the foundation students’ performances in vocabulary were enhanced as shown in the differences between the pre and post-tests. For example, participant #6 used to write ‘I am interesting in this game’ and after using Quizlet, he...
successfully wrote ‘I feel bored’, and ‘I feel depressed’. Also, participant #11 was able to use -ed/ing correctly in the following phrases and sentences namely ‘interesting topic’, ‘the surprising thing’, ‘I was surprised when I saw Nizwa’, and ‘what an amazing place’. Moreover, participant #14 used to write ‘it is an interested place’, but his performance improved as he was able to write sentences such as ‘they are interested in that place’ and ‘I chose Dubai because it is exciting’. Furthermore, participant #14 was also able to use Hot verbs – take, get, do and make successfully and with different words that were not explored through Quizlet (see Appendix A). For example, he wrote phrases such as ‘make a plan’, ‘discover the information about animals’ and ‘take rest’. Also, Participant #6 successfully wrote ‘get happy’ as he had explored to ‘get angry’ through Quizlet.

Furthermore, participants showed their likeliness towards using Quizlet functions, such as Flashcards, Match, Spelling and Quizlet live. These activities helped participants learn the vocabulary in an attractive way. Participants indicated that they had to match and spell the learnt vocabulary as fast as possible. This process enabled them to improve their spelling. Moreover, they did not only challenge themselves, they also challenged their friends; the fastest was the winner. The participants also showed that when they competed and challenged each other in the Quizlet live, they became excited and learnt the vocabulary faster. Therefore, as they expressed, they remembered the vocabulary for a long period of time.

Quizlet not only created a challenging and competing environment; it also created a collaborative learning environment. The majority of participants confirmed that they learnt from Quizlet what collaborative work meant. A participant in one of the focus groups explained that he learnt “how to work as a group. When we work as a group, our friends helped us. If we do not understand the meaning of the word, and someone knows it, he is going to tell us”. Another participant indicated that practising Quizlet in a group made learning vocabulary interesting and simple. A third participant agreed and showed that he liked working with a team, in particular the Quizlet live. This collaborative learning environment excited them to learn and improve their vocabulary faster; thus, retained in the short term memory. This finding resonates with the social constructivism concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where learners reach their best performance in collaboration with their peers and experts as they provide guidance and support.

Surprisingly, the use of Quizlet also created a sense of autonomy. The majority of participants, as observed, were able to do the activities by themselves without the assistance of a teacher. This is due to two reasons: first, the participants were equipped with the technology skills as they learnt how to use the technology when they were at school. Second, the Quizlet activities were personalized to the learners which meant they navigated it in a motivating way. For instance, the activities designed in the Quizlet were associated with the Omani culture and with the learners’ names. This finding of being autonomous and collaborative is similar to Anjaniputra and Salsabila’s (2018) study.

Nevertheless, the finding shows that there were some limitations to Quizlet. The participants were dissatisfied about the mere focus of vocabulary on Quizlet. They indicated that more skills should be incorporated into Quizlet to learn vocabulary in a natural way. One of the
focus group participants indicated that Quizlet should integrate vocabulary with speaking, grammar and writing paragraphs for the words learnt. Once this integration is infused, vocabulary can be acquired naturally as if learners learnt it in an authentic environment. Another limitation raised by the interviewed focus groups was that the one study set took a long time which made it tedious. As they clarified, the exercises in each activity were repeated; therefore, they suggested that a number of activities be done in the classroom and the remaining ones be assigned as homework. This would enable them to revise the study sets outside the classroom. However, this finding was opposed to the study conducted by Kose et al. (2016) which found that repetition assisted Turkish students to learn vocabulary.

Conclusion

It is important for future recommendations and implementation strategies to note the findings from the analysis of the use of Quizlet in EFL foundation students’ vocabulary learning at Rustaq College of Education in Oman. Given that the most prominent findings of the study were associated with improving students’ performance in vocabulary, particularly –ed/-ing adjectives and Hot verbs–take, get, do and make in sentences; enhancing students’ spelling in writing; creating a collaborative learning environment where they learn to work as a group and creating a sense of autonomy where they were able to do the activities without the teacher’s explanation, it can be reasonably concluded that the analysis has indicated the merit of using Quizlet in foundation student programs. It was further identified that by aligning the implementation of Quizlet within the foundation program, the vision of the program to produce graduates responsive to the changing needs of the labor market will be achieved. It is also noted that both globally and locally, the labor market targets graduates with effective technological skills.

It is envisaged that the findings from this research will allow for the identification of the most appropriate teaching strategy to proceed in teaching foundation programs aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Importantly, the data analysis and subsequent findings can be applied to tailor the prescribed curriculum of the foundation students to match student needs in using technological applications in the classrooms. In so doing, it would be possible to substantially improve the foundation program and its curricula. Therefore, this research undertaking was unique in the Omani context, as it aimed to improve Omani students’ English vocabulary and take into consideration the needs of labor and global markets pertaining to producing skillful graduates in technology. Lastly, the research finding identified the need for the Quizlet designers to improve its application through integrating more language skills when learning vocabulary so that vocabulary is learnt in an authentic context.

Acknowledgement

I would like to sincerely thank Mrs. Raeda Al-Hinai for her support and assistance during the stage of the data collection and part of the data analysis. She is now doing her Phd in Technology at Sydney University.

About the Author:

Dr. Al-Malki is an assistant professor working at Rustaq College of Education since 2007. She holds PhD from Griffith University, Australia in Education. Her interests are in the area of assessment, teaching strategies and integrating technology in classrooms. Currently, she is
teaching college-and school-based practicum courses, English language Teaching (ELT) courses and language skills for foundation students. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6712-2764

References


www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
child psychology and psychiatry, 17(2), 89-100.

### Appendices

A. List of Words (used in Quizlet)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Take tablets</th>
<th>18. Surprised (for people)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Take somebody</td>
<td>19. Surprising (for things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out for a meal</td>
<td>20. Annoyed (for people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Take care</td>
<td>21. Annoying (for things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Take a photo</td>
<td>22. Frightened (for people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Make a complaint</td>
<td>23. Frightening (for things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Make friends</td>
<td>24. Tired (for people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Make up your mind</td>
<td>25. Tiring (for things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Make a reservation</td>
<td>26. Interested (for people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Make sure</td>
<td>27. Interesting (for things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do me a favor</td>
<td>28. Bored (for people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do some shopping</td>
<td>29. Boring (for things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Do your homework</td>
<td>30. Excited (for people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do your best</td>
<td>31. Exciting (for things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Get back home</td>
<td>32. Worried (for people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Get angry</td>
<td>33. Worrying (for things)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Get cold</td>
<td>34. Discover a cure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Get on well with someone</td>
<td>35. Discover the truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36. Discover gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37. Discover DNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38. Make cars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39. Make a discovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40. Make a phone call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41. Make 1000$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42. Tell a story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43. Tell a lie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44. Tell a joke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45. Tell the truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46. Give advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47. Give a present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48. Give a lift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49. Give information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50. Lose the game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51. Lose money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52. Lose weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53. Lose the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54. Carry an umbrella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55. Carry passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56. Carry a gun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57. Carry a briefcase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58. Keep a diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59. Keep a secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60. Keep a promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61. Keep the peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62. Miss the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63. Miss the ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64. Miss the bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65. Miss school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Self-Reflection task

1) Did you like the session?
2) What best did you like about the session?
3) Did you understand the vocabulary without teacher's explanation?
4) Is Quizlet a good tool to learn vocabulary? Why?
5) What challenges (difficulties) have you faced during the session?
6) Any comments?

C. Interview questions

1) What have learnt from using Quizlet in learning vocabulary?
2) Can you tell me the good points you like about Quizlet?
3) Can you tell me what you did not like about Quizlet?
4) Any comments?
Investigating the Effectiveness of YouTube as a Learning Tool among EFL Students at Baghdad University

Nawal Fadhil Abbas
Department of English, College of Education for Women
University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq

Tabarek Ali Qassim
Department of English, College of Education for Women,
University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq
*corresponding author

Abstract
YouTube is not just a platform that individuals share, upload, comment on videos; teachers and educators can utilize it to the best maximum so that students can have benefits. This study aims at investigating how active and influential YouTube can be in the educational process and how it is beneficial for language teachers to enhance the skills of students. The study demonstrates different theoretical frameworks that tackle the employment of technology to enhance the learning/teaching process. It relies on the strategies of Berk (2009) for using multimedia media, video clips in particular to develop the abilities of teachers for using technology in classrooms. To achieve the objective of the study, the researchers develop a questionnaire and apply it to fourth-year college students, University of Baghdad, to give evidence and to prove the effectiveness of technology in the academic field. The paper examines classes where computers can be employed, and also shows the challenges that face teachers and educators concerning this application. The researchers conclude that YouTube is an essential tool in classrooms as it attracts the attention of students and develops their mentality and creativity. It also helps cover the materials comprehensively, especially language. YouTube brings the fun element into classes, which thereby meet the interests of students. Such findings have a significant impact on the learning process as the students will find the educational environment more encouraging and exciting. Besides, they find the material presented worth studying, and this way, they would appreciate the efforts exerted in explaining the information. The research intends to be of value to teachers for the use of technology and for students to have a better comprehension of the materials presented.

Keywords: E-learning, social media, YouTube, questionnaire, flipped classroom, EFL college students.

DOI:https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.23
Introduction

Burgess and Green (2009, p.1) state that “YouTube is a video repository, founded in February 2005 by three former employees of the eCommerce Business PayPal, in which users could upload, publish, and watch videos by streaming.” (Portugal, Arruda & Meneghello, 2018). Users can download, view, and share video clips on a wide variety of content. Such contents include film clips, television shows, music and instructional videos, blogs or video blogs, as well as amateur videos. YouTube has turned as social media when the videos are shared and when comments and other forms of interaction occur on the site (De Witt et al., 2013).

YouTube generates knowledge, mainly; it offers multimedia forms of education. Lindstorm (1994) finds out that the abilities of learners to recall and comprehend improve better when they have a full experience, that is, when they see, hear, and do. The comprehension level of a subject is higher than 75% when they see, hear, and produce materials during instruction, whereas it is 20% for learners who only understand during preparation, and 40% only is among those who see and hear. So, learning through using videos has been demonstrated to be influential in teaching activities by different scholars. Besides, Bunus (2010) and Greenhow and Robelia (2009) have manifested that social media is valid for the learning process. Higher levels of reasoning skills like decision making and problem-solving, and capabilities of communication and collaboration through social media have developed in learners (DeWitt et al., 2013). Such expertise connects to what they are learning in their classrooms. Therefore, it is possible to use social media in instruction. Focusing on the effect of YouTube videos and devise strategies improves knowledge by integrating them to improve the teaching-learning process (Gbolahan, 2017).

The present study investigates how active and influential YouTube can be in the educational process and how it is beneficial to language teachers to enhance skills of students in learning the English language. The research tries to answer the following questions: What is the effect of YouTube videos on students in classrooms? What are the strategies for utilizing YouTube in the educational environment? And what are the challenges of using technology in the developing countries, Iraq in particular? This paper focuses on instructional YouTube videos, not any other application. It reveals the obstacles to its employment in Iraq. The study sample constitutes 100 fourth-grade college students from the department of English, College of Education/Ibn Rushd, University of Baghdad.

Theoretical framework

Rice, Cullen, and Davis (2011) state that employing the Internet has a high impact on the educational process, especially when handling classes. Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) tackle the positive and negative implications of using modern technology in education. They state that positive side of technology is that it offers enhanced Teaching and learning through the use of computers, digital cameras, PowerPoint presentations, etc, which are now important sources that teachers use to assist their learners in understanding lessons quickly. Also, the visual explanation gives students an enjoyable, exciting, and interactive learning setting, so they participate more in the class activities. Globalization is another positive side of technology in that students can meet through videos their counterparts while sitting on their chairs. A website like www.glovico.com aids students to learn foreign languages online by joining groups of students and their teachers who are from other countries.

Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL Number 6. July 2020

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
For the negative impact of technology, they point out that technology results in declining the skills of writing because of too much usage of chatting and shortcuts available online. Recently, children increasingly depend on digital communication to the extent that they entirely ignore improving their writing skills. The results include the misspelling of different words, misuse of grammar rules, and lack of cursive writing. Another drawback of technology is the growing incidents of cheating by the use of equipments such as graphical calculators, high tech watches, mini cameras. Technology contributes to the lack of focus as students spend their time texting and playing with their cell phones during lectures.

Wu, Hou, Zhu, Zhang, and Peha (2002) investigate the effective use of videos, and offer recommendations, directions, and approaches to achieve the best benefit in education. Bonk (2009) points out that YouTube is an attractive social medium that adds to school in general. Duffy (2008) points out that there is an increasing interest by educators on YouTube for the teaching of foreign languages like English. YouTube offers fun, and it is fast. It is easy to access videos about different cultures in different styles worldwide (Almurashi, 2016).

Berk (2009) concentrates on the role that YouTube clips play in teaching a language in college classrooms. He comes up with 15 strategies for using videos in learning environments. Seilstad (2012) examines using YouTube videos as an innovative method for English language teaching in Morocco. He states that YouTube clips are just a simple way to make the teaching material related and specified. The results display the efficiency of using YouTube videos on achievement of students and personal reflection on their learning progress (Almurashi, 2016).

YouTube has a high potential for improving the learning skills of students. Fathallah (2007) claims that educational videos are educational situations recorded on the world wide web. Such videos involve real elements, and they teach specific goals. Videos on YouTube offer several services like uploading, downloading, watching, and sharing among individuals. Clips on YouTube are available anytime and anywhere, they have a high quality of showing contents, and they offer the potential of repeating, stopping, or completing at any other time. YouTube videos provide multimedia content as they engage visual and verbal material in them thus, they develop many educational skills. YouTube videos encourage group work activities through sharing the videos which add fun and meaning to the learning environment. Thus, YouTube helps to keep the material in the long-term memory (Ebied, Kahouf & Rahman, 2016). Farlinger and Owens (2009) states that technology and the Internet contribute considerably in the social and educational lives of students.

Portugal, Arruda, and Meneghello (2018) state that the central point of teaching and learning on YouTube is ‘interest,’ but it is different from other planned educational contexts in that both the learner and the ‘informal teacher’ display their free-choice to enter to the learning situation. Also, the voice-tone and expressions of the ‘informal teacher’ on the video are like what they teach; otherwise they do not need to do this. Thus, what makes YouTube different from school is that the latter gives choice for neither the teacher nor the learner about the curriculum to be taught or learned. Therefore, YouTube puts all the options concerning what to teach, what to learn,
when, where, how, etc.. The link is that school knowledge is determined previously, i.e., prior; whereas experience from YouTube is free and relies on the what the learner wishes to grasp.

Zahn, Krauskopf, Hesse, and Friedrich (2012) recommend the necessity of developing teacher skills in using technology through a mental frame of mind maps; this way, they can construct educational practices through YouTube. It appears that the employment of YouTube for educational purposes has turned as a priority in the learning process. Lastly, Procopio (2011) concludes that making students familiar with the use of YouTube as a learning tool shows high enthusiasm and interaction (Ebied et al., 2016). The present research attempts to bridge the gap concerning the lack of studies on how to better use technology in classrooms, especially in a country like Iraq, where the use of computers and the Internet is somehow not that easy.

### Challenges for YouTube Videos as Educational Innovations

Educational contexts can employ YouTube in teaching; Nevertheless, some authors have concerns about the security and validity of online videos. Kay (2012) maintains that videos involve positive attitudes, management of the learning process, enhancement of reading and study behavior, and the performance of students. Nevertheless, he outlines the disadvantages of using videos in learning. These are less class participation, referring to orthodox teaching, and technical problems. Recommendations made that future studies focus on providing empirical evidence on the influence of online video and new media in the learning process (Gbolahan, 2017).

Bonk (2008) reveals a few pitfalls regarding the technical side of showing a YouTube video. Sometimes, the videos on YouTube taken down without prior notice and restrictions on playing a video in a specific location. Thus, teachers should download these videos for offline playing. Besides, educators should know the policies of using YouTube like copyright and online content protocols because these are complicated, confusing, and hard to understand as they differ from one school board to another (Wilson, 2015).

Some authors find video sharing sites necessary, and YouTube clips are significant for practical, medical and clinical science, education, and research. They point out that videos on YouTube motivate student’s participation and compensate for their lack of interest in traditional classrooms. Despite the overt enthusiasm of employing technology for educational purposes, they warn against the potential that social media harms the student’s performance. Guo, Kim, and Rubin (2014) provide evidence that is empirical for the students attach to video materials as an addition to the pre-recorded classroom lectures. They examined the time that students spend in watching these videos to the assessment of the production. They recommend a guideline for the suitability of online videos for the producers and the teachers (Gbolahan, 2017).

Several academic institutions use YouTube to upload and share the course material on the Internet. Jafar (2012) mentions that 98% of students use YouTube as a resource of information, and 86% of them confirm that it helps their learning. Thus, the videos were a worthy instructional means. Concurrently, the number of users of innovative media has increased all over the world. The use of this innovation still restrict educational members, whether students or teachers. For instance, in the developing countries, there are challenges for the utility of technology in education. Kremer, Brannen, and Glennerster (2013) mention some of these problems, like diffusion of
technology, supplies of computers, and efficient use of ICT, requiring the availability of equipment and tools, pedagogy issues, accountability, access, and quality. Others state further issues like software licenses, training, maintenance issues, hardware and software costs, and learning material development. Liyanagunawardena, Williams, and Adams (2013) report challenge like low download speeds of Internet connections, language, and computer literacy. Some of the essential issues of educational technology include:

- A lack of understanding of user experiences.
- The problems of limited empirical evidence of the effect of new tools on student performance.
- An absence of the strategies and approaches that best fit using media in the learning process (Gbolahan, 2017).

Ebied et al. (2016) recommend that teachers should train to manage YouTube videos to make the learning process more productive. Also, universities need to activate web sites and share videos on YouTube as a teaching goal. The relationship between teachers and students should establish through an educational channel for the topic and content videos.

**Flipped Classroom**

It is an innovative way to join technology in classroom learning. Tucker (2012) highlights that a flipped classroom is where the instructional approach replaces the teacher generating videos and lessons where interaction takes place. Now, students follow the instructions at home, and receive them before the time of the class. Thus, the classroom is for working out the problems, and for proposing concepts. It is where interaction takes place collaboratively. Honeycutt and Garret (2014) describe a flipped classroom as an environment for learning in which the activities that conventionally completed as homework, now accomplished in classes during the lesson. This process refers to students watching a video of lectures recorded previous to classroom time. Another definition by Bishop and Verleger (2013) points out that the flipped classroom engages group learning activities in school with immediate computer-based individual instruction outside school (Wilson, 2015).

Flipped classrooms are of different types; some flip an entire class in all activities and lessons, and some flip a partial class with precise subjects and experiences. The applicability of such kinds depends on the preferences of the teacher and the students, and the technological resources available. Herreid and Schiller (2013) argue that flipped classrooms have become more appealing to classroom teachers because of the availability of Internet resources, videos in particular. The researchers concluded that teachers create an introductory video one night before the class and upload it on YouTube for students to watch. The teacher provides students with a set of questions to answer before the quality, and then the teacher upholds another video with more information in the course. It is not necessary that the teacher generates the videos him/herself or shares the content of someone else. Students prefer watching a video to reading the printed material when the teacher demands them to prepare homework. The researchers conclude that flipped classrooms provide a new model of teaching as it contains active instruction. Such classes take students at its center and its content directed to fix real-world problems (Wilson, 2015).
Johnson (2013), in his study, states some of the merits of flipped classrooms using videos for teaching. These include pace in the first place, and students can pause, rewind, or speed up the video as they wish. Flexibility is the second feature in that students can watch the learning videos wherever and whenever they like because these videos are available on the Internet. Lastly, communication is an aspect of attention in that it is videos, not any other Internet sources that allow teachers and students to engage interactively in discussions and activities. The results of that study show 84% of students find flipped classrooms more interactive than a traditional learning environment. It reports that 84% of students watch the assigned videos, and 57% like to view the videos, and 29% are neutral. Such findings indicate that students like to watch videos for educational purposes. Although 70% of students prefer traditional classrooms, there are positive attitudes for this method of teaching (Wilson, 2015).

Johnson (2013) also reveals some drawbacks of flipped classrooms. Some students have difficulty managing pace if they fall behind and keep self-mutilation to the task. There are several distractions for the students in using the Internet and YouTube. Some students find it challenging to initiate questions during the lesson, and others see the videos annoying. The findings of the study unfold that students do less homework in flipped classrooms and that students enjoy and benefit from the videos shared on YouTube. Using YouTube in flipped classrooms has excellent outcomes on the traditional learning process and can be influential and alternative to the current environment of teaching (Wilson, 2015).

**Strategies for Using YouTube Videos in Classrooms**

Berk (2009) offers twelve generic techniques for using video clips in teaching. First, video clips should provide content and data that is different from the information appropriate for the context. Second, they illustrate different concepts or principles like family relationships, anger management, etc. Third, YouTube videos present alternative viewpoints to develop the ability to reach decisions and convey compelling arguments. Fourth, they apply content to real-world applications for important matters like child abuse, rape, etc. Fifth, videos serve as a stimulus for learning activities. Playing the video, the teacher can ask students for their reaction in an open discussion, direct them to answer specific questions collaboratively, or ask specific questions about the content presented. Sixth, video clips provide a good or bad application to critique, like inaccurate interpretations offered by the media on different topics. Seventh, the videos can exaggerate a particular point on various issues like personality disorders, diplomacy, and political decision making, etc. Eighth, YouTube clips snap student's attention through inserting sound clips of comedy or inspiring and motivating videos to the class while covering any particular topic. Ninth, videos should be entered into collaborative learning exercises. The teacher can assign examples of practical applications, the students critique the performance and concept, and the video is the motive for the discussion. The students engage in an unforgettable learning experience, and of course, this has various characteristics and several benefits for the educational process. Tenth, YouTube videos should motivate and inspire students through viewing uplifting message videos. A short video clip may make a gigantic difference in their moods, motivation, and attitude, and it takes the pressures they experience away. Eleventh, the teacher can use videos as commercial breaks when students are restless for whatever reason. These breaks charge student’s energy and grab their attention back to the presentation of the material. Twelfth, the teacher can also employ videos to signal a return from a class break.
Berk (2009) also provides eight steps for using a video clip in teaching. These are the following:
1. The teacher picks a particular clip to provide the content or illustrate a concept or principle.
2. The teacher prepares specific guidelines for students or discussion questions, so as to have directions on what to see, hear, and search. What is the point of the clip? The teacher makes it clear to the students;
3. The teacher introduces the video briefly to reinforce a purpose;
4. The teacher plays the clip;
5. The teacher stops the clip at any scene to highlight a point or replay clip for a specific in-class exercise;
6. The teacher sets a time for reflection on what was the view;
7. The teacher assigns an active learning activity to interact on specific questions, issues, or concepts in the clip; and
8. The teacher structures a discussion around those questions in a small and large group formats.

Methodology

The researchers of the present study have developed a ten-item questionnaire applied to the fourth-year college students in the department of English, College of Education, Ibn Rushd in the University of Baghdad. Participants respond to each item as ‘agree,’ ‘disagree,’ or ‘neutral.’ The sample is limited to the students of the fourth stage because they have four years of study experience in the college. Also, they have a great time trying to get more understanding of the material presented to them through using the Internet, YouTube in particular. That is to say; they are more aware of the benefits of the technology they gain throughout their years of study. Besides, the researchers expect them to share their experience on how YouTube can affect their future career as teachers. The researchers conducted and applied the questionnaire electronically using the Telegram application. A vote was structured and distributed over a group of such students. This group includes 48 members, but only 26 students responded to the questionnaire. Thus, the study sample considered the 26 male and female students who answered the survey to evaluate the effective use of YouTube in their academic study. The researchers constructed the items of the poll based on the fact that YouTube can be influential for the educational environment and language learning. That is, such things are the most significant ones for the researchers to ask. Besides, they are supported and highlighted by others. The following points show the details and percentages of the questionnaire:

1) Learning through YouTube videos is interesting.
2) I understand what is presented on YouTube properly.
3) The use of YouTube represents a shift from a traditional to a flipped classroom.
4) Teachers must use YouTube in the classroom as a learning tool.
5) The perfect length of a video should not be more than 15-20 minutes.
6) It is preferable to take notes while watching a YouTube video.
7) YouTube can take the role of the teacher.
8) YouTube videos enhance language skills, especially speaking and listening.
9) YouTube videos presented by native speakers are better than those created by teachers.
10) YouTube videos are vital in developing grammatical patterns and building vocabulary.
Table 1. **Percentage of the responses to the questionnaire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researchers have not used a follow-up activity due to a lack of communication with the sample members and the difficulties expected to have students talk about their learning experience during COVID-19 global pandemic.

**Discussion**

The responses of students to item number one, “Learning through YouTube videos is interesting,” show that 41% of them agree that they enjoy learning through YouTube. It is quite interesting as they have fun experiencing it. About 38% of the participants give a neutral response to the use of videos as being impressive for classes, and 21% do not agree to this. Such difference in percentages indicates that it is still unusual for students to have their academic education done on YouTube. Such findings conform to that of Frdlinger and Owens (2009) in their study, which found that 93% of students feel the YouTube process is fascinating. Also, Almurashi (2016) supports this view through his interviews with language students. He concluded that the majority of his sample members feel happy and satisfied while watching YouTube videos. They like YouTube since it has audio and visual effects.

Concerning item number two, “I understand what is presented on YouTube properly,” the result showed that 43% of students agree that the materials are explained on video adequately, and the students fully comprehend them. Only 36% are neutral to this, and 21% disagree on the probability of gaining a complete understanding of the materials. Again, this conforms to the conclusions of Frdlinger and Owens (2009) that 95% of students report that they understood the content learned from the tutorials uploaded to YouTube.

For item number three, “The use of YouTube represents a shift from a traditional to a flipped classroom,” students' responses show that 50% agree to the change and 25% equally disagree and neutral. The point here is that students are hesitant about whether or not the video should carry the whole task of presenting materials with no instructions from the teacher. Wilson
(2015), in her findings, states that the individuals in her sample confirmed the change that some teachers seem passive in the whole process of teaching while in traditional, their explanation usually accompanies the videos. Both have an impact on students in one way or another.

For item number four, “teachers should use YouTube in the classroom as a learning tool,” 82% of the participants find it a must to employ YouTube videos as a tool for learning. Participants who disagree constitute only 7%, while those who have a neutral reaction are only 11%. The findings of the present study show a considerable interest in using YouTube in the classroom, unlike the results of Frdlinger and Owens (2009) that display only 73% of their participants are less interested. In this regard, most the respondents feel they would use the YouTube project in their classroom, while the other respondents state they would not use this methodology. Almurashi (2016) assures that technology can play a crucial role in improving the understanding of students. His results show that learners are eager to have technology like YouTube in the classroom to be more comfortable.

Responses to item number five, “The perfect length of a video should not be more than 15-20 minutes,” show that students agree the appropriate length of the video should be on a scale between 15-20 minutes; they constitute a percentage of 50%. The rest of students divide between 25% are neutral, and 25% do not agree to this time allocation. Relying on the questionnaire, it is not clear whether students have other suggestions to share, yet clearly, this does not work best for them. Such findings conform to the instructions of Berk guideline that the video should be appropriate in length so that students will not get bored.

Item number six, “It is preferable to take notes while watching a YouTube video,” displays that students confirm taking notes while a video is playing. It is that 81% of them do take notes by either pausing or rewinding the video for minutes. Only 8% of them do not take notes, and 11% are being neutral; they sometimes do take notes other times they do not. One more time, this conforms to Berk guideline that students should write down their observations.

Regarding item number seven, “YouTube can take the role of the teacher,” 62% of students agree to the possibility of using videos instead of the teacher in classes. Others at the rate of 15% disagree, and 23% are neutral. Such findings show concordance to Frdlinger and Owen (2009) that the professor is a guide on the side; he/she knows the subject material and gives good feedback.

As for item number eight, “YouTube videos enhance language skills especially speaking and listening.” 88% of the students agree that watching videos on YouTube can improve their language skills, speaking and listening in particular. Only 4% of the students do not agree with this; others are neutral 8%. Almurashi (2016) comes with similar rates and some past reviews, that YouTube is a useful tool that can build the knowledge of learners and help them improve their English fluency. Also, watching YouTube videos can help learners communicate and experience events in the videos.

Item number nine, “YouTube videos presented by native speakers are better than those created by teachers,” shows that 63% of students agree that watching YouTube videos of native speakers is more beneficial. Others 15% disagree with this, and 22% are neutral. Again, Almurashi
(2016) finds similar results in that watching official videos in the classroom can make the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful. Official YouTube videos can improve the comprehension of learners and elicit information. Additionally, it allows learners to understand the lesson in an effective and lively way. Also, YouTube videos can present the experience more realistically and comprehensively than traditional teaching methods.

Item number ten, “YouTube videos are vital in developing grammatical patterns and building vocabulary,” displays that 75% of students find YouTube videos significant in improving these two aspects of language. Only 11% do not agree, and 14% are neutral to this. Almurashi (2016) again emphasizes that there is a reasonable number of students who believe that YouTube videos can simplify lessons since it has audio and digital effects and make them more realistic and understandable. In addition, the audio-visual effects featured in YouTube videos can help learners to grasp the hidden meanings of some references and idioms in the English language and sources that are available in the library.

The point of the researchers through this study is to examine how effective YouTube videos can be to the students grasping of the material. The questionnaire items address this and find out the positive feelings and experiences that students have. Thus, these findings should be taken into account when applying technology to classrooms to enhance the teaching-learning process. Stating recommendations and suggestions is of priority to this research as it is a real attempt to lessen the challenges that hinder the Iraqi educational domain. As the results display, students find learning through YouTube interesting, informative, vital in improving language skills, and more flexible in dealing.

Conclusion

Teachers cannot leave YouTube outside the educational process as it offers all the advantages of having more beneficial and exciting teaching experience. YouTube videos should be simultaneously integral and a supplementary part of the learning process. Students find the use of YouTube videos enjoyable. Such videos increase the understanding of the academic materials, and improve the performances of the students. Students take the YouTube videos seriously by students as an educational tool since they are taking notes, and have a proper time length for the videos in their minds. Students have a strong motivation for using YouTube videos in classrooms to the extent that they confirm that it is a MUST. Besides, students do believe that YouTube videos enhance their language skills and aspects, especially that they hold a preference for videos created by native speakers. YouTube videos help students to approach the culture of the language under study through the authentic material presented. Thus, YouTube videos are vital for the educational process, and further studies should focus on improving them to serve more purposes.

Recommendations:
1. The educational system in Iraq must find solutions for the shortcomings of using technology in education.
2. Teachers and educators need to improve their skills in employing technology in the learning process.
3. Teachers need to be careful about what videos they should display to students; videos must be informative, appropriate, inspiring, and exciting.
4. Using YouTube should be taken as a MUST in classrooms as it attracts the attention of the students and meets their interests.
5. Students should be encouraged to use YouTube to improve their English language.

About the Authors:
Tabarek Ali Qassim is an M.A. student. She studies at the department of English, College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad. Her major is Linguistics. You can reach her at: tabarek269@gmail.com. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2924-639X.

Nawal Fadhil Abbas has a Ph.D. in English Language and Linguistics. Now she is an assistant professor teaching at the College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad. You can reach her publications at: Nawal F. Abbas - Google Scholar Citations. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2608-6909.

References:


The Effect of Using Padlet as a Vocabulary Knowledge Enhancement Application on Saudi EFL Female Learners, and their Attitudes toward its Value in Learning

Abbad M Alabbad
College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Hadeel Saad Bin Huwamel
College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Abstract
This study aimed to investigate the effects of using the digital learning tool Padlet to teach English vocabulary to Saudi females learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within the context of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Specifically, it examined the attitudes and thoughts of these females toward the application and the effectiveness of using it as a learning platform. The study was set out to answer two questions; the first question is “How effective is the application Padlet with regard to using a CLT approach to teach English vocabulary skills to Saudi female EFL learners?” while the second one is “What are users’ attitudes toward the online learning platform Padlet?”. The experiment was conducted for two weeks using Padlet. The population size was 50 Saudi females who were level-eight students at the English Language and Translation Department of Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. After inclusion criteria (i.e., the results of an English language placement test) were applied, 30 students were selected for the study; this was done to ensure that the group was homogenous with regard to the level of English skill. The remaining participants then took a pretest; subsequently, the researcher and subjects engaged in seven instruction sessions using Padlet, during which the researcher followed a Communicative Language Teaching approach to presenting English vocabulary. After the experiment was concluded, the participants were given a posttest identical to the pretest in order to assess their knowledge and compare their vocabularies before and after the instructions were provided. In addition, the participants responded to an online survey designed to measure their attitudes toward Padlet. The participants’ scores and mean scores were calculated using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS); specifically, a one-sample t-test and a paired sample t-test were conducted. The findings revealed that the vocabulary instructions given using Padlet were effective at improving the English lexical knowledge of learners. The survey also revealed that the learners’ attitudes toward the tool were positive. Finally, the results indicated that the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching through Padlet was crucial to developing the participants’ English vocabulary skills.

Keywords: Arab EFL, attitude, CLT, Collaborative Learning, Communicative Language Teaching, Computer-Assisted Language Learning, constructive learning, e-learning, English as a foreign language female learners, English vocabulary enhancement, Padlet, Saudi EFL, Saudi Female EFL

Introduction
The emergence of technology has impacted numerous domains of life and education is one of them. For example, technology has helped transform traditional teacher-centered approaches into new student-centered approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Sandholtz, Ringstaff & Dwyer, 1997). Technology has become necessary for such student-centered methods because it has facilitated learning processes and provided convenience and ease. Hence, language learning has evolved and grown beyond the boundaries of classroom walls (Yunus & Salehi, 2012).

Numerous recent studies have investigated the roles of new technologies in language teaching; these studies have found that such developments encourage creativity and improve motivation (Ilter, 2009). Indeed, “educational technology has been found to have positive effects on student attitudes toward learning and on student self-concept. Students felt more successful in school, more motivated to learn, and had increased self-confidence and self-esteem when using computer-based instruction” (Sivin-Kachala, Bialo, & Langford, 2000, p. 5). Technology has also helped students develop language knowledge independently and become more responsible with regard to their learning. In addition, technology has increased student motivation and enabled students to learn successfully; teachers have facilitated this by offering students numerous new learning opportunities.

These opportunities include various web 2.0 sites and tools, such as wikis, social networking platforms (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), blogs (e.g., WordPress), video sites (e.g., YouTube), and other websites that provide educational, social, and business content (e.g., Wikipedia and Weebly); these tools have now become widespread (Parkison & Thomas, 2018). Moreover, according to McCarthy (2010), these tools and websites have begun to provide virtual online environments to help people collaborate, communicate, and share insights with others, and combinations of these tools in EFL learning are crucial parts of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Further, such combinations have received significant attention in language research, as they have advanced the development of language technology (Egbert, Paulus, & Nakamichi, 2002; Hubbard, 2008).

Several researchers have found that CALL offers numerous advantages to learning; one of CALL’s core attributes is its focus on the learner-centered approach (Dina & Ciornei, 2013; Hani, 2014; Lai & Kritsonis, 2006). Farrah and Tushyeh (2010) noted that this approach is significant because it results in the creation of enjoyable, meaningful, motivational, and anxiety-free settings that increase learners’ self-confidence and encourages students to learn independently. Further, the researchers noted that an integral facet of CALL is Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)—that is, communication conducted through the use of a computer. It has been found that CMC is an easy method of participation in communication regardless of participants’ times and geographical locations (Bansal et al., 2012). The method creates enthusiastic students who are confident in their learning abilities and provides learners with equal opportunities to participate, which is unlike in-person interactions (Warschauer, 1995; Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter, 2007).

CLT is a widely adopted approach for language teaching that can be applied to CMC and CALL environments. According to Sekiziyivu and Mugimu (2017), “CLT is based on the concept of communicative competence by which learners are expected to possess the ability to understand...
a language and be able to use it for the purposes of effective communication” (p. 8). The main purpose of learning a second language is to communicate effectively in real-life situations; therefore, CLT focuses on presenting learners with situations that closely resemble those found in real life (Lee, 2002). Hence, CLT involves learners in the active production of language by providing tasks and activities that imitate the authentic use of language.

Moreover, learning a second language demands the interaction of the four language skills for effective communication: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Rivers, 1987). Vocabulary has been regarded as an integral part of these skills. It has been noted that communication relies significantly on vocabulary and meaningful communication cannot take place without adequate vocabulary; therefore, vocabulary shapes the aspect of creating meaning in languages (Huyen & Nga, 2003).

Therefore, given the importance of vocabulary with regard to communication and second language learning, this study aimed to develop students’ vocabulary knowledge. This was done by investigating the use of CLT through Padlet (Version 113.0, Wallwisher, Inc, San Francisco, CA 94103), an online learning platform. Padlet has numerous distinctive learning features, such as uploading items, sharing links, and commenting on and replying to posts. Thus, it can assist students with learning meaningful communication by providing real-time online collaborative environments (Dewitt, Alias, & Siraj, 2015). The following section examines previous studies on second-language learning; the importance of vocabulary, teaching, and technology; and an evaluation of using Padlet.

Research Questions
Two questions guided this study. The first was “How effective is the application Padlet with regard to using a CLT approach to teach English vocabulary skills to Saudi female EFL learners?” The second was “What are users’ attitudes toward the online learning platform Padlet?”

Literature Review
Approaches to Second Language Teaching
The practice of teaching a second or foreign language is an established concept (Musumeci, 2009) that has been documented for decades. However, it is important to distinguish between language acquisition and language learning. Among the things that had a great impact in the field of research is what was mentioned by Krashen (1981) stating that “adults have two independent systems for developing ability in second languages, subconscious language acquisition and conscious language learning.” (p. 1). He mainly described language acquisition as a subconscious process and noted that people acquiring a language are not aware that they are doing so; rather, they are aware only of their usage of the language. In contrast, language learning is a conscious process with regard to knowledge and awareness; learners know the rules of the language they are learning and are able to discuss them (Krashen, 1981). Which indeed had many valuable effects on research in language acquisition and learning.

Foreign language learning has been ascribed great importance (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Due to this importance, numerous methods and approaches to language teaching have been developed. One of the first approaches was the grammar-translation method, which was introduced
by Karl Plotz, who lived from 1819 to 1881 (McLelland, 2017). This method is used rarely today; a large number of researchers have criticized it for emphasizing only specific areas and for neglecting numerous skills required for appropriate foreign language learning (Zhou & Niu, 2015). During the 1970s, CLT was introduced to address these shortcomings in addition to those of a number of other approaches (Littlewood & William, 1981). According to Abebe, Davidson, & Biru (2012), CLT became one of the most prominent and frequently used methods in classrooms and it is used widely today. The method relies upon and prioritizes interactive communication during the learning process, and aims to “make communicative competence the goal of language teaching” (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 155). The characteristics of this approach include a focus on learning and an aim to utilize real and meaningful communicative interactions in classroom activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). An interesting point raised by Larsen-Freeman (2000) indicates that this method emphasizes communication fluency and considers the learning process a creative construction that comprises trials and errors. Further, one of the method’s core features is that it encourages students to practice multiple language skills simultaneously (Johnson & Johnson, 1998). Among the important aspects discussed in many studies, it has been found that CLT is effective in supporting the development of competencies associated with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and confidence regarding interactions in the target language among learners (Abebe et al., 2012; Hu, 2010; Kavanagh, 2012), which was an important addition to the field of language learning.

The Importance of Learning Vocabulary
According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2020), vocabulary is “all the words that exist in a particular language or subject” (para. 1) Further, vocabulary—in addition to other language skills, such as grammar, reading, and writing—can be taught and learned using various teaching methods. The importance of using such methods to build vocabulary and develop language skills has been noted by numerous researchers (Alqahtani, 2015; Hong, 2010; Jabar & Ali, 2016; Nation, 2003; Schmitt, 2000). Schmitt (2000) stressed on vocabulary as a critical skill most EFL students need: “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language.” (p. 55). In other words, there is a direct relationship between lexical knowledge and language use (Nation, 2003). The more a learner uses a language, the more likely it is that the learner will gain lexical knowledge; it is this vocabulary competence that facilitates language use. Hence, there have been a number of studies emphasized the importance of learning vocabulary and described it as fundamental to second language learning (Alqahtani, 2015; Ghazal, 2007; Hong, 2010). Nation (2003) has noted that lexical awareness—that is, knowledge of vocabulary—can greatly impact all areas and skills regarding a language because it can help learners read, write, and speak the language, among other things. Additionally, amongst many researchers, (Dakhi & Fitria, 2019) mention that vocabulary “is the heart of language skills. More importantly, it appears to function as a basis for communication.” (p. 23). Thus, as Yang and Dai (2011) found that “It is clear that a learner who is constantly adding to his vocabulary knowledge is better prepared both for productive and receptive language skills.” (p. 64). Moreover, “there is not much value in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one does not have the vocabulary that is required to convey what one wishes to say… without grammar, very little can be conveyed and without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.” (Wilkins, 1972, p. 97). However, vocabulary skills can be taught utilizing a CLT approach. According to Wu
(2009), teachers who have mastered the spirits and principles of CLT can help their students enlarge, enhance, and develop their vocabulary knowledge and abilities. Another view by Brown (2007), points to the idea that a CLT approach to vocabulary can offer learners interactive student-centered environments that facilitate vocabulary building and real-world meaningful communication, which corroborate the objectives of the current study.

**The Emergence of Technology in Teaching**

It has been noted that a digital revolution has begun; this revolution has impacted a large number of people worldwide (Collins & Halverson, 2018). Consequently, numerous aspects of daily life have evolved (Delgado, Wardlow, McKnight, & O’Malley, 2015). For example, according to Clements (1998), children around the world are surrounded by technology, and as Delgado et al. (2015) noted, young children and teenagers interact with and are influenced by media on a daily basis.

Two decades ago, Strommen and Lincoln (1992) stated that researchers predicted a generation of children that would be accustomed to multidimensional media sources and would have views of the world that are completely different from those of previous generations. Indeed, as Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts (2010) stated, “over the past five years, there has been a huge increase in media use among young people.” (p. 2). As technology has been normalized in daily life, it has been integrated into language learning as well. Technological advancements have assisted teachers in classrooms by providing increasing opportunities for students to directly interact with different technologies. Indeed, Saidin, Halim, & Yahaya (2015) expressed that education has been significantly influenced by technology and this has motivated students and teachers to instruct and learn by employing dynamic learning processes.

However, there a few challenges associated with these changes; teachers require certain proficiencies in order to use technology meaningfully, effectively, and successfully (Sadik, 2008). Despite this, numerous researchers have found a strong correlation between the use of technology and increased student engagement and academic achievement (Rashid & Asghar, 2016; Sahin & Yilmaz, 2020). They have also noted that technology can be an effective tool for the development of language learning and critical thinking skills and can lead to academic achievements; for example, the use of podcasts can help learners improve their pronunciation skills (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009; Morin, Thomas, & Saadé, 2012).

**Enhancing Academic Achievements with Technology**

As Spinath (2012) mentioned, “academic achievement refers to performance outcomes in intellectual domains taught at school, college, and university.” (p. 1). In a study that used a smartphone application to test student engagement, Pechenkina, Laurence, Oates, Eldridge, & Hunter (2017) concluded that there was a strong relationship between improvements in students’ academic achievements and their use of the application; scoring highly in the application helped students and, in turn, influenced their overall performance. Similarly, in a study that utilized the same methodology to teach mathematics, improvements in student performance correlated with the use of mathematical applications (Zhang, Trussell, Gallegos, & Asam, 2015). A similar standpoint was emphasized by Outhwaite, Faulder, Gulliford, & Pitchford (2019) who conducted a study with almost 400 children from the United Kingdom; interactive math applications were
employed and their impacts on student performance were measured. The researchers found that the use of applications in conjunction with regular math lessons improved student achievement; mathematical gains were considerably higher for students exposed to interactive applications (Outhwaite et al., 2019).

Thus, due to the widespread use of smartphones worldwide, numerous educational institutions have begun to use these devices. Consequently, teachers have begun to rely on technologies with increasing frequency, and the effectiveness of using technology within classrooms has received academic attention (Olsen & Chernobilsky, 2016). Olsen and Chernobilsky (2016) studied the impacts of technologies on students’ motivation and mathematical achievements; using pretests, posttests, questionnaires, and other tools, they found that students’ scores and motivation increase with the use of technology. Thus, researchers have encouraged teachers to identify new technological materials to use during instruction to improve the learning experiences of students. Similarly, a few researchers have recommended the use of video games and the internet to improve academic performance and achievements; one study demonstrated that students who used the internet more often than other students had better reading skills than their peers (Jackson, Von Eye, Witt, Zhao & Fitzgerald, 2011).

**Using Padlet as a Teaching Tool**

Padlet (https://www.padlet.com) is a “free web-based application that provides a wall that allows to post words, pictures, and even videos, which can be viewed by anyone with link or address to the specific wall” (Rashid, Yunus, & Wahi, 2019, p. 613). Different researchers have demonstrated that such online interactive tools have become more popular with the development of web 2.0 applications, which positively influence student learning (Matias & Wolf, 2013; Rahimi, van den Berg & Veen, 2014; Uzunboylu, Bicen, & Cavus, 2011). As Fisher (2017) argued, Padlet can improve student learning; it replaces the traditional use of whiteboards to share and store information; enables students to interact with each other and with teachers, ask questions, and request feedback; and can be used by teachers for activities during and after classes, such as summarizing and applying key points to lessons. In addition, the research has demonstrated that the application strengthens teacher-student relations, encourages and motivates students, and offers effortless and continuous communication. Fuchs (2014) puts forward an interesting argument for Padlet, in which he confirms that the application is can “encourage real-time, whole class participation and assessment.” (p. 7). Moreover, Padlet is very simple and easy to use. Hence, Fisher (2017) encouraged teachers and students to use Padlet, as it supports their participation and engagement with one another both within and outside the classroom with ease. Also, a very good contribution to the argument of Padlet’s effectiveness and impact is what was mentioned by (Zainuddin, Azmi, Yusoff, Shariff & Hassan, 2020) and was supported by their study, as they state “The use of Padlet could help to enhance students’ comprehension in topics studied. Therefore, the use of more learning software should be encouraged and further developed to achieve more successful learning and teaching process.” (p. 56).

Due to these benefits, numerous surveys of attitudes toward Padlet have found positive views of the application, and researchers found that utilizing Padlet in the sphere of education increases student interest and motivation (Awaludin & Karim, 2017; Haris, Yunus, & Badusah, 2017; Saepuloh & Salsabila, 2020; Toti, 2018). Lestari and Kurniawan (2018) conducted a study...
that aimed to investigate the effectiveness of Padlet with regard to improving students’ mastery over writing; the researchers designed their experiment in two phases and each phase included observations of student “planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting.” (p. 184). They concluded that the implementation of Padlet improved students’ writing skills.

Similarly, Algraini (2014) measured the effectiveness of Padlet with regard to enhancing the writing performance of Saudi females; 24 students participated in the study and were assigned to either an experimental group or a control group. The experimental group received intensive academic writing instruction using Padlet, while the control group did not; the results indicated that Padlet was a very effective teaching tool. Indeed, the data showed a noticeable improvement in the writing skills of the experimental group (Algraini, 2014). Kleinsmith (2017) also examined the effectiveness of Padlet; specifically, improvements in engagement and academic achievement among fifth-grade math students were measured. The study used a single-subject methodology that included different testing phases. The academic achievements of students were evaluated using daily assessments and the students’ engagement was evaluated at daily intervals. It was concluded that Padlet led to an “increase the weekly mean engagement score[s of four] out of [six] students” (p. 5) and was helpful with regard to improving students’ engagement and academic achievement rates (Kleinsmith, 2017).

Further, Nurviyani (2018) investigated the effectiveness of the application at enhancing the critical reading skills of college students. The researcher conducted a study that used two phases and a sample size of 25 students. Different methods were used to collect data, such as reading tests, questionnaires, and classroom observations. It was found that “over 80% of the students reached the learning outcome in critical reading” (p. 66) and there was a significant improvement in the skills of almost all the participants. Thus, the researcher recommended the implementation of Padlet considering its efficiency (Nurviyani, 2018).

Similarly, a study on the effectiveness of Padlet for tenth-grade writing students was conducted by Ismawardani and Sulistyanto (2019). The researchers used a quasi-experimental design with posttests and two participant groups: control and experimental. While the experimental group received instruction through Padlet, the control group was taught traditionally—that is, without the use of any media. After testing both groups, the results revealed that the experimental group had higher scores than the control group. Consequently, the researchers confirmed the effectiveness of using Padlet to teach writing. Finally, with regard to Padlet’s efficacy in teaching English grammar to ESL learners, Haris et al. (2017) implemented pretests and posttests to measure the achievements of 30 university students; their findings indicated significant improvements in learners’ grammar performance.

Thus, Padlet can be a helpful tool for approaching teaching from a CLT perspective; indeed, it provides students with access to classmates’ replies and answers; thus, it is a setting that facilitates peer-to-peer learning and self-assessments (Rashid, 2015). Creating a student-centered environment in which learners’ ideas and opinions are expressed, cooperative learning among students is encouraged, and opportunities for learners to listen and speak are provided are crucial to CLT learning, and this is what the current study aims to investigate. Padlet offers precisely such an environment to teachers and students (Mahmud, 2019); it provides students with opportunities to think, correct mistakes, and learn from instructors and peers and can, therefore, help instructors...
The Effect of Using Padlet as a Vocabulary Knowledge

Alabbad & Bin Huwamel

The Effect of Using Padlet as a Vocabulary Knowledge within a CLT framework. Indeed, Padlet is an effective tool for incorporating numerous aspects of CLT (Ab Hamid, Rosli & Yunus, 2019; Awaludin & Karim, 2017). However, despite this knowledge, further research on Padlet can provide additional perspectives regarding its application in EFL learning and can confirm the findings of previous studies; one means by which this can be done is by investigating the use of Padlet within communicative language teaching settings.

Materials and Methods
Participants
The study took place at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Potential participants were informed of the experiment on Whatsapp, the social messaging platform; due to the online nature of the experiment, this platform was selected to establish the initial communication between the researcher and the participants. Thus, the study’s participants comprised 50 female students who were learning EFL and were level-eight students at the English Language and Translation Department of the University. The average age of the participants was 22 years and they were Arabic native speakers, and they all willingly agreed to participate in the study.

Subsequently, inclusion criteria were applied; that is, all the students were asked to take an online English placement test, which can be found at http://englishenglish.com/englishtest.htm. This was done to ensure that the participants were similar with regard to their English language skills and that a homogenous group of participants was used for the study. After the results of the test were considered, 30 out of the 50 students were included as participants. Thus, approximately 60% of the study’s population was selected to participate. A group chat that comprised the 30 participants was created on WhatsApp to inform them of the instructions of the experiment and obtain approvals. In addition, in order to encourage participation, students were offered motivational incentives once the experiment was concluded.

Materials
Padlet
The current study used Padlet as a teaching and learning instrument as well as a communication method between the researcher and the participants. It was used primarily to present the experiment’s materials to the students.

English Online Pretest and Posttest
A standardized vocabulary test was designed on Google Forms using vocabulary items adopted from a preliminary English test; this preliminary test was developed by Cambridge English (Appendix B). The resulting vocabulary test was used as a pretest to measure the prior vocabulary knowledge of the participants; moreover, it was used as a posttest to determine the participants’ knowledge at the conclusion of the experiment and to compare results. The test comprised 23 multiple-choice questions; for each question, the participants were asked to carefully read a description and select the correct vocabulary item that corresponded to the question.

English Online Questionnaire
An online questionnaire by Dewitt et al. (2015) was adapted for this study in order to collect...
feedback from the participants regarding their learning experiences during the two weeks (Appendix C). Specifically, this was done to determine whether the participants considered Padlet as a motivating and useful tool in learning. The questionnaire was in a Likert-scale format and was created using Google Forms and included at the end of the experiment.

It is important to note that numerous researchers have stated that using an online survey for research provides certain advantages (Wright, 2005). Such questionnaires save researchers time, as written surveys require researchers to physically distribute and collect the surveys and manually enter data for analysis. In contrast, online surveys enable researchers to collect data while working on other tasks and provide researchers with the opportunity to export their collected data into different statistical programs for analyses (Llieva, Baron & Healy, 2002). In addition, online surveys provide the advantage of cost-efficiency—sharing a link to a survey costs less money than printing multiple sheets of paper (Yun & Trumbo, 2000).

**Vocabulary**

110 English vocabulary items were selected from the book Vocabulary Power 2 (Dingle & Lebedev, 2007) for vocabulary instruction. The vocabulary items included nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Thereafter, the words were presented to the students over WhatsApp prior to the experiment. They were asked to indicate which vocabulary items they were familiar with and which ones they were unfamiliar with. Only unknown words were used for the experiment, and known items were excluded. A total of 70 words were noted as novel and were, therefore, taught and presented to the participants (Appendix A).

**Statistical Analyses**

SPSS was used to analyze the data by conducting a one-sample t-test. This was done to measure the dependent variables (the pretest and posttest scores) in relation to the independent variables (each student). Subsequently, a paired sample t-test was used to compare the differences between the two variables.

**Method**

This study aimed to answer the research questions quantitatively; thus, the collection and analysis of data was conducted using an experimental research design. Numerous researchers stated that one of the most suitable ways to answer questions regarding language teaching and learning is through the implementation of an experiment (e.g., Brown & Rodgers, 2002). Further, in experimental research on language and education, an attempt is made to build theories that explain the mental processes underlying language and literacy learning, the individual differences that go along with these processes, and the outcomes of differential treatments intended to stimulate such processes (Verhoeven, 1997).

Specifically, a pretest was applied before the instruction on Padlet began. Instructions were provided both in English and Arabic (when needed). At the end of the sessions, the participants took a posttest and as well as answered the online questionnaire. The experimental design involved the utilization of a CLT approach to provide English vocabulary instruction to EFL students. Using Padlet, over the course of two weeks, the participants and the researcher engaged in seven teaching and learning sessions; each session lasted approximately 20–30 mins. As CLT was implemented
as a method of instruction, it was used to stimulate the communicative consciousness of the participants to elicit a creative and authentic use of language. For example, it involved activities such as describing a vocabulary item in a short story, describing what they see in pictures and providing their opinion regarding certain words that they were introduced to. During each session, the researcher presented the students with 10 new vocabulary items, and the participants were expected to learn the meaning of each word as well as its part of speech and how it could be used within a sentence. The entire teaching process of the 70 selected new English words used Padlet. Subsequently, the researcher used SPSS to analyze the collected data by conducting both one-sample and paired sample t-tests.

Results and Discussion

One-Sample t-Test
As noted earlier, the participants were administered a pretest and posttest at the beginning and at the end of the experiment, respectively, in order to measure the subjects’ knowledge of the targeted English vocabulary items. One sample t-test was applied to determine statistical differences between the participants regarding the tests. These results of the pretest and posttest data and their means and standard deviations (SDs) are presented in Table one below.

Table 1. Pretest and posttest data and the results of the One-Sample t-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretest and Posttest Data</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean score (out of 23)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Standard error mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18.5333</td>
<td>2.63574</td>
<td>0.48122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20.5333</td>
<td>1.67607</td>
<td>0.30601</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Results of the One-Sample t-Test*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The test value was 23.

The results revealed that the pretest had a mean of 18.5 and a SD of 2.6, and the posttest had a mean of 20.5 and a SD of 1.6. Further, with regard to vocabulary knowledge, the results indicated that the Padlet vocabulary instruction was effective at improving the participants’ English lexical knowledge; \( t(8) \) was 29 and \( p \) was less than or equal to 0.000.

Paired Sample t-Test
As previously stated, a paired sample t-test was conducted in order to investigate differences between the variables; that is, the test was conducted to measure the effectiveness of using Padlet to improve the students’ English vocabulary by comparing the pretest and posttest results. Table two below presents the results of the paired sample t-test.
Table 2. *The results of the Paired Sample t-Test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Sample Statistics</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean score (out of 23)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Standard error mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20.5333</td>
<td>1.67607</td>
<td>0.30601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18.5333</td>
<td>2.63574</td>
<td>0.48122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Standard error rate</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p (two tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest and posttest</td>
<td>2.00000</td>
<td>1.64002</td>
<td>0.29942</td>
<td>6.679</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These statistical data show a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The pretest had a mean of 18.5 and a SD of 2.6, and the posttest had a mean of 20.5 and a SD of 1.6; $t(6.6)$ was 29 while $p$ was less than or equal to 0.000. These findings indicated that using Padlet within the CLT approach settings had a positive impact on learners’ vocabulary learning outcomes.

**Attitudes toward Padlet**

Table three below presents the descriptive statistics for the Likert-scale questionnaire. It shows the percentage of students who selected each answer to the online survey questions with regard to how they felt about the application.

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics for the Likert-scale questionnaire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 I like to see my friends’ comments on Padlet</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Padlet enables me to share ideas with my friends</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 I developed new ideas from the activities on Padlet</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 I learned new concepts from others’ posts on Padlet</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I learned through collaborative learning with Padlet</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 The materials posted on Padlet were clear</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 The materials posted on Padlet were useful</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 The activities on Padlet were challenging</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A statistical analysis of these results revealed that approximately 80% of the participants enjoyed seeing their peers’ comments in the application and found the materials presented to be useful. Further, 73.3% of respondents found the materials clear as well as learned new concepts from their peers’ posts. Further, 80% of the respondents believed that Padlet enabled them to share their ideas with their peers and helped them develop new ideas using the activities presented. Finally, 60% of the participants did not find the activities challenging.

Discussion
As previously explained, the primary aim of this study was to investigate whether Padlet had a positive impact on enabling students to develop vocabulary skills and examine the students’ attitudes toward the application. While comparing the mean pretest and posttest scores for the group, it appears that there is a clear difference; the majority of the students scored higher on the posttest than on the pretest. Indeed, the students’ average score on the pretest was 18.5 out of 23, with a standard error mean of 0.48; this implies that from among 23 questions, the students answered an average of 4.4 questions incorrectly. After the experiment, the results showed a decrease in errors, with a standard error mean of 0.3 and an average score of 20.5 out of 23; this implies that out of 23 questions, the students answered an average of only 2.4 questions incorrectly. Further, the survey results revealed positive feedback on Padlet from the learners’ perspective—that is, a majority of the participants found it helpful, easy, and fun. Thus, the use of Padlet positively influenced participants’ vocabulary knowledge and was perceived positively by the learners; these results provided clear evidence for answering the study’s research questions.

Further, the findings supported the use of technology—that is, mobile and tablet applications and interactive websites, which is in line with Olsen and Chernobilsky (2016). In particular, Padlet, can truly be an effective tool in education; in the context of the current study, it helped to improve students’ vocabulary performance. This finding is an agreement with another study which examined the effective usage of Padlet in learning vocabulary (Ab Hamid et al., 2019). It provided the participants with equal opportunities to improve their knowledge and gain confidence regarding their communicative abilities. Padlet also offered an environment in which the students could view others’ responses; therefore, it enabled them to practice peer learning and self-assessment, as discussed by Rashid (2015). In addition, Padlet enabled the participants to be independent from the researcher during the study. The participants often replied to their peers’ comments and attempted to correct their peers’ mistakes; this led them to improve their knowledge in a collaborative manner, without interference from the researcher.

With regard to the motivation, the researcher noted seriousness among the learners regarding the learning process. The participants were always punctual for sessions, were regularly active in discussions, and were confident in their posts, views, and ideas. Indeed, based on the results of the online questionnaire and the researcher’s observations, the majority of the participants expressed their positive attitudes toward the platform, which confirms the results of a similar study conducted by Ab Hamid et al. (2019). Further, a large number of participants even mentioned that they found it an acceptable replacement for actual classrooms.

The results obviously showed that Padlet was an effective tool for learning vocabulary within the CLT environment and learner-centered settings, which is consistent with the findings of previous studies in this topic such as Lestari and Kurniawan (2018), Algraini (2014), Zainuddin.
et al. (2020), and Saepuloh and Salsabila (2020). In addition other researchers (e.g., Awaludin & Karim, 2017; Haris et al., 2017; Toti, 2018) also described it as an effective tool with a significant role in improving students’ language skills as well as contributing to their positive attitudes. Therefore, it is fair to say that the language performance of EFL learners—particularly their vocabulary skills—could be enhanced through the implementation of Padlet as an instance of a vocabulary learning smart application, particularly with the realization that the goal of language is to connect and establish effective communication in the target language and that vocabulary is the main tool for doing so (Brown, 2007).

Conclusion
This study aimed to investigate attitudes toward and the effectiveness of using Padlet to improve the English vocabulary skills of female Saudi EFL students; specifically, it investigated this in the context of female students at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The study examined how Padlet could be utilized as part of the CLT approaches to teach English vocabulary to EFL learners. The study demonstrates that the application significantly contributed to the participants’ vocabulary knowledge enhancement; this was supported by the statistical results of a comparison between pretest and posttest scores. Indeed, Padlet helped the majority of the participants familiarize themselves with new lexical items and become aware of their vocabulary usage. Subsequently, results of the experiment offered considerable insight on how similar smart applications could have positive effects on participants’ vocabulary knowledge acquisition. Evident decrease in error rates noted by the tests results, as many participants improved their vocabulary skills and gained new lexical items. Further, in support of the use of technology, results show that Padlet can be regarded as an influential tool in education as well as a enjoyable method of learning for students. The results of two together, the surveys and observations confirmed the participants’ positive attitudes towards using the application in learning. As already reported that vocabulary words were crucial to establishing meaningful communication using a specific language (Schmitt, 2000), the findings of this study suggest that smart applications like Padlet could possibly be viewed among the effective learning tools to enhance English language vocabulary skills beyond the classroom context.

About the authors:
Dr. Abbad M Alabbad is an assistant professor at the School of Languages and Translation, King Saud University (KSU) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Alabbad studied his master’s degree in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in West Virginia University, USA, then completed his PhD studies in Computer Assisted Language at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. His main research interests are in CALL, WALL, and discourse analysis. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1360-5821

Hadeel Saad Bin Huwamel is a master’s graduate from the School of Languages and Translation, KSU in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She obtained her BA in English Languages and Translation at Imam Muhammad Bin Saud University. Afterwards, she started her studies in Theoretical Linguistics at KSU. Among many fields of interest to Bin Huwamel are CALL, TEFL, and SLA. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9327-7628
References


### Appendix

#### Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Vocabulary Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absence: The state of not being present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve: Succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration: Organization and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement: Public promotion of a product or service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid: Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art: The creation of beautiful or significant things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate: Connect with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behave: Do things in a particular way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define: Explain a meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frost: Ice crystals that form a white deposit, especially on objects outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odd: Strange</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DVD: Digital recording (e.g., a movie) on an optical disk that can be played on a computer or a television set</th>
<th>Electric: Using, providing, transmitting, or operating using electricity</th>
<th>Excessive: Much more than is necessary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joke: Humorous anecdote or remark intended to provoke laughter</td>
<td>Library: Building that houses a collection of books and other materials</td>
<td>License: Official document the permits something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palace: Large and stately mansion</td>
<td>Pale: Light in color</td>
<td>Park: Piece of open land for recreational use in an urban area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclude: Prevent</th>
<th>Expert: Person with special skills or knowledge</th>
<th>Forecast: Prediction about how something (e.g., the weather) will develop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major: Large or important</td>
<td>Notice: Announcement containing information about an event</td>
<td>Occur: Happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty: State of being poor</td>
<td>Profit: Money received</td>
<td>Qualify: Prove capable or fit; meet requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quiz: Examination consisting of a few short questions</th>
<th>Restrict: Limit</th>
<th>Sting: Give sharp pain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rain: Water that falls in drops from vapor condensed in the atmosphere</td>
<td>Sacrifice: Give up something you value</td>
<td>Strike: Hit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region: Part of a state or country</th>
<th>Subject: Branch of knowledge</th>
<th>Region: Part of a state or country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slight: Not serious or important</td>
<td>Underground: Electric railway operating below the surface of the ground (usually in a city)</td>
<td>Struggle: Deal with a difficult situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urge: Strongly advise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Define: Explain a meaning

Dictionary: Reference book containing an alphabetical list of words with information about them

Distinguish: See a difference

DVD: Digital recording (e.g., a movie) on an optical disk that can be played on a computer or a television set

Electric: Using, providing, transmitting, or operating using electricity

Excessive: Much more than is necessary

Exclude: Prevent

Expert: Person with special skills or knowledge

Forecast: Prediction about how something (e.g., the weather) will develop

Quantity: Amount

Relate: Show a connection

Stadium: Large structure for open-air sports or entertainment

Quiz: Examination consisting of a few short questions

Rain: Water that falls in drops from vapor condensed in the atmosphere

Region: Part of a state or country

Subject: Branch of knowledge

Underground: Electric railway operating below the surface of the ground (usually in a city)
The Effect of Using Padlet as a Vocabulary Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretest/Posttest</th>
<th>Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A machine for performing calculations automatically:</td>
<td>Television, Heating, Computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Be in verbal contact; exchange information or ideas:</td>
<td>Interpret, Message, Communicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A humorous anecdote or remark intended to provoke laughter:</td>
<td>Joke, Chat, Ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Water that falls in drops from vapor condensed in the atmosphere:</td>
<td>Dry, Temperature, Rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. An announcement containing information about an event:</td>
<td>Break, Notice, Essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A recording of both visual and audio components (especially a movie or television program):</td>
<td>Video, Mobile phone, Electricity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A building that houses a collection of books and other materials:</td>
<td>Library, Cathedral, Police station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A reference book containing an alphabetical list of words with information about them:</td>
<td>Dictionary, IT, Educate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. A utensil for cooking:</td>
<td>Cooker, Telephone, Clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. A large structure for open-air sports or entertainment:</td>
<td>Cinema, Stadium, Prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. A branch of knowledge:</td>
<td>Arithmetic, Art, Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. A public promotion of some product or service:</td>
<td>Channel, Advertisement, Audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. A piece of open land for recreational use in an urban area:</td>
<td>Bridge, Route, Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Using, providing, producing, transmitting, or operated using electricity:</td>
<td>Radio, Video, Electric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. A timepiece that shows the time of day:</td>
<td>Laptop, Cooker, Clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. A large building formerly or presently occupied by a ruler and fortified against attack:</td>
<td>Cottage, Clinic, Castle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Prove capable or fit; meet requirements:</td>
<td>Qualify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. An electric railway operating below the surface of the ground (usually in a city):</td>
<td>Subway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. An examination consisting of a few short questions:</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. A complex of buildings in which an institution of higher education is housed:</td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. A prediction about how something (e.g., the weather) will develop:</td>
<td>Shower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. A facility where wild animals are housed for exhibition:</td>
<td>Signpost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. A place of business where professional or clerical duties are performed:</td>
<td>Theater</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix C**

**Online Attitudes Questionnaire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like to see my friends’ comments on Padlet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Padlet enables me to share ideas with my friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I developed new ideas from the activities on Padlet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I learned new concepts from the other posts on Padlet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I learned through collaborative learning with Padlet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The materials posted on Padlet were clear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The materials posted on Padlet were useful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The activities on Padlet were challenging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intercultural Awareness and Writing through the Use of WebQuest: Iraqi Students at Al Furat Al-Awsat Technical University as a Case Study

Shahad Saleh Al Asadi
Al Furat Al Awsat Technical University, Technical Institute of Karbala
Holy Karbala, Iraq

Abstract
E-Learning platforms offer plenty of opportunities, pedagogies, and challenges in English Language Teaching (ELT). It is already being applied partially in most parts of the world, and certificates are issued from well-known universities. The cultural dimension in ELT has gained in importance. As long as English is a lingua franca, the needs of English foreign learners (EFL) are far from obtaining the skills or accent of the language. This study is significant because it tries to check to what extent can the intercultural awareness and writing through the use of WebQuest help the Iraqi learners to better up their writing skills. They need to understand the similarities and differences between their own culture and the targeted language culture, English. Iraqi learners are part of the EFL students, and it is time to start getting the intercultural awareness. This study is aimed to pay the Iraqi learners' attention to the intercultural awareness issues in order to improve their writing skills. Accordingly, an experimental research is conducted on forty-three first-year participants of Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University. The data of both the Pre-test and Post-test were analyzed by using the SPSS) statistical editor. Results have shown the following: First, the progress of more than (0.05≤) has been detected as far as students' understanding and using some intercultural concepts in their writings. Second, students show unique enthusiasm in surfing the net for assigning their homework about intercultural awareness's props. 

Keywords: Intercultural awareness, WebQuest, writing, Iraqi students, e-learning, classroom pedagogy, inter-cultural teaching

Cite as: Al Asadi, S. S. (2020). Intercultural Awareness and Writing through the Use of WebQuest: Iraqi Students at Al-Awsat Technical University as a Case Study. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL (6). 379-393.
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.25
Introduction

In Iraq, English language learners suffer from many issues that prevent them from getting a better performance in learning English such as traditional classroom pedagogy, traditional or ineffective methods that lack active learning clues, demotivation, or research skills. The importance of this study is emerged from its intention to provide up-to-date methods which depend on cultural awareness issues. These cultural awareness issues can provide the Iraqi learners with punctual details of both their own and the target language culture. These details of differences and similarities can improve the writing skills of Iraqi learners. The main question that included in this research is to what extent the intercultural awareness and writing through the use WebQuest can improve the Iraqi learners’ writing skills. This study points to the extent of the positive impact that cultural awareness has on improving the writing skills of Iraqi EFL learners. Intercultural awareness concentrates on the cultural dimension of a language. It is impossible to teach language separately of its culture, as Risager (2007) mentions that the cultural aspects are always present in its pedagogy. Knowing the cultural context is essential in language teaching because culture is a component of our understanding of communicative competence. Byram (1997) highlights the role of culture as an effective way to prepare language learners for intercultural communication.

E-learning is the second targeted point in this study. Co-vid-19 promotes the importance of using the internet in every life aspect as a choice of direct managing or working. Gupta (2017) finds that e-Learning has wholly transformed the environment in which learning is directed. It makes learning more straightforward, more comfortable, and more productive. Rajput (2019) praises the technological revolution that helps in improving the e-learning situation. He finds that through the unceasing development of technology, the field of education has experienced massive variations in itself. The internet has moved the whole process of learning and development to the virtual world. The youth has encouraged it to the beam, and e-learning has a bright future ahead.

However, English is considered a lingua franca in the world nowadays, and the necessity of knowing its cultural contexts is growing. Both of them, cultural awareness and e-learning through WebQuest, are the main issues to enhance the Iraqi learners’ writing skills. This research argues that while intercultural awareness is necessary, it needs to be represented for foreign learners through a remote interactive way to improve crucial English language skills. Intercultural Awareness (ICA) proposes more relevant concept for these dynamic contexts of English use.

This study aims at testing how intercultural awareness and WebQuest learning can enhance the Iraqi L2 learners’ writing skills. These learners have been studying English for more than 12 years. They do not have prior experience of e-learning, nor they do any task in intercultural awareness.

Literature Review

Intercultural awareness is occurring between or involving two or more cultures. Culture conflict is defined as the conflict of behavior, patterns, and values that results when different cultures
"Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts. There are numerous components of ICC. Some key components include motivation, knowledge, and tolerance for uncertainty" (Allen, 2011).

Communication with people from other cultures demands the need to know more about their culture. There is a great debate among scholars about the question raised by Damen (1987) "Which is first language or culture? (p. 65). This question has not a clear answer, but it affirms that language and culture have strong connections.

Intercultural Competence can deliver a strong support for intercultural communicative competence, but the two should not be considered equivalent. Qualified individuals with ICC are able to achieve interactions of a greater diversity and complexity as a result of self-study, foreign language proficiency, and analysis of one’s own culture and that of those who speak the target language (Wilberschied, 2015).

Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004) clutch that intercultural awareness implicates a gradually developing internal sense of the equality of cultures, an increased understanding of your own and others' cultures, and a real concern in how cultures connect and differ. They claim that increased intercultural awareness helps learners broaden their minds, increasing their tolerance, and achieving cultural empathy and sensitivity. According to Tomalin and Stemple斯基 (1993), there are three domains in which intercultural awareness encompasses in:
1- Knowledge of one's culturally-induced behavior
2- Recognition of the culturally-induced behavior of others
3- The ability to explain cultural standpoint (p.5)

The importance of culture in the EFL context
Teaching culture is very essential and should become a more important part of foreign language instruction. In this mode, boundaries will not be locked and nations come closer to one another to evade cultural disintegration and boost empathy and understanding. In case language learners have confident attitudes about the target languages, this will inspire and stir their interest to learn at best (Tran, 2019).

In (2006), Knutson refers that the development of learners’ intercultural awareness begins by boosting them to recognize their own cultural identity with other cultures. He proposes that teachers should analyze students’ real-world and academic needs in terms of cultural knowledge, awareness, or ability to function in inappropriate ways. Knutson agrees with Tannen (1990) who finds that cultural identity is likely to diverge based not only on learners’ national and linguistic background but also on their ethnic heritage, religious beliefs, class, age, gender, and sexual orientation.
Shemshadsara (2012) finds that a shift from a traditional to intercultural stance in EFL classrooms enhances students’ intercultural awareness of the complicated and interdependent relationship between language, culture, and teaching culture. Culture is an essential component of language teaching. Teachers’ cross-cultural awareness perspectives have a real impact on their language teaching methodology and syllabus design. This shift is a challenge that EFL teachers and learners have to be aware of the importance of intercultural awareness to meet the goals of foreign language education in our modern world.

Daifi (2017) mentions that developing the students’ ability to communicate successfully and appropriately with native speakers of English is a primary goal of teaching intercultural awareness in (EFL) classrooms. Intercultural awareness helps students to develop the needed skills for adequate communication, and it raises their attention to all differences to make them flexible and tolerant of doing things that are different in their culture.

Wahyudi (2012) assumes that integrating intercultural aspects of the targeted language in teaching is salient because it would benefit both communicative competence and minimizing the possible misunderstanding between second language learners and the target language speakers. The inter-cultural aspects are considered as the democratic view of learning the language. They look closely and compare the learner’s culture and the target’s language culture, similar to the concept of ethnographic conversations to enhance inter-cultural learning (Heuser, 2012). The expansion of the language concepts, culture, intercultural awareness, and teacher’s intra-cultural profile in relation to classroom pedagogy is essential. This would provide insightful knowledge for language teacher’s and add professional development for the learning process of second language learner (Wahyudi, 2012).

Havran (2015) provides examples of cultural activities that should be carefully organized and implemented into the EFL syllabus to enrich and inform the teaching content. These are Havran's beneficial ideas for presenting culture in the classroom:

- Students read articles or extracts from books, newspapers, magazines or websites written by travel writers or people who have visited the students’ town, country or region. Discussion topics can include the norms and values of the culture, nonverbal behaviours (e.g. the physical distance between speakers, eye contact, gestures, societal roles).

- Students discuss funny stories and experience they once had related to cultural issues, or misunderstandings. They can role play a situation based on cultural differences (e.g. a situation in which an inappropriate greeting is used).

- Using photos in class to explore various cultures and lifestyles and answering questions together can be interesting for your students; these activities enable lessons to take the form of collaborative discovery.
Students are usually curious about the different foods, art and songs that have value in different cultures, and you can teach that by incorporating important elements of cultural celebrations into English language classroom.

Using proverbs in class as a way to explore culture, its values, and analyze the stereotypes of the culture. Discussions can focus on how the proverbs are different from or similar to the proverbs in the students’ native language.

Students create a brochure, guidebook, poster or webpage for visitors to their town, country or region. This should not only describe famous sites and places to visit, stay or eat, but also give visitors some useful tips about what they may find strange or unusual about their own culture.

**WebQuest**

"A WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented lesson format in which most or all the information that learners work with comes from the web" (Dodge, 1997). The content of education completely originates from internet resources. March (2004) refers to the power of WebQuest in education "a real WebQuest is a scaffold learning structure that uses links to essential resources on the World Wide Web and an authentic task to motivate students' investigation of an open-ended question, development of individual expertise, and participation in a group process that transforms newly acquired information into a more sophisticated understanding" (p.42).

Baker (2012) assures that e-learning is an effective medium for teaching intercultural communication and awareness. He applies an experiment in which both students and teachers receive and discuss many changes in their understanding of intercultural communication that have occurred as a result of the experiment. During this investigation, participants show a very positive attitude that can add more value to e-learning.

Now, learners want relevant, mobile, self-paced, and personalized content. This need is satisfied with the on-line mode of learning; students can learn at comfortable condition (Gupta, 2017). Gupta identifies nine benefits of e-learning; first, the on-line method of learning suits most of learners’ conditions. Second, it is unlike classroom teaching; with on-line learning, you can access the content at any time. Third, learners are in a synchronization mode with each other, and this enables them to access updated content whenever they want it. Forth, e-Learning is a way to provide quick delivery of lessons and save time. Fifth, e-Learning helps in creating and communicating new training, policies, concepts, and ideas. Sixth, the scalability of e-learning enables educators to get a higher degree of coverage to convey the message in a consistently for their target audience. It also ensures that all learners receive the same type of training with this mode of learning. Seventh, e-learning reduces the cost of the learning process for everyone. It is cost-effective as compared to traditional forms of learning. The reason for this price reduction is because learning through this mode happens quickly and easily. A lot of training costs are reduced.
with respect to trainers, travel, course materials, and accommodation. Eighth, e-Learning has a positive influence on an organization’s productivity. It makes it easy to grip the content and digest it. Finally, it has less impact on the environment because it is a paperless way of learning; it protects the environment to a lot of extents (Gupta, 2017).

Rajput (2019) discusses and supports the e-Learning mode because he finds that it has fixed roots on the surface of education. Since the speed of the internet is increasing, the opportunities for multimedia training have arisen. For example, social media has left a significant impact on education and is evolving constantly. Learning and educating can be very expensive, time-consuming, and does not guarantee results, while e-Learning has the baggage of solutions to every possible problem. Saving time and money is a fundamental human wish and need. With the e-Learning model, physical presence is not necessary. Everything is available in the portable virtual world.

Warnock (2009) indicates that teaching writing through on-line modes offers new ways to apply theoretical and pedagogical concepts about writing. It can provide different means of disseminating, sharing, reviewing, and responding to student texts.

Moodle distance learning system adds more positivity to the process of teaching English. It is effective only with students of non-linguistic specialties personally-oriented, communicative and professional-oriented. The researchers note some advantages of Moodle distance learning system:

- improving the educational process and ensuring effective independent work of students learning English;
- the optimal implementation of the content in training English in connection with the creation of a fairly extensive resource base. The Moodle system allowed teachers to solve the problem of providing students with educational and methodological materials, to present a training manual in a more accessible and convenient electronic format directly in the learning environment;
- flexibility and mobility of learning, achieved due to the fact that EEMC is available at any time and outside the university, thus students could plan their curricula and course time, perform tasks at a convenient time;
- taking into account the specificities of students. The Moodle system gives students with different levels of learning and unequal abilities the opportunity to study at an individual pace. It creates a learning and educational environment that is conducive for a student and gives the prerequisites for more effective learning;
- active introduction of new information technologies in the training process using interactive tasks, computer and multimedia technologies, that helps to improve the process of forming students’ foreign language skills, increase the level of such
professional personal qualities as independence, creative activity and communication skills (Butova, et.al 2019).

In Iraq, the United Nations implement a remote educational project which focuses on the transitional grades of 6, 9, and 12. Through the distance education modalities such as educational TV and radio programming. The radio section is annulled early because of its high costs and limitations; therefore, it is replaced with advanced curriculum-focused website which will eventually contain electronic copies of all pedagogies and supplemental such as textbooks, TV lessons, interactive lessons, educational games, and other tools (Djelid, 2011).

Also in Iraq, Aajami (2019) attempts to expand the vocabulary repertoire of Iraqi students through using the theory of domains. The fact that increasing the vocabulary leads to perceptible development in writing performance. Aajami's study reveals that the theory of domains propositions more emphasis on the lexical concepts and its relations with relative domains. Occasionally, finding the relations between lexical concepts needs more time and analysis. Certainly, the learners engross a new strategy, and they can open more paths for vocabulary learning during their analysis, investigation or quest about vocabularies, their background, and relations. Naturally, participants comprehend the semantic networks of the lexical concepts through using the domains theory.

This study is trying to improve the writing skill of Iraqi learners through intercultural awareness, and WebQuest. These two points, intercultural awareness and WebQuest, can enlarge the students’ quantum information and give them the flexibility to catch up with this experiment.

**Methodology**

The present study focuses on the problems of writing skills of Iraqi English language learners who cannot improve their writing skills in a better way although they spend more than ten years in studying English as a foreign language. To answer the question presented in the present study why Iraqi university students cannot write well-formed paragraphs with well-used intercultural clues. Their received answers in both the Pre-test and Post-test are the data for this study in order to improve the writing skills. Depending on the intercultural awareness topics, the researcher aims at implementing the WebQuest strategy among Iraqi English learners.

The participants were forty-three first-year students who are mostly of pre-intermediate level in the English language. Some of the students do not know anything about intercultural awareness or WebQuest before they participate in this experiment, while others know headnotes about the subject of this study. The procedures are implemented as shown below:
The researcher displays slides in PowerPoint in the dashboard that define and explain intercultural awareness and WebQuest; in addition to some hints about how this study and its feedback would take place.

Then, simple homework is set for the participants to start surfing the net to delve more in-depth with the subject of this study. They have to pick up the accurate meanings of gender identity, transgender, asexual, and bisexual, to be aware while using them.

Students work in groups in the Pre-test to elicit intercultural similarities and differences between British and Iraqi cultures. In order to achieve a high level of participation, every available on-line path such as dashboard, google forms, and WhatsApp groups are used. The researcher sings a set of words about intercultural awareness for students to practice in getting the multi-meanings of each word in the targeted language culture. They are also required to locate the dimensions and configurations of these cultural words.

The researcher asks the students to identify the cultural concepts of any given intercultural aspect. They have to explain interrelated meanings and usage of these cultural words and mention the context in which they are used; then, the Post-test is arranged according to the steps in the procedures.

The Experiment

This study aims at enhancing Iraqi students' intercultural awareness and writing through using the WebQuest. Internet is a possible means of bringing an intercultural awareness dimension into the classroom in a manner that reflects the complexity of English use in global contexts. The potentiality of technology lies to aid in the process of language learning, mainly through offering learners access to a wide range of resources. It is an experimental study that is designed in the Pre-test and the Post-test. Forty-three students contribute to this research as an experimental group. The researcher highlights the lack of cultural competence and assures it can lead to miscommunications and has a detrimental impact in some cases. Sometimes, cultural differences can cause difficulties in understanding one another. The researcher uses the on-line learning method to help all of the participants to contribute to this experiment easily. To achieve the aim in question, the researcher prepares an investigation of three phases:

- In the first phase, it is an introduction to the main points of this study. It contains definitions of intercultural awareness, WebQuest, and e-learning. The researcher also mentions the importance of cross-cultural awareness and WebQuest in servicing the improvement of writing skills in the English language for EFL learners. During this phase, the researcher asks the students to look up the following words: gender identity, transgender, asexual, and bisexual, by using the WebQuest. The participants can work individually or in groups to make this experiment more active and exciting;

- After the introductory phase, the Pre-test phase, it is time to sink deep to elicit intercultural similarities and differences between the Iraqi Arab culture and British English culture. The
participants are divided into two groups. Each group has to make a deep WebQuest about custom and rituals of English people and their Iraqi counterpart. Students are requested to write specific paragraphs about a wedding, funeral, congratulations, faith, fast, prayer, and hospitality. They can do their WebQuest search to get the needed information to do the task. After they send their responsibilities, the researcher has to check, correct, and discuss every paragraph alone. An on-line meeting is determined to make a scale-up for the participants' performance.

- In the third phase, the Post-test, it is designed to test the participants' intercultural competence through analyzing the intended meanings in some pictures related to both the participants' native culture and the targeted language culture.

**Target Topics**

The topics that are selected by the researcher and the participants' suggestions have to contain intercultural specificity. Each issue has to have a definite hint of intercultural awareness. Starting with simple practices during the search of some essential words in the gender identity topic can help the students to understand the basis of this research. Then, they have to freely think in other examples to elicit and explain the intercultural differences or similarities.

**Results of the Pre-test**

Forty-three marks were collected by the researcher in the preliminary examination of students' abilities to get and analyze the meanings of 1. Gender identity, 2. Social customs (wedding, dead consolation), 3. Ritual differences. It was noticed that the participants have limited aptitude in writing. They show an accurate knowledge about intercultural specificity throughout surfing the WebQuest, but they have a clear deficiency in sentence structure. Most of the participants write long sentences; thus neither the meaning nor the grammar is free from errors. Their sentences lack the logical sequences sometimes, especially the topic sentence. Most of the topic sentences are loose and do not have a clear statement. Their limitations appear drastically in developing the ideas and closing the paragraph. Besides, they use general sentences and show an inability to go deeper into describing the targeted topic details.

The results of the Pre-test showed that all students have a developing but not developed level in both writing or cultural awareness specificity. It was evident that students depended on their knowledge in representing their ideas of intercultural awareness in writing.

**Treatment**

The treatment phase started after the declaration of the Pre-test's results. The targeted issues were distributed in pictures. A number of pictures were assigned to the same topic. The participants were asked to write captions about the presented topics in pictures. Participants wrote these captions after being advised to make WebQuest. The Web was the primary source of
information that learners work on. After writing a short description, the participants started working on setting a topic sentence. As long as the topic sentence worked as the backbone of any paragraph, participants had to practice writing it in various. In the next step, participants were asked to write the first supporting sentence that supports the main idea in the topic sentence. They could write more than one supporting sentence. Then, they had to explain the details in the paragraph. The transition sentence also had its importance in the paragraph because it linked one paragraph to another in the essay. In terms of grammar, participants had to pay attention to subject-verb agreement, punctuations and capitalization, sentence structure, and avoiding sentence fragments, and run-on sentences.

Participants had to use the intercultural information to be aware of intercultural specificity between Iraqi and British cultures. These intercultural awareness clues were the main task that the students had to look for through the WebQuest, explain their actual meaning and hints, and compare them to the participants' culture. WebQuest was the medium in which the researcher and the participants share, discuss, and evaluate both intercultural awareness hints and writing. Participants involved in activities and games, in which they were asked to select the best answer to complete some pieces of writings drawings depending on given intimations. After three months of the treatment period, the students were allowed to sit for the post-test.

**Post-Test**

After three months of working on intercultural awareness and writing through WebQuest, the participants sat for the Post-test. The participants felt free in choosing the time to work. They had to submit their tasks at the pre-defined deadlines. They were asked to write two essays each one should be of three paragraphs: the first essay was about sending a message to your remote British boss asking him to decrease your work hours during Ramadan, the fasting month in Islam; the second essay was directed to their Iraqi friends in which they had to explain to them a wedding party's customs in England.

Lowe model analysis is used to represent the domains of the lexical concepts in diagrams. The results of the post-test showed a remarkable improvement in the learners' performance in both writing style and intercultural awareness issues. They achieved a notable awareness in determining the intercultural specificity. They were further able to grasp the surface and profound meanings of the distributed images. Their ability appeared in writing clear topic sentences, linking sentences, and details. They could avoid about 80% of sentence structure errors. They were also capable of selecting the best topic sentences or arranging a group of sentences to be a meaningful paragraph.

**Data Analysis**

The obtained results from both the Pre-test and Post-test were analyzed to two SPSS statistical editor tests. Each test compared the performance of all students when treating their writing and
Intercultural Awareness and Writing through the Use of WebQuest

Al Asadi

Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL Number 6. July 2020

Table 1 displays the basic descriptive statistics of the Pre-test scores of the students. In this Table, the number of students and the mean of their scores along with the other statistical variables is described.

**T-Test**

Table 1. *Paired samples statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>13.1667</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5.35037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>17.4333</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.99727</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Paired samples correlations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>.825</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. shows the number of the participants, which is 43, and their average in the Pre-test, which is 13.1667, and the post-test, which is 17.4333. The participants showed the improvement of 4.2666 marks. Since the difference between the two means of both tests showed a growth that was more than (0, 05)*. This means that the intercultural awareness and WebQuest can make a remarkable positive change within the participants' writing skills.

**Discussion**

Iraqi English language learners face some difficulties in acquiring English writing skills. These difficulties make them low performances. These difficulties such as traditional classroom pedagogy, traditional or ineffective methods that lack active learning clues, demotivation, or research skills. The major findings meet and treat the above mentioned problems. It is clear that the experiment is a remote learning environment which means there is no traditional classroom pedagogies such as books or other materials. The activities are done individually and in groups in a remote positive environment. Active learning clues make this experiment exciting through discussing some points, sharing notes, and assigning some related topics. As for motivation, most of the participants are motivated and give their agreement to participate via a google form survey. This experiment strengthen the learners' research skills since it mostly depend on research activities. The findings are important because the results of the study reveal that Iraqi learners boost their ability on improving their writing skills; Intercultural awareness can help in avoiding misunderstanding in communication; This process of research and analysis can certainly expand learners' vocabulary and fortify the intricacy of meaning interrelations in their minds; and using
WebQuest is an effective method of learning because it is extremely flexible. Its flexibility permits the participants to choose any time or place to catch up. It saves time, money, and create a positive remote environment among both the researcher and participants. Expectedly, the participants fascinate a new strategy and flexible perspective in reaching both native and targeted language cultures through the WebQuest. Consequently, they can open more windows for vocabulary learning during their analysis or search for vocabularies and enrich their intercultural background information. It is really that the learners get an in-depth understanding of similarities and differences in their own culture and the targeted language culture. The current study's findings are in accordance with UNESCO's distance educational modalities (2011) in terms of remote education, but this study is characterized by its online communication and assessment through WebQuest tasks, emails, and google forms tasks. Its results are also in agreement with Aajami (2019) in terms of expanding vocabulary, but this study is hitting a farther objective which is the writing skills not only vocabulary. This study is limited to first-year students of pre-intermediate level in Karbala Technical Institute/ Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University during the academic year 2019/2020. Forty-three students were selected through a google forms' survey to be the participants of this study.

Conclusion
Intercultural awareness, WebQuest, and e-learning can offer a considerable method of teaching English in Iraq. 70% percent of the aims is achieved while the other 30% percent is not due to technical problems such internet availability, and there are some problems related to some participants who need training sessions in how to get research skills and cite the references. This study achieves most of its aims as improving the writing skills, identifying cultural and intercultural specificities, developing the research skills, supporting the use of active learning strategy, and keeping the participants motivated. Concerning the number of participants and the number of discussed examples, this study is very limited. The aspiring results of the participants can inspire further research studies, and to use intercultural awareness to improve business, email, and conversation skills for Arab learners. Treating this research problem can be done through self-study booklet, and a website under the patronage of the Ministry of Education to help learners study and evaluate their progress.

Recommendation
According to the results of this study, the following points are recommended: Using the e-learning method and intercultural awareness can better up the students' performance and expand their writing skills. Training sessions for both teachers and researchers on intercultural awareness and e-learning can improve EFL classroom sessions.
Intercultural Awareness and Writing through the Use of WebQuest  

**About the author:**  
**Shahad Saleh Al Asadi** Assist instructor at Al Furat Al Awsat Technical University/ Technical Institute of Karbala her major research interests include all language skills in EFL. ORCiD ID https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2391-7909

**References:**


Tran, Q. (2019). Developing English Teaching Practices in the Mekong Delta; Why teaching culture is important in EFL setting. Can Tho University Publisher.


Appendix
The researcher uses different topics in this study as habits, religion, and communication style.

Write a suitable caption to describe the images below.

These pictures are taken from google images

Rearrange the following sentences to be a complete paragraph.

1. The ‘laying-out’ of the body — or ‘rendering the last offices’ was in the past a job traditionally done by women, often the local midwife.
2. In Britain, funerary practices begin with the lay or official declaration of death, and consist of small attentions to the body itself, such as closing the eyes and covering the face.
3. However, in cases of death at home undertakers are now generally swiftly called to remove the body, and the process of laying-out is done by available staff — male or female — away from the location of death or mourning.
4. Today the female tradition is continued to some extent inasmuch as most hospital, hospice, and district nurses who do the job are women.
5. It involved undressing and washing the body, plugging its orifices, if necessary placing coins (traditionally pennies) on the eyelids, and a bandage under the chin, to hold these parts closed, dressing the body in its grave clothes, and holding limbs straight (with bandages or ribbons around the body at the elbows, wrists, and ankles, and sometimes a thread around the big toes) ready for placing in the coffin.

Write two essays:
- The first is directed to your remote British boss asking him to decrease your work hours during Ramadan, the fasting month in Islam.
- The second is directed to your Iraqi friends explaining to them a wedding party that you attend in England.
Difficulties of Teaching Saudi Female Students Linguistic Courses through Educational Closed-Circuit Television at Albaha University

Elsadig Mohamed Khalifa Gawi
Department of English, College of Science and Arts.
Albaha University, Albaha, Saudi Arabia

Abstract.
The present study aimed at investigating the problems of teaching female students in Shahbah College of Arts, through Closed-Circuit Television by male instructors. This research paper was significant because it attempted to find solutions to these problems. 20 male professors, who teach female students Applied Linguistics courses, participated in this study. A questionnaire used as the main instrument for this study to answer the main question of the study: ‘Do male instructors face any difficulties in teaching Saudi female students?’ The tool demonstrated to the participants of the study in the summer term of 2018. The researcher used the Descriptive-Analytical Method to run the study. SPSS statistical method had used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed that male instructors faced many problems when they teach female students through Closed-Circuit Television, such as class management, assessment of female students performance, and the use of teaching tools. So, the paper concluded that female instructors should teach female students instead of their male counterparts. In terms of the findings, the study recommended that male instructors should improve their skills to use CCTV by attending training courses and workshops. These can overcome the problems of teaching Saudi female students through Closed-Circuit Television at Albaha University and other Saudi universities.

Keywords: camera, closed-circuit television, open-circuit television, technology

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call6.26
Introduction

Female education increases recently in Saudi Universities, especially in Albaha University and other universities, such as Amirah Nurah University for female students in Riyadh. So, the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia aims at improving Saudi female performance in different fields. However, due to the shortage in female instructors and the increasing number of female students in universities, the Ministry of Higher Education search for male instructors to teach female university students through Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV). The male instructors follow this method in teaching female students in most of the Saudi universities (Alsemiri, 2006). In this study, the researcher tries to investigate the significant problems facing male instructors when they teach Saudi female students at Shahbah College and suggest some solutions.

The CCTV is a technical system prepared for male instructors to teach female students in the College of Arts for female students in Shahbah at Alba University and other universities. The CCTV studio contains some teaching tools such as wireless systems, TV screens, transmitters, smart boards, computers, microphones, and cameras. Male instructors in most Saudi universities use this electronic system for teaching female students linguistic courses from remote rooms.

Basing on the author’s experience as a lecturer of applied linguistics courses, the male staff members face some difficulties when they teach Saudi female students through the CCTV in Shahbah College of Arts for female students at Alba University. According to the Saudi Islamic culture, male instructors cannot teach female students face-to-face. They have to use remote studios supported by teaching tools. However, they find some difficulties when they teach female students through CCTV. These are class management, attendance, paying attention, lack of experience in using such tools, difficulties in evaluating female students performance, lack of face-to-face teaching, etc.

Although the CCTV helps to teach female students in Saudi Arabia, it causes many technical and educational problems. Hafiz (1991) noted many difficulties related to teaching through CCTV, such as the lack of trained teachers, difficulties in evaluating female students, class management, and participation. Other research finds that female students are not active in the English classes, which run by male instructors. According to the researcher’s experience, Saudi female students at the College of Arts in Shahbah at Alba University face the same problems. In sum, these difficulties have some relations with the tools of the study, class management, and female students evaluation.

Questions of the study
1. Are teaching tools suitable for teaching female students through CCTV at Shahbah College?
2. Do male instructors face any difficulties in managing female classes?
3. Is it difficult for male instructors to assess females performance through CCTV?

Hypotheses
1. Teaching tools are suitable for teaching female students through CCTV.
2. Male instructors face some difficulties in managing female classes.
3. It is difficult for male instructors to assess females performance through CCTV.

**Review of Literature**

**Theoretical framework**

The use of television in teaching foreign languages has started in the 1950s in the UK and the USA as the first countries that use TV in the teaching process. In the 1960s, some Arab countries have begun to use television programs to teach students, especially in Egypt and Jordan. Then, the process has moved to other countries. Consequently, it spreads worldwide at different educational levels, training programs, job development, and teaching adults (Mohamed, et al. 2004).

**Types of TV Wireless**

*Open-Circuit Television (OCTV)*

In this type, the microphone and camera take the sound and photos, respectively in the studio. Then, they sent them through the waves by special instruments. Television receivers receive these waves and change them to sounds and pictures in open space. Then, lectures immediately appear in the female classes.

*Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV)*

The Closed-Circuit Television is a term that generally refers to the system that reach it through receiver tools only inside the system (Cieszynski, 2006); whereas, the educational CCTV is a television system used between the teacher and the students. It contains TV studio supplies with educational tools through which educational programs such as; films, videos, lectures, etc. The system sent these programs to female students in other rooms using receivers and TV screen (Sultan, 2005). CCTV room consists of the following teaching tools (Alhashemi, 2014):

1. Camera.
2. Light unit.
3. TV screen
5. Receivers (in rooms for female students).
6. Cables.
7. Printer.

**Uses of Closed-Circuit Television**

The CCTV used in lectures for remote places such as teaching female students in Saudi universities, in large crowded rooms, in faculties of medicines to see critical surgery in rooms, and in faculties of Arts to teach applied linguistic courses for male and female students simultaneously (Zaiton, 2002). It is also used because of the shortage of female instructors and qualified teachers and in some Islamic countries where there are no co-education (Fathallah, 2007).

**Communication through CCTV**

In teaching through CCTV, male instructors observe those female students are passive. However, the classes prepared recently with teaching tools, such as...
microphones/loudspeakers, which help students to participate in lectures (Zahir & Nabhani 1999). Accordingly, lectures through CCTV help female students to interact with each other and with the language materials.

**Development of teaching female students through CCTV in KSA**

The first college for girls constructed in Riyadh in 1390 H. At that time, male teachers teach female students some courses due to the shortage of female teachers. They use the educational Closed-Circuit Television in their teaching process. Consequently, the Ministry of Higher Education HR does their best to contract with female instructors from many Arab countries such as Egypt, Sudan, and Jordan. However, due to the spread of many female colleges in different parts of Saudi Arabia, and to the shortage of female instructors, they make contracts with male instructors to teach female students. This process requires the preparation of Closed-circuit TV studios for professional male teachers to teach females (Alshafei, 2013).

**2.3 Previous studies**

The researcher found a few recent research studies about teaching female students via the closed-circuit television in Saudi universities.

Almolhis (2005) holds a study aimed to investigate female students perceptions of being guided through the CCTV by male instructors in the College of Education at Taibah University. The sample of the study consisted of 98 female students selected randomly. The researcher used the descriptive method. He used two questionnaires: the first one was for evaluating the uses of CCTV, and the second one for measuring the perception of female students towards the application of CCTV. The findings of the study revealed that there were positive responses of female students toward the uses of Closed-Circuit Television.

A study carried out by Asemiri in (2006) investigated the purposes of using television circles technology in teaching female students at King Saud University. The study followed the descriptive-analytical method. The findings of the study revealed that the use of television circles in education helps to teach and develop women in Saudi society in general. According to these findings, teaching female students through CCTV depends mainly on the skills and experience of teachers.

A study by Fathallah (2007) examined the impact of using PowerPoint program through the Closed-Circuit Television to improve female performance at the College of Education in Onizah, Alqassim University (as cited in Alshahat & Awad (2009). The researcher used the experimental method for three groups. The first experimental group consisted of 41 female students who studied slides of PowerPoint program through Closed-Circuit Television. The second experimental group studied slides of PowerPoint program accompanied by video through CCTV. In contrast, the control group traditionally studied the course without using teaching tools. The results of the study revealed the superiority of the second experimental group, that used PowerPoint with video, over the first experimental group and the control group.
Alshahat & Awad (2009) investigated the problems faced by female students in lectures held through Closed-Circuit Television at King Saud University. The study used the Descriptive-Analytical Method. The participants of the study were 199 MA female students who studied educational technology courses through CCTV in the first term (2008/2009). The findings of the study revealed that female students experienced many problems when they attended classes through CCTV. Also, they showed that female students performance was very weak due to the lack of interaction.

Another study held by Ashafei (2013) examined the demonstrative and systemic problems of teaching female students through CCTV in female colleges and their impact on the education process. The researcher used the descriptive method. The tool of the study was a questionnaire presented to 459 participants who considered the samples of this study. The results of the study revealed that few female students participated and paid attention in classes hold through CCTV.

**Methodology**

*The Study Participants*

The participants of this study were 20 male professors. They taught female students, in Shahbah College of Arts at Albaha University, linguistics courses through CCTV in the summer term of 2018. They were selected randomly from three branches: Alaqeiq, Almandaq, and Quilua.

*The Instrument of the study*

This study used a questionnaire to collect data. It contained 16 items divided into three parts. Parts one contained five statements related to the tools of the study, part two consisted of six statements related to the class management variable, and part three consisted of five statements examined student assessment.

*Statistical Reliability and Validity*

Reliability refers to the reliability of any tests, to obtain the same results if the same measurement uses more than once under the same conditions. Besides, the reliability means when a particular test apply to several individuals and the marks of everyone have assessed. Then, the same test apply another time for the same group, and they can obtain the same scores which means this test is reliable. Also, reliability is the degree of the accuracy of the data that the test measurement. Some of the most used methods for calculating reliability are:

*Alpha-Cronbach Coefficient.*

Validity is also a measure used to identify the validity degree among the respondents according to their responses on certain criteria. The validity counted by several methods, such as validity, using the square root of the (reliability coefficient). The value of the reliability and the validity lies in the range between (0-1). The validity of the questionnaire means that the tool should measure the specific aim designed for. In this study, the validity was calculated by using the following equation:
Validity = $\sqrt{\text{Reliability}}$

The reliability coefficient estimates the measurement that uses in the questionnaire by using the Alpha-Cronbach coefficient Equation.

Basing on the above equation, to estimate the validity and the reliability of the instrument, the researcher distributed (10) samples of the instrument to the participants to estimate the reliability coefficient using the Alpha-Cronbach Coefficient. The results appeared in the following table one:

Table 1. The reliability and validity coefficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alpha-Cronbach</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.901</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the results of the table one above that all reliability and validity coefficients for the sample individuals about each questionnaire theme, for the overall questionnaire, are higher than (50%), some of them are nearest to one. These results indicate the high validity and reliability of the responses. This means, the study instrument is valid and reliable giving correct and acceptable statistical analysis.

Statistical Instruments:
To satisfy the study objectives and to test its hypotheses, the researcher uses the following statistical instruments:
1. Mean.
2. Frequency
4. Non-parametric Chi-square test by using SPSS and EXSEL

Results and Discussion
This part discussed the analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of the data of 20 respondents, who represented the English teachers community at Abaha University.

Responses to the Questionnaire
The answers of the participants to the questionnaire elements tabulated and computed. The following points clarified the analytical interpretation and discussion of the findings regarding the objectives and hypotheses of the study. Each item in the questionnaire was analyzed statistically and discussed based on tables.

Analysis of the Questionnaire:
The researcher distributed the questionnaire on a determined study sample (n= 20) and constructed the required tables for the collected data. This step consisted of the transformation of the qualitative (nominal) variables (strongly disagree, disagree, Undetermined, agree, and strongly agree) to quantitative variables (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), respectively. Also, the graphical representations were used for this purpose.
Test of the Study Hypotheses:
To answer the study questions and examine the hypotheses, the mean and standard deviation computed for each statement of the instrument. To do that, the researcher gave five degrees for each response (strongly agree); four degrees for each answer (agree); three degrees for each response (uncertain); two degrees for each answer (disagree), and one degree for each response with (strongly disagree). This means, under the statistical analysis requirements, the nominal variables transformed to quantitative variables. After that, the non-parametric Chi-square test used to check if there were statistical significant differences amongst the participants’ responses to the study hypotheses.

Findings of the First Variable: Teaching Tool
Table (1) Chi–Square Test for Hypothesis NO. (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male instructors use suitable tools for teaching female students</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Using the smart board is one of the best teaching tools.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PowerPoint presentation helps in understanding lectures well.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The camera is a useful application for teaching.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Closed-Circuit TV studio is well prepared for teaching.</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female classes are uncontrollable.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The calculated value of Chi-square for the significant differences for the participants responses for the first statement is (22), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). These results indicate that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the participants. Also, the calculated mean is (2.7), which is higher than the hypothesized mean (2.3), which supports the participants, who agree with the statement, “Male instructors use suitable tools for teaching female student”.

The Chi-square calculated value, for the significant differences for the participants’ responses in the second statement, is (19), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4), and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7).
This indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the participants’ responses, also, the calculated mean is (2.6), which is higher than the hypothesized mean (2.3). These finding supports the respondents who agree with the statement, “Using smart board is one of the best teaching tools”.

The calculated value of Chi-square for the significant differences for the participants’ responses in the third statement is (31), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4), and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the participants. Also, the calculated mean is (2.5) which is more significant than the hypothesized mean (2.3). This result supports the participants who agree with the statement, “PowerPoint presentation helps in understanding lectures well”.

The Chi-square calculated value for the significant differences for the participants’ answers concerning the fourth statement is (22), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the participants. Besides, the calculated mean is (2.9), which is more significant than the hypothesized mean (2.3). These results approve the respondents, who agree with the statement, “the camera is a useful application for teaching”.

The calculated value of Chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents’ responses in the fifth statement is (22), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4), and the significant value level (5%), which is (11.7). This indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the study participants. Furthermore, the calculated mean is (2.7), which is higher than the hypothesized mean (2.3), that supports the respondents who agree with the statement, “the electronic circuit is well prepared for teaching”.

The Chi-square calculated value for the significant differences for the participants’ responses for the sixth statement is (19), which is greater than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4), and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). These results indicate that there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the participants. Also, the calculated mean is (2.6) which is higher than the hypothesized mean (2.3). These results approve the respondents who agree with the statement, “Female classes are uncontrollable”.
According to the previous results, we accepted the first hypothesis.

Findings of the Second Variable: Class Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nom</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Chi square</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A limited number of female students attend classes presented by male instructors.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Most of the female students attend classes presented by male teachers.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male instructors can easily manage female classes.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female supervisors help in controlling the classroom.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female students usually pay no attention during the classes presented by male instructors.</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The calculated value of Chi-square for the significance of the differences for the participants’ responses in the first statement is (27), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4), and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the participants’ responses. Also, the calculated mean is (3.8), which is more significant than the hypothesized mean (2.3). These findings support the participants, who agree with the statement, “Limited number of female students attend classes presented by male instructors.”

The Chi-square calculated value for the significance of the differences for the respondents’ responses for the second statement is (29), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This result reveals statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the study participants. Besides, the calculated mean is (3.7) which is higher than the hypothesized mean (2.3). These results approve the participants who agree with the statement: “Most of the female students attend classes presented by male teachers.”

The calculated value of Chi-square for the significant differences for the participants’ answers for the third statement is (34), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4), and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This shows statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents.
Moreover, the calculated mean is (3.6), which is more significant than the hypothesized mean (2.3), which supports the respondents who agree with the statement, “Male instructors can easily manage female classes”.

Chi-square calculated value for the significant differences for the participants’ responses for the statement no. (4) is (27), which is greater than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4), and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This result reveals statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the study samples, and also the calculated mean is (3.4), which is higher than the hypothesized mean (2.3). These findings approve the respondents who agree with the statement, “Female supervisors help in controlling the classroom”.

The calculated value of Chi-square for the significance of the differences for the participants’ responses in the fifth statement is (2,3) which is superior to the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the participants. Also the calculated mean is (3.9) which is higher than the hypothesized mean (2.3) which supports the respondents who agree with the statement, “Female students usually pay no attention during the classes presented by male instructors”.

According to the previous results, we accept the second hypothesis.

Results of the Third Variable: Students Assessment

Table (3) Chi–Square Test for Hypothesis NO. (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>female instructors should teach female students.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male instructors help in developing female students performance.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of the direct learning causes students weak performance.</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It is difficult for male instructors to assess female students oral performance accurately.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male instructors are not allowed to monitor the written test.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The calculated value of Chi-square for the significance of the differences for the participants responses in the first statement is (25), which is superior to the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This result indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents. Also, the calculated mean is (2.8) which is higher than the hypothesized mean (2.3), which approves the respondents who agree with the statement, “female instructors should teach female students”.

The Chi-square calculated value for the significance of the differences for the study samples’ responses in the second statement is (19), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4), and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This finding shows that there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the study samples. Besides, the calculated mean is (2.5) which is more significant than the hypothesized mean (2.3). These findings support the participants who agree with the statement, “Male instructors help in developing female students performance”.

The calculated value of Chi-square for the significant differences for the participants’ answers for the third statement is (31), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4), and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This result reveals statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the respondents. Also, the calculated mean is (2.4), which is higher than the hypothesized mean (2.3). These results support the respondents who agree with the statement “Lack of direct learning causes students weak performance”.

The calculated value of Chi-square for the significance of the differences for the participants responses in the fourth statement is (25), which is higher than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4), and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This indicates that there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the participants. Also, the calculated mean is (2.9), which is more significant than the hypothesized mean (2.3). These findings approve the respondents who agree with the statement “It is difficult for male instructors to assess female students oral performance accurately”.

The calculated value of Chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents’ responses in the 5th statement is (36), which is higher than the tabulated value of Chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which is (11.7). This result shows statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the responses of the participants. Besides, the calculated mean is (2.6), which is superior to the hypothesized mean (2.3). This proves the respondents who agreed with the statement “male instructors are not allowed to monitor written test.”

According to the previous results, we accept the third hypothesis.
The findings of the present study show that male instructors face some problems related to the tools of the study, class management, and students evaluation when they teach Saudi female students through CCTV in the College of Arts in Shahba. Its findings go in line with some study findings like those of Hafiz (1991), Alshahat & Awad (2009), and Alshafei, (2013). These studies support the findings of this research in that male instructors face some difficulties when they teach female students through Closed-Circuit Television at Albaha University. These problems are lack of paying attention, participation, and female students are unserious in lectures held via CCTV. Also, some instructors lack the experience of teaching through Closed-Circuit Television. This is the first study that addresses the difficulties that face male instructors when they teach female students linguistic courses through CCTV at Albaha University.

Conclusion and implication

The present study investigated the difficulties faced by male teaching staff involved in teaching female students through Closed-Circuit Television at Albaha University. The findings of the study revealed that male instructors faced many problems in teaching female students through CCTV. According to the study findings, we accept all hypotheses of the study. The CCTV room prepared with the suitable teaching tools for teaching female students. However, male instructors faced some difficulties in managing female classes due to the lack of direct teaching. Also, the results showed some problems hinder male instructors in assessing female students performance for the same reasons. So, it concluded that female instructors should teach female students instead of their male counterparts. In terms of the findings, the study offers valuable implications those help in improving teaching female students through CCTV at Albaha University and other Saudi universities. The lack of direct teaching causes weakness in the female students performance. Male instructors should improve their skills to use CCTV by attending training courses and workshops. Furthermore, technicians should set up the system before language classes.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, the study recommended:
1. Male teaching staff should attend training to use the various teaching tools in CCTV studio.
2. The University Directorate should encourage the teaching staff to use recent technology in their presentations.
3. Teachers should motivate female students to participate in lectures.
4. Female monitors must attend lectures held by male instructors to assess in managing the classes.
5. The Directorate should prepare CCTV rooms with the necessary teaching tools.
6. Male teachers should develop new assessment methods to enhance female students performance.
7. Trained technicians should check CCTV studio before lectures.
8. Female instructors should teach female students linguistic courses.
9. The Deanship of the College of Arts should make a contract with the trained female instructors to solve the problem.
About the Author:
Elsadig Mohamed Khalifa. I am a Sudanese. I am a PhD. holder in Applied Linguistics, University of Gezira, Sudan (2011). I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, College of Science and Arts, in Almandaq. At Albaha University, Saudi Arabia. I have published more than ten papers in different international indexed journals in Canada, USA, UK, Australia, India and Malaysia. ORCID ID https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2378-7099

References:
Alshafei, F (2013). Problems of Teaching Female Students through the Closed Circuit Television in King Khalid University. Journal of Arabic Studies in Education and Psychology 35 (1) 9,128
Michele, T. et al. (2014). Online Instruction: E-Learning and Students’ Satisfaction, International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, (15) 6, 111.-113.

Appendices

Appendices

Appendix (A): Teacher’s Questionnaire

- Teacher’s name (optional) ......................................................

- Qualifications
  a. MA [ ]
  b. PhD

- Academic Post
  a. Lecturer
  b. Assistant Prof.
  c. Associate Prof.
  d. Professor
This questionnaire is a tool used to collect data to contribute to the research paper entitled ‘Difficulties of Teaching Female Students through Closed Circuit Television in the Female College of Arts in Shahba, at Albahe University. It consists of sixteen items classified into three variables. Your responses are used only for research purposes. Please, tick (✓) choose from [1 to 5].

5- Lickert scale is used.

1= strongly agree  2= agree  3 =unsure   4= disagree   5= strongly disagree

Table (5): teachers’ Questionnaire:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>[1] Teaching tools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Teaching staff use suitable tools for teaching female students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Using smart board is one of the best teaching tools.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PowerPoint Presentation helps in understanding lectures well.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Camera is a good application for teaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The CCTV studio is well prepared</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>[2] Classroom management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Female classes are uncontrollable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Limited number of students attend classes presented by male teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Most of the girls attend the classes presented by male staff members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Male teachers manage easily female classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Female supervisors help in controlling the class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Female students usually pay no attention during classes presented by male teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>[3] Students’ assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Female teachers should teach female students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Lack of the direct learning causes students weak performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. It is difficult for male staff members to assess female students oral performance properly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Male staff members are not allowed to observe students in the written tests.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>