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Dental Students’ Perceptions of ESP Material and its Impact on Their Language Proficiency: A Case Study of a Saudi Arabian University

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Abstract
The paper aims to explore the dental English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students’ perceptions of the ESP material and its influence on their English proficiency in the dentistry department of a Saudi Arabian university. The study adopts a qualitative technique of semi-structured interviews to elicit the views of 12 purposively chosen participants. The process of a thematic analysis of the qualitative data led to the emergence of three overarching themes that aimed to answer the main research question which is how the dental students in the Saudi context perceive the ESP materials and the impact these materials have on their language proficiency. The key findings indicate that the ESP learners in the dentistry department have a very positive attitude towards learning the English language in general and ESP in particular. Their awareness of their linguistic needs makes it a significant study in the field of ESP in Saudi Arabia. The results also suggest that the coursebook contents and material are outdated and inappropriate for the ESP learners in the Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The findings illustrate that the ESP teachers need to use the English language in classrooms and introduce learner-centred interactive activities to encourage students to participate in classroom activities. In light of the findings, the study outlines the implications and gives directions for future research.

Keywords: English proficiency, English for specific purposes (ESP), EFL context, Saudi Arabia

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1.0 Introduction

In contexts where English is spoken as a foreign language, professionals in the field of medical sciences require to develop language proficiency to adequately express themselves in spoken and written English and meet the international standards. The emerging need for English proficiency has forced policymakers to concentrate on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses around the world and consider it an integral part of EFL teaching. As an approach, ESP aims to tailor English language teaching materials to an identified group of learners’ specific learning and language use needs within a particular context (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This trend is conspicuous in Saudi Arabian universities where ESP courses are offered to ESP students in their respective departments, such as business, engineering, humanities, and medicine. Particularly in medicine, dental students are offered tailored courses in a bid to meet their professional learning needs and develop their language proficiency to be able to interact with scientific research, professionals and patients from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Despite the significance of the ESP courses for medical students in general and dental students in particular, the existing courses and materials used in the Saudi EFL setting make an insignificant contribution to the learners’ linguistic competence. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the current course material and assess its effectiveness concerning the learners’ expected level of English proficiency.

Teaching ESP is a complex and daunting task as the pedagogical process involves teacher training with a specific focus on multi-disciplinary knowledge development, a wide array of content material that is related to the learners’ professional fields and rigorous ways of evaluating material and assessing learners’ performances. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987): "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" (p. 19). Therefore, researchers around the world have investigated this phenomenon in great depth to assist ESP practitioners and make the courses efficient to meet international standards and global demands.

Over the past two decades, the professional medical bodies have emphasized the need for enhancing the training, development and evaluation of doctors concerning their communication skills, so that they can establish a good relationship between themselves and their patients. Improved communication skills and language proficiency in the English language are equally important for dentists who can learn and develop their skills in a systematic way as part of their dental education. Nevertheless, there seems to be inadequate empirical evidence to determine the effectiveness of ESP courses designed for medical students, particularly the dental students in Saudi EFL context. Hence, this case study calls into question the effectiveness of ESP material that is being used in dental department of a higher education institution in the Saudi Arabia.

The primary aim of this small-scale qualitatively driven case study is to explore the dental students’ perceptions of the current ESP course material that is being implemented in the classroom and understand whether the course material has any impact on the dental students’ language proficiency. Moreover, the study aims to identify different factors that might hinder the successful implementation of the course material in the Saudi EFL context. This study will be an opportunity to elicit the needs of dental students, the challenges related to the course materials, and how to cope with those challenges. This case study will further give insights into the dental
students’ ESP related problems and help understand their needs to revise or modify the course material and syllabus to better meet their English learning needs. Other universities that offer ESP courses in the Kingdom can benefit from this study as it will take into consideration the real-life experiences and observations of dental students in a state university of Saudi Arabia.

1.1 The Objectives of This Study
- To explore the dental students’ views about the current ESP material in the Saudi EFL context.
- To understand the impact of the ESP teaching material on the dental students’ English proficiency.
- To identify the dental students’ needs and expectations of the ESP material in the Saudi EFL context.
- To offer suggestions for improving the existing teaching material in the dental department and make it more consistent with the dental students’ ESP needs.

1.2 Research Questions
This small-scale qualitative case study aims to answer the following research questions:
1. What are the dental students’ perceptions of the ESP course material that is being taught in the Saudi EFL context?
2. To what extent do the dental students consider the ESP teaching material appropriate for developing their field-related language proficiency?
3. How can the existing ESP course material be improved to meet the ESP needs of the dental students in the Saudi EFL context?

1.3 Context of the Study
Saudi Arabia is one of the largest countries in the Gulf region where EFL has been taught at the tertiary level. As Saudi Arabia hosts the most expatriates than any other gulf state, its society is more culturally diverse. Therefore, the hospitals have doctors, nurses, technicians, managers from various countries who use English as a means of communication. According to the Ministry of Health (MOH), only 27.6% of the dentists are Saudi nationals in Saudi hospitals, which shows that local dentists will have to interact with foreign counterparts in English language and thus need to develop their communicative competence and enhance their intelligibility and comprehensibility in an EFL setting. In the department of dentistry in a Saudi Arabian university where the current study was conducted, the purpose of ESP learning of dentist students is purely instrumental, so that they develop their communicative repertoire and utilize it in various cultural settings.

2.0 Literature Review
The ESP programs started in the mid-20th century as an expansion of technical, economic and scientific activities at different parts of the world (Dudley-Evans, St John, & Saint John, 1998). This new initiative in the field of English language teaching aimed to address the language learning needs and demands of the non-English speaking students to develop their communication skills. As a result of this new branch of the English Language Teaching (ELT), the course designers, material developers and instructors were pressured to meet the requirements of the learners, employers, and language schools in their respective contexts. This
section of the paper underpins the theoretical foundations of ESP material designed for medical students in dental departments to understand its use and effectiveness in relation to the dental students’ language proficiency in various contexts around the world.

2.1 The Meaning of ESP
The fundamental objective of English language teaching is to enable language learners to use English for different purposes in various social and professional contexts. According to Candlin, Kirkwood, and Moore (1978), ESP has stemmed from the field of ELT, which has a significant impact on course design and syllabus, and material development. The key benefit of ESP is to tailor language material in a particular context to meet the context-specific requirements of ESP adult learners and enable them to communicate in their career fields. In Mackay and Mountford (1978) view: “ESP is generally used to refer to the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarian purpose” (p. 2). They contend that ESP textbook should serve the purpose of improving learners’ English proficiency, particularly related to their field of specialization. Similarly, Robinson (1991) explains that: “Students study English not because they are interested in the English Language or English culture as such but because they need English for study or work purposes” (p. 2). In light of Robinson’s (1991) argument, the ESP course material should develop learners’ proficiency so that they can operate in their work. This idea has been further elaborated by Basturkmen (2014), who states that: “In ESP, language is learnt not for its own sake or for the sake of gaining a general education, but to smooth the path to entry or greater linguistic efficiency in academic, professional or workplace environments” (p. 18). Basturkmen’s (2014) definition helps in understanding the meaning of ESP, which is mainly about developing linguistic competence that is required to function in a particular profession, discipline or professional field.

2.2 English for Medical Students
English has become the language of scientific research and publications around the world. In the field of medicine, the researchers, experts and scientists publish their findings in English, which has forced the curriculum designers to make the English language as a significant component of the EFL curriculum at the professional level. In this respect, Ammon and Hellinger (2013) state that:
“English has become so dominant as the international language of science, especially of scientific publications, that its use seems to be necessary if one wants to be read or discussed outside of one’s own country” (p. 8).

Moreover, Webber (1993) states that: “It is well known that 90% of scientific articles are published in English because they have a higher probability of being read and cited” (quotes in Piqué & Viera, 1997, p. 98). As English has been the language of scientific research, students of medical science need to develop concepts and knowledge related to medicine by watching lectures, talks, dialogues, videos and reading an extensive source of scholarly articles published in peer-reviewed journals. As a branch of medical sciences, dental students also require developing their English proficiency to read scholarly articles and communicate with people from different social, cultural, linguistic, academic and professional backgrounds.
2.3 The Basics of an ESP Course

The communicative needs of medical students are an essential consideration of an ESP course. However, before designing a course, it is equally important to consider their learning needs and targets. Target needs refer to what the learners require to learn and be able to do at the end of an ESP course. To put it more simply, the learners’ needs “are perhaps more appropriately described as “objectives.” (Berwick & Johnson, 1989 as cited in Robinson, 1991, p. 7). According to Robinson (1991), the learning needs are: “what the learner needs to do to actually acquire the language” (Robinson, 1991, p. 7).

When the target is set, the course designers can think of the ESP learners’ necessities, lacks and wants to solidify the syllabus and its objectives.

2.3.1 Necessities
They refer to what the ESP students have to know about the language and target situation so they can effectively communicate and function in that particular situation.

2.3.2 Lacks
Lacks involve the learners’ lack of knowledge of the English language. The learners consider a gap between what they already know and what they need to know in order to develop their language proficiency. The ESP course bridges this gap and the learners can develop the missing knowledge by the end of the course.

2.3.3 Wants
They refer to what the ESP learners want to achieve from the course that is mainly related to their personally identified needs. These needs could be job-specific, or a field related which the course designers will have to consider.

2.4 The Use of L1 in Dental EFL Classrooms

In the field of ELT, the research presents two different viewpoints on the use of students’ first language (L1) in EFL classrooms. It’s a tool to facilitate the teaching and learning process and to swiftly achieve the lesson objectives. Some scholars believe that it becomes inevitable to teach without using students’ L1 for translating and explaining particular words, terminologies and concepts as instruction in L1 can have a positive influence on the learners’ comprehension of the target language (Basturkmen, 2014; Bonyadi, 2003; Harmer, 2007; Juárez & Oxbrow, 2008; Latsanyphone & Bouangeune, 2009).

On the contrary, research shows that the use of L1 in an EFL classroom is the result of failure to understand the target language. The teachers and learners often code-switch to the learners’ L1 when they encounter a communication barrier. Nevertheless, the increasing use of L1 will reduce the amount of linguistic input the learners receive through classroom instruction. As a result, their communicative competence will be affected. Therefore, to achieve greater language proficiency the teachers should avoid the use of L1 in EFL classrooms (De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Spada & Lightbown, 1999; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Turnbull, 2001; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002).
It is worth noting that there is no empirical evidence to prove the use of L1 a beneficial or detriment practice for dental EFL students. It would be interesting to know whether the dental students in Saudi EFL context consider it a useful tool that helps them communicate effectively.

2.5 Teaching Activities in Specialist Vocabulary Development

The nature and range of teaching activities used by the teachers to develop learners’ vocabulary play a vital role in the process of learning a foreign language. In the ESP domain, it is crucial as the students would be using those newly acquired words, phrases, and expressions for specific purposes in their professional contexts. Teaching medical vocabulary might prove to be a challenging task for ESP teachers, particularly in the dentistry department, where the language use is more specific to the learners’ professional language use. Therefore, teachers would need to be very innovative to design and plan activities that are based on the ESP learners’ needs, lacks and wants. Developing the students’ interest and familiarity would be the key targets of the ESP teachers to introduce vocabulary that is needed for comprehension as well as for production.

For learners to improve their communicative competence, teachers can adopt various methods, such as associating words pictures/diagrams with their correct pronunciation or spelling of the English words (Thornbury, 2005). Similarly, to make learning a sustainable experience, the words could be taught cognitively so that they can become part of the learners’ permanent memory (Miller, 2009). The same technique could be applied by ESP teachers teaching medical vocabulary to develop learners’ vocabulary; however, more empirical investigation is required to understand the needs, lacks and wants of the students who study ESP in dentistry departments at the tertiary level.

2.6 Learners’ Attitude Towards ESP Learning

Learners’ attitude towards learning a target language plays a vital role in the success of pedagogical practices. There is an abundance of literature that shows that EFL learners’ lack of motivation and interest in English learning classes hinder the process of teaching and learning (Shah, Hussain, & Nasseef, 2013). Since dentists and other medical students need to communicate effectively in their professional fields, the learners must develop a positive attitude to English courses that are taught in the dentistry departments.

Studies indicate that the learners’ lack of interest in learning English is due to cultural differences between the content material and the learners’ culture (Brown, 2004; Cutrone, 2009; Doyon, 2000; Johnson, 2009; Sullivan & Schatz, 2009). It is essential that the course designers consider cultural differences and learners’ preferences with regards to ESP materials, specifically, for future dentists who will be using the English language in a variety of situations.

2.7 Significance of Writing Skills for ESP Dentistry Students

The importance of writing skills for dentistry students is widely acknowledged because scientific and medical research is written and understood in English language and ESP learners will have to read and keep themselves abreast of new ideas. Nguyen (2016) is of the view that:

In the medical community is the dental community in which dental students, research dentists, practicing dentists, and dental faculty in dental schools write and publish their research. All groups of the dental community face challenges and receive benefits when
they write and publish their own research; however, each group is influenced by their writing experiences in different ways (p. 34).

As the significant role of writing in the field of dentistry is acknowledged, it is vital to give students adequate training and exposure to reading and writing on scientific research in dentistry and enable them to be proficient professionals. Since there is a shortage of literature on this issue in the Saudi EFL context, the learners’ writing needs and lacks need to be investigated to make the current course up to the international standards.

2.7.1 The role of the ESP Textbook

The vital role of ESP textbook has been discussed in the literature. There is no doubt that in EFL contexts, the use of English is restricted to classrooms, therefore, the textbook material should suffice to the needs of the learners in and outside the classroom (Dudley-Evans et al., 1998; Riazi, 2003). According to Li and Huo (2014), it is fundamental to design an effective and a practical syllabus, content material for effective teaching and evaluation of ESP courses. The coursebook for dental ESP students should include activities that would bring variety to classroom teaching and learning. De Jong (2016) has identified the following activities which would benefit the ESP medical students:

- Reading texts in groups,
- Finding specific information related to the content,
- Group work for problem solving,
- Workshops, and
- Teacher’s explanations of grammatical contents (when needed). (De Jong, 2016, p. 256).

It would be interesting to explore the various textbooks that are being used in the Saudi Arabian universities for improving the communicative skills of the ESP students in medical fields. As textbook is the only available source for teachers and learners, it is important to understand its relevance and effectiveness in the process of dental ESP students’ communicative abilities in the Saudi EFL context.

2.7.2 The Evaluation of the ESP courses

Since the primary goal of the ESP courses is to improve the learners’ communicative skills for professional purposes, therefore, the process of evaluation is important to assess the quality and effectiveness of the courses. According to Lesiak-Bielawska (2014) explains that: “It not only requires assessing learners’ knowledge and skills at the end of the course..., but also evaluation of the acquired skills in the light of the post-course vocational and academic experiences of the learners” (p. 24). To make it more explicit, the evaluation process encompasses both ESP students and the textbook/syllabus to assess the learning outcomes and link them to the future goals of students’ and organizations. Lesiak-Bielawska (2014) considers the process of summative and formative assessment as part of the overall assessment and course syllabus may not achieve its expected outcomes unless we apply a rigorous means of evaluation. In the EFL context of Saudi Arabia, it is certainly a novel idea to evaluate the ESP course of dentistry students as empirical evidence does not support the practice in this part of the world.
3.0 Methodology
This study has adopted a case study approach to look into the perceptions of ESP students at a dental department of a Saudi Arabian university and understand the nature of ESP material and its impact on their English proficiency. The case study approach suited the nature of the current study as a case study is: “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context ...where multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 2017, p. 13). Similarly, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2013):

A case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles. ...contexts are unique and dynamic; hence case studies investigate and report the real life, complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance. (p. 289)

Since the focus of this study is on one particular context, one group of ESP students in a dentistry department, the case study will provide insights into the learners’ understanding of the research phenomenon.

3.1 Participants
The participants of this small-scale case study are 12 ESP students in the dentistry department of a Saudi university who study ESP course over the course of a semester to meet the English proficiency requirement of the institute. The students are all Saudi nationals who speak Arabic as their L1 and have studies for one full year in the preparatory year program at the university before enrolling in the dentistry department.

The purposive sampling strategy was used to employ the participants for this study. Purposive sampling allows the researchers to choose the participants who are in the best position to share their knowledge and experience related to the research phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2013). Before the start of the data collection process of the study, the participants’ consent was sought, and they were formally informed about the goals and objectives of the study. They were also informed about their right to withdraw from the study. Their confidentiality was ensured by assigning them pseudonyms, which have been used throughout the findings of this paper.

3.2 Research Methods
This case study has utilized qualitative data techniques to elicit and interpret the ESP learners’ experiences and observation of the ESP material and its impact on their English language proficiency. Qualitative data collection tools equip a researcher to examine “how human beings construct and give meaning to their actions in concrete social situations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 204). Besides, these data collection tools focus on the participants’ understanding of the meaning that they give to the events (Patton, 1990). The current study will use semi-structured interviews with 12 ESP students in the dentistry department of a Saudi Arabian university. The use of semi-structured interviews allows researchers to look into the research phenomenon from the participants’ perspectives and gain an in-depth understanding of it. Due to its flexibility,
structured interviews gave the participants a chance to express their views without any influence of the researcher. The participants shared their opinions about the use of ESP material. The key themes of the interviews were derived from the literature as well as my personal experience of the research phenomenon.

3.3 Data Analysis
The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed. Saldaña (2015) model of step by step qualitative data analysis was applied to develop codes, categories and themes; however, NVivo 10® software was used for this purpose. The initial process of data analysis involved coding of the whole data which led to 150 open codes. Then the identical codes were put together and merged to reduce the number of categories to 70. In the third step, the codes were further brought closer to develop 14 broader categories. The closely linked categories were put against three broad themes. These themes were checked against the research questions to make sure that they are answered, and the key aims of the study are achieved.

4.0 Findings and Discussion
This section of the paper presents the significant findings and discuss them in the light of the reviewed literature. The findings delineate the participants’ views in the form of direct quotes. The presented themes are representative of the participants’ views which directly answer the three research questions.

1. What are the dental students’ perceptions of the ESP course material that is being taught in the Saudi EFL context?
2. To what extent do the dental students consider the ESP teaching material appropriate for developing their field-related language proficiency?
3. How can the existing ESP course material be improved to meet the ESP needs of the dental students in the Saudi EFL context?

4.1 The Inappropriacy of the ESP Contents
The participants’ views show that the ESP textbook, its key contents and the topics that are being covered in the dentistry department of the Saudi Arabian university do not meet the English proficiency needs of the dental ESP students. The data explicitly indicate that the learners want topics that are context-specific and reflect the local culture, so they can utilize the acquired communicative competence and enhance their professional effectiveness. The extracts from the interviews by Sarah, Sonia, Manal, and Yoku (pseudonyms) show that the teaching material and the coursebook contents need significant modifications.

_I believe what we read and try to learn in the classroom, doesn’t give us a chance to make use of outside the classroom. The textbook has topics related to your dentistry field, but I don’t think these topics help us develop our speaking skills._ (Sarah)

_The textbook material is fine for students who study in western countries as the contents are directly borrowed from that context. That’s why I think lots of changes need to be made in order to make it context specific. We need to be proficient in our own context._ (Sonia)
The teaching techniques, the classroom tasks and the topics in the syllabus are OK but I would love more interactions with my peers. For example, group presentations, pair work etc. can be very useful for our learning. (Manal)

A textbook is a key to develop skills. The range of topics covered in our textbook is wide and really nice, but the textbook seems to be outdated and topics look unfamiliar and irrelevant. Sometimes, it’s not easy to link the topics to my personal experience. It often takes me so long to connect myself to the topic of a reading passage. It doesn’t help my comprehension. (Yoku)

There is a visible theme in the data that existing contents of the textbook do not meet the learners’ needs; however, it is worth noting that the learners are aware of their communicative needs as found by Riazi (2003), and Dudley-Evans et al. (1998). As the participants have voiced their concerns regarding the inappropriacy of the course contents, the findings resonate with what Li and Huo (2014) found out that course material and syllabus need to be up to the learners’ expectations. Moreover, the activities and teaching techniques promogulated in the textbook are not of interactive nature and the participants would love to have activities that would involve group work, workshops and problem-solving tasks. The findings are in line with what De Jong (2016) established in her findings.

4.2 Teachers’ Teachability and Its Influence on ESP Dental Students’ Proficiency

The data indicate that the participants are very pleased with teaching material, teachers’ pedagogical techniques and the teachers’ linguistic backgrounds. It is evident from the participants’ interviews that most of the ESP teachers come from the Arab world and speak Arabic as their mother tongue. Their lack of English proficiency has a direct impact on the learners’ motivation and attitude towards ESP material and classroom activities. Moreover, the findings show that ESP teachers often make use of Arabic in the classroom which might have a negative influence on the ESP learners. The teachers’ lack of knowledge about the most top-notch pedagogical techniques is another problem that the participants have outlined in this study. The following extracts are representative of what other participants shared in their interviews.

Our teachers are mostly Arabs. They are very experienced though, but I think they should use more modern techniques to teach their ESP students. (Maria)

Nothing can be done about the course syllabus if the teachers are not willing to make the material interesting. I don’t find most of the teachers’ lessons motivating or interesting because they teach in a very traditional style. (Sana)

I would love to have teachers who don’t speak Arabic as their first language and always use English in the classroom. Sometimes, we need to discuss things which are not related to the lesson and we need to use English. It helps our English language fluency if we speak in English. (Maha)

The old and traditional ways of teaching ESP course do not help us learn and improve our English language skills. I think it’s all about the teachers to make the lessons enjoyable. (Marina)
As this study confirms that the use of learners’ L1 is not encouraged by the participants, the findings are in contradiction to what the literature shows (Bonyadi, 2003; Butzkamm, 2003; Harmer, 2007; Juárez & Oxbrow, 2008; Latsanyphone & Bouangeune, 2009). Nevertheless, the findings of this study are very much in line with previous studies in this area of research (De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Spada & Lightbown, 1999; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Turnbull, 2001; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). In a nutshell, the study suggests that the ESP teachers should avoid the use of L1 in classroom as it might influence the language proficiency of the Saudi dental students in the EFL context.

4.3 Learners’ Awareness of Their ESP Needs
The data indicate that the dental ESP learners are highly motivated and have an urge for learning English and developing their communicative skills. The positive learning attitude of the dental ESP students in the Saudi Arabian university is in striking contrast to the studies reviewed on this topic. For example, previous research studies illustrate that the learners in the EFL context usually lack interest and motivation to learn English as a foreign language and therefore, their negative attitude hinders the pedagogical process in EFL contexts (Brown, 2004; Doyon, 2000; Johnson, 2009; Shah et al., 2013; Sullivan & Schatz, 2009). Nevertheless, this study indicates that the ESP dental students in the Saudi EFL contexts are not only motivated to learn English, but they are very much aware of the learning needs and lacks. The following excerpts show the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of the participants and their acute awareness of their ESP needs.

_I know it’s not an ideal context as we have to study other subjects, but English is very important as we have to read scholarly articles in English to keep our knowledge of the field up to date._ (Rana)

_It's not only for the job purposes that I want to improve my English. In fact, I want to continue my studies and intend to go abroad for further studies. Therefore, I need to work on four skills. I would love to face intellectual challenges in my ESP course, so I can improve myself and score well on proficiency tests._ (Sana)

_We often discuss with each other in classrooms. Our main problem is that we don’t ever use English outside the classroom. So, it’s not going to be easy to speak English correctly. But if we can create an environment in the classroom where all four skills are practiced together along with our knowledge about dentistry, that will really help us a lot._ (Mano)

The findings also show that the participants consider reading and writing as essential skills as they would require read scientific research and write scholarly articles in the field of dentistry. Of course, without being able to read research papers, they would not be able to write and publish empirical research in journals. The findings are similar to what Nguyen (2016) and confirm the fact that writing skills are crucial for ESP students of dentistry even in the Saudi EFL context. The excerpts below are indicative of what other participants expressed.

_The dentistry books are in English. In fact, the articles, research papers, commentary and blogs, everything is in English that we must read to pass the exams or upgrade our knowledge. So, we should have good reading skills. If we get a chance to learn the reading comprehension_
techniques in our ESP class, that will be something huge. We can use the same techniques in our general reading. (Sonia)

I dream to be a published author. I really want to write and publish in peer-reviewed journals in the field of dentistry. I wish our ESP course focuses more on writing skills and prepares us for professional writing in the field of dentistry. That will give us a chance to share our knowledge and research with other dentists in the field. (Sarah)

This is an interesting finding that learners are aware of their reading and writing needs and they can link this necessity to their future goals and aspirations. Therefore, the coursebook material and teaching methodologies should focus on the learners’ lacks, wants and necessities that are based on a strong evidence in the form of needs analysis.

4.4 Implications of the Findings
The qualitative findings of this small-scale study have implications for the ESP courses that are being taught in the dental departments of higher education institutes of Saudi Arabia. The data show that coursebook contents, topics, learning tasks and skill-based activities do not reflect the learners’ needs and learners often feel disconnected to the topics. Therefore, the course designers should take into account the ESP dental students’ interests and background knowledge of the teaching contents to make it a learners’ interest-based course that will benefit the ESP students. The findings also show that learners’ have a very positive attitude towards learning of English language and they are aware of their contextual constraints; therefore, it is significant to consider their ‘wants’ while designing an ESP course for dental students which would ideally encompass all four skills and concentrate on their development of reading and writing skills along with listening and speaking skills. Last but not least, learners demand for competent teachers who are proficient in English language and who would not use the learners’ L1 in classroom. Such teachers would be a source of inspiration and motivation for dental ESP learners in the Saudi EFL context. Since students have a preference for such dynamic and professionally rich ESP teachers, the recruitment teams should consider the learners’ preferences while employing teachers in the dentistry department of higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia.

5.0 Conclusion
The small-scale qualitatively driven case study has aimed to explore the dental ESP students’ perceptions of the ESP material and its influence on their English proficiency. The study has adopted a qualitative technique of semi-structured interviews to elicit the views of 12 purposively chosen participants. The key findings have indicated that the ESP learners in the dentistry department have a very positive attitude towards learning English language in general and ESP in particular. Their awareness of their linguistic needs makes it a significant study in the field of ESP in Saudi Arabia. The findings also suggest that the coursebook contents and material are not up to the mark and the participants have voiced their concerns about outdated, inappropriate and remote topics which are often not in line with the ESP learners’ interest and needs. The findings illustrate that the ESP teachers should use English in ESP classes and introduce learner centered interactive activities that would encourage the students to be more involved in classroom activities. In short, the existing ESP courses in the dental department needs to be revised to make them in line with the learners’ needs and international standards.
6.0 Future Research
This study has a qualitatively driven case study approach to explore the dental ESP students’ perceptions of the ESP material and its influence on their English proficiency. The future research can consider different data collection tools, such as a survey questionnaire and open-ended questionnaires to reach out a wide range of ESP students in the dentistry departments of the Saudi universities to grasp a fuller understanding of the research phenomenon. Moreover, the coursebooks, syllabuses and curriculums need to be evaluated and their appropriacy in light of the modern ESP practices should be taken into account in order to take the existing courses to the next level and meet the international standards. This exercise will certainly require a rigorous research process; therefore, the researchers can consider the task as an important milestone in a bid to evaluate the existing courses and recommend changes to the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia.

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Interlanguage Development of English Complimenting Speech Acts: Strategies of Performance

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Abstract
Every speaker of a native language undergoes an interlanguage continuum or the way that the language learners go through from the first to the second language. Interlanguage is an essential theory for teachers to know what goes on in the learning process. It makes the teachers look at the varieties of mistaken linguistic forms with an eye for improvement. Interlanguage is the main motive to conduct this research. The article aims to analyze the interlanguage used by the Ukrainian participants. The study analyzes how semi-fluent to fluent Ukrainian speakers of English produce compliments as a speech act. Then the results to the linguistic patterns of the same speech act to those used by native speakers of English in the US are compared. Participants were interviewed via a survey to collect the following data: compliment forms, correlation of compliment formulas, Russian/Ukrainian transfer of typical compliments, and common idiomatic complement expressions. The results of this study have cultural implications in the teaching of the second language (English) in the Ukrainian context. To simplify the act of complimenting second language (L2) students, the research suggests some main speech tactics of producing compliments based on metalinguistic awareness and contextual factors. It helps to attain pragmatic teaching goals and supports the interlanguage development of learners to be more productive in their second language.

Keywords: complimenting speech act, interlanguage, pragmatic competence, pragmatic failure, pragmatic transfer

1. Introduction

Second language acquisition is a creative construction, during which the learners are consciously or unconsciously constructing a language system that enables them to understand and produce utterances in the target language (Song, 2012). In this process, L2 learners create mediate mental system – interlanguage (IL). This system is dynamic and flexible. L2 students make many transfer mistakes because they mostly relate the target language to their native language. Teachers see incorrect utterances of learners in a bad light. They over-criticize students and reduce their chances of achievement. The study of IL gives practitioners understanding why learners cannot have perfect mastery of the foreign language at the very beginning and how to cover the distance between first language (L1) and L2. The more language teachers are aware of IL, and its various factors, the more they may be conscious of its importance and thus may be efficient in their teaching practice. The better they can make use of it to improve the quality of language teaching (Song, 2012).

The article aims to analyze the IL used by the Ukrainian participants. It investigates the factors affected or shaped such processes. The speech act of complimenting in this study was selected because American and Ukrainian L2 learners of Ukrainian, Russian, and English, get confused when they try to make or understand a compliment in the target language. Also, the misunderstanding of compliments carries false interpretations leading to pragmatic failure. Another essential aspect to consider was to investigate how semi-fluent and fluent Ukrainian speakers of English can use tributes appropriately, but also to see how their IL takes place in the production of this speech act.

There are research questions in this study: What are the similarities and differences between the two speech communities (Ukrainians speaking English and Americans speaking English) in their expression of compliments? What are the patterns (structures) that American English speakers use to realize a compliment? What are the models that Ukrainian [Russian/Ukrainian] speakers use to achieve a tribute in English? What possible factors contribute to the production of compliments in English from Ukrainian speakers? What strategies this study offers to teach English compliments to Ukrainians and to teach Ukrainian/Russian language compliments to foreigners in the second language classroom?

2. Theoretical Background of the Research

2.1. Interlanguage

The researches consider second language acquisition (SLA) as the process of interaction of three productive language systems. These are (1) the native language of learners, (2) the foreign language competence (interlanguage), (3) the foreign language system (Ellis, 1982; Shahjahan, Shameem, & Thörnryd, 2013; Jäschke & Plag, 2016).

Interlanguage (IL) is a popular term to refer the versions of the target language. It usually contains elements of both the native language and target language (Tarone, 2006). IL is considered a separate linguistic system, which is different from the native language and the target language, existing in the mind of learners, and has no meaning outside that system. (Weinreich, 1968; Selinker, 1992). This is a halfway between L1 and L2. Nemet, (2006) refers IL to an approximative system. Saville-Troike names it as a transfer (positive or negative) in interlanguage development (pp. 18-21). Corder (1981) calls IL universal built-in syllabus that guides the learners in the
development of their linguistic system or transitional competence. It includes phonology, morphology, syntax, lexical, pragmatic, and discourse levels (Oktavianti & Dahlan, 2015). Selinker (1992) identifies IL as a psycholinguistic process (latent psychological structure) of L2 learners. According to Saville-Troike (2006), IL has the following characteristics: systematic, dynamic, reduced system, and variable.

2.2. Interlanguage, language transfer and complimenting speech acts

Language transfer is the sole process of shaping learner language (Tarone, 1988, p.747). Setting up interlinguistic identification across linguistic system L2 learners demonstrate language transfers: native language transfer, overgeneralization of target language rules, transfer of training, strategies of communication, and strategies of learning (Selinker, 1992).

In the context of second language acquisition, transfer broadly refers to the influence of the native language of learner. The extent to which transfer occurs is an essential issue in any general model of second language acquisition. When the impact of the native language leads to errors in the addition or use of a target language, negative transfer, or interference occurs. It manifests in phonetics, phonology, morphosyntax, vocabulary, and pragmatics. This process has an inhibitory effect on mastery of a new language (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse, 2017). When the influence of the native language leads to an immediate or rapid acquisition of the target language, positive transfer, or facilitation appears. It makes the acquisition task straightforward (Selinker, 1992).

Powell investigates what extent is language transfer responsible for the form and function of IL. He debates with extreme views of Lado (1957) who proposes that second language learners rely almost entirely on their native language in the process of learning the target language, and Dulay and Burt (1974) who suggest that transfer was mostly unimportant in the creation of IL (Powell, 1998).

Applied linguists tend to focus much more on negative transfer than on positive transfer. Negative transfer presents teaching and learning challenges. Bardovi-Harlig and Sprouse (2017) describe the understanding of transfer as changing perspectives on the nature of language acquisition. They think that with the discovery of IL, the mentalist perspective becomes dominant. Thus language acquisition cannot be seen not as the acquisition of habits but as the acquisition of mental representations underlying linguistic behavior. Both native and foreign language acquisition have the series of developmental stages (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse, 2017). According to these stages, transfer can be viewed as the influence of the mentally represented native language grammar on the mentally represented IL grammar. This approach shows how shifting perspectives are associated with shifting expectations about the extent of the effects of transfer.

Benati, (2018) reviles three critical principles of the transfer: 1) L2 learners construct a system of abstract linguistic rules; 2) L2 competence of learners is transitional and variable at any stage of development; 3) IL development is affected by cognitive and communicative strategies.

Researchers investigate the transfer of different speech acts, including speech acts of politeness and complimenting (Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Holmes, 1988; Yang, 1987; Nelson, 1993; Yu, 2005; Chang, 2009; Perea-Hernandez, 2017). It shows that IL is an unstable system. It is permeable to invasion by new linguistic forms. This dynamic quality is reflected in tremendous
IL variability (Dickerson, 1975; Song, 2012). The variability of transfer in complimenting may become a transfer trap for L2 students (Takahashi & Beebe, 1993).

Ellis offered classification IL variability. According to Ellis (1992), systematic variability can result from linguistic context, situational context, and psychological context. Two types of non-systematic variability are performance variability and free variability. In this sense, second language acquisition involves a gradual reduction in the degree of variability as non-target language variants (Tarone, 1983; Song, 2012).

2.3. Interlanguage and pragmatic competence

IL of speech act performance in L2 learners refers to pragmatic competence in IL (Koike, 1989; Cai & Wang, 2013). Pragmatic competence is language ability for L2/FL learners to understand and interact with both native and foreign speakers of the target language. Without a proper understanding of the pragmatic rules in the target language, learners may run the risk of coming across as insensitive and rude (Gomez-Laich, 2016). In-depth analysis of Barron shows that acquisition in IL pragmatics provides practitioners with a much-needed insight into the development of pragmatic competence (Barron, 2003). Sabater (2011) investigates practical awareness in the field of IL pragmatics and shows how it influences on L2 pragmatic competence. Target practical features are beneficial for learning pragmatics (Gomez-Laich, 2016).

Takimoto points out the importance of additional metapragmatic information about the target language. It makes L2 students more motivated and attended to the target linguistic forms. Learners can understand functional meanings and the relevant contextual features more intensively (Takimoto, 2012).

Watts believes that it gives L2 learners an understanding of pragmatic features that characterize the target language. He calls it a set of dispositions to act in certain ways, which generates cognitive and bodily practices in the individual (Watts, 2003, p. 149). Convergence or divergence of learners from the L2 pragmatic norms, both consciously and out of awareness, sometimes depends on whether these norms fit their image of self and their L1 cultural identity (Gomez-Laich, 2016; Suszczyńska, 2011). Identity-related conflict can have significant consequences for the acquisition of second language pragmatics. Failing to consider the centrality of cultural identities will produce an inadequate understanding of SLA (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Gomez-Laich, 2016).

Studies in IL pragmatics (Bu, 2012; Cai & Wang, 2013) show that L2 proficiency of learners influences on the occurrences of the L1 pragmatic transfer. Bardovi-Harlig (2014) emphasizes the importance of IL development in the pragmatics of L2 learners. The interpretation of learner forms in conversation is dependent on the inventory of available linguistic devices. During SLA, learners actively transfer knowledge of their native language to generate the missing competence of L2 acquisition. L1 pragmatic transfer decreases with the increase of L2 proficiency in the process of IL development (Bu, 2012; Long, 2008). The higher the proficiency level of English the learners have, the less L1 pragmatic transfer they show (Alhadidi, 2017).
2.4. Contrastive analysis, transfer analysis, error analysis, and IL: facilitation the process of target language learning

Contrastive analysis, transfer analysis, error analysis, and IL are methods used for second language learning investigation. They constitute evolutionary phases in the attempt to understand and explain the nature of the target language performance of learners. Each theory has its view, especially in the attitude toward errors of learners and the explanatory hypotheses regarding the sources of errors (Oktavianti & Dahlan, 2015).

The contrastive analysis aims to provide practitioners the ideas to design instructional materials for development of classroom techniques. (Granger, 2015). Transfer analysis is a new label given to contrastive study. Its fundamental feature is that specific errors in learner performance are the result of native language transfer.

The goal of error analysis is to find out something about the psycholinguistic process of language learning. This method can be considered as a pedagogical technique and exploited in identifying the errors of L2 learners and explaining their sources (Haded, 1998). It enables teachers to draw certain conclusions about the strategies used by the learner in his learning process (Oktavianti & Dahlan, 2015; Khansir, 2012; Azevedo & Corder, 2006).

Corder (1978) maintains that IL is in a restructuring or a recreating continuum that evaluates the role of second language acquisition.

Thus contrastive analysis, transfer analysis, error analysis, and IL are methods that complement one another and constitute four phases with one goal to facilitate the process of target language learning or teaching by studying errors of learners.

3. Methods and Materials of Research

3.1 Method of data collection

The methodology employed in the present research is an ethnomethodology approach since the idea is to work with people in their natural contexts. Thus, researchers are concerned with describing a group, asking questions, etc. The method of data collection used was similar to that of previous studies on compliments such as those from Barlund & Araki (1985), Nelson (1996), and Solodka & Perea (2018).

3.2 Subjects

The number of participants in this study included 81 American native speakers of English as the control group and 157 Ukrainian speakers of English (semi-fluent to fluent) who participated in an online and paper and pencil survey. Ukrainian participants consisted of university students, teachers, and professors of English, and people who knew English from all over Ukraine. The American participants were university students, professors (Portland State University, George Fox University, the University of Texas at San Antonio, University of the Incarnate Word), and people from all over the USA and some other living overseas.

The results indicate 300 compliments in English (control group – American participants) and 250 compliments in English also (experimental group – IL Ukrainian participants) were collected.
3.3 Instrument

To investigate and analyze the variables under consideration for this study, the authors implemented a survey. Questions 2-5 were not asked for the Americans but addressed to the Ukrainian participants. These included: the number of years studying English, the context or situation where they use English regularly, what skills they use in English (writing, speaking, listening or reading), and the percentage of time they use English per week.

Questions for the survey:
1. Please select the profession that identifies you best (Teacher of English, Student of English, Business, Other)
2. How many years have you been studying English?
3. In which situations do you currently use English? (in school/university, with my students, with my teachers, with my classmates, with native speakers of English, in my work (with other users of English), at home (watching movies, TV, reading a book, surfing the internet, listening to music), with my English speaking friends (at school, online, etc.), other
4. What skills do you currently use in English? (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
5. In a typical week, what percentage of time do you use English in any skill category?
6. What is the last compliment that you have given to somebody else? What were your exact words?
7. What tone did you use? Was it sarcastic, sincere, funny, surprised, etc.?
8. Which is your relationship with the person who received the compliment? (friend, acquaintance, stranger, coworker, family member, spouse, significant other, etc.).
9. The person who received the praise was male, female, or a group of people?
10. What was the approximate age of the person who received the compliment?
11. What is the last compliment in English that you have received from a fellow Ukrainian who speaks English as a second language, and what were the exact words?
12. What kind of tone did the person who told you the compliment use? Was it sarcastic, sincere, funny, surprised, etc.?
13. What was the point of the person who told you the compliment? What did the person say?
14. How long ago did you receive the praise (3 hours, 6 hours, one day, etc.)?
15. The person who told you the tribute was male or female?
16. What was the approximate age of the person who told you the compliment?
17. Which is your relationship with the person who told you the compliment? (friend, acquaintance, stranger, coworker, family member, spouse, significant other, etc.)

3.4 Data analysis

The authors established a coding system to analyze and filter all the expressions accurately. First 10 coders analyzed each expression. They codified each one with all the variables to investigate the compliment form or syntactic formula, the attributes praised, the relationship between the giver and receiver of the compliments, the gender between the interlocutors, the frequency to which each group tells compliments, the tone used in the compliments and the overall age of participants. After this, three of the principal investigators analyzed in-depth the variables. They did more in-depth analysis of the semantics of the expressions. Then, the final stage consisted of verifying the categories and the coding with the two PIs who were Ukrainian and American university professors.
4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Characteristics of IL participants (Ukrainian)

It was important for this study to research the experimental group (Ukrainian participants) to figure out what background they had. From 152 participants, the mean was about nine years learning English with a minimum of 1.5 and a maximum of 37 years. In terms of the professions in which they reported they used English, the choices were students of English (44%), teachers of English (10%), business-related professions (15%), and other professions (32%). Another exciting piece of information was the situations under which the participants used or practiced English. They use it in school, at the university, when interacting with teachers, with native English speakers, at home, and with English speaking friends.

4.2. Similarities in the Grammar of the Compliments in IL & American English

In table below, there are the similarities between the American English and Interlanguage English formulas to produce compliments. Still, in addition, we also inserted the syntactic methods provided by the native speakers of Ukrainian from the study of Perea & Solodka (2018) in order to establish the connections from the Ukrainian as first language of participants to their use of the second language (IL English).

Table 1
Similarities in Compliment Form between Interlanguage and American English Compliments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UKRAINIAN</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
<th>INTERLANGUAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREP+PRO + HAVE + (intensifier) ADJ + N/NP</td>
<td>PRO+HAVE+ADJ+NP</td>
<td>PRO+HAVE+ADJ+NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>В тебе такі хороші парфуми</td>
<td>Wow, you have perfect white teeth.</td>
<td>You have excellent pronunciation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Який у тебе гарний парфум! (How good perfume you have)</td>
<td>about how good his wife looks</td>
<td>What a terrific look!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO + (intensifier) + ADJ</td>
<td>PRO+BE+ADJ+COMPLEMENT</td>
<td>PRO+BE+ADJ+COMPLEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Він дуже влучний (He is very accurate).</td>
<td>You will be successful anywhere you go.</td>
<td>You are very brave!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO/ADV+LOOK</td>
<td>PRO/NP+LOOK+ADJ+COMPLEMENT</td>
<td>PRO/NP+LOOK+ADJ+COMPLEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Класно виглядаєш (You look cool).</td>
<td>You look beautiful today. Like a model!</td>
<td>You look so cute. you look great today!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJ(+)</td>
<td>ADJ+NP</td>
<td>ADJ+NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Розумний (Smart)!</td>
<td>Great job!</td>
<td>Good, pretty!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bright-colored eyes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first set of formulas in Ukrainian, English, and the IL used by the Ukrainians speaking English, a good correlation between the three formulas which seems rather apparent: PRO+HAVE+ADJ+NP present in both English and IL, yet very similar to the Ukrainian formula: PREP+PRO+HAVE+(intensifier)+ADJ+N/NP. A similar situation happens with the second formula PRO+BE+ADJ+COMPLEMENT and the Ukrainian formula: PRO+(intensifier)+ADJ. These examples indicate how grammatically Ukrainians may transfer elements of the first language into English positively. The same phenomenon we can find in the next two methods: PRO/NP+LOOK+ADJ+COMPLEMENT vis-à-vis PRO/ADV+V and PRO+HAVE+(intensifier)+N. Therefore, our argument here is to say that there are indeed similarities syntactically speaking from the L1 in Ukrainian, which learners transferred into the L2 in English positively, which allows Ukrainians to form genuine compliments in American English. We also wanted to include the study from Perea & Solodka (2018) as a baseline indicator from this positive IL transfer to explain why the almost perfect correlation between the formulas identified in English and the IL cases.

4.3. Relationship of Compliment Formulas

The authors found an association of the syntactic formulas between the production of compliments by the American English native speakers and the IL Ukrainian speakers (Figure 1). We can see a strong correlation of syntactic models in the NP (Det+Adj+Complement), Idiomatic expressions, PRO+have+Adj+N, I like/love+NP. It demonstrates an excellent acquisition of this speech act in English. Nevertheless, the remaining syntactic formulas, but especially: Interj+intensifier+complement, Question+complement, and Interjection+complement, did not get a good correlation. Therefore, Ukrainian users of English need to look at these other grammatical formulas and work on them to avoid pragmatic failure and polish their IL process.
4.4. Interlanguage Semantic Results

Based on received data, we observe some examples that could explain how Ukrainian participants express compliments in English.

For instance, there are some expressions uttered in English in this way: *very beautiful, very well, well done*, etc. which imply the Russian/Ukrainian transfer of a common idiomatic expression *очень* + adjective as in *очень красивая*. Another typical expression, that learners transferred into English to praise good ability of a person on an activity, skill, etc., is the equivalent in English *good job* (молодец) from Russian.

A different set of examples we found in reported speech compliments: *I told my mother that I love her, I said that my friend painted hair in a beautiful color, I told my girlfriend ‘very good’ because she, in my opinion, answered the questions well, I told the boy to another country that he has beautiful eyes, I told my mother that she is so beautiful*. Thus, in these particular examples, participants misunderstood the task and reported their answers. Other examples include: *about a an elegant hairstyle, about how good his wife looks*. It could be a typical manner in which Ukrainians speak and may answer or merely a pragmatic failure mistake in understanding how to answer the questions in the survey questionnaire.

Other expressions included the use of a determiner + either an adjective, a noun, or a complement such as in the following: *A good answer to the question, a great jacket, a beautiful look*. Others contained a noun phrase construction: *my beautiful flower, my bunny, a cat, my beloved, my dear*. In these constructions, native speakers of American English would be very unlikely to respond to a compliment in this way. Typically, NS of English would add a demonstrative adjective (this, that, those, these, etc.) or will state an Adjective + Noun constructions: *Great jacket*, or *Good Job*. Consequently, we can assume in these types of structures, that Ukrainians, whether they speak Ukrainian or Russian as their native language, typically do not use or have determiners (a, an, the). In turn, speakers overgeneralize the rules of articles. Other expressions seem somewhat metaphoric or poetical: *my beautiful flower; my bunny,*
a cat, my beloved, or my dear. In these cases, Ukrainian speakers may be culturally transferring typical idiomatic expressions of endearment which they typically use in either Russian or Ukrainian (моя дорога, моя дорогая, мий дорогий, мий дорогий). There is another regular phrase uttered from Ukrainian-Russian: my bunny (мий зайчик).

The rest of examples (What a beautiful perfume! What a terrific look! What a grief for such good students!) denote a possible transfer not too frequent in American English compliments through the use of structure what a + adjective + complement. Both Russian and Ukrainian use a very English idiomatic expression that takes the place of what a…. They use the particles in Russian: какая (feminine singular), какой (masculine singular), and какие (plural for both genders). Conversely, the particles used for Ukrainian are: яка (feminine singular), який (masculine singular), and які (plural for both genders).

Ukrainians use typical idiomatic expressions when produce specific compliments. Therefore, some of the sample expressions presented and discussed in English above, are a consequence of transferring the natural formula from the praise Який, Яка = how.

Finally, in some other examples, we noticed the influence of British English as students study this English language variation. Yet, these do not constitute paralinguistic failure or part of their IL process. Thus, in the end, there can be observed some mistakes as part of the grammar acquisition, which are typical of the second language learners. We can see idiomatic expressions as noted above from either Russian or Ukrainian languages that transferred into English.

4.5. Cultural Implications for Teaching in the L2 Classroom

After having discussed the results in this paper, the cultural implications from this study in the teaching of the second language (English) in the Ukrainian context should be pointed out: 1/ For Ukrainians, natural human traits are physical characteristics of people. On the other hand, appearance is a characteristic that can be changed. 2/ Ukrainian speakers are frank in their production of compliments. In different cultures, speakers are more sarcastic. However, Americans tend to be sincerer than Ukrainians. 3/ American males tend to compliment other males, which can cause misunderstanding in Ukrainian culture. 4/ Ukrainian males praise more appearance in females. 5/ Emotions are a reflection of language as perceived in compliments. Thus, it is crucial to be aware of them.

4.6. Strategies for producing compliments

A compliment is a typical improvisation, but this improvisation a speaker creates according to certain semantic models, which acquire specific lexical-semantic content. To simplify the act of complimenting L2 students, we offered some main speech tactics for building compliments. Having analyzed complimenting speech acts produced by native English speakers, we classified them into the following groups:

1. Direct nomination (simple tribute): You have a kind heart. A direct appointment is the most common and straightforward way to express admiration of speaker to the addressee.
2. Rhetorical exclamation: What a beautiful smile you have! These compliments show a high degree of expressiveness. Expressive emphatic construction is the essence of it. As a rule, we use...
it in an atmosphere of friendly communication, since they imply an open expression of emotions of the speaker. It is inappropriate in the official atmosphere.

3. Reported compliment: *Did anyone tell you that you are very lovely?* We use this technique for the creation of an illusion of objective estimation. It is also the situation, when the speaker has no wish to display his/her feeling directly. Using this speech tactic demands from L2 learners the knowledge of grammar structures (reported speech, double negation, etc.).

4. Rhetorical questions: *Why are you so beautiful?*. In most cases, they do not imply a verbal reaction, and if the answer is present, then it is purely formal.

5. Complex (prolonged) complimenting speech act: *I highly appreciate you as an employee, because you are very executive and hardworking.* A tribute requires argumentation primarily in a situation of formal communication. The content of such compliments is, as a rule, intellectual abilities and professional skills of the addressee. These compliments can be called rational.

6. Indication of the origin: *Remarkable costume! It is evident that you have not bought it in the market.* This speech strategy is used, as a rule, among people with a high level of prosperity, who aspire to show everyone that they are more successful than their friends and acquaintances.

7. Indication of the possibilities: *What a voice you have! Even now on the stage!* With the help of this phrase, the speaker evaluates the quality of the addressee as extraordinary.

8. Attracting the attention of other people: *Look! What a beautiful bouquet!* The speaker addresses the other people to tell them about the sign that he/she positively assesses.

9. Surprise: *I did not know that you have such a beautiful sister!* We use a tactic to surprise someone in a situation of a meeting. For example, the speaker emphasizes any changes in the appearance of the addressee (*You have not changed at all!*).

10. Compliment-appeal: *Who are you, a lovely stranger?* The speaker pronounces an expression without undue emphasis on the attention of the addressee.

11. Sophisticated compliment (casual compliment): *I, as a fan of your talent, have read all your books.* This compliment achieves the significant effect very easy: the speaker changes the emotional state of the addressee for the better.

12. Substitution of terms: *Without you, we will die.* The speaker operates with terminology that gives an addressee an overrated estimate.

Some communication strategies are built on the basis of comparison with a certain standard.

13. Compliment-comparison: *Your skin is like a peach!* The possibilities of positive evaluation through comparison are very diverse. The rule of comparison can serve as objects, animals, flowers, etc. Standards of comparison are culturally determined by geographical, cultural, political, etc. features of a particular country, and will be different. A wrong transfer, in this case, can lead to misunderstanding and conflict.

14. Involving the names of famous people: *You are like Megre today!* This speech tactic can cause communicative failures since the opinions of the speaker and the addressee concerning the evaluation standard may not coincide. Also, the addressee may not know the person with whom the speaker compares addressee. It can cause uncertainty in communication. This type of comparison is the most culturally determined since it assumes the knowledge of precedent names.

15. Comparison of the addressee with the addressee: *How you have lost weight!* This speech tactic implies a comparison of the addressee with himself/herself, but at another time, in a different
Compliment on the background of the anti-compliment to yourself: *Your legs are beautiful, small. Not as mine. They are like skis.*

Compliment on the context of a compliment to yourself: *I ask you because I appreciate intelligent people. I am a smart man too. We are a few.* The speaker produces praise as an objective evaluation due to a favorable assessment not only of the addressee but also of the speaker. Such a tribute creates a sense of unity, belonging to one group.

Recognition of personality of the recipient against the background of the environment: *Never could understand the men who hunt for young girls.*

Including the addressee into a positively evaluated group: *I always respected people who know how to live.*

Recognition of the uniqueness of the object of evaluation: *Alice, you amaze me. I have never met such a woman.*

Conditional compliment: *If I were younger, I would have done it for you!* The speaker builds the speech tactic using conditional sentence, which usually begins with the words *If I were ...*

Through the child to the addressee: *What a pretty daughter you have. She is just your copy.*

Implicit (deductive compliment): *Looking at you, I understand why your husband is always so in a hurry to go home.* The degree of indirectness in this compliment is very high. The speaker does not give the addressee positive evaluation explicitly. The addressee understands himself/herself a positive assessment of the statement.

In the process of communication, the speaker can use the set of speech tactics. Their combination strengthens the compliment, makes its impact on the addressee more powerful. We can use these strategies as the base for activities in the classroom that help to attain pragmatic teaching goals and support IL development.

5. **Conclusion**

As we have observed in these preliminary results, there exist numerous implications from this study into the teaching of pragmatics in the ESL, Russian and Ukrainian as a second language classroom. We can see the importance of understanding the syntactical formulas in English and the IL as the means to teach compliments at the university and avoiding pragma-linguistic failure. Students wishing to produce these speech acts can better understand the structure of the expressions and follow the formulas as mentioned above. Adjectives are also essential to consider as part of the cultural lexicon used within those languages and utilize those that are the most familiar in the second language context. Another critical aspect is paying attention to the attributes praised and see how native speakers of English (living in the USA), and reflecting how the Ukrainian participants (living in Ukraine), tend to compliment people in their second language. These results also allow us to take a glance through a window into the cultures. We can see what is valued by different speakers in different situations. A final aspect worth mentioning is the fact that by looking at the Ukrainian formulas (L1) we can establish relationships to the IL formulas in English and see and predict why and how certain expressions are similar in both English and the IL sets as a result of the Ukrainian complimenting. It reflects how Ukrainians think in the second language when producing compliment expressions.
Further recommendations for future studies would be interesting in response to compliments (perlocutionary speech act) to see how native speakers of these languages respond to these expressions. Also, studies aiming to more naturalistic methods of data collection would allow more valid and reliable data to make more accurate generalizations.

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Teaching in a Multicultural and Demanding Society

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Abstract:
What does involve leading a new experience of teaching and learning under the new paradigm of a true knowledge society? Is it about mastering the teaching experience through critical reflection, or knowing the natural and social environment in its multiple interactions? Isn’t it about favoring an educational environment where students are not only limited to participate in a traditional way, but expect to find meaning to their learning experience and be able to build the acquired knowledge? This article allows to identify different stages in the new educational models within a multicultural environment. In other words, a field where teachers are asked to transform their role as exhibitors of knowledge to learning facilitators, and students from spectators to active participants, proactive and critical members in the construction of their own knowledge, acting as a guide in the development of competences that allow students to communicate in a timely manner and complex world. Through different insight and scenarios, practices and methodologies, this article presents a pedagogical tool that could facilitate the organization and the establishment of a follow-up in an actual form and thus contribute to the improvement of the study programs.

Keywords: curriculum design, didactical training, diversity, Foreign languages, multicultural environment, teaching challenges

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Introduction
The teaching-learning process has been a controversial but challenging issue for all the entities involved in carrying out this act according to an ideal dimension. However, to guide an active change of this process, it is relevant to consider a bidirectional transfer of knowledge between teachers and students, since it is about favoring an educational interaction environment where students are not only limited to participate in a traditional way, but their expectations to find meaning to their learning experience are the result of the entire process where they are able to build the acquired knowledge. That would allow establishing a stage of reflection and critical thinking about the current educational situation in both theoretical designs and in the field of reality. In other words, three essential axes - which could favor the research process - are defined between the perception of the teaching-learning act from the perspective and conviction of each participant; interactive action when participating in the classroom or at a distance; and, results of the behavior of the main actors, the educator and the student.

On the other hand, it should be noted that one of the most forgotten topics in the various educational agendas is the anthropological reflection for both the teacher himself, as well as for the students. Questions concerning educational foundation arise without a doubt: who do we educate? from where do we educate? and how do we educate?

The constructivist educational philosophy that has assumed the majority of educational reforms implies certain approaches that should influence educational proposals with an eminently humanistic profile and integrates five basic assumptions: a) the person is a rational being; b) his cognitive ability is essential; c) he has a psychic dimension; d) he is a social being, and e) he is a biological being. This implies that during every educational event, these dimensions of who is implied in the process of learning; who is in charge of facilitating the interaction with students, and under what modality the whole process is carried out should be addressed and analyzed for the beneficial of all the factors included.

Scenes from outsides of the traditional format:
This awareness implies a greater commitment from all faculty and staff members involved in the Teaching process. The new challenges based on the birth of new scenarios and training modalities, and the ability of networks to promote information growth exponentially; the evolution of society and the implementation of technological resources in the information process affect the educational environment in a straight way.

The teacher represents an essential role in the design and creation of interaction environments considered appropriate to the new temporal space coordinates, to the new educational objectives, etc., in such a way that one can understand how the changes influence and affect the students, educators, schools and community. Between the classroom and the possibilities of access to learning materials from any coordinate or specific data through technological tools, the teacher as facilitator faces a range of alternatives to access learning resources, so it is necessary to route with the opportunities of the networks which - without a doubt - add a more global perspective and enhance the communication process.
The changes of the educational models have also influenced the evolution of the modalities of open or distance learning, which favors the approach of flexible educational offerings that serve both students who follow face-to-face teaching and those who are enrolled under distance learning modality or by any of the mixed forms. These changes have required educators to get involved in the design of new pedagogical models and strong support of interactive multimedia technologies. According to Salinas (1995) Communication through different social media networks enhances this new model of more flexible learning and at the same time the appearance of new scenarios such as: learning at home, in the workplace and in a center of multimedia resources.

However, technological availability is not considered as the only fundamental element in the whole process, but rather teachers contemplate in their design – either known as creation, retrofitting or reengineering – the characteristics of learners or learning’s users, who do not identify themselves with the same needs, the same motivations, the same independence, the same work and professional situations, the same conditions and availability, etc., or those who learn from home do not claim the same learning as those who do it from the job, for example.

**Multicultural and Educational Diversity Environment**

Another scenario is that educational establishments in many countries have become a multilingual environment (Perregaux, 1995). The diversity of languages is part of the reality of schools at different levels. From the point of view of learning - as stated by Dolz (2001) - the analysis of students' verbal abilities implies establishing a linguistic profile in accordance with the language of study. The places that recognizes or faces a migratory transit of families are extremely important, a situation that leads teachers to research and seek alternatives to evolve and improve their level of adaptation with cultural and linguistic diversity. In other words, teachers adopt a new curriculum whose content contemplates a new integrated teaching of foreign languages, a challenge considered without any doubt as relevant. A compromise that implies creating an intellectual environment where multilingualism and interculturality are not lived as factors of academic complexity or teacher overload, but – following (Vez, 2011, p. 105) – as stimuli for social enrichment and cultural development.

For this purpose, the need for the teacher to master a foreign language is clearly relevant in the multilingual contexts of today's society. That is why their professional training involves identifying the aspects that influence the language and its uses and concern the treatment of the contents intended for teaching, because it is problematic to teach a foreign language if the oral or written abilities of the educator are limited. Due to its role in interactions with students, it is necessary to recognize the diversity of uses depending on the communication situations. A language is not only an object of teaching, but also the tool of all linguistic learning process. Hence, the teacher training - in itself - reflects a challenge that consists – mainly – of studying didactical transposition (Chevallard, 1985/1991; Schneuwly, 1995; Bronckart & Plazaola-Giger, 1998). That is, it is about studying how linguistic knowledge is transformed to allow its teaching and learning. In other words, the teacher finds himself in the need of establishing a relationship with knowledge and literary culture, to question the source of the references involved and to choose and analyze heritage texts that allow work in that direction.
Another challenge identified as an important human capital in the process deals with the teacher seen as an agent of the 21st century in his teaching phase under the new demand of the educational offer. In a new model based on information and communication technologies, both teachers and educational institutions cease to be the only source of knowledge. Educators become facilitators and advisors for students by guiding them to how to use the necessary resources and tools, monitoring their progress and providing feedback on their progress to acquire new knowledge and develop different skills through new collaborative experiences and thus responding to the challenges of tomorrow's society.

For both Gillett and Wray (2006), teaching should focus on the needs of students in their academic courses and help them to perform better in these activities. Within this academic conceptualization, content-based teaching (Content-Based Teaching) appears as the one that allows students to practice language skills in the process of studying an academic course through the development of speech, reading, listening comprehension, writing, grammatical forms and some sub-skills such as note taking (Pally, 1999).

Although the development of skills that allow academic and cognitive learning through exposure to academic language is highly valued (Cummins, 1981), the availability of teachers who can teach courses in a foreign language is relatively small. As it is stated by Bell (1999), finding teachers trained in teaching a foreign language is a challenge to the extent that those who teach do not generally have the required language experience and lack the academic content that allows them to contribute with a comprehensive training of its students.

Crandall and Kaufman (2002) consider the following factors as challenges for teaching foreign languages in an educational content:

- Identify and develop the appropriate content;
- Motivate teachers to participate in this type of instruction by developing and maintaining communication and collaboration among themselves;
- Develop sufficient knowledge between disciplines and institutionalize this academic practice.

That means that the new profile of teachers would be beneficial if it includes characteristics of creativity, proactivity, availability to research, positive attitude for continuous training, promotion of teamwork, use of all technological resources available to enrich and make more efficient the interaction with students, move from linear education to students-centered education and be skillful to manage their own teaching and learning resources.

Didactical Training importance for Foreign Languages Teachers
Teachers of foreign languages are in the need of basic development tools necessary in their teaching process, and which could be divided into three essential axes: having the academic training to teach languages; being able to develop a new curricular design based on educational competences and finally, becoming pedagogically involved in all interaction processes with students either in a traditional face to face classroom, blended learning environment or distance classes using different technological resources available for this purpose.
These didactical resources implicate a substantial change in accordance with the conditions and needs of the educational act, basically when it refers to the field of education and the level corresponding to learning activities. It is very different when we teach in the elementary section than when we do in middle/high school or at the university level. The teacher's training is directly related to the linguistic competence and the didactic and pedagogical preparation through different training programs.

For the linguistic competence, teacher need to be involved in continuous trainings if the requirements surrounding the entire process consider the economic cost to be spent, the dedication effort and, the commitment and discipline to pursue a progressive improvement. Another requirement that reflects a positive impact at both professional and personal level is the study abroad. It is suggested that every educator in charge of teaching foreign languages should consider the option of experiencing a period of three weeks in a specific country of interest at least every three years, for immersion, linguistic practice and social and cultural contact. On the other hand, there is no doubt that seminars and courses referring to the teaching context itself provide updated experiences and lessons. Another reason that aim to the importance of every foreign language teacher to be committed to follow a training process at least once a year.

Teachers in charge of distance education are crucially needed especially for students without access to language schools in their communities. Teachers find themselves in the need of taking an approach that guarantees independent, self-regulated, responsible and developer learning, and at the same time promote the integral development of the student's personality, so that he acquires knowledge and develops skills to learn, learn to do and learn to be. It is important in this endeavor that the teacher does not lose sight of his role as facilitator and adviser, he has the responsibility in this mode of design, organization and control of the activities that make the learning process happens smoothly, through which the student will build knowledge. (Maldonado, 2016)

In dual education, it is recommended that teachers keep a close connection with the professional environment in which students develop their learning skills, as well as being involved in a comprehensive education that includes transversal competencies and allows to have the ability to adapt to different social and economic contexts. Likewise, it must permanently evaluate the relevance of the educational programs that allow the anticipation of the market’s requirements and/or demands. (Martínez; Ramos & Briano, 2016)

It is also important that multilingual schools encourage and involve their teachers in a series of professional and development trainings to contribute to educational plurality; that is, to enable the teaching of other languages besides English – as a second language that is taught almost uniquely in public schools –, since learning foreign languages implies knowing and understanding diversities and contexts in an equal relationship. Through the knowledge of more than one language, students are offered the possibility of being acquainted with other realities and cultures, as part of belonging to the new world of globalization, multiculturalism, and interculturality, for which they should be prepared through knowledge of more than one language. It is also important to highlight the cultural strengthening that reflects a high impact on the studies and helps cultural motivations and vocations to be enhanced.
Teaching practice:
"Send a soldier to a war without any weapon" is an expression used to metaphorically say that someone has been ordered something, without providing him with the indispensable and minimum tools to perform his task. That is what happens when teachers are given a syllabus (sometimes not even that) and are assigned one or more groups in some course. It is not surprising that teachers still use very little so-called teaching resources, except for hardcopy books already assigned. On one side, they are not usually provided with sufficient resources according to the demands of modern society; In addition, there are not always favorable and concrete circumstances to produce and use many of the teaching resources.

And on the other side, there are still few teachers with enough training in this field. That leads us to make a guideline to reflect on the profile of the teacher of foreign languages. Is he a teacher like any other? Each one conceives or poses the teaching in a particular way, having to teach according to his own vision or personal interpretation of the teaching developed through experience, trying, at the same time, to discover and reach the best way to apply the Linguistic knowledge of the practice, which is not easy.

Teaching a foreign language requires a series of skills, abilities, attitudes and aptitudes. The teaching competence should be characterized, among other reasons, by a true pedagogical and didactic training. Such teaching competence, as Mendoza, (1994) refers to:

Teacher's set of knowledge, skills and behaviors that seem to motivate a better student performance (…) The professional competence of the teacher is determined by the specific training that he has received and by the way in which it has been assimilated and nuanced according to his own capacity for self-training (beliefs) (…). The training process focuses on the critical assessment of the relationship between problems and solutions; according to this criterion, training is understood as permanent observation and assessment and as a pedagogical pragmatic. (p241)

Undoubtedly, the intervention of the teacher is decisive in the success or failure of the learning of his students since, as Montijano (2001) warns, we want to believe that there is a direct correspondence between the quality of the teaching performance and the effectiveness in learning and, therefore, "teaching performance can be seen as the best aid for learning, if it really provides students with meaningful communicative experiences, triggers of authentic learning."( p. 29)

Curriculum Design
Each teaching process requires standards based on which the assessment is measured. One of those that can be recognized as valid is the design of the curriculum, considered - following Cristan (2010) - as an “inclusive capacity or power that allows us to make it an essential instrument for speaking, discussing and contrasting our visions of what we believe is the educational reality”, and which is expected to meet several criteria such as:

- Be useful to meet one or more social needs;
- Curriculum objectives must be attainable under really important circumstances, that is, they must be “realistic”;
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- The curricular objectives must be evaluable, that is, it must be possible to determine in some way whether they are being achieved or not, whether they have been achieved or not;
- Be consistent with the educational policy and philosophy contained in the applicable laws in this regard;
- Be a guide concrete enough so that everyone's effort contributes to the achievement of the same goals;
- Be useful for the satisfaction of the needs and expectations of the students considered as individuals;
- The selected contents must be relevant for the achievement of the respective objectives and thus contribute to the integral education of the student;
- The lessons to be achieved, proposed in the curriculum, must be designed in such a way that they are coherently integrated into the material and intellectual reality of the student;
- The curriculum must be in line with the degree and type of student's average development in biological, psychological and cultural aspects; and,
- The curriculum should be prepared considering the really available resources, or those that are feasible to have in the relatively near future.

Landing these criteria to the area of foreign languages, a curricular design whose structure is multidimensional and with a vision of fostering the development of cognitive and strategic skills that are considered key to language learning would be needed. This design would include four outlines developed separately before being integrated into a single program:

- The first would focus on knowledge of the language as a means of communication. Its structure will include aspects of phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and pay attention to acts of oral production. In addition, no specific content or teaching material would be provided. Its objectives will be achieved through the material provided during interaction.
- The second one would deal with cultural issues and focus on sensitizing students about multilingual culture, allowing to understand intercultural relationships and deepening their understanding of the multicultural reality especially in their environment. The dimension of tolerance will be developed when living in a multicultural society.
- The third would contemplate a communicative study plan based on real experiences that highlight strategic aspects of communication. It would focus on involving students in experiential activities of daily life by performing linguistic exchanges, projects in foreign culture contexts… etc., thus allowing them to develop their communication skills. It should be mentioned that these experiences may be in the intellectual, social, sports field … etc.
- The fourth structural framework of the design would focus on general linguistic education; whose objective is to lead the student to achieve some autonomy in their language learning. When developing and evaluating your own generalizations about the structure and functioning of French as a foreign language, you should acquire skills that are useful for learning other languages.

Research studies lead us to reflect on the fact that the practice of foreign language teachers is characterized by two fundamental aspects: learning about teaching and teaching of teaching. What involves the acquisition and development of a wide range of skills, knowledge and competencies.
These aspects are complicated by cognitive and affective tensions present in practice that influence learning and professional growth.

In the words of Rosemberg (2011), there is a need to promote new and better training activities as a result of the rapid changes in the world and the speed of knowledge production. These training processes must transform traditional practices based on teachers' conceptions as simple reproductive technicians of knowledge elaborated by others. Learning then a foreign language implies the design of a set of didactic strategies that contemplate the use of the native tongue. A configuration process that allows to organize learning in an understandable and meaningful way, because the acquisition of a language is more creative than mechanical.

**Conclusion**

Considering all the inquiries and in order to improve this practice, it is necessary to adopt certain guidelines that have a communicative approach and involve the development of tasks and contextual actions including functional competencies whose focus is the use of language for specific purposes; the linguistic, lexical, grammatical and phonological competences that contemplate the knowledge of the formal resources from which one can assemble and formulate well-formed and meaningful messages; and, sociolinguistic and intercultural competencies that include the knowledge and skills necessary to address the social and cultural dimension of language use. It is important to adopt a methodology that prioritizes oral language and is based on the natural acquisition of languages, which leads to the development of listening comprehension, oral production, reading comprehension, written production and interaction skills.

The motivation of teachers plays a significant and influential role in the communication process, so the teacher has a great responsibility to be a linguistic model. He needs to demonstrate a positive attitude towards the acquisition of the new language and its culture; guide students to be responsible for their own progress, managing and organizing activities within the classroom; develop the communicative approach among students stimulating the degree of their curiosity and creativity. On the other hand, the space where the process takes place should be enabled for the teaching and learning of foreign languages. The favorable conditions allow to pass without difficulty from individual work to group work. Free and useful spaces are required for the representation of dialogues, exhibition of posters, material prepared by the students, library… etc

The importance in our today's society of the new Information and Communication Technology resources becomes a necessity that requires continuous promotion, as they serve as a vehicle for learning the contents of the area. However, their use in the classroom must be accompanied by adequate planning to achieve the desired objectives. ICT resources favor the autonomy of learning.

For this curricular concretion, the cycle is maintained as a unit of programming and evaluation. The procedures, attitudes and assessment criteria need to be related to each of the objectives, considering the functional, linguistic, sociolinguistic, sociocultural and intercultural aspects.
As a language teacher, I believe that the goal is to help students become efficient, creative and critical users. In the words of Van Lier, (1995, pp. 23-24), language teachers must ensure that people manage to use languages to develop themselves and the world in which they live. We need to study both languages uses and policies in educational contexts and pedagogical processes involved in teaching and learning languages.

Rather than transmitting information, the responsibility of knowing how to articulate in a relevant and creative way the different types of disciplinary and professional knowledge that I master when I plan, promote, conduct and evaluate the learning processes; and, on the other hand, the function of acting as a guide in the development of competences that allow students to communicate in a timely manner in a changing and complex world. As Martínez (2006, pp. 180-181) states, the language teacher must grow as a person with autonomy, master the teaching practice through critical reflection, know the natural and social environment in their multiple interactions and generate attitudes that allow support opinions and commitments.

An innovative experience would be planning the teaching process based on social daily life contexts and diversity of students. In addition, integrate basic notions from their native language into target languages contexts and teach them simultaneously. It would create an active interaction environment that would allow a consistent follow-up to the development of both oral and written learners skills. It will not only focus on school programs, but will adapt them to the needs of students. The assessment process would cover common skills and consider being rational to the requirements of each environment. Dealing with any new curriculum design involves the influence of social media demands on the educational system to go through a noticeable change by including programs and pedagogical resources that apply integrated teaching of different foreign languages.

As a didactic sequence proposal (Dolz, Noverraz & Schneuwly, 2001), teachers will have the ability to choose and adapt materials, texts, and activities to their classroom’s reality, design a multilingual curriculum and put it in practice, being aware that developing their teaching-Learning process requires an essential training and continuous development workshops.

Having in our hands, as educators, the cognitive destiny of students, being able to influence their freedom of thought and forge an ethical framework, is of relevant importance; So, let's review our beliefs and truths about the person, and try to outline the vision we have regarding the educational, since without pretending it we are always configuring and contrasting the student with models, whose foundations can be decisive for their future. Efforts should be more focused on how to develop the new training paradigm to gain access to a true Knowledge Society.

Acknowledgement:
This an original work based on the challenges faced when it comes to teaching foreign languages in a multicultural and demanding society.

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A Comparative Research on Perceived EAP Competencies of Turkish Academics

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Abstract
English is presumed as the globally dominant language in the scientific world, and academics are expected to attain written and verbal competencies in academic English to a visible, accessible academic portfolio that represents them as individuals as well as their institutions. The present study was meant to investigate perceived English for Academic Purposes (EAP) competencies of Turkish academics. It exclusively aimed to reveal whether they significantly differ in their perceived EAP competencies regarding such variables as gender, length of academic experience, length of teaching experience and training received abroad. Data were collected via a five-point Likert-type scale developed by the researchers, and quantitatively analysed to explore similarities and differences across different groups of academics in relation to such variables as gender, length of experience in academia, academic titles, training experience received abroad, experience in teaching abroad, number of scientific publications and paper presentations in English (last five years). The findings revealed significant differences in academics’ perceived competencies in EAP related to training experience received abroad and experience in teaching abroad regardless of its length and number of paper publications/presentations in English over the last five years. Based on the findings, a positive correlation was established between the participants’ EAP competency in speaking and other skills. The study is meant to contribute to the existing literature on EAP via and offer practical implications for EAP practitioners and non-native academics.

Keywords: Academic language skills, English for Academic Purposes, English as academic lingua franca, Turkish academics
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Introduction
The globalization of the economy and science has made English the language of research, education and technology (Cargill & Burgess, 2017). It is the world-wide means of written and oral communication in academia. Indeed, it is called “the academic lingua franca” (Mauranen, et. al., 2016, p. 183) or “English as an international language of science” (Tardy, 2004, p. 247) in the global academic community. It is the language with which researchers share their research with colleagues throughout the world, gaining academic visibility and accessibility. This puts pressure on non-native speakers in academia in all disciplines to publish in English (Burgess et al 2014, p. 72; Cargill and Burgess, 2017). In fact, according to Meneghini and Packer (2007):

English has become the modern lingua franca in a world that is economically, scientifically and culturally largely dominated by Anglo-American countries. Any scientist must, therefore, master English –at least to some extent- to obtain international recognition and to access relevant publications. But although this makes communication between scientists much easier, it also creates problems for non-English-speaking countries. Even if their scientists are able to read English publications, to reap the societal benefits, they must still translate this knowledge into a national context. (p.112)

Besides writing for publication, Basturkmen (2016) argues that spoken events based on or involving dialogic interaction in academic environments such as conferences and seminars play a significant role in professional communication with scholars, which makes academic speaking is a significant part of academic literacy.

English for academic purposes (EAP) refers to language research and instruction that focuses on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular groups in academic contexts (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). It dates back to the 1960s when EAP training courses, generally lasting from four to 12 weeks, prevailed among British and American campuses as more international students appeared (Zhi-feng, 2015). Its purposes may range from ”teaching international modules, chairing and participating in meetings, presenting a paper at an international conference, tutoring exchange students in clinical practice, to preparing articles for publication” (Gulden, 2008, p. 2017). Although academic writing is often the primary focus of EAP, in the 1990s second language acquisition (SLA) researchers began to pay more attention to speaking in EAP (Franks et al., 2018).

Karakaş (2012, p. 174) emphasizes that the use of English whether for written or communicational intentions is primarily based on practical vocational activities chiefly including research, and exchanging information or ideas concerning their fields of study with their colleagues from different countries, mainly from outer and expanding circle locations, through various communication tools or in person. According to Jingmei and Dewen (2014), more than 120 American universities offer degree courses in EAP on technical communication and magazines with indications on how to publish EAP research articles, and it is commonly offered for students attending Romanian and Hong Kong universities.

In the Turkish context, the British Council (2015) underlines that the teaching of academic English should be improved at all university levels (preparatory program, undergraduate and...
graduate education, in-service program) and among academic staff within the framework of a state-funded program in Turkey. This could also be achieved through the encouragement of global collaboration in research, international student mobility, academic staff mobility, and revision of EFL preparation programs (Adams et al., 2011).

Even though a great deal of research has been conducted on the significance and necessity of EAP worldwide, limited number of studies have been carried out with a focus on EAP competencies of academics in Turkey. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no research has previously covered Turkish academics' perceived competencies in English academic skills regarding such factors like gender, academic title, training/ teaching abroad experience, educational background, and publishing/ presenting scientific papers in English (for a given period). The term of perceived competency used in this research refers to the self-evaluation of the academics' skills in EAP. In order to bridge the research gap, and to contribute to the existing literature, the present study was motivated to reveal perceived EAP competencies of Turkish academics working at a state university in Turkey. It primarily sought answers to the following research questions:

1. Do Turkish academicians significantly differ in their perceived EAP competencies regarding gender?
2. Do Turkish academicians significantly differ in their perceived EAP competencies regarding the length of academic experience?
3. Do Turkish academicians significantly differ in their perceived EAP competencies regarding the type of academic title earned?
4. Do Turkish academicians significantly differ in their perceived EAP competencies regarding the length of training received abroad?
5. Do Turkish academicians significantly differ in their perceived EAP competencies regarding experience in teaching abroad?
6. Do Turkish academicians significantly differ in their perceived EAP competencies regarding the number of scientific publications in English (last five years)?
7. Do Turkish academicians significantly differ in their perceived EAP competencies regarding the number of paper presentations in English (last five years)?

Previous research

The review of literature has shown that most of the related studies have been carried out with a focus on the general EAP general competencies and pedagogy (Jingmei & Dewen, 2014; Chen & Zhang, 2015; Khamis et al., 2015; Solikhah, 2015; Zhi-feng, 2015; Li, 2017), and academic writing mainly with the participation of undergraduate students (Chou, 1998; Akyel & Özek, 2010; Kakh et al., 2012; Srikrai, et al., 2016; Nimako et al., 2018). Divergently, Araki and Rapahel (2018) studied the EAP speaking skills of Japanese undergraduate students, whereas Basturkmen (2016) emphasized EAP practices and dialogic interaction. Hitherto, as noted earlier, slightly less attention has been paid to EAP practices of academics, which constitutes the motivation of the present study. Buckingham (2008) conducted a study on academic writing competence Turkish scholars from various subject areas who regularly publish articles in English, and concluded that despite high exposure to English, participants still face linguistic difficulties in developing their own L2 scholarly writing abilities.
Karakaş (2012) remarks that Turkish academics need and use English in non-native contexts and mainly with non-native speakers of English for various reasons and purposes and that they experience a large number of misunderstandings and difficulties in the use of English for work-related purposes. Burgess et al. (2014), on the other hand, attempted to identify the needs of Spanish researchers in terms of research publishing skills in both English and Spanish and to learn about their attitudes, motivations, and experiences of research publication and writing training.

In a comparative study, Atai and Taherkhani (2018) explore the similarities and differences between language instructors' and content teachers' cognitions, and practices in teaching reading, speaking, writing, and listening at Iranian medical sciences universities. The researchers concluded that language instructors and content teachers are strongly recommended to work cooperatively to enhance the teachers’ choice of methodological options in EAP instruction. They also highlighted that more systematic EAP teacher education programs are strongly needed to attain this objective. Finally, Durmuşoğlu-Köse et al. (2019) performed a needs analysis of the Turkish academics and graduate students studying different disciplines in Turkey. The findings indicated that the participants needed most of the competencies questioned in the survey, and their needs were language-skill specific rather than discipline-specific. The participants mostly emphasized academic writing competencies, which supports the assumption in the literature that productive skills are the most challenging skill to improve for learners.

**Research Design**

**Sampling**

The participants of the study were 90 non-English major Turkish academics working at a state university in Turkey (22 Females, 68 Males). They were selected through the purposive sampling method, which is “the process of selecting a sample that is believed to be representative of a given population” (Gay et al., 2009) and in this way “the researchers can target attributes within a specific population and obtain a sample of individuals with those attributes” (Haegele & Hodge, 2015, p. 70). The demographic features of the population sample were varied and summarized in Table 1. Most participants held a doctoral degree (72%), fewer held a master's degree (21%), and even fewer a bachelor's degree (7%) in different disciplines ranging from engineering through health sciences to education and archaeology. Their academic titles ranged from the full professor and associate professor (44%), through assistant professor (27%) to research assistant (29%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Background</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Title</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paper publication in English is usually awarded a higher score than similar works published in Turkish while evaluating the associate professorship requirements in Turkish higher education.

²Paper presentation in English is usually awarded a higher score than similar works presented in Turkish while evaluating the associate professorship requirements in Turkish higher education.

The participants also differed regarding their professional experience. Namely, those with 0-5 years of experience and those with 16+ years of experience were equally represented in the sample (32.2%). The participants with 6-10 years and those with 11-15 years of professional experience constituted slightly over 22% and 13% of the population, respectively. More than three-fourths of the participants reported that they had not received training abroad (77.8%). Similarly, a large number of them reported no experience in teaching abroad at the time of data collection (76.7%). 14.4% and approximately 8% of them reported they had received training for less than a year and over a year in a foreign country, respectively. Likewise, slightly over 15% and less than 8% of them informed that they had taught in a foreign country up to a year and over a year, respectively. Lastly, 33% of the respondents reported having no publication in English, and approximately 50% reported having presented no paper in English over the last five years. The breakdown of these responses across academic titles is reported in Figure 1 and Figure 2.
As indicated in Figure 1, one-sixth of the full professors and one-seventh of the assistant professors reported that they had not published a paper in English for the last five years (17% in both cases), while a higher number of associate professors reported the same (25%). Lastly, 39% of the research assistants stated they had published no papers in English for the last five years.

Figure 2. Number of paper presentations in English (last five years)

Figure 2 shows that the academics who reported they had presented at least one paper in English at the scientific events for the last five years outnumbered those who had not regardless of their titles. Namely, 75% of the professors, slightly over 71% of the associate professors, approximately 80% of the assistant professors and 58% of the research assistants appear to have delivered an oral presentation at international scientific events where English was identified as the common language. The data were gathered from them through a scale developed by the researchers, which is outlined in the following section.

Data Collection & Analysis

Data were collected via a five-point Likert scale developed by the researchers. In the first place, the scale created by Berman and Cheng (2001) to elicit academic writing proficiencies of international students in America was adapted into Turkish, and the expert opinion of two faculty members specialized in educational measurement and evaluation was received on the suitability of the "scale" to the research objective and research question(s). They found the "scale" inadequate in addressing our research objectives due to the fact that it was primarily designed to evaluate perceived EAP difficulties of non-native undergraduate and graduate students living in Canada. Subsequently, a pool of 35 Likert-type items were created by the researchers to evaluate perceived EAP competencies of Turkish academics, and each item was pointed from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Cronbach’s alpha .98). Likewise, sub-dimensions of the scale were measured highly reliable (Speaking .96; Reading .95; Writing .97 & Listening .93), as shown in Table 2.
As indicated in Table 2, all sub-dimensions of the scale except speaking and overall EAP skills were calculated as high (Reading: 3.93±0.91; Writing: 3.67±1.17; Listening: 3.46±1.14; general EAP skills: 3.59±0.99) (5-1=4/5=0.80; 1-1.80: very low; 1.81-2.60: low; 2.61-3.40: moderate; 3.41-4.20: high; 4.21-5.00: very high). With this finding in mind, the scale was administered to the participants who were visited at their office. Their responses to the scale items were quantitatively analysed through SPSS 15.0.

Results and Discussion

The first research question of the study was meant to reveal whether the participants significantly differed in their perceived competence in EAP concerning gender. The independent t-test results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Academics’ perceived EAP competencies based on gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-dimensions</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>x̅</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-1.31</td>
<td>0.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>-1.31</td>
<td>0.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>-0.59</td>
<td>0.555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3, no significant difference was found among the participant academics’ in terms of perceived competencies between genders (p>0.05).

Table 4 presents the findings across types of educational backgrounds.

Table 4. Academics’ perceived EAP competencies across educational backgrounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-dimensions</th>
<th>Educational background</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>x̅</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The statistical results suggest that the participant academics who held BA, MA and Ph.D. at the time of the study do not significantly differ from each other in their overall perceived EAP competency and sub-competencies in EAP (p>0.05). Table 5 illustrates the test results related to the academics' perceived EAP competency concerning their academic title.

Table 5. Academics' perceived EAP competencies based on the academic title

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-dimensions</th>
<th>Academic title</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>x̅</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Full Prof.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assoc. Prof.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assist. Prof.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Res. Assist.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Full Prof.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assoc. Prof.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assist. Prof.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Res. Assist.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Full Prof.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assoc. Prof.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.22</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Res. Assist.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Full Prof.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assoc. Prof.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assist. Prof.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Res. Assist.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>Full Prof.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.771</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.04</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Res. Assist.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.02</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants did not significantly differ in their perceived EAP competencies across academic titles (p>0.05). Subsequently, they were compared through the ANOVA test to figure out whether...
their academic experience significantly influences their perceived competencies in EAP. The statistical results are outlined in Table 6.

### Table 6. Academics’ perceived EAP competencies based on experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-dimensions</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>x̅</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16+ years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
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<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16+ years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
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<td>3.49</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
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<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.08</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16+ years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
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<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16+ years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.573</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16+ years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 6, academics’ experience ranged from less than a year to more than 16 years; however, these differences do not appear to influence their perceived competencies in EAP skills. In other words, no statistically significant difference was measured among the participant academics across different durations of their experience (p>0.05).

The academics’ perceived EAP competencies were also compared through the t-test in terms of their background training received abroad. The test results are summarised in Table 7.

### Table 7. Academics’ perceived EAP competencies based on training abroad experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-dimensions</th>
<th>Study abroad</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>x̅</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 illustrates that perceived EAP competences of the participant academics were largely counted high and very high (5-1=4/5=0,80; 1-1,80: very low; 1,81-2,60: low; 2,61-3,40: moderate; 3,41-4,20: high; 4,21-5,00: very high). Nonetheless, the t-test results showed that the academics considerably differed in their degree of perceived EAP competence about their training abroad experience. Namely, those who stayed abroad for training purposes appeared to be more competent in all EAP skills except reading [Speaking (t=2,77; p<0,05); Writing (t=2,32; p<0,05), Listening (t=2,30; p<0,05); & Reading (t=2,57; p>0.05)]. Based on this finding, it could be stated that training abroad contributes to their perceived competencies in interactive skills such as listening and speaking as well as writing.

The t-test results related to the academics’ perceived EAP competencies and the length of training they received abroad are demonstrated in Table 8.

Table 8. Academics’ perceived EAP competencies based on the duration of training abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-dimensions</th>
<th>Duration of study abroad</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>x̅</th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>1 year and less</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1+ years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1 year and less</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1+ years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>1 year and less</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1+ years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>1 year and less</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1+ years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>1 year and less</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1+ years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 8, the participants' perceived competencies in EAP skills were measured high and very high regardless of the duration of their training stay abroad (5-1=4/5=0,80; 1-1,80: very low; 1,81-2,60: low; 2,61-3,40: moderate; 3,41-4,20: high; 4,21-5,00: very high). Similarly, the statistical results showed that they do not significantly differ in their perceived EAP competence concerning the duration of their study abroad (p>0.05). Thus, no difference was found between those who stayed abroad for educational purposes less and more than one year, respectively concerning their perceived competencies in EAP.

The independent samples t-test results related to the academics’ perceived EAP competencies and experience in teaching abroad are displayed in Table 9.
As seen in Table 9, academics have high perceived competencies in EAP regardless of their teaching abroad experience. However, those who taught abroad tend to have significantly higher perceived competencies in overall EAP and speaking skills as opposed to those who did not [Speaking (t=2,23; p<0.05), Overall (t=2.00 p<0.05)]. This particular finding might be interpreted that teaching abroad significantly contributes to the improvement of overall EAP skills as well as speaking academic English of the academics.

The statistical results related to the academics’ perceived EAP competencies and length of teaching abroad experience are provided in Table 10.

As shown in Table 10, the participant academics' perceived EAP competencies were high and very high (5-1=4/5=0,80; 1-1,80: very low; 1,81-2,60: low; 2,61-3,40: moderate; 3,41-4,20: high; 4,21-5,00: very high). However, no statistically significant difference emerged among the academics who had previously taught abroad in terms of their perceived EAP competence about the different duration of their stay abroad for teaching purposes (p>0.05). The statistical findings on the academics’ perceived EAP competencies and having published in English for over five years are shown in Table 11.
As indicated in Table 11, those who had published at least one paper within the identified period displayed significantly higher perceived competencies in overall and sub-skills of EAP than those who had not [Speaking (t=2.32; p<0.05), Reading (t=2.43; p<0.05), Writing (t=3.56; p<0.05), Listening (t=3.48; p<0.05) & Overall (t=3.08; p<0.05). This result might also be evaluated that publishing papers in English considerably improves perceived EAP competences of the academics.

The statistical results related to the academics’ perceived EAP competencies and having delivered oral presentations in English during scientific events for over five years are portrayed in Table 12.

The statistical findings in Table 12, show that the academics significantly differed in their perceived competency related to EAP in general (t=4.38; p<0.05) as well as speaking (t=4.04; p<0.05), reading (t=3.09; p<0.05), writing (t=4.95; p<0.05), and listening (t=4.03; p<0.05) depending on whether or not they had presented a paper in English for the last five years. In other words, the academics who have delivered an oral presentation in English for the last five years
reach significantly higher scores than those who have not. Subsequently, the Pearson correlation analysis was administered to the results obtained from the scale.

Table 13. Pearson Correlation Analysis Results: Sub-dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-dimensions</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Speaking</td>
<td>0.72**</td>
<td>0.81**</td>
<td>0.85*</td>
<td>0.92**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Reading¹</td>
<td>0.87**</td>
<td>0.76*</td>
<td>0.91**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.88*</td>
<td>0.96**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.92**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-EAP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

** p<0.01 ¹Converted normal scores

As shown in Table 13, a positive and meaningful correlation was found between speaking and reading (r=0.72; p<0.05), EAP speaking and EAP writing (r=0.81; p<0.05), and EAP speaking and EAP listening (r=0.85; p<0.05). These results could be interpreted that the academics with high perceived competence in EAP speaking tend to have higher perceived competence in EAP reading, writing and listening. A similar correlation was found between the academics' perceived competency in EAP reading and EAP writing (r=0.87; p<0.05), EAP reading and EAP listening (r=0.76; p<0.05), and EAP writing and EAP listening (r=0.88; p<0.05). To put it differently, those with high perceived competence in EAP reading tend to have high perceived competence in EAP reading and EAP listening, and those with high perceived competence in EAP writing tended to have high perceived competence in EAP listening.

Conclusion

The current research primarily probed perceived EAP competencies of Turkish academics working at a state university in Turkey. The data were gathered through a five-point Likert scale developed by the researchers, which was proved highly reliable (Cronbach’s alpha scores: Overall .98; Speaking .96; Reading .95; Writing .97 & Listening .93).

The research has indicated no statistically significant difference among the participant academics' perceived competencies in EAP skills regarding such variables as gender, experience in academia, duration of training abroad experience, and duration of the study and teaching abroad experience. However, the findings have shown that the academics significantly differ in their perceived competencies in EAP concerning training abroad experience (especially in EAP listening, EAP speaking and EAP writing), teaching abroad experience (especially in EAP speaking and overall EAP), publication/presentation of a paper in English for the last five years (all skills). The research also investigated the relationship among the academics' perceived EAP sub-competencies. The statistical findings have yielded a positive correlation between their perceived competencies in EAP speaking and EAP reading, EAP writing, and EAP listening. This suggests that EAP speaking competency may positively influence the competencies in other EAP skills. Besides, the academics’ perceived EAP competency in reading was found in a positive correlation with their perceived EAP competencies in writing and listening. A similar correlation was also found between their perceived EAP writing and EAP listening competencies.
The results suggest that training and teaching abroad experience may have a positive impact on Turkish academics’ perceived EAP competencies regardless of the duration of their experience. Namely, those who reported no training and/or teaching experience abroad tended to have lower perceived competencies in all EAP skills except reading. In light of this particular finding, they could be encouraged to participate in exchange programs and/or to involve in international projects where the communication is established and maintained via English.

Another finding of the research is that publishing articles and presenting papers in English have positive influence on Turkish academics’ EAP skills regardless of their frequency. Therefore, academics should be encouraged to publish their works in international journals and to participate in international scientific events –if possible.

Considering the findings that the EAP speaking competency positively influences competencies of other EAP skills, and that EAP reading competency seems to have a similar influence on EAP writing and listening skills, the organization of courses and seminars on EAP could be recommended to improve EAP skills of non-native academicians and graduate students. Likewise, especially to improve their EAP speaking competency, speaking clubs could be organized under the guidance of academics whose majors are English. The academics in concern should also be encouraged to read and write research papers instead of falling back on the translation by others. Through first-hand experience, their understanding and writing, and especially their field knowledge will increase more in quality and quantity (Karakaş, 2012). As noted in Olkun (2006), general to specific scientific writing should be integrated into courses from primary education onwards in Turkey. From the perspective of higher education, program developers should be informed about the significance of EAP and encouraged to design discipline-specific academic English programs and courses. Introducing these into higher education curriculum, especially as a compulsory part of the related program, is strongly believed to improve EAP competencies of degree students particularly at the tertiary level.

This study was limited to the investigation of perceived EAP competencies/difficulties of restricted sample size (90 non-English major academics working at a state university in Turkey). Hence, further studies could be conducted with the participation of non-English major academics resided in other countries to compare its findings with the ones reported here. Future studies could also explore perceived EAP competencies and/or difficulties of academics working at different departments to see whether they significantly differ in terms of their major.

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ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8166-974X

References


Appendix A.

EAP COMPETENCY SCALE FOR NON-ENGLISH MAJOR ACADEMICS

Dear Colleagues,

This survey was motivated to reveal Turkish academics’ perceived competencies in EAP. The findings to be elicited here will be orally presented during a scientific event. We hereby acknowledge that your personal information will not be shared with third parties. Thank you very much for your invaluable contribution.

Researchers

Academic Title: _______ Academic Experience: _______ (Year) Educational Background: _______

Age: ______ Gender: ( ) F ( ) M

Did you receive training abroad? ( ) Yes ( ) No Length of training abroad (if you did): ______

Did you teach abroad? ( ) Yes ( ) No Length of teaching abroad (if you did): ______

Number of papers published in English for over 5 years ______
Number of papers presented in English for over five years ______

Please choose the option that best describes your opinion.

[1: Strongly disagree; 2: Disagree; 3: Undecided; 4: Agree; 5: Strongly agree.]

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I can discuss a wide variety of issues, clearly expressing their opinions and reasons for those opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I can participate in an informal debate, refuting, exemplifying and requesting further information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I can make academic requests and replies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I can establish written communication with formal and informal institutions and organizations in English (e.g. e-mail).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I can use persuasive language to convince others to adopt their point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I can use skimming and scanning techniques to get the gist of a text and find specific information in complex texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I can critically read and analyse a variety of complex texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I can identify genre, purpose, tone, bias, and author’s stance in a text and understand the role of style in relation to these.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I can identify and follow the stages of a written text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I can evaluate the reliability and credibility of a variety of texts, including those found on the Internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I can synthesize information for use as evidence of supporting ideas in research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I can understand and expand on a wide range of academic vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I can write correctly-structured and cohesive paragraphs for inclusion in essays or research reports, using topic sentences, supporting ideas and relevant evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I can plan, draft and edit a piece of writing in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I can write a well-structured and cohesive argument essay with a clear thesis and logical development of that thesis, including a refutation of the opposing point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I can identify the purpose of a research report and analyse the parts and functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I can formulate and administer a questionnaire for the purpose of creating a report from this research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>I can generate graphs and tables using research results, and interpret them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>I can synthesise primary and secondary research into appropriate discussion sections and paraphrase ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>I can refer to any research cited in their writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I can create all sections of a report, including executive summary, introduction, methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion and recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>I can listen for signals and discourse markers in lectures which indicate important ideas etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>I can use several techniques for listening and note-taking e.g. symbols and abbreviations, using lecture notes and PowerPoint slides, spider diagrams, linear method, tables, Cornell Method etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>I can take notes from detailed explanations and write summaries from such notes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceptions and Practices of EFL Pre-service Teachers about Reflective Teaching

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Abstract
Current theories of teacher education and teaching expertise as a process consider teacher/student teacher reflection one of the main ways of learning how to teach effectively. Such theories of teacher expertise reinforce the claim that teachers who engage in reflective practices can develop a deeper understanding of their teaching, assess their professional growth, develop informed decision-making skills, and become proactive and confident in their teaching. Given the importance of reflective teaching, this case study focused on exploring pre-service teachers' perceptions and practices of reflection in teaching. Three student teachers took part in the study. Portfolios, reflective journals, observations and discussions were used to collect the data. The qualitative analysis showed that pre-service teachers generally believed that reflection was useful and helpful, particularly at the beginning of their teaching experience. Then, it became just a repetitive routine act. Analyzing pre-service teachers' practices, the study indicated that student teachers’ reflection was general, brief, and mostly descriptive in nature. Pre-service teachers did not really engage in effective reflection practices. The study suggested that there is a need for reconsidering reflective teaching in undergraduate courses of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

Keywords: beliefs, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), expertise, portfolios, practices, perceptions, pre-service teachers, portfolios, professionalism, reflection, reflective teaching, reflective writing, student teachers, tacit beliefs, teachers

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need for reflective teaching. Initiated by Dewey’s and Schon's models of reflective practice during the 1980s, the concept of reflective teaching flourished in response to the call for professionalism in teaching. Reflective teaching aims at helping teachers broaden and deepen their teaching through the on-going examination of their practices. Such examination assists teachers to uncover tacit beliefs and consider alternative practices and their consequences. With reflection, teachers can bridge the gap between their beliefs and classroom practices leading them to act critically rather than reactively.

Formerly, it was a common belief that only experienced teachers can be reflective. Nowadays, many teacher educators consider reflection a necessary requirement not only for in-service teachers, but also for pre-service teachers that can lead them to professional growth and expertise in teaching (Farrell, 2008). Most of the studies in the literature focus on reflective teaching of in-service teachers. However, very few studies deal with pre-service teacher’s perceptions about reflection. Most importantly, few of them explore student teachers’ reflective practices considering reflective tools such as reflective journals and portfolios. This study is an attempt to explore pre-service teachers’ perceptions about reflective teaching. It also tries to investigate student teachers’ reflective practices. More specifically, the study is set out to answer the following questions:

1. What are EFL student teachers’ perceptions about reflective teaching?
2. What are EFL student teachers’ practices of reflective teaching?

Literature Review

Different attempts have been made to define the elusive concept of reflection in the literature. These attempts and debates reflect the continuous efforts to arrive at a consensus about reflective thinking. Nevertheless, the proposed definitions share the underlying theme that reflection is a special form of thought. Beginning with its originator, Dewy (1933) defines reflection as an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief in light of its original sources and consequences to which it leads. Also, Ross (1989) defines reflection as a form of thinking about educational issues to which one tries to make rational choices and assumes responsibility for those choices. El-Okda (2008) maintains that reflection is a special type of thought associated with professional practice in which the practitioner tries to de-routinize it and uncover the tacit beliefs underlying it. Hence, a reflective teacher strives to de-routinize teaching by considering alternative routes and their consequences to uncover the tacit beliefs underlying habitual actions.

Reflective teaching is a chief means of developing professional growth and expertise in teaching. Osterman (1990) comments that not only does professional growth depend on developing new ideas, but on modifying the old ones that have been shaping behavior through reflection. Essentially, reflective teaching paves the way to expertise in teaching regardless of a teacher’s years of experience. Teachers usually come with beliefs about teaching and learning that have been formulated through years of being students and, later, teachers. These tacit beliefs are not always translated into actions. Reflective teaching helps in bridging the gap between teachers’ beliefs and actual practices. Farrell (2004) comments that one way of exposing gaps between teacher beliefs and actual classroom practice is to encourage teachers to engage in reflective practice.
Different classifications of reflection have been suggested based on time, process, level, and stages (Farrell, 2004; Lee, 2005; Schön, 1983; Van Manen, 1977). Schön (1983), for example, introduces the concepts of reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action based on two frames of time. Reflection-in-action happens while the action of teaching is taking place in the classroom. Reflection-on-action is teachers’ reflection after teaching occurred in the classroom. On the other hand, Van Manen (1977) offers three levels of reflection: the technical, the practical, and the critical. The technical level is the lowest level of reflection in which the teacher considers the effectiveness of the practices to achieve lesson goals and objectives. In the practical level, the teacher reflects on the assumptions that support his/her actions and the consequences of such practices. The critical level of reflection encompasses the first two levels but, more importantly, considers moral and ethical criteria. Smyth (1989) maintains that there are four sequential stages linked to questions, which lead teachers to critical reflection: (1) describe (What do I do?), (2) Inform (What does this mean?), (3) Confront (How did I come to be like this?), and (4) Construct (How might I do things differently). Taking into consideration the different classifications of reflection in the literature, Lee (2005) comments that the meaning of reflection in educational research has changed over time to include both reflective thinking as well as non-reflective thinking.

Recently, reflective teaching research has grown rapidly, given its importance in teachers’ professional growth. Different studies have been conducted to explore reflective teaching among both in-service and pre-service teachers. A’Dhahab (2009), for example, investigates seventeen EFL in-service teachers’ perceptions and practices of reflective writing as a teaching requirement in Oman. The analysis of the questionnaire, reflection document, and the interview results indicates that teachers have positive views about reflective writing. Contrary to these positive beliefs, only half the participants write reflections on a daily basis. Further, their reflective writings represent an inadequate understanding of reflection. Most of their reflective writings are descriptive with some evaluative statements about how successful the lesson was. The study recommends a reconsideration and improvement of the required reflective writing in Oman.

Further, Fakazli and Gönen (2017) explore the perceptions of eight EFL university instructors regarding different reflective practices. Several reflective tools, including diaries, video analysis, and peer sessions, were used for reflective practice after some training. The analysis of the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and reflective writings indicates that the participants recognize the usefulness of the reflective tools to their professional development in spite of some negative perceptions regarding the time and effort required.

Azizah, Nurkamto, and Drajati (2018) examine the reflective practices of two EFL pre-service teachers. The analysis of the open-ended questionnaire, interview, and documents shows that the two pre-service teachers practice reflection in, on, and for action, i.e. while the lesson is taking place, after the lesson, and before the lesson, respectively. The study strongly recommends reflective training of pre-service teachers to help them engage in real critical reflection.

The above studies generally indicate positive perceptions about reflective teaching, but mixed findings regarding reflective practices. Actually, considering the fact that reflective
practices are analyzed from different perspectives necessitates the need for more studies on reflection. Further, most of the studies in the literature focus on in-service teachers rather than pre-service teachers in spite of the fact that they represent the foundation of teaching as a profession. This study attempts to enrich the body of literature by exploring EFL pre-service teachers’ perceptions and practices of reflection.

**Methodology**

**Participants**

The participants were three female pre-service teachers from the English Department at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. The participants were chosen based on convenient sampling and their willingness to participate. Besides the preparatory year, university students spend four years studying at the department. They take courses in Linguistics, TEFL, Translation, and Literature. Considering TEFL in particular, university students take two TEFL courses. The first course introduces them to the different methods and approaches developed throughout history. The second course aims at preparing them for teaching as a profession through tackling topics of teaching the different skills and sub-skills, lesson planning, classroom management, etc. In the last semester, the students are required to practice teaching in schools for 11-12 weeks (all working days except Wednesdays as they go to the university). In the first week, the students familiarize themselves with the school, the administration, English teachers, and the school resources and facilities. In the second week, they attend classes to observe how English teachers teach their students and assist them. Starting from the third week, the student teachers begin to teach by themselves, and supervisors attend to observe and evaluate them. The participants in this study had their training semester at an intermediate school. They spent 11 weeks where they completed the English course with the school students. The following is a table showing the participants’ grades in TEFL courses and their GPA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Grade in TEFL 1</th>
<th>Grade in TEFL 2</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data collection instruments**

The study adopted a triangulation design to collect the data. Data triangulation assists in obtaining data from different resources; hence, enriching and deepening the results of the study. Additionally, it increases the validity and trustworthiness of the study results (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Specifically, the data were collected through portfolios, reflective journals, observations, and discussions.

**Portfolio**

The student teachers were required to build their portfolios during their teaching experience at the school. The portfolios contained their data and CV, their academic records, school acquaintance forms, school teacher observations, and peer review observations. They further divided the portfolios into two sections: curricular and extra-curricular activities. In the curricula section, they included all the lesson plans, the activities implemented, worksheets, samples of
quizzes and exams, a list of students’ names and marks, pictures of games, realia, posters, and any teaching aids. The extra-curricular activities contained morning English broadcast, projects, copies of wall magazine articles, sample pictures of an open assembly, and any orientation or event executed by the student teacher. At the end of the portfolio, the researcher asked the student teachers to write a final reflective essay on the entire teaching experience, and on reflective teaching itself for the purpose of the study.

**Reflective journals**

The student teachers were requested to keep a journal where they record their thoughts after each lesson. They were asked to write spontaneously focusing mainly on reflection rather than worrying about grammar or spelling. In order to guide them in the reflection process, the researcher informed them that they could ask themselves several questions after each lesson, probe into their answers and write them down. They were requested to take their time and write as much as they could to reflect on their teaching philosophy, what went well during the lesson and why, what problems they encountered, why they encountered them, and how they could overcome them.

**Observations and discussions**

As their supervisor, the researcher attended a lesson to all the three student teachers every week. She read and commented on their lesson plans, followed up their portfolios, observed and evaluated them. The evaluation was based on different criteria including personality, preparation, presentation, use of teaching aids, and classroom management. After each observation, the researcher asked the student teacher to reflect on her lesson, discussed the strengths along with the weaknesses, and provided her with feedback. There were also discussions of reflection and what they wrote in their reflective journals. Generally, the discussion for each student teacher usually lasted about fifteen to twenty minutes.

**Data analysis**

Generally, the data about perceptions and practices were systematically analyzed considering patterns and topics repeated among the three participants using the Constant Comparison Method. The data were broken down into communication units, coded, compared and contrasted and formed into categories. The comparison was examined in individual participants and across all the participants. A quantitative analysis was also followed in analyzing student teachers’ practices. Further, Lee’s (2005) three levels of reflection were considered. According to Lee, the depth of reflection is classified into three levels:

- **Recall level (R1):** recalling and describing the situations without considering alternatives.
- **Rationalization level (R2):** observing relationships between teaching experiences and interpreting them in accordance with the rational through answering “why” questions.
- **Reflectivity level (R3):** analyzing those experiences for future improvement.

Enhancing the validity of the results was also a continuous process. Starting from triangulation of data and prolonged commitment, to the quantitative analysis of the result to support qualitative analysis and avoid subjectivity.
Results

Perceptions about reflection

Student teachers’ perceptions about reflection were generally positive, especially at the beginning. They perceived reflection as a helpful tool that assists them through their teaching experience. To them, reflection is a record in which they express their thoughts after each teaching experience in order to keep the good teaching acts, focus on the problems encountered, and consider plans for improvement:

A: “Self-reflection is a way to assist your progress. After each class, you write feedback about how your class was, what went wrong, and how you would change it next time.” “You set aside every time you finished your class and assist yourself. This helps to make sure you know what you are doing.”

B: “Self-reflection was very helpful at the beginning. I benefited a lot from it.” “It was an outlet and reference at the same time.”

C: “The reflection I wrote after each class helped me so much. It made me better than yesterday.”

They believed that reflection helped them develop and plan coming lessons through avoiding the mistakes in previous lessons.

A: “It helps to avoid mistakes and come up with new strategies for teaching to help students and you as a teacher.”

B: “Each time I faced problems, the first thing I thought about was: I have to write this problem down in my self-reflection to remember it and avoid it next time. There were also good things that happened, and I was excited to write about them in my self-reflection.”

C: “It helped me not to repeat the mistakes that I did.”

Specifically, they maintained that it allowed them to notice how they can manage classrooms, time, and activities.

B: “There were some problems I faced with time management, students and activities in class, I write them down to learn and benefit from them.”

C: “It helped me in dealing with students. It also helped me in varying the explanation method and become creative.”

Yet, they believe that reflection is important only at the beginning. By time, it becomes a boring repetitive routine act.
A: “The only disadvantage is that by time it becomes a little bit boring or maybe because you feel like you are going on and on in the same circle; therefore, I think it should be for the first five weeks.”

B: “By moving forward in training, it was difficult to find any problem or anything new to write about. So, the most helpful reflections were at the beginning of the training.”

One of them believed that these reflective writings are for me to follow what they are doing:

C: “It helps the supervisor to know what we do every day, how was the class, what activities we used, the problems and the solutions.”

Reflective practices

Basically, student teachers’ reflective writings are considered short and brief and they become shorter as time passes on. This result reflects their perceptions of reflection as a useful and important practice only at the beginning. Looking at their reflective writings, for example, one can quickly notice that their early writings, though short by themselves, were longer than their late writings. Table 2 shows the difference in the number of words in the participants’ reflective journals in the first week of teaching compared to the last week.

Table 2. The number of words in the participants’ reflective writings in the first and last week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student teacher</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>First week</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Last week</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>First week</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Last week</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>First week</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Last week</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another feature of student teachers’ reflective practices is that they are mostly descriptive or narrative in nature. The student teachers began their reflection with a general evaluative statement about the lesson and how it was. They express their feelings. Then, they generally described what happened, what they explained, what went well, and if there were any problems they encountered. Even when the researcher asked them about their lessons in the discussion following the observation, they began to give general statements and described what happened, what they felt was effective, and what needed improvement. Further, their reflections focused mostly on the students and what they understood or did rather than on the teaching experience itself. Here are some of each of the student teachers’ writings in the reflective journals at different times (the beginning, middle, and by the end of training):
A¹: “The class was the first period, so the students were little bit sleepy. If I asked them to raise their hands to participate only few students did so because the class was early. I decided to divide them into four groups, and each group will get a star for the correct answer. Slowly they become very active and cooperative.”

A²: “Today’s lesson was about adverbs of frequency. As I thought, it was easy to explain, and they understand it quickly. I gave them examples and then we did some of the examples in the book. After that, we watch the video and we discussed the broadcasting and what we should do about it.”

A³: “Today’s lesson was about grammar (there is/ there are). What I loved by this time is that the students are more comfortable to give me examples on their own. They were shy and hesitate, but now they are much better.”

B¹: “In today’s lesson, I divided them into groups. Their understanding of the lesson become much better, also they participated more than usual, but actually they were noisy little bit. Maybe I should separate some girls from the other.”

B²: “Everything works good today. I finished every part in its exact time. But students weren’t very active. Maybe because that there are a lot of new vocabulary and it was hard to pronounce. I will try to simplify it next time.”

B³: “Today’s lesson was grammar. It was good. I didn’t face any problem. The students were active, and I saw the best of them. The time was enough, and we enjoyed the class.”

C¹: “Today’s lesson was about around the home. They were so enthusiastic because I did some activities. I gave them cards and put inside them pictures of home chores, then I asked the students to come and choose a card and guess what does it mean. I gave them objects to use when they act such as t-shirts, sponge, dish, towel, and socks. After that I presented a video about house chores. I felt that they wanted activities every day. They love games.”

C²: “My class was good. The students were so active because the period was on early morning. The rule of (and & but) was so easy to them that is why they were so active. I answer the round up with them, then I gave the students worksheet about (and & but). The group who won, I gave them chocolate.”

C³: “My class was good, I answered with students the exercise in workbook and gave them the grades.”

In addition, their reflections are sometimes repetitive. They also reflect on similar problems such as, grammar explanation, student participation and understanding, time and classroom management. Table 3 shows the problems they commonly share in their reflective writings and their frequency:
Table 3. Problems commonly reported in student teachers’ reflective writings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Times reported</th>
<th>Samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Time management                   | 6              | B: “It is the first time I take the whole class and I fail in managing time. The period finished before I do the comprehension questions. I really wasted my time in many things.”  
B: “I can’t manage my time with extra activities.”  
C: “Time is over before I finished my lesson.” |
| Classroom management              | 6              | B: “Today’s class was horrible. It was the last period. There was noise everywhere.”  
B: “I asked them to answer and write their answers on the board if it is correct. They become noisy.”  
C: “Some of the students talk to each other while I was explaining. I asked them to stand up for 5 minutes.” |
| Student participation             | 12             | A: “The class was the first period so students were little bit sleepy. If I asked them to raise their hands to participate, only few students do so.”  
B: “The class were lazy to participate. Maybe the subject was grammar, so they weren’t active.”  
C: “It was the last period and Thursday. The students were sleepy.” |
| Grammar explanation              | 4              | A: “The grammar took longer than I expected.”  
A: “Today’s grammar was about personal pronouns. As I expected that they were very confused about them.”  
B: “I felt that my students didn’t understand the difference between some and any. Their faces while I was explaining were like: we are lost.” |
| Administrative issues             | 5              | B: “There was a problem in the time, because there was a change in the schedule and I wasn’t informed.”  
C: “We have problems with the periods of classes.”  
C: “The students are bored because it is the last period. I will talk to the deputy principal to change it.” |

In some cases, they do not offer solutions to the problems they encounter. Further, they sometimes generally state that they would do their best or they would look for a solution without specifying it.

B: “The class were lazy to participate. Maybe the subject was grammar so they weren’t active. One student refused to participate completely. I tried with her then she gave me little attention. Perhaps there weren’t anything to attract their attention. I have to change my way in explaining grammar. I will try a new strategy.”

C: “They weren’t enthusiastic about grammar. They prefer vocabulary and reading but I will do the best to make them like grammar.”
C: “The time was over before I finished my lesson. The introduction wasn’t good but next time, I will do the best.”

Taking these features together, it can be recognized that most of student teachers’ reflective practices come under the recall level (R1) of Lee’s (2005) three levels of reflection. Sometimes, they move to the second level where they rationalize their practices interpreting why they believed something happened in a certain way. Yet, they rarely practice real critical reflection that helps them to uncover their tacit beliefs. Even in the discussion following the evaluation, the researcher sometimes asked them about a certain problem and why they believed they encountered it, or why they acted in a certain way to help them rationalize or critically reflect on their practices, but they began to describe or relate it to administrative issues. For example, student teacher A constantly complained that the class students did not participate. When I asked her why, she related that to having the class as the first period in the schedule. But after observing her, I noticed that the class students did not participate because her instructions and questions were not clear enough and the classrooms students were not following her.

Actually, they sometimes recall and describe administrative issues rather than teaching practices. For example, in one of student teacher C’s reflective writings, she stated that “My class was good, but some students were bored because it was the last period.”, then she extensively described how she would change it by talking to the deputy principal. In another writing, she fully explained how she substituted the classes with another teacher because she took permission to leave early.

Discussion

The results show that pre-service teachers’ perceptions about reflection are positive. They believe that it was helpful during their teaching practice at the school. It helped them to notice and record what they actually did and improve their teaching through developing solutions for the problems they encountered. Yet, they think that the importance of reflection was temporary. It was useful only at the beginning but became a repetitive routine act with time. This actually indicates that they have misconceptions about reflection. They consider it as a way of writing down their thoughts about their teaching practices and how to develop them rather than an on-going process to explore and de-routinize teaching. Such findings echo the results in previous studies (A’Dhahab, 2009; Al-Jamal, 2012; Azizah, Nurkamto & Drajati, 2008; El-Dib, 2007; Fakazli & Gönen, 2017)). Al-Jamal (2012), for example, found that Saudi EFL teachers’ perception of reflection revolved around their understanding that a teacher needs to find alternative routes and solutions to problems encountered. In this regard, Lee (2005) argues that the process of reflective thinking should not just discuss progress towards the solution of a problem, but rather the degree of awareness of the situation; the process and progress should be viewed together. Teaching training is not enough for developing reflective teaching. It is just a milieu in which pre-service teachers can practice reflection. In reality, reflection training is needed before teaching training itself because reflective teaching does not develop with experience; rather, it is a learned skill (El-Dib, 2007).

The misconceptions about reflection are also reflected in pre-service teachers’ reflective practices. Their reflections are general, short and become shorter with time. Further, they are mainly descriptive or narrative in nature, impeded with some repetition of shared problems that
focus mostly on students rather than on the teaching experience itself. Basically, most of their reflections occur at the first level of recalling and describing teaching practices, with some reflections in the second level of rationalizing. However, they seldom involve deep critical reflection that uncovers tacit beliefs. In other words, student teachers did not consider why they were doing what they were actually doing. They focused mainly on how the students reacted rather than on the sources behind their practices and how they were formulated in a way that can help them develop new practices. Similarly, in her study of EFL teachers in Oman, A’Dhahab (2009) hardly found any instances of deep critical reflection in which classroom events were critically analyzed to develop decisions carried forward to subsequent lessons. Al-Jamal (2012) also comments that teachers lack in-depth reflection as they seem to be unaware of the multiple reasons for problems, or their beliefs and assumptions that guide their choices. Reflection is not about describing teaching acts and developing solutions based on students’ reactions. Rather it occurs when “teachers subject their own beliefs about teaching and learning to critical analysis, take full responsibility for their actions in the classroom, and continue to improve their teaching practice.” (Farrell, 2008, p.1). In other words, reflective teaching occurs when teachers identify problems and anything they do routinely, question why they do it, try to uncover the underlying beliefs, then break the routine by experimenting with alternatives and consider the consequences for such alternatives.

Conclusion
Reflective teaching is the impetus for professional growth. With reflective teaching, teachers can become experts in teaching not through routinized years of teaching experience but through expertise. The skill of reflection is not gained through experience, no matter how long it is, but through learning how to critically and thoughtfully consider teaching acts and what motivates them in order to consider alternative routes and their consequences. Hence, reflection should be considered in designing EFL syllabi. Practically, reflective training should be a condition for teaching training of pre-service teachers before the teaching training itself. Criteria for reflection also need to be part of the student teacher evaluation. In reality, reflection needs to be considered not only in pre-service teacher programs but also in in-service teachers’ professional development programs to increase the understanding of teaching as an on-going process of development. Portfolios and reflective journals are indispensable tools lying at the heart of any reflective teaching experience. Technology can also be utilized to develop reflective practices through the use of e-portfolios or online communities of practice in which teachers can share their ideas in online discussion boards.

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Rhetorical Move Structure in Abstracts of Research Articles Published in Ecuadorian and American English-Speaking Contexts

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Abstract
A growing body of literature recognizes the importance of examining research article (RA) abstracts in particular disciplines. RA abstracts, after titles, are the first mini texts that readers may encounter in a scientific paper. Abstracts, therefore, determine the value of the paper and categorize them as good or vague. The present contrastive study aims to investigate the rhetorical organization of RA abstracts published in native and non-native English-speaking countries. It adopts Hyland’s (2000) rhetorical structure model: introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion. A corpus of eighty RA abstracts written in the fields of humanities (education and sociology) and science (electronics and agronomy) and published in Ecuadorian and American journals between the periods of 2010-2016 constitutes the target data for the analysis. The results show rhetorical variation in the construction of RA abstracts across the four disciplines. These abstracts followed a non-hierarchical five move structure with three stable moves, as of M2, M3, and M4 sections. Research findings add to the claim that in academic writing, different discursive conventions and discourse community practices influence writers’ preferred rhetoric and composing patterns.

Keywords: abstracts, native and non-native contexts, rhetorical organization, scientific papers

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Introduction
The massive production of knowledge and the necessity to spread scientific information have made English the language for the dissemination of academic research. Over 95% of academic papers across disciplines are published in this language (van Leeuwen et al., 2001). Indeed, with the number of studies published every year, the English language is perhaps the main source in academia (Swales & Feak, 2009). Even journals publishing articles in other languages require that authors include the English translated versions of the original abstracts (Kafes, 2012). English abstracts increase the opportunities for spreading the research articles (RA), both nationally and internationally.

The use of English RA abstracts in academic publications has led to extensive attention being paid to how writers present the new knowledge to the academic discourse communities (Hyland, 2000; Lau, 2004; Swales, 1990). Much research on RA abstracts has been widely investigated across disciplines and languages (e.g., Lorés, 2004; Samraj, 2002; Pho, 2008; Doró, 2013; Çakir & Fidan, 2015). Because abstracts are the gateways to knowledge production and the first “mini-text” freely available online, they provide readers with a brief description of the study, “helping readers decide whether to read the whole article or not” (Huckin, 2001, p.93). Abstracts are a clear reflection of the entire document in such a way that the information content influences readers’ interest in scanning or skimming the paper (Lorés, 2004). Thus, if the text is accurate in terms of content and structure, readers can follow it, moving easily from one sentence to another and from one paragraph to the next.

Hyland (2009a) points out that, “a text carries meanings and gains its communicative force only by displaying the patterns and conventions of the community for which it is written” (p.34). Abstracts, depending on their readability, may show readers that the paper as a whole is worth reading whereas their ill-construction diminishes the possibilities of indexing and citation. However, writing accurate texts are challenging, particularly for inexperienced writers, who report difficulties at following the rhetorical norms set by their discourse communities (Sedan, Erkan & Jingjing 2016). The knowledge of the rhetorical moves —discoursal or rhetorical units to determine the communicative purpose of the texts (see Swales 1990), and writing instructions, to some extent, provide writers with the guidance to produce better abstracts, in terms of lexical-grammatical choices and appropriate discourse structures. The present research study examines the rhetorical move structure of abstracts in scientific papers published in Ecuadorian and American journals and written in the fields of humanities and science.

Theoretical Background
The publication of research articles (RA) written by native and non-native academic writers has greatly increased in the academy. Hyland (2009b) states that “research articles are central to the academic enterprise” (p.1) because they are shorter than books and written about very specific disciplines. Researchers, on the one hand, have kept their interest in the rhetorical development and organization of texts as a social construction of the language (e.g., Halliday, 1994), and, on the other side, they have focused on analyzing the accuracy of written texts, in terms of content and structure (e.g., Hyland, 2000). Since then, much research has examined the hierarchical and non-hierarchical move structure and linguistic realizations of RA abstracts produced by authors from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (e.g., Dos Santos, 1996; Lorés, 2004; Kafes,
Rhetorical Move Structure in Abstracts of Research Articles

Viera

For example, Kafes (2012) found that the hierarchical structure in the majority of the abstracts written by American, Taiwanese and Turkish authors was the *purpose (M2), method (M3) and product (M4) sections*. This result is in line with those of Pho (2008), who identified that introductions and conclusions are the least frequent rhetorical structures across the disciplines of applied linguistics and educational technology. In the same way, Dos Santos (1996) observed that *M2, M3, and M4* were compulsory in the field of applied linguistics and that each move employs specific lexico-grammatical choices to drive its communicative goal. Samraj (2002) meanwhile discovered that unlike Kafes, Pho and Dos Santos’ study, *conclusion (M5) sections* frequently occurred in the whole corpora of RA abstracts. As the frequent occurrence of moves relies on social dimensions, for instance, disciplinary practices and discourse conventions, the structure and organization of texts are not hierarchically constructed. That is academic discourse conventions orient and influence writers in adopting *disciplinary-oriented practices* when introducing their works, which to some extent, vary according to the writer’s intentions and preferred rhetoric.

In another seminal study, Suntara and Usaha (2013) report that abstracts in the field of applied linguistics compared to the linguistics texts followed a non-hierarchical structure with four stable moves, whose functions are to state the purpose, methodology, results, and conclusions. *Introduction (M1)* moves, due to their less frequent occurrence were categorized as non-obligatory in both linguistics and applied linguistics sub-corpora. The variation in the structure and organization of written texts, to some extent, is the result of the linguistic and cultural diversity across disciplines. Similarly, Lorés (2004) argues that the rhetorical organization of abstracts differs from one another because authors follow established discourse community practices, which in many cases, embody different functions.

In a comparative analysis of abstract written in English by native and non-native speakers of the language, Çakır and Fidan (2015) observe that native English writers tend to justify the place of the study before announcing the research purpose while non-native authors described the purpose without referring to the place. These rhetorical differences could be attributed to cross-linguistic background and expectations of the discourse community who decide whether the article is worth reading. Lau (2004) discovered heterogeneity in the organization of abstracts written by novice writers. They showed three rhetorical patterns, as of 1) *M1-M2-M3-M5*, 2) *M1-M4-M5* and 3) *M4-M5*. The distinct rhetorical patterns employed by novice authors could be the result of their inexperience in academic writing and lack of awareness related to the conventions of discourses, disciplinary practices, and phraseology used in the production of written texts. In this way, Doró (2013) points out that abstracts with less than three moves are often considered vague, particularly for readers who are outside the given disciplines and discourse communities. Nonetheless, this tendency should not be the reason for the article’s rejection, but it could be the subject of further analysis to explore how effective and well-organized those abstracts are concerning the disciplines they belong to.
The studies discussed above clearly argue that the rhetorical move structure of abstracts is not hierarchically constructed across disciplines. Connor (2004) highlights that when producing a particular type of text, discursive practices and lingua-cultural conventions shape the context of the content. This point of view claims that each text is connected to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, disciplinary phraseology, the context of publication and intended audience, which may influence the frequency of moves. Although the literature review done by the researcher has reported studies carried out in Latin America (e.g., Tapia and Burdiles, 2012; Parodi, et al. 2014; Quintanilla, 2016), covering the discursive and pragmatics aspects (Beke, 2008), and lexicosemantic relations (Venegas, 2006) of texts, no database concerning the analysis of RA abstracts was found in Ecuador, either print or online. What is more, contrastive studies between Ecuadorian and American journals have been rarely investigated (Tovar, 2018), compared to the number of research works published over the past two decades (e.g., Pho, 2008; Loré, 2004; Behnam and Golpour, 2014; Loutayf, 2017). To fill this gap, the present study investigates the rhetorical move structure of RA abstracts published in Ecuadorian and American journals. It follows Hyland’s (2000) move model. We, hypothetically, can account that the context of publication and different discourse conventions determine the rhetorical move structure of abstracts. To respond to this belief, the current study expects at answering the following research questions: Do English abstracts published in native and non-native English-speaking contexts show different rhetorical move patterns? If yes, what are those differences? Do abstracts display similar paragraph length?

**Methodology**

**Data collection**

Two English sub-corpora were compiled for the contrastive linguistic and disciplinary analysis. Each corpus contains 40 RA abstracts selected from journals that meet the criteria of a) representativeness —appropriate sample testing group, b) reputation —indexation and double-blind peer-reviewed, and c) accessibility —in print or online database. Even though the sample of English abstracts is limited, the research will provide outsiders with useful outcomes in the humanities and sciences fields. Therefore, in this study, 20 abstracts from each set of disciplines are large enough for comparative analysis, which would shed light on research generalization and linguistic implication.

The education, sociology, electronics, and agronomy abstracts were explored because these disciplines are linked to the global scientific and technological production to generate scientific and technological research. Particularly in Ecuador, they are based on the innovation, promotion, development, and dissemination of knowledge and culture internationally (Constitution of Ecuador, 2008). These areas, in Ecuador, are the professions with widely job opportunities (INEC, 2018), and of interest to the higher education system. Therefore, it is important for academics who aim at spreading their research findings, not only gain knowledge in their career skills but also academic writing, particularly when writing abstracts of scientific papers in English.

**Corpus selection**

Only RA abstracts that meet the criteria of a) national or international indexing, b) double-blind peer-reviewed, c) unstructured text, and c) single paragraph condensed summary were chosen as the sample data for the analysis. Additionally, the English abstracts in the disciplines of education, sociology, electronics, and agronomy should be published between the periods of 2010-2016.
this in mind, the selection of the abstracts was also based on the context of publication and not on the nativeness of the authors.


Similarly, the Ecuadorian corpus consists of 40 abstracts written in English and published in Ecuador in the following journals: INNOVA Research Journal, Alteridad, Axioma, UTCiencia, Revista Tecnológica ESPOL, Amazonica, Analitika, Procesos, Perfiles, Avances, Ingenius, and La Granja. All four disciplines encompass 10 abstracts each. Ecuadorian journals are indexed in latindex (regional cooperative online information system for scholarly journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal), as well as in elsevier, dialnet, REDIB, GoogleScholar, and e-rivist@s. These journals are hosted by Ecuadorian Universities. Unlike American journals, Ecuadorian ones are mixed, which devote special sections and space for the aforementioned disciplines.

**Data analysis**

Hyland’s (2000) five-move model was used for the analysis. This is because Hyland’s model documents the lexico-grammatical relationships between the cultures of academic communities and the discursive practices across eight disciplines in science and humanities. Thus, the research relies on its functions and communicative goal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Establishes the context of the paper and motivates the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Indicates the purpose and outlines the aim behind the paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Method</strong></td>
<td>Provides information on design, procedures, data analysis, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Product/Results</strong></td>
<td>Indicates the results and the argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>Points to applications or wider implications and Interpretation scope of the paper.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the process of identifying moves and determining their functions, phrases and formulaic expressions were used as a referent to differentiate one move from another. For instance, in a recent work..., the present study examined..., the purpose of this investigation is..., the article analyzes data from..., the data for this research..., the findings reveal..., the results of the study suggest..., the article concludes..., within this context, differences ..., in this project, we.... As a move may be within one or more sentences, the study used a top-down and bottom-up approach
to recognize moves and set up the boundaries between them (Ackland, 2009). The former, top-down approach focuses on the content of abstracts, while the latter, bottom-up approach looks for linguistic signals to categorize the textual boundaries of the moves in each discipline.

The researcher, namely human coder, and the undergraduate students majoring in English, ensure the reliability of the move coding. The procedure consists of a double round of coding with an interval in between. If there were any move coding disagreements, the discussions were made. Once each move was set down and differentiated from one to another, the coding was compared to see to what extent the rhetorical move structure matches. The classification of moves was based on Kanoksilapatham’s (2005) criterion, wherein a move, depending on its frequent occurrence was considered as obligatory (100%), conventional (60% to 99%), and optional (less than 60%). The Word Count online editor was used to count the length of the texts. The research, therefore, emphasizes the analysis of move occurrence, move pattern and paragraph length.

Results
This section presents the research outcomes of the rhetorical move analysis across disciplines between NNE and NE sub-corpora. Similarities and differences are discussed.

Table 2. Move frequency in the two datasets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Ecuadorian corpus</th>
<th>American corpus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=40</td>
<td>n=40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction (M1)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Purpose (M2)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Method (M3)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Results (M4)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conclusion (M5)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the similarities and differences of rhetorical move occurrence in the two corpora. Ecuadorian corpus follows a three-move structure, as of purpose, method, and results. In American corpus, introduction, purpose, and results were conventional while the method move was obligatory (100%). Conclusions were found as an optional move in both datasets. Unlike in American corpus, M1 in Ecuadorian ones was optional (55%). Purpose, method, and results were the dominant moves throughout the two corpora.

Table 3. Analysis of rhetorical move structure in NNE and NE groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Sociology</th>
<th>Electronics</th>
<th>Agronomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNE</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>NNE</td>
<td>NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>f = NNE</th>
<th>f = NE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hu</td>
<td>Sci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 provides an overview of the move frequency across the four disciplines. There were obligatory, conventional and optional moves throughout the four sub-corpora. Since move occurrence varies significantly, introductions and conclusions were classified as conventional (99% to 60%) and optional sections (less than 60%). Similarly, purpose, method, and results were functioning as either obligatory or conventional moves in the four datasets of article abstracts. Methods were obligatory (100% of occurrence) in education, sociology, and electronics texts produced in NE contexts. What stands out in the table is that abstracts in the discipline of agronomy adopt the five-move model suggested by Hyland (2000), where results, in the two corpora, work as the obligatory move. Further analysis shows that sociology and electronics in NE group and education in NNE group follow a four-move structure, as of M1-M2-M3-M4. Purpose was the first highest frequent move (98%, 95%) in humanities while in science, it is the second most frequent one. Unlike method in humanities, in the science field, it was the first most frequent move. Methods and results in NE group, particularly in the humanities field, were categorized as obligatory moves (100%).

**Figure 1. The occurrence of semi-linear patterns**

Figure 1 provides the summary statistics for the frequent move patterns in NE and NNE groups. From the data, we can see that the semi-linear move sequence, namely *IPM* had a lower incidence in both NE and NNE groups (13% to 10%) while IPMR reported considerable move occurrence in the two English corpora. In sum, data in Figure 1 shows that the semi-linear patterns, for instance, IPMR; PMR; PMRC and IPM were the move patterns that regularly occur when constructing the rhetorical move structure of the RA abstracts, written either in native or non-native English-speaking contexts.
From the data in figure 2, it can be seen that the word count varies quite considerably across disciplines in the humanities and science fields. Ecuadorian texts report the higher word count (170,32) compared to the American texts (166,50). While agronomy and electronics texts in the NE group report having the highest average word count with 216,42 and 190 words, sociology and education abstracts in NNE and NE corpora had the lowest word count with 137,42 and 116,28. The data analysis revealed that the electronics and education abstracts of NE and NNE written texts differ significantly in the number of words compared to the sociology and agronomy abstracts. Although the length of the abstracts contributes to the fulfilment of the overall communicative purpose of the texts, this may not be considered as the only or main reason for the move structure differences, but as one of the factors that in the text organization and language choices determine the structure of academic abstracts. Nonetheless, it should be borne in mind that, in terms of content and rhetorical move structure, there are various reasons for text variation across disciplines and fields.

Discussions

The comparative analysis of English RA abstracts across the four disciplines showed that these abstracts have a non-hierarchical five-move pattern with three stable moves, whose functions are to present the purpose, describe the method and discuss the product of the research in which the frequency of occurrence is above 94%. These outcomes corroborate the research findings of Dos Santos (1996), Pho (2008), Doró (2013), Behnam & Golpour (2014) and Çakır and Fidan (2015), who concluded that the schema: M2-M3-M4 is obligatory in some RA abstracts. Conclusions (as optional) were the least frequent move while introductions match the results observed in previous studies (e.g., Lau, 2004; Kafes, 2012; Fallatah, 2016) where this section (M1) was commonly used as conventional. A Comparison of the findings with those of other studies confirms that the construction of rhetorical move structure across disciplines and fields varies significantly. 

As can be seen from table 3, the agronomy texts reported following a rhetorical pattern of five moves. Although the percentage of occurrence in the M1 and M5 is not significantly higher compared to the NE group, this finding showed that the agronomy abstracts are more closely to the English-written convention rather than the others, but in the gain, the NNE group has the lowest figure. The reason for this tendency might be that the NNE authors conventionally devote more space to the purpose, method, and product when shaping the rhetorical organization of
abstracts. A possible explanation for this rhetorical difference might be that L1 and L2 academic authors experience different lingua-cultural conventions within their disciplinary communities.

The research outcomes indicate move variation in abstracts published in humanities and science fields along with the two corpora. The basis for such rhetorical dissimilarities is mainly explained by the influence of the context of publication, which is different in terms of discourse practices that writers are addressing. Abstracts in the field of science reported that M3 and M4 are the most frequent moves (95% of occurrence) whereas, in humanities, they were the second (83%) and third (70%) most frequent moves in NE and NNE groups, respectively. What stands out in the data is that a move in NE group is considered as obligatory and conventional while in NNE one, it is taken as optional. These results are in line with Fallatah (2016), who revealed less rhetorical move consistency among NNE academic writers.

Variation was observed in the move occurrence across disciplines. The following examples in education and electronics texts, belonging to humanities and science, respectively, illustrate frequent use of the moves. As shown in example (1), the move frequency in the education texts (NNE group) was M1-M2-M3-M4-M5 whereas in example (2), moves 2, 3, 4 and 5 were the preferred pattern in the electronics ones (NE group). Moves are numbered and highlighted to facilitate their understanding and identification in the texts.

(1) Education Text written by NNE:

(M1) In a recent work by Chalak and Kassaian (2010) the motivation and attitudes of university... (M2) The present study aims to investigate the motivation of... (M3) For the purpose of this investigation a questionnaire containing items related to... (M4). The results show that all the students are highly motivated..., they also state to be very interested on learning foreign languages. (M5) It suggests pedagogical implications...

(2) Electronics text written by NE:

(M3) Ohmic curing was utilized as a method to improve the conductivity of three-dimensional... (M2) The goal was to increase conductivity of the conductive path without inducing damage...(M3) The 3D via/interconnect structure was routed within 3D polymeric substrates...(M4) Ohmic curing was shown to decrease the measured resistance of the via/interconnect structure without... (M5) The work demonstrated a method to overcome the thermal cure temperature limitations of polymeric substrates imposed on the processing...

From the data, we can see that the education text (example 1), published in the field of humanities (NNE group) showed move linearity or move ordering. Whilst the electronics text in the field of science (NE group), indicates semi-linearity, in the sense that the moves are not used in sequential order as the education text does (example 2). The differences in the education and electronics texts rely on the move ordering; consequently, the education text might be categorized as linear and the electronics one as a semi-linear text. It is because, in the electronics text, M3 is emphasized two times and overlaps at the beginning of the text, which is unnecessary if the text adopts the four-move pattern, as of M2-M3-M4-M5.
Although some of the electronics texts of NE group reported semi-linearity, for instance, M2-M3-M4; M1-M2-M3 and different move ordering (example 3), these abstracts were worth reading, in terms of content and structure compared to the texts, which did not include accurate information (example 4). As can be seen, the sociology text seems to be the result of patchwork paraphrasing when transferring L1 functions to L2 —e.g. /sin secuelas o evidencia física, cometidas/ ‘the sequelae or Physical Evidence sin committed’ (see example 4). Due to its inaccurate information, identifying the moves and thus setting up the move frequency was difficult, as well. Because of the inappropriate lexico-grammatical choices, the length of sentences and vague information, this abstract shows unclear rhetorical move structure and information.

(3) Electronics text written by NES:

(M2) The effect of a polycrystalline silicon (poly-Si) seeding layer on the properties of relaxor ... thin films and energy-harvesting cantilevers was studied. (M3) We deposited thin films of the relaxor on two substrates, with and without a poly-Si seeding layer. (M4) The seeding layer, which also served as a sacrificial layer to facilitate cantilever release, was found to improve morphology, phase purity, crystal orientation, and electrical properties. (M4) We attributed these results to reduction of the number of nucleation sites and, therefore, to an increase in relaxor film grain size.

(4) Sociology text written by one NNES:

(M2) This article explores the reasons why the Manifestations of symbolic violence son and reproduced socially tolerated in the majority of cases, impunity a Through the (mM) micromachismos, which is the term that is known to everyday Low Intensity macho aggression, the sequelae or Physical Evidence sin committed by both men’s and women, and that no child questioned due to the naturalization of inequitable gender schemas, micromachistas: Besides these practices no shares represent deliberate actions generated in the conscious, but obey one patriarchal estructures that have internalized historically Sido room, based on stereotypical gender roles nesting one Gender and manifest themselves in many areas of everyday life, such as: street harassment, the use of public space, sexism in language, the distribution of tasks by Genre, the image of men and women in the advertising space, jokes, memes, among others.

Examples (1), (2), (3) and (4) provide evidence on how academic texts from different disciplines vary in the construction of the rhetorical move structure of abstracts to communicate the scope of the whole paper. Example 5, items a, b, c, and d, illustrate how abstract reports inaccurate content and the transference of Spanish-L1 functions to the target language. The underlined words show the transfer of L1 words in Spanish to the English translated version. The findings reveal that the communicative functions of the moves, to some extent, are the results of the authors’ intended purpose, which in many ways, respond to their discourse conventions. This is, in significant part, because, according to Hyland (2009b), writing is the way in which authors consolidate the information content and demonstrate readers the understanding of the subjects.

(5) Example of a sociology written text:

a. [...] manifestations of symbolic violence son and reproduced socially tolerated in the majority of cases...
b. [...] impunity a Through the (mM) micromachismos, which is the term that is known to everyday...

c. [...] the sequelae or Physical Evidence sin committed by both men’s and women, and that no child questioned due to the naturalization of inequitable gender schemas, micromachistas...

d. [...] obey one patriarchal estructures that have internalized historically [...] based on stereotypical gender roles nesting one Gender and manifest themselves in many areas of everyday life

The results show not only the overall structural organization, but also different rhetorical move patterns used in NE and NNE groups of abstracts. This tendency is because authors conventionally keep on their own disciplinary practices, epistemology, and lingua-cultural backgrounds to create knowledge, frame and understand emerging discourse communities to whom they are writing. That is, in the academy, authors construct and perform their social realities, personal identities and professional institutions (Hyland 2009b). However, writing may be produced by considering the coherent communicate functions that discoursal units display in the text (Hyland, 2000). The fact that the NE and NNE texts did not always include all five moves is unlikely to be caused just by the word-count restrictions of the journals in which they were written but also associated with disciplinary practices, cultural and context of the publication.

Although the length of abstracts is suggested in publication manuals, and typically range from 150 to 250 words (APA, 2010, p.27; Chicago Manual, 2010, p.42), longer and shorter abstracts were noted in NE and NNE corpora. One of the longest abstracts (agronomy) in the data with 301 words displayed verbosity, repetition and complex information whereas the shortest one (education) with 85 words showed accuracy, in terms of content and structure. It is inferred then, that the construction of accurate abstracts does not depend on the number of words, but on how writers organize the information.

Conclusions
The research study confirms that although abstracts of academic papers could include the five move structural elements when introducing the gist of the complete article, this pattern is not always hierarchically adopted across languages and disciplines. A clear example is the rhetorical move divergence between NE and NNE groups. This divergence is because authors follow and respond to different discursive practices and lingua-cultural conventions, as a result, the move occurrence and its frequent use across disciplines varied significantly. Although the three-move structure was reported in all the RA abstracts, further analysis revealed that the agronomy abstracts in the NE and NNE groups, written in the fields of science follow a hierarchical structure with five conventional moves.

Because moves work as functional units to communicate information, these may be obligatory, conventional or obligatory. Ecuadorian and American written texts did not always include all five moves, it is unlikely to be caused by the word-count restrictions of the journals in which they were published. Also, the move ordering (linear and semi-linear sequence) found in the abstracts report irrelevance of length texts in the construction of rhetorical moves. Although the five moves were not frequently used in NE and NNE English-written texts, the findings
revealed that the rhetorical move structures of RA abstracts in the NE group generally reflect the English international convention; however, differences in the textual organization were observed. This genre difference may be ascribed to the fact that unlike non-native English texts, native ones show the useful selection of moves and accurate abstracts when drafting the information content to promote their research studies.

Overall, this study strengthens the idea that authors’ different discourse practices, the context of publication, and linguistic and cultural backgrounds influence the construction of the rhetorical move structure of abstracts in scientific papers. Due to the move patterning, word counting, move ordering and move frequency (figures 1 and 2), the two datasets of abstracts demonstrate distinct rhetorical and textual move organizations. Nonetheless, the highest three-move occurrence found in the two English corpora implies that NE and NNE groups were aware of the importance of this rhetorical move structure. Therefore, it is suggested that the authors in the other disciplines and fields take these findings as a referent when producing their RA abstracts into account. The contribution of this study has been to confirm the outcomes of Dos Santos (1996), Pho (2008), Doró (2013), Behnam & Golpour (2014), and Çakır and Fidan (2015), who concluded that M2-M3-M4 moves are conventionally constructed across disciplines and languages.

Writing accurate RA abstracts in terms of content and structure play an important role in the academy. They determine the acceptance or rejection of a paper conference. The communicative effectiveness of abstracts relies on the effective selection of moves and their appropriate phraseology. Accordingly, when persuading readers about statements, writers must display a stance like disciplinary insiders, through a writer-reader dialogue where the texts engage, orient and guide readers to make a clear interpretation. It is essential then that authors take a writer-oriented sense when presenting their studies and not only assume that the understanding of that information depends on the reader’s ability to predict such information. Consequently, as in academic writing, the practical selection of rhetorical and linguistic features determines text readability and publication success, English-written texts should be accurate in terms of content and structure. It is hoped that the findings would be the referent source to implement useful pedagogical practice and develop teaching materials for writing instructions.

Despite the reported outcomes, the small sample size, language proficiency, and authors’ lingua-cultural backgrounds may affect the generalization of the study. To have a wider perspective of the current findings, further studies should consider these limitations when examining the contextual factors that affect the move occurrence and the lexical and grammatical choices frequently used in RA abstracts.

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References


The Use of Information and Communication Technology in Academic Research: Is it possible to Realize Academic Integrity?

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Abstract
Realizing academic integrity in the digital age becomes a nightmare for universities and educational institutions in the entire globe. After the spread of Information and Communication Technology, dishonesty has replaced ethical considerations in research. The focal reasons behind this increasing dilemma are the researchers’ attitudes and their different cultural perspectives. The spread of Information and Communication Technology provides avenues for academic dishonesty since detecting software products do not offer a real solution. As such, the incentive of this study is to scrutinize how Information and Communication Technology can help in attaining academic integrity. It also intends to see what is behind the backdrop of the academic misconduct, i.e., the motives that lead researchers to switch to e-dishonesty. The present survey seeks to bring the issue of Information and Communication Technology and academic integrity into the light to ensure honesty among the Algerian researchers. The researcher collected data through a questionnaire addressed to four Masterclasses in English studies at Mascara and Saida Universities supported by an interview with teachers. The findings revealed that most students used technology in cheating and plagiarism. The findings also revealed that universities and institutions can achieve integrity if the learners are aware of the positive side of Information and Communication Technology in academic research.

Keywords: Academic integrity, dishonesty in research, Information and Communication Technology, students’ perception

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1. Introduction
In the last few decades, there was a tremendous increase in the use of technology not only for educational purposes but also in every aspect of human life. With the digital age, all people can have access to the network either for research or shopping and chatting. Technology brings benefits as a tool in hastening research through the availability of eBooks and research papers. However, students do not always use technology in the right path since it becomes a means of cheating during examinations and tests. Plagiarism has also taken the lion’s share, even though universities and institutions have developed detecting materials and created penalties to achieve integrity. In the other side of the corner, the overuse of technologies has ravaged academic honesty and opened the gateway for different types of academic misconduct.

Several studies have demonstrated that there is increased use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in academic fraud from secondary school, starting with cheating and then plagiarism (Bauer, 1995). Academic dishonesty increases due to the lack of scholarship. Besides, universities cannot depend on indigent literature that does not help researchers to realize integrity.

In this perspective, the current research under scrutiny pursues to shed light on how Information and Communication Technologies can be utilized to achieve academic integrity after their misuse. Therefore, this small scale study intends to put Information and Communication Technology (ICT) users in the right path, so that dishonesty in research in Algerian Universities will be no more a topic of discussion. More importantly, the present survey attempts to provide an inked eye on the motives that encourage academic misconduct. In this vein, these research concerns give birth to the following peripheral research questions:

1. How teachers can raise students’ awareness of the use of ICT to fulfill academic integrity?
2. How can ICT grow dishonesty in research?
3. Are there any strategies that diminish the students’ academic misconduct?

The following research hypotheses spring from the research questions mentioned before:

1. Teachers and universities play crucial roles in raising students’ awareness of the right use of ICT to promote integrity.
2. ICT paves the floor for researchers by providing all possibilities for all types of academic fraud like cheating during exams and plagiarism.
3. Teachers can reduce academic misconduct if they look after their students by checking their pieces of writing. Besides, all universities should provide strict penalties and laws by making ethics in research as an essential module to be taught.

Therefore, the present research work seeks to supply the field of academic research with possibilities and implications on how students can use ICT correctly to hearten honesty and integrity in research. Moreover, the researcher takes the sample from two universities hoping that it can open the gateway for more scholarship to enhance the quality of academic writing by putting integrity at the center of the researchers’ concern.
2. Review of the Related Literature
   a. Technology and Education
Studies reveal that ICT provides an active learning environment, while more recent research works show that the use of ICT becomes linked to the students’ attitudes and their cultural backgrounds. According to Ching (2013), the easy access to materials through the net has developed positive attitudes towards cheating and plagiarism, although it becomes an important tool in education. In this regard, Ching (2013) maintains that “Internet use can unintentionally promote academic dishonesty. This result is quite disturbing since the use of the internet is already an inevitable part of the education today” (p. 84).

Significantly, technology smooths the laziness of the learners by supplying them with ready projects and pre-written essays; therefore, they make no efforts to improve their level and research. They depend on the net through copying down what they need without even selecting. Therefore, it opens the portal for cheating and various academic misconducts. In this regard, Renard (2000) observes that technology gives learners ways of dishonesty by promoting them with unethical techniques. Students think that they can take ideas from the net without identifying references, and they forget that academic institutions can use technology as a tool of punishment through detecting products.

Many scholars write on the benefits of technology on learning, but no study tries to deal with students’ attitudes towards e-cheating and e-dishonesty in the academic community in general. For this reason, it remains an unfair judgment that needs reliability. As such, the question that imposes itself is: can we consider ICT as the only culprit of academic dishonesty? Most of the researchers agree that integrity becomes old-fashioned and the notion of ethics in research changes considerably with the emergence of Wikipedia, mashups and other sites. Accordingly, many scholars are afraid of the future of education, ethical considerations, and honesty in research with the catalyst spread of the net. In light of this idea, Woodmansee & Jaszi (1994, as cited in Spigelman, 2000, p. 160) write that:

A battle is shaping over the future of the Internet. On the one side are those who see its potential as a threat to traditional notions of individual proprietorship in information, and who perceive the vigorous extension of traditional copyright principles as the solution. On the other side are those who argue that the network environment may become a new cultural “common” which excessive or premature legal control may stifle. ( p. 160)

One can add that institutions cannot preserve integrity in the digital age and they have to do too much to put learners on the right path since e-dishonesty starts to replace ethical considerations in research. In this regard, one cannot dig deeper without shedding light on the concept of integrity and academic dishonesty.

b. Integrity and Academic Dishonesty
The notion of integrity defers from one culture into another because it is a part of ethics and values. Indeed, the meaning of integrity is unified and is not only limited to research. It forms an important part of every aspect of human lives. For this reason, it is an essential ingredient, so that to build honest individuals who can lead their societies and guide them to the right gate. Being honest in
research means realizing integrity, which can be better understood through its opposite ‘dishonesty’ and academic fraud. According to Fang (2012), “Ethical lapses during one’s education may carry over into a person’s career and personal life”, while ameliorating “academic integrity not only preserves the integrity of an assessment” or a class, a whole university, or the entire academic program, but also serves as part of an ongoing education that enables a person to grow as a learner, an employee, and a public citizen” (par, 1).

When talking about dishonesty in research, one has to explain the concept of academic misconduct. The latter involves different forms like cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, sabotage, bribery, and deception…etc. Cheating and plagiarism are the most known forms of misconduct in research and spread nowadays more than previous decades even though cheating is not a new subject in the field of education.

According to Ching (2013), the increasing nature of academic misconduct cannot be only limited to the misuse of technologies, but also other factors including “the perceived norms on cheating, on attitudes about cheating, and on knowledge of institutional policy regarding cheating behavior” (p. 84). Learners have previously developed positive attitudes towards different types of misconduct and ICT is only a means that increases the phenomenon of academic dishonesty. Stated various, many conducted types of research confirm that the net cannot be touted as the only means that increases misconduct especially plagiarism, but it provides “a space for those students plagiarizing to increase their plagiaristic activities” (p. 102). Warschauer (2004) pinpoints that researchers cannot take the net as the central factor of academic misconduct, but as a reason that encourages dishonesty. In this vein, Warschauer (2004, as cited in Sutherland-Smith, maintains 2008) that:

There is little doubt that the rapid diffusion and growth of the Internet facilitates students’ plagiarism by making available millions of texts around the world for easy cutting and pasting, many of them commercially-provided and tailored to high school and college students’ needs. Online plagiarism takes a variety of forms from the blatant and intentional (e.g., purchasing an essay online) to the accidental and ill-informed (e.g., quoting small amounts of online material without proper citation). (p. 103)

On the other stream, researchers claim that many people misunderstand the impact of the Internet because the first reason is the attitudes towards misconduct that some students share. In his part, Howard (2007) highlights that researchers should understand the net in terms of textual relationships, and not as a source for information, i.e., “The biggest threat posed by the Internet plagiarism is the widespread hysteria that it precipitates”; in fact, it is the role of teachers to subscribe “to plagiarism-detection services instead of connecting with their students through authentic pedagogy” (Howard, 2007, p. 12, as cited in Sutherland-Smith, 2008 p. 103).

Before proceeding further, it is helpful to talk about how ICT aids in increasing academic misconduct. According to Manly et al. (2015), technology has added to academic dishonesty “unauthorized representation, purchasing written papers, using unattributed secondary sources and cut and paste plagiarism” (as cited in Dernek & Parther, 2015, p. 15).
One should conclude that realizing integrity in the digital age becomes impossible because technology promotes all ways of dishonesty and cheating in research. Besides, engaging students in education about how to achieve integrity through the use of ICT becomes a necessity for teachers, universities, and educational institutions. Therefore, this research paper strives to raise students’ awareness of the positive side of ICT.

3. Research Methodology and Design

a. Sampling and Population
The researcher selected the sample for the current study from the second-year Master level. She also chose four classes from Mascara and Saida Universities. The sample contains 120 students whom the researcher opted randomly. Details about the sampling are represented in table one as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Field of Didactics</th>
<th>Field of Literature and Civilisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mascara</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saida</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Research Instruments
The researcher selected data quantitatively and qualitatively through a structured questionnaire. She retrieved the answers of the survey from the participants after one week from their distribution, which took place during the first semester. She also conducted an interview with fifteen teachers from both universities. All teachers have experience in teaching research methodology, and some of them have the opportunity to introduce ethics in research in their lectures.

C. Data Presentation and Analysis

i. Questionnaire
The questionnaire contains three essential sections. The first section involves personal information about the participants including age, gender, and the field of research. The second section was meant to test their ideas about the importance of technology in research. The researcher also asked them on whether they used it in cheating and plagiarism or not. The last section aims to raise their awareness about the possibility of using ICT to achieve academic integrity. The researcher also employed the Likert scale to test the learners’ attitudes towards the option of using ICT to promote academic integrity to know their knowledge of ethical considerations. In this regard, the researcher picked out a set of questions from the questionnaire for presentation and discussion. These questions address the research problem of the present research work directly.

**Question One:** Is the use of ICT important in education?
- Yes
- No
Table 2. The importance of ICT in education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Students from Mascara</th>
<th>Students from Saida</th>
<th>Expressed in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 and figure 1 demonstrate that all students recognize the importance of technology in education. They maintained that ICT becomes an integral part of learning and teaching because it gives easy access for eBooks, theses and exposes to do their assignments and write their dissertations. On the other hand, five percent of the informants highlighted that everything is available in the libraries and added that the overuse of ICT prevents their writing practices, and henceforth they will not be able to develop their writing competence.

**Question Two:** How do you take the information? Do you depend on ICT?
1. Through ICT, I copy down data as it is.
2. Through reading books, I learned how to reference, paraphrase, and summaries to avoid plagiarism.

Table 3. Ways for taking information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Students from Mascara</th>
<th>Students from Saida</th>
<th>Expressed %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through ICT, I copy down information as it is</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through reading books, I learnt how to reference, paraphrase and summarise in order to avoid plagiarism.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. Ways for taking information

Figure and table two demonstrate that 67.7% of the students tend to copy down from the Internet information for their research proposals, exposes, and assignments for written expression, phonetics or linguistics as they found them in websites like Wikipedia. In contrast, 32.5% of the informants confirmed that they employ printed books and theses for information. They added that they tend to paraphrase and summarize techniques to attain integrity and honesty in conducting research.

**Question Three:** Do you consider copying information from the Internet without referencing a type of academic misconduct?
- Yes
- No

Table 4. Students’ knowledge of academic misconduct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Students from Mascara</th>
<th>Students from Saida</th>
<th>Expressed in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>56.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Students’ knowledge of academic misconduct
About 56.67% of the respondents agreed on the point that copying down information from the net as they are is regarded as a part of academic misconduct, while about 43.33% of them highlighted that copying is not bad. They justified their answers claiming that their writing style is weak and have no idea about how to paraphrase and summarize. They further pinpointed that even though they are studying research methodology for years, they have no idea about the different types of academic misconduct. They also added that no importance on how to paraphrase and summarize.

**Question Four:** Did you conduct any unethical practices in your studies? If yes, is it:
1- Cheating
2- Plagiarism
3- Other forms of academic misconduct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Types of academic misconduct employed by students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other forms of academic misconduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4. Types of academic misconduct employed by students*

This question was susceptible, and the researcher faced difficulties to get answers; for this reason, they asked the participants to respond to the questionnaire anonymously. After convincing the informants about the importance of their solutions, they agreed to answer this question. The findings demonstrated that most of them made fraud. They added that they started to use e-cheating through phones and laptops because the university does not act regulations that punish them. In contrast, 19.17% of the participants admitted that they commit plagiarism in their assignments, including exposes and research proposals because they have a weak knowledge of paraphrasing,
summarizing, and referencing. They justified their answers claiming that the syllabus of research methodology is too long and the teachers provide few activities with the lectures.

**Question Five:** ICT can be employed effectively to realize academic honesty and integrity.
- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I strongly disagree
- I disagree

**Table 6. Students’ attitudes towards the use of ICT to implement academic integrity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Students from Mascara</th>
<th>Students from Saida</th>
<th>Expressed in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I strongly agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>26.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>44.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I strongly disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I disagree</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5. Students’ attitudes towards ICT to implement academic integrity*

The researcher’s intention from this statement is to test the learners’ knowledge about academic honesty and integrity and whether they see ICT as a means to put an end for academic fraud. The results reveal that about 26.67% strongly agree that technology is essential in academic honesty, while 44.67% of them decide on the point. On the other side, 17.5% of the participants claim that the net provides different ways for cheating and plagiarism; whereas 11.67% of them highlighting that ICT has a negative impact. They confirmed that they become incapable of depending on themselves to write a small essay because they do not read what they copy down.

c. Interview
The researcher selected fifteen teachers for the discussion from two English departments at Mascara and Saida Universities. Nine teachers are from Mascara, and six are from Saida. Most of those teachers have a good experience in teaching academic research as a module and research
methodology in general. The researcher chose a focus group interview where they gathered the informants in two groups. The first group represents teachers from Mascara, and the second one includes interviewees from Saida University. In this regard, the researcher asked questions and gave a statement and let teachers discuss them. The researcher recorded the interviews and analyzed them later on. The discussion on the subject of ICT and research integrity took four hours. The researchers summarized these statements in the most critical points.

1. In which level did you introduce the subject of academic integrity to your students? And how many sessions did it take? Did you provide them with practices on the subject?

All the teachers showed positive attitudes towards the subject of academic integrity and how they are suffering from their students not only in supervising but in all modules. Five teachers highlighted that they introduced the lecture of academic integrity during the second year in research methodology, while ten teachers claimed that they included the lecture with the students of the first. All teachers informed that students do not need practice in this lecture since they always evaluate completeness in their writings.

2. Are your students aware of dishonesty? Have they any idea about different types of academic misconduct? How do you raise their awareness of the negative impacts of academic fraud?

The discussion was fascinating and took about one hour. The teachers talked about the different types of academic misconduct that they are living with their students starting with cheating, which becomes a necessary ingredient in their research. They highlighted that about 90% of students cheat during tests and exams either through the traditional methods or ICT tools. They also added that fabrication also took place in addition to plagiarism, which took the lion’s share in all students’ writing activities. All teachers informed that they warn their students about the negative impact of dishonesty in research. In this regard, they maintained that they could not raise their awareness without laws that warn them at the level of the administration. Some teachers from Saida added that there is no place for the subject at the level of the administration, i.e., there are no punishing rules against cheating and plagiarism. They also acquainted that there are no plagiarism detecting tools at the level of the administration, and it is the duty of the teacher who has to punish students. In contrast, teachers from Mascara reported that the laws put by the administration are stringent and severe. Teachers raise students’ awareness through seminars on the issue of academic fraud and honesty in research; for this reason, they succeed to diminish the rate of plagiarism in comparison to the previous years.

3. Do you believe that the central factor behind the increasing phenomena of plagiarism and cheating is ICT and its use in education?

The answer to the informants confirmed the researcher’s assumptions about the fact that the learners consider ICT tools like mobile phones, social networks, and the Internet as spaces for cheating and plagiarizing. Through their experience, the teachers affirm that the learners are lazy in doing their assignments like essay writing and exposes. They tend to copy down information as they are from the net without using their own words. They claimed that the reason revolves around
their poor writing styles because the students grew up depending on copying and cheating. The interviewees also reported that learners do not employ ICT tools correctly. They claimed that ICT is used for chatting and cheating.

4. Do you think that institutions can use ICT to realize academic integrity?
All the interviewees agreed that ICT is a source or a way for academic integrity if students will be honest in conducting their research works. They added that teachers should change the students’ attitudes through raising their awareness of the negative impact of cheating and plagiarism. They also informed that universities and institutions employ ICT as a tool to achieve academic integrity through plagiarism detecting products. The interviewees concluded that it is a problem of ethics, although teachers teach students about ethical considerations in research.

4. Discussion of the Main Results
The researcher endeavored to understand the reasons behind cheating and plagiarism. She summarizes these factors as follows:
- Gender and age,
- Negative attitudes towards integrity,
- Indigent knowledge on academic research (referencing, paraphrasing and summarizing),
- Weak writing styles,
- Time constraints for Master students,
- Students used to cheat in their middle and secondary schools,
- The need for academic success drives learners for cheating and plagiarizing,

The findings revealed that ethics’ perception takes a permanent part in directing the learners’ attitudes. School and family play a crucial role to raise the pupils’ awareness towards honest in their own lives including behavior, study, and work. This means that politeness and ethics are the concerns of schools from the early age of the pupils’ education.

Looking carefully and thoroughly on the first hypothesis, one can confirm the point that teachers, to some extent, are doing their best in raising their students’ awareness. It is now the role of the administration through enacting rules that warn them, and the Algerian universities have not taken any procedures in diminishing academic dishonesty.

The results also affirmed that the use of ICT tools encourages e-cheating and plagiarism because the learners think that ICT promotes easy success. The last hypothesis is also confirmed because teachers do not look after their learners’ pieces of writing and punish them if they copy without referencing.

5. Recommendations
To achieve the aims at hand and to diminish all types of academic fraud, the researcher suggested the following suggestions:
- Teachers can order their students to conduct their assignments in class, rather than doing them at home.
- They should provide their students with original subjects to develop their spirit on how to realize integrity. In this sense, they develop their students’ critical thinking and love of research.
- If teachers face the problem of time constraints, they can ask them to carry their assignment at home and, then test their knowledge on the subject through questions.
- Teachers should encourage their students on how to use printed books, journals, and dictionaries which are better than what is on the websites. They have to raise their awareness that they should not take Wikipedia as a source of references.
- The student should provide oral reports after homework.
- A written summary of the homework or the assignment should be given by the student during class so that the teacher can be able to check whether the student uses ICT to plagiarize or not.
- Universities and institutions should provide teachers with ICT tools to detect plagiarism and train on their use.
- Administrations should act regulations to control the overuse of ICT tools in class so that students can depend on their competence to write their assignments.
- Universities should enact regulations and rules against e-cheating and plagiarism.

6. Conclusion
One can conclude that academic fraud becomes a catalyst that threatens the quality of research in the entire globe. Conducting an investigation in the Algerian Universities proves the assumptions of many researchers in the field of academic research, although the researcher cannot generalize the findings on all Algerian Universities. However, researchers can take these findings as a point of departure for more scholarship in fields of academic integrity and misconduct. Indeed, the issue at hand is the concern of all fields of research because these phenomena have invaded and influenced not only the academic arena but also the whole human lives.

The analysis revealed that students share positive attitudes towards ICT tools and their use in cheating and plagiarizing. Therefore, motivations towards ICT are driven by the students’ positive attitudes towards cheating and plagiarism since they are recognizing their weaknesses in language competence and procedures of conducting research works. Hence, the use of ICT the ways students cheat and make it easier to do their home works and copy works as if they are own.

The findings also confirmed the point that both teachers and students welcomed the idea of using ICT to realize academic integrity, but no procedures are taken to achieve that aim. The results also marked the absence of the administration in preparing seminars and study days on academic integrity; in fact, the subject is totally neglected; for this reason, the researcher faced various problems in conducting this research and confirming the reliability of their hypotheses, especially the last one due to the point that we have first to talk about the status of ICT in the Algerian educational system, and then we try to conduct an investigation about its placement in the academic research.

To wrap it up, the issue of ICT and achieving integrity remains under investigation and application. In here, the first point that the researcher suggested is to develop a culture of integrity,
i.e., it is the attitudes of the researchers that have to be changed towards integrity, so that it can pave the way for using ICT correctly and putting research in the right path.

Therefore, integrity and honesty should be enhanced from the early years of the learners’ schooling by their parents and schools until the university level, and this cannot be achieved overnight. Indeed, it is a challenge for the whole society to change the individual’s attitude towards the placement of ethics, so that he will be able to build his ethical considerations not only in research but in his entire life which is affected by the profound impact of technology and globalization in general that have changed beliefs and attitudes and therefore ethical considerations.

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References
A Discursive and Pragmatic Analysis of WhatsApp Text-based Status Notifications

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Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract
WhatsApp has significantly penetrated the various spheres of peoples’ lives all over the world. The purpose of this study is to look at two aspects of WhatsApp text-based status notifications; namely, the most common discursive realizations and the major pragmatic themes. A sample of 846 status notifications for WhatsApp users’ profiles was analyzed. Data, which were gathered between January and March 2017, were from three sets of male and female users. The status notifications were qualitatively analysed in terms of both the most common discursive realizations and pragmatic themes. The major findings of the study showed a variety in the discursive realizations, including self-generated statuses, which marked 82%, and auto-generated statuses, which made 18%. Data revealed also that the most used type of the self-generated was the pure text, which marked 53%. In terms of the major pragmatic themes employed by the users, data showed four main categories: religious, social, personal and national. The findings were then discussed, justified, and compared with results from previous research. The paper concludes with the limitations and future research recommendations.

Keywords: Discourse, language and technology, pragmatics, statuses, WhatsApp

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1. Introduction
Technology has influenced various aspects of our life. Indeed, the advent of technology has “reorganised how we live, how we communicate and how we learn” (Siemens, 2005, p. 3). With new technologies, people have found new prospects that made their lives different. Certainly, the wealth of resources and information that the Internet provides has also created new opportunities for society to make connections with each other and share knowledge and experiences which contribute to personal learning (Siemens, 2005).

Along with the Internet, mobile phones have contributed a great deal to this change. Mobiles, with the various applications that we install, have become indispensable parts of our everyday life (Sultan, 2014). As we all practice it, much of our time is spent examining the various applications and platforms installed in our mobiles. This involves numerous activities such as text messaging, which has become the most popular means of communication in social networks (Sultan, 2014).

Communication with friends, relatives, and other contacts has dominated users’ activities. Some of these activities provide spaces for expressing one’s self on different applications. Every individual can now expose whatever he/she wants and make available it to as many audiences as possible. Mobile users now have numerous platforms both to send messages about their personalities and to reflect on issues inside their community, or even outside.

WhatsApp has become one of the most mobile applications used worldwide. This application was created by Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009 (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). The developers intended to create a free of charge SMS platform to make communication easier and faster (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). This application has become the most popular in the Arabian Peninsula (Camp et al., 2019). It is connecting over one billion users every day, with about 55 billion messages sent by one billion users per day. In addition to communicating through WhatsApp messaging, status notifications provide a significant forum for expressing one’s self with their feelings and reflections on issues and events around them. Using these texts, users can openly share their thoughts and feelings with friends and contacts (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2016).

To complete their profiles, WhatsApp users are required to fill up a 139-digit status notification to communicate with friends and contacts with different purposes. Studying the language used in these forms of expression would provide useful insights in how the forms of language are employed by these users to share with their contacts. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to that field by focusing on the status notifications employed by WhatsApp users.

Thus, the discursive realizations of WhatsApp status notifications, along with the various pragmatic themes employed by users in these texts, can provide loaded resources for researchers in applied linguistics. This study, therefore, intends to investigate a sample of status notifications to find out about the themes and purposes that WhatsApp users utilize to communicate with others. In particular, the present study aims at exploring the discursive realizations of the status notifications and identifying the major pragmatic themes conveyed by the users. This study is designed to answer the following research questions:
1) What are the common discursive realizations of WhatsApp status notifications?
2) What are the major pragmatic themes that these notifications are meant to convey by the users.

This investigation may contribute to our knowledge on how users deal with the forms of statuses offered by this technology, and how they do to depict their images in the digital space provided by this Application.

2. Theoretical framework
This section reviews the theoretical aspects concerning WhatsApp, pragmatics and discourse, and relevant studies in the literature.

2.1 WhatsApp, pragmatics and discourse
WhatsApp Messenger is a rather-new, highly popular means of communication that employs instant messaging (Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015). Up to February 2016, WhatsApp total users reached one billion, whereas, in July 2017, 55 billion messages were sent by one billion users per day in 60 languages. In addition to the text messages, this application allows its users to use real-time texting or communication, which can allow them to exchange information and media content (Ahad & Lim, 2014). These include emoticons, images, pictures, voice notes, videos, weblinks and so on. WhatsApp users also have the privilege of creating their own digital profiles with their personal information. The users are encouraged to attach a photo, along with a status with a 139-character status, where they can describe their online persona (Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015).

From a pragmatic perspective, WhatsApp users produce a meaningful linguistic expression, which is known as the locutionary act. This expression is produced with a purpose, the illocutionary act. Any expression of this kind is intended to have an effect on the reader or hearer, which is termed as the perlocutionary act (Yule, 1996). The features in WhatsApp, therefore, can provide some pragmatic functions that lead us to new insights. In addition, the texts used in WhatsApp are believed to share elements from both written and spoken varieties of the language (Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015). Yus (2011) lists some of the most frequent strategies that users do to oralise written text, including phonetic, colloquial, and prosodic spellings. This indeed gives hybrid flavour which is neither written nor spoken, but something with its own characteristics (Maizarevalo, 2015). All this is vital for users to reshape themselves, and to create the effect they intend to have on their contacts (readers).

On the other hand, the discursive, communicative and other forms of interaction are monitored by social cognition which “mediates between micro- and macro- levels of society, between discourse and action and between the individual and the group” (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 257). The micro aspects concern the linguistic choices, whereas the macro levels involve global meanings (the schematic representations). The analysis of themes can also be grounded on Fairclough’s conventions that “ideologies reside in texts”, that “it is not possible to ‘read off’ ideologies from texts” and that “texts are open to diverse interpretations” (Fairclough, 1995, p.71). WhatsApp users, therefore, rightly exploit the space given in these notifications to expose their own beliefs and ideologies to others. These texts, therefore, can be an excellent resource for researchers to disclose the hidden messages expressed within.
2.2 Previous studies

WhatsApp has undergone a decent bulk of research in various disciplines. Some studies were undertaken in relation to WhatsApp as a popular SMS text messaging platform (e.g., Church, & de Oliveira, 2013; O’Hara et al., 2014). Other studies were concerned with studying the users’ purposes of using WhatsApp as a social media technology (e.g., Robin et al., 2017). Much more attention has been given to the use of WhatsApp messenger in the teaching and learning of language (e.g., Amry, 2014; Lam, 2015; Al Shekaili, 2016; Binti Mistar & Embi, 2016; Sayan, 2016; Marçal, et al., 2016; So, 2016; and Hassan Taj et al., 2017; Ali et al., 2019). Some studies also were conducted with respect to the pragmatic aspects of WhatsApp messages (e.g., Otemuyiwa, 2017; Ueberwasser & Stark, 2017; Yus, 2017; Lestari, 2019). In terms of studying the language in WhatsApp status notification; however, the amount of research is still in its infancy (Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015). In quest for research work related to this area, three studies have been found, and thus reviewed below.

One chief relevant study regarding WhatsApp status notifications was conducted by Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya (2015). The study is intended to identify the most recurrent pragmatic uses of the discursive realizations of a corpus of WhatsApp notifications by looking at the multimodality that these statuses give. The study used a corpus of 400 WhatsApp statuses for users of different ages. The findings outlined a five-label taxonomy for the recurrent realizations of the statuses. The first two are self-generated and automatic-generated statuses. The self-generated types were also found to come under four categories: purely-verbal, hybrid, purely-iconic and blank.

Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2016) is another research work that deals with WhatsApp status notifications. The focus of the study was the discursive and thematic analysis of the WhatsApp statuses. The study was intended to find out both the major characteristics and purposes of the notifications and the gender differences in this regard. To achieve these goals, a corpus of 300 statuses by users from Jordan was examined. Analyzing the data qualitatively, the study found the major characteristics to run under five streams: personal, social, religious and political. The most recurrent type was personal, social and cultural, whereas the last one was religious.

Al-Smadi (2017) investigated the WhatsApp statuses from a sociolinguistic point of view by looking at the differences according to the age of the users as well as the gender. Using a qualitative method, the study investigated 400 statuses for two groups of participants: those under 30 years old, and those above 30 years old. The results of the study showed differences in the age, as well as the gender of the users. The study found that the religious status was the most frequent among female users, whereas the social status was the most numerous among male users.

The above studies have provided a good glimpse of how these statuses are used. This study, moreover, aims to shed further light into this scarcely researched area (Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015; Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2016; Ueberwasser & Stark, 2017) by combining both the discursive realizations and the pragmatic themes.
3. Methodology
This research work used data from three different sets of mobile phone contacts representing both males and females. The three sets belong to a male university professor, a housewife, and a female high school student. The data of this study were collected between January and March 2017. At that time, status notifications were either written texts or emojis. For completing one’s profile, WhatsApp users at those times were required to have a text-based status notification.

The status notifications used in this study were for Yemeni users with various backgrounds and levels of education (ranging between school students up to Ph.D. holders). Even though the contacts used in this study were mainly Yemenis, their communication has been open to various types of users including non-Arabic speaking contacts. The professor's contacts involved professors, friends, relatives, colleagues in other countries, and so on. The contacts of the housewife and the student were primarily female Yemenis, with some from other Arab speaking countries particularly KSA and UAE.

The data comprised a sample of 846 different statuses that belonged to 846 users (one status for every user). After collecting the data, they were qualitatively examined and analysed into forms and themes. For obtaining the discursive realizations, they were initially categorised into two major types, namely, automatically-generated and self-generated. The self-generated category was subsequently categorized into minor four types: purely text, hybrid, purely iconic, and blank. As for identifying the major themes in the sample of the notification statuses, the data were classified into smaller categories, including religious, social, and personal categories.

4. Results and Discussion
This section presents and discusses the findings obtained from this study. The analysis of the data is classified in connection to the two objectives of the study.

4.1. Discursive realizations
The first research question of this study is to find out the discursive realizations uses of the text-based status notifications of WhatsApp users. The analysis of the data showed two types of status notifications: automatically-generated and self-generated notifications. The two types are presented below.

4.1.1 Automatically-generated statuses: Data uncovered that 156 statuses, which represent 18% of the total 846 of the sample, used auto-generated notification statuses. These statuses include the ones with “Hey there! I’m using WhatsApp!” and other alternatives such as “Available”, “At the Cinema”, and “Urgent calls only”. These notifications appeared in both the Arabic language (the mother tongue) and English. This finding is in line with (Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015), who found that 35% of their sample used this kind of status.

The use of these statuses can be attributed to the fact that many users might not be aware of the space provided by the App or perhaps they are not even able to know how to use it. For some users, however, this might be intended to show a lack of interest in “reshaping their digital identity” (Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015, p. 56).
4.1.2 Self-generated status notifications: After identifying the auto-generated statuses, the remaining 690 statuses that represent 82%, are then examined. These self-generated statuses are the ones that have been intentionally added or modified by the users to share with their contacts. Data yielded four categories of these notifications, namely: purely text, hybrid, purely iconic, and finally blank statuses. The percentages given in Figure 1 below are for the 690 total of the self-generated statuses. These categories are presented and discussed in the following paragraphs.

**Purely-text realizations**: This makes 53% (369) of the total sample. Users deliberately used both quoted or personally composed texts (see section 4.2 for the discussion of this category).

By creating their own texts, users intended to actively use the space provided by the WhatsApp to interact with the other members of their community. The users have deliberately selected texts that are of importance to them and they feel they might be of interest to their contacts as well.

![Figure 1: Discursive realizations status notifications](image)

**Figure 1**: Discursive realizations status notifications

**Hybrid realizations**: users seem to be purposely intended to use both the usual text forms as well as the vast options of emoticons that WhatsApp puts forward to its users. It has been found that these statuses make 17% (118) of the total sample. Examples of such statuses from the data include “❤️Sh❤️”, “❤️My S7❤️”, “life is a testبك”, “Fragments😉”, “a smile in your brother’s/sister’s face is a charity😊”. According to Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya (2015, p. 58), there are three main uses for the emoticons: reinforcing the verbal message, adding a semantic value, and storytelling. These have also been clearly identified in the data of the present study.

**Purely iconic**: data show that there are statuses with icons only. This type makes (18) 3% in the sample of this study. This finding shows it is limited. This might be due to the sample of a majority of elder users rather than younger users. Some examples are: “🙏🪄❤️”, “❤️”, and “🙏”. Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, (2015, p. 58) found that this type of status has been used majorly by younger users, as a means to “transmit a more cryptic kind of communication”. This finding is also in line with Ueberwasser & Stark (2017), who found that that emojis are used between 14-28%.
**Blank realization**: users intentionally deleted the text options provided by the WhatsApp and used a blank space instead. This type makes 27% (185) of the total sample. This may indicate that even though these users are aware of this facility, they showed no interest in communicating any message about themselves by utilizing it. Further, these users seem to emphasize their knowledge of this facility, and yet they deliberately delete it. This finding is also in agreement with Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya (2015), even though it was the least common realization in their data.

The analysis of the data concerning the types of self-generated statuses uncovers that the pure text type is the most prevailing. Blank realization has also been used more in the data. The least is purely iconic, which may indicate less familiarity of the users in the sample with the icons, used for various situations.

### 4.2 Themes of WhatsApp notifications

The second research question of the present study is to find out the major themes used in the WhatsApp status notification used in this study. The analysis of data revealed five major patterns of themes. They are religious, social, personal, and national, as shown in Figure 2 below.

![Figure 2: Major themes for status notifications](image)

**Figure 2**: Major themes for status notifications

1. **Religious status notifications**: This type is the most common category in the data gathered from the users in this study. As shown in Figure 2 above, 180 (37%) of the used texts are majorly categorised as religious. These include verses of the Holy Quran such as: “And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out”; Prophet Sayings, e.g. “You are only as good as those who associate with”; prayers e.g., “Oh Allah! I ask you for help, and I depend upon you in my all issues”; and supplications to God “Prayers be on his prophet Mohammad and his family and companions”, and “There is no god save Allah”. Though with less percentage, this finding is in line with the findings of Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2016), who obtained 26% in this type. This is also in agreement with Al-Smadi (2017), who found that this status is more frequent among female users.

The frequent use of these items can be attributed to the tendency among the users to utilize this facility to share religious messages with their contacts. Users seem to prefer to communicate religious items to their contacts. They perhaps mean either to remind them of their religious duties, to invite them to take part in what they do, to repeat their religious verses or sayings in order to be
rewarded by Allah, or to give their contacts an image that they are more linked to religion. Although these might provide some explanations, more qualitative work eliciting users’ justifications will perhaps enlighten us further in this issue.

2. **Social status notifications**: the second major category that could be classified in the sample data comes under social notifications. This represents 27% (132) of the total sample. Data showed that users intended to fill this space provided by the App with texts that can achieve social purposes. These statuses reflected expressions that share functions and events with other members of the community on various occasions such as greetings, marriage and engagement, death, and the like. Examples of this type include:

- Greetings: “Salam!”,” Have a nice day!”
- Marriage and engagement: “Hope she’ll have a blessed life.”,” Oh Lord make things go well (wedding)!”,” “Congrats on your engagement!”.
- Public occasions: “Many Happy Returns”,“Happy Valentine!”, “Ramdhan Mubarak”.
- New baby: “Congrats on the new baby”.

This result here is in line with Al-Smadi (2017), who found that this status is more frequent among male users.

3. **Personal status notifications**: the third category identified fall under personal notifications. This makes 23% (113) of the total. These are expressions that reflect personal purposes such as expressions of love, expressions for one’s self, saying farewell and so on. Examples of this type include:

- Love for beloved persons: “In all languages in the world ‘I love you’.”,” Oh my Lord! Preserve them for me and do not deprive me of them,”,” “Your love is not my choice, it’s my fate”.
- Saying farewell to a beloved person: “May Allah let their way be safe for them.”,” “Have a safe journey!”.
- Personal wishes for things expected: “Oh our Lord! make it easy for us to go to Makkah for Hajj.”,” “Oh our Lord make us among those who attend the month of Ramadhan”.
- Other: under the personal type also, there are notifications that were intended to inform contacts about things in connection to the user. These include telling friends and contacts that s/he lost their contact numbers, and that they excuse him/her when he/she confuses any of them; example: “Kindly each one should introduce herself to me as I have lost all my contacts”. There are also statuses, which tell contacts information about the users, such as changing the telephone number. Personal statuses also included statuses in which users write their full names in Arabic or English, their post at jobs, or sometimes their titles.

4. **National notifications**: This type deals with the statuses written in connection to the home country and the national situation. Although Yemen is in unrest, the percentage of notifications of this kind in the sample is somewhat limited. As seen in Figure 2 above, only 9% of the data could be placed under this category. Most of these statuses were in the form of wishes or prayers for the country -or sometimes a city or place of it- to be in better conditions. Here are some examples: “Oh Allah, save Yemen and its people”, “Oh God, save Taiz (Yemeni town) with your sleepless eyes”, “My heart will eternally beat ‘Yemen’”, and “Oh my country, green herbs that grow inside
my body”. This finding here is in agreement with Al-Smadi (2017), who found that the national status is the least status used by Jordanian users.

6. Miscellaneous notifications: these include notifications that serve many purposes. Some statuses give positive and encouraging meanings, for example, “don’t be sad, what’s coming would be better.”, “challenging words often lead to beautiful destinations.”, “After every breath, new life is given.”, and “Be good, do good, and have fun.”. Some other statuses include indirect messages e.g., “I’m being envied as if I own the whole world.”, and “Stay away from negative people, they have a problem for every solution”. Other statuses are meant to tell something about the user, such as “Sorry for not taking part in group discussions”.

5. Conclusion
5.1 Concluding remarks
This paper is intended to examine the discursive realisations and the thematic categorization of a sample of 846 text-based status notifications of WhatsApp users in the year 2017. The sample comprised three sets of data for a male university professor, a female housewife, and a female high school student. The major findings of the study showed a variety in the discursive realisations, including auto-generated statuses, which marked 18%, and the self-generated statuses, which made 82%. The most recurrent self-generated type was the purely text (53%). Data also revealed that the most used themes are religious (37%), social (27%), and personal (23%). The findings of the present study are hoped to have added more glimpse of grasping WhatsApp users’ preferences and purposes on using the statuses, along with previous research in this area. This would primarily be valuable for expanding our understanding of the discursive and pragmatic features used with the facilities offered by this application.

5.2. Limitations and future research
As the data used in this study were collected before the upgrading of the WhatsApp status into a multimodal one, this study was confined to the text-based statuses only. WhatsApp statuses in the new multimodal, however, would be an immense source of data that could result in further insights when it is looked at by applied linguists. This new multimodal status can provide an excellent platform for eliciting insight in the discourse and pragmatics of the forms used. Researchers can investigate various relevant facets, including differences between people of different nationalities, genders, ages, and levels of education.

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The 4mat Model in English Language Teaching

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Abstract:
This paper aims at highlighting the 4MAT Model as a teaching procedure in teaching English Language for undergraduate students at colleges and Universities. Moreover, the current study tries to focus on using the 4MAT model as a framework for teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language based on the principles of learning methods and their relationship to the learning cycle. The results of the study indicate that the learning cycle is designed 4 MAT with four learning styles. Each quarter is appropriate for teaching methods, which were used depending on the dominance of the right or left hemisphere of the learner’s brain in order to be suitable for all types of learners.

Key words: 4MAT Model, English Language, and undergraduate students, University teaching techniques

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1. Introduction and Background

People who have one source of information and use this information according to one system cannot generate multiple solutions effectively. In social life, which is becoming more complex because of new technologies and means of communication, when people use different perspectives to find solutions to the problems they face, difficulties in social life and thus generally acquire lifelong learning, successful interdisciplinary approaches can be applied. Therefore, teaching based on a multidisciplinary structure and qualified teachers who can implement this education are required in the educational process. The interdisciplinary approach is a process of integration, (Wragan, 2002).

Integration is the most challenging and critical component of the multidisciplinary process. Multidisciplinary integration is an assessment process involving analysis of relevant interdisciplinary objective (Mansilla, 2005; Lattuca, 2001). Integration is based on the analysis of discipline-based goals and perspectives or problem solving, followed by subsequent integration under different methodologies in the light of this analysis, (Lattuca, 2001). The integrated models and curriculum models developed on this perspective follow closely the constructivist perspective, (Davis & Knobloch, 2002), as education is more integrated, and more structured. (Wraga, 2002), Lettuce, 2005 discussed constructivism and interdisciplinary approaches together and defined it as "structural education science", (Lattuca, 2005). According to Lettuce, traditional teaching not only reduces the teaching responsibility of the teacher, but also extends the definition of education. Teaching is not only achieved by providing content, but also by designing experiences that encourage and ensure learning. Constructors assume that students have been given the information and beliefs necessary to form the basis for them to understand the world, no matter how inexperienced.

To encourage multidisciplinary teachers, multidisciplinary teaching must be based on the concept of constructivist education, and programs must be developed on the basis of this perspective. In this context, it is important to create models that combine structural methodology with a multidisciplinary perspective and provide results of practices related to these models. Models and approaches used in the implementation of the constructional approach in the teaching process include the 5E-learning model, project-based learning, problem-based learning, brain-based learning, collaborative learning, 4MAT teaching, and active learning. These models and approaches were developed to facilitate a learning environment that promotes the application of prior knowledge to new information about content and the use of results, McManus (2001).

Among the above models, the 4MAT teaching model is an integrated curriculum approach, enabling different strategies and teaching methods based on structural theory. This module also encourages students to develop their own understanding and perceptions. Using different learning strategies together in an integrated way makes learning more interesting, supportive, and more effective, (Merrill, 2001). Many studies have found that using an integrated curriculum instead of traditional teaching methods that adopt standardized strategies allows students to build knowledge in their minds more effectively, (Beane, 2016; Blair & Judah, 1990; Taylor, 2018; Lattuca, 2001). In addition, integrated teaching methods, such as 4MAT, facilitate effective and attractive learning and guide students to collaborative learning and relational thinking, (Kaewkiriya, 2017). The 4MAT-teaching model is usually used by teachers and helps them to carry out cooperative
activities. Therefore, in order to develop a strong multidisciplinary program, the use of this model is effective, because it includes the mentioned advantages and an integrated teaching approach, (Blair & Judah, 1990).

1.1. University teaching techniques
In order to ensure equal learning for an increasing number of university students, much attention has been focused on learning styles and their impact on the teaching and learning process. Despite its critics, the idea of learning style and its effects in higher education is not new, (Reynolds, 1997). In their seminal study on learning methods in higher education, other studies suggested that matching learning styles and teaching methods improve learning, (Beane, 2016; Nelson, 2013).

It is difficult to implement this matching approach, which may be the most common means of using learning methods to positively influence learning, especially in higher education, (Nelson, 1993). It is not surprising that the literature is rare regarding the extent to which teachers, particularly in higher education, systematically integrate the learning style theory into their education. This idea is supported by other studies, (Claxton&Murell,1987), which emphasizes that serious consideration is rarely paid for differences in learning styles and their impact on teaching and learning, with few attempts to make the methodology of incorporating learning methods into education.

Because traditional teaching methods and traditional methods are still ongoing in many of today's classes, another way to implement learning in higher education is to provide learning to university students. Claxton & Murrell (1987); Garcia-Otero & Teddlie (1992) reported that students' ambition for their learning patterns increased academic success in college courses. Even other studies showed that students' knowledge of their learning preferences improved the retention rate of college students, (Nelson, 1993; Ingham, 2003; Cutolo, A& Rochford, 2007).

1.2. What is 4MAT Model?
The 4MAT-teaching model is a conceptual framework for teaching and learning which is based on the work of John Dewey (Experimental Learning), Carl Young (Individual Theory), and most directly, David Kolb (Experimental Learning Theory). The premise is that individuals learn primarily in one of four different but supplementary ways based on how they perceive and manipulate information, (McCarthy & White & McNamara, 1987; McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006).

4MAT identifies four interrelated learning methods that depend on how we perceive and process new information. Our individual learning pattern results in naturally falling on this sequence. McCarthy (2006) has identified these four teaching methods as learners of imagination (one kind of learners); analytical learners (type two learners); common sense learners (type III learners); and dynamic learners (type IV learners). The following is a brief description of these learning styles from the perspective of learning and teaching:

- Innovative learners (type I) learn better through personal experience. They take advantage of the opportunities to find meaning in what they learn and enjoy sharing their beliefs, feelings and opinions with others.
They reflect nature and learn primarily through dialogue. They are skilled at taking perspective and are sensitive to the needs of others. As teachers, "lost learners" are facilitators, emphasizing personal connections to content through classroom discussions, group participation, and listening. Their priority in the classroom is individual student development.

- The analytical learning approach (type II) in a logical and organized way by examining details and details. As students, they often excel in traditional classrooms. Learners have an insight into new ideas and link new learning with other information they know to be true. Logically, they enjoy the formulation of theories and models.

They strive for accuracy and prefer teachers who do it too. As teachers, analytic learners are scientists, focusing on content through structured and logical lectures, notes, and readings.

- Sensitive learners (type III) learn to practice. When providing new information, they focus on practical applications immediately. They are active learners, preferring to get the right to work in the classroom. They hate tasks that have no clear purpose or application.

They learn better when they are provided with experimental learning opportunities. As teachers, Sense Learners are trainers who focus on providing students with opportunities to practice new skills.

- Dynamic learners (type IV) are active learners. They enjoy the risk and learn primarily through self-discovery. They like to link their learning to the things that matter to them in their lives. They enjoy gathering information and applying their learning in new ways. As teachers, dynamic learners challenge their students by creating realistic learning experiences in their classrooms and believe that the curriculum must be flexible and geared to the interests of individual students.

In the right sequence, these four learning styles provide a natural framework for teaching and learning. The use of the 4MAT model has been supported through research in primary, secondary and more recently in higher education classes,(Bair & Judah,1990). As a representative of what Kolb calls integrated learning, the 4MAT learner model is taught through four main teaching methods, (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Based on the original concept of KOLP methods in learning methods, 4MAT combines learning with brain-based processing strategies. 4MAT provides a systematic model of planning education that assumes that individuals learn in different, but identifiable ways and that interaction with a variety of diverse learning activities leads to higher levels of motivation and performance.

1.2. Applying 4MAT for university students
4MAT for college students aims to further enhance students' self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses in learning, towards a framework that students can use to adapt to a variety of teaching methods and disciplines required of college students today. Students begin a four-year course at the College for the first year of the semester by identifying their own learning style and then identifying and applying specific strategies they can use to improve their academic achievement, especially in cases where learning is inconsistent with their teaching style, (Taylor, 2018). Students
also learn how the 4MAT model can be used as a flexible framework for the natural learning cycle and to improve writing, reading, understanding and study skills.

The fact that student-centered educational models do not focus on what needs to be taught, but how they are taught raised studies on with learners’ characteristics. The concept of learning methods has been shaped in this process. Acceptable learning methods have become choices for the learner during the learning process search topic for many psychologists and wishers since 1940, (Beane, 2018). Although learning methods are accepted, one of the most important indicators related to needs, but motivation, attitudes and expectations in the learning environment are not the only reason to learn to occur in different stages are even accepted as one of the most important ingredients of the educational learning process, (Lattuca, 2005). However, this concept has gained great importance to "Experimental Learning Theory", which adopted by Colb which is based on learning theories for Dewey and Lewin and Piaget, (Sahin & Celik, 2012). As an experimental learning theory, learning is a four-step process. This process continues in circles and makes the learner acquire new experiences, and the experiences gained make the learner into the following learning processes, (Sahin & Celik, 2012). Despite the fact that it is influenced by many learning methods, the 4MAT (4 Methods of method applications) theoretically relies on Learning as in the Kolb learning course which rely on Learning Theory Demo, at 4 MAT, each quarter is classified as a visual student (type 1), analytical learners (type 2), sensitive learners (type 3) and dynamic learners (type 4). The McCarthy learning patterns are shown in Figure 1. The vertical axis of the cycle shows the visualization of information and the horizontal axis shows the organization of information. The perception of the information dimension consists of a movement of concrete experience into abstract visualization. The organization of the information dimension consists of a movement from a reflective observation to an active experiment. According to McCarthy (2006), all students are done in a quarter of the course.

![Figure 1. McCarthy learning style](source: McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006)
In the class there are students of all four learning styles, so appropriate education should be provided to each student. A learning cycle is 4MAT more important than any part of the course. Because every quarter of the year provides an appropriate learning environment for students this quarter, while also helping students orient themselves to other learning styles elsewhere. Therefore, a learning environment is created in which students learn to use other people's learning methods. Studies have shown that the differences between the functions of the right and left hemispheres of the brain, (Cutolo & Rochfold, 2007). The results of these studies indicate that the left hemisphere of the brain regulates logical and analytical ideas, while the right half of the brain works around intuitive and integral functions, (Aud, 2012). These results have helped in the case that learning methods differ from each other to be acceptable, (Davis & Knobloch, 2002). These studies have contributed to hemispheric dominance in the development of the teaching cycle 4MAT. Therefore, the learning cycle is designed 4MAT With 4 learning styles. Each quarter, appropriate teaching methods were used depending on the dominance of the right or left hemisphere. This course was completed in 8 steps, .). The teaching model appears 4MAT in Figure 2.

![The 4MAT Model](image)

*Figure 2. 4MAT learning style*

In the second step, the analysis must be based on the experience provided by the teacher. Students begin to discuss what they have learned about the concrete experience presented in the first step. In this way, all students are interested in what other students see. Allow For students to reflect similar experiences by seeing, sharing and discussing. In the third step, before students are provided with specialized information, they must have their own
experiences. Therefore, they understand, perceive and perceive the concept, (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006). In step four, the ability of students to create information and concepts is developed. The teacher introduces the subject to students and identifies concepts using different resources such as CDs. In step five, where students begin their activity, the concepts and formulas learned are applied and promoted and problems solved in which formulas are used, (McCarthy & McNamara, 1987). In step six, students will learn the information they have learned before. In this step where innovation begins, students acquire skills in how to use formulas, what they can do as part of specific concepts and how to interpret acquired information, (McManus, 2001). In step seven, students’ activities are analyzed to create a step towards learning in the future. Pioneering students to undertake a project or task perform the techniques used in this step, (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006). The eighth step where students perform themselves and share what they do with others is where practice and experience are integrated. This step, which differs from others, is the one in which students participate practices, they recognize the differences in their creativity, and the skill of everyone is important, (McCarthy & McNamara, 1987). The teaching model was 4 MAT which is designed according to hemispheres brain dominance with four basic learning styles source of research in various disciplines such as engineering, mathematics, microbiology, history, geography, science, music, English learning, and Engineering. Other researchers concluded in their studies that the model has positive effects on student attitudes, (Taylor, 2018; Ramirez & Laurinco, 2015; Burkum, 2010). There are some studies depending on the teaching model 4 MAT in various disciplines.

Conclusion
The 4MAT-teaching model will have many contributions, especially in teaching English. Furthermore, thanks to the 4MAT Learning Loop, students will be able to understand new concepts and terminology, which is one of the biggest problems students face. In addition, the processes in the learning loop can be useful for students regarding the use of English terminology in real life. The 4MAT teaching model provides students with an opportunity to learn about knowledge and experience in a field that starts from concrete experiences. Therefore, teachers can consider the four learning methods in order to meet the needs of all students. First of all, teachers should learn the differences between the four learning styles. While maintaining the learning style of each student in their learning process, they should systematically expose all students to multiple learning techniques. In order to properly achieve appropriate teaching methods for different learning styles, university-level English teachers can include student-centered teaching models in a 4MAT loop such as problem-based learning, multiple intelligence theory, brain-based learning, constructive theory learning, and learning-based learning, Institutional learning, computer-assisted English teaching, and active learning.

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Dialect Conflict and Identity Issues in Tlemcen Speech Community

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Abstract
The present article aims at serving as a reference work in the field of sociolinguistics. It also provides a concise summary of the sociolinguistic situation in an Algerian stereotyped speech community named Tlemcen. In addition, it sheds light on the status of its dialect, which most people consider as one of the most distinguished and stigmatized dialects in the Algerian society. This article also discusses the effect of bi-dialectalism on Tlemcen native speakers’ identity. To reach the aim of the study, the following hypotheses are formulated: First, the widespread of the rural variety in Tlemcen speech community may affect the social and cultural identity of Tlemcenians. Second, Tlemcen native speakers show negative attitudes towards the use of the rural variety, especially among females. Yet, the mixed variety is gradually gaining a pleasant status in Tlemcen speech community and its adoption is rather acceptable. For the sake of collecting information about the issue, the researcher has used both qualitative and quantitative instruments. The research findings reveal that dialect shift has negative effects on the social and cultural identity of Tlemcen native speakers which may probably lead to an identity crisis among them. In addition, we have noticed that another variety, the mixed one (a mixture of urban and rural varieties), is progressively displacing the urban one, and may undoubtedly affect the maintenance of Tlemcen dialect.

Keywords: Dialect Contact, dialect shift, identity, language variation, Tlemcen Arabic

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Introduction

Language contact, bi-dialectalism and variation are nowadays among the most interesting subjects of sociolinguistic investigation. Variability is persistent and omnipresent in languages which do not vary only in different countries but also within a single speech community. When being in contact with each other, some changes affect dialects and languages. It is generally assumed that there are several reasons that may be the cause of dialect shift. It is probably due to the constant dialect contact or simply because of the speaker’s aim in the identification with a particular speech community or with its values.

As far as Tlemcen speech community (TSC) is concerned, Tlemcen Dialect (TD) is considered as being one of the most distinguished and stigmatized dialects in Algeria since it is characterized by the use of the glottal stop [ʔ] instead of [Ø] in Classical Arabic (CA) Most of Tlemcen native speakers, more importantly, women are still using it and share positive attitudes towards the use of the glottal stop. Yet, nowadays, some changes have occurred in Tlemcen dialect; the most salient one is the insertion of the rural variety and the adoption of [g] instead of [ʔ]. The main reason is probably due to the internal migration from the rural regions towards the urban ones, and the constant contact between Tlemcenians and non-Tlemcenians. As a result, the rural variety is the dominant one and may eradicate TA one day. In this respect, Kingston (2000) agrees on the loss of dialects because of three main reasons: The first reason is due to population loss. The second one is caused by a forced shift whereby the language or the dialects are lost since their speakers abandon their dialect in favour of a more prestigious variety. The third and last one is due to its speakers’ adoption of another variety rendering it superfluous for communicational needs.

What is happening nowadays in Tlemcen is that people from the new generation try to accommodate their speech by using, from time to time, the rural variety depending on the situation and the context they are in or on the person they are talking with. In this vein, we should state that Howard Giles has introduced the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) which is concerned with the links between language, context, and identity (Bates & Taylor, 2016). In this vein, Gallois & Giles (2015) say, “communication accommodation theorists focus on the patterns of convergence and divergence of communication behaviors, particularly when they relate to people’s goals for social approval, communication efficiency, and identity” (pp.2). So, when addressing non-native speakers, Tlemcenians, more importantly, males and youngsters, try to avoid the use of the glottal stop in addition to some Tlemcenian words.

To highlight the impact of dialect shift on Tlemcen native speakers, the present sociolinguistic study attempts to investigate the impact of the widespread of the rural and mixed varieties in TSC and its effect on Tlemcenians’ identity. It also tries to evaluate Tlemcen native speakers’ attitudes towards Tlemcenians’, more importantly, females’ use of these two varieties.

To reach the target of the study, the author has stated two research question: First, will the spread of the rural variety in TSC influence Tlemcenians’ identity? Second, Which attitudes do Tlemcenians have towards the increasing use of the rural variety, mainly among females?
1- **Tlemcen Arabic**

As an outcome of the rural exodus, Tlemcen speech community is witnessing considerable changes in its dialect which are occurring at several levels, more importantly, the phonological, the morphological, and the lexical ones. For example, today Tlemcen native speakers, especially males and youngsters, are most of the time dropping from the use of their native variety including the use of the glottal stop and adopting the rural variety which seems to be more suitable for them. In this context, the study of Fasold (1990) in Kamwangamalu (2003) about language shift shows that the need of adopting a new language is “a feeling that the language being shifted from is inferior to the one being shifted to” (p. 227). In other words, in the view of males, the rural variety is considered as being more suitable and convenient, less stigmatized comparing to the urban one. Another feature which is quite apparent in Tlemcen Arabic is the use of the feminine mark {-فرح} of the third person singular which is dropped in verbs when addressing to females. For example, a Tlemcien native speaker may say [kفك:ل] meaning ‘eat’ (the imperative form) instead of [kف:ل{idente}. Another example is that in Tlemcen speech community, most Tlemcien females, tend to use the sound /ق/ as it is used and pronounced in (CA). Contrarily, in mixed or rural variety, Tlemcen speakers use /ق/ instead.

Another feature in Tlemcen speech community is that the [❑] has become a glottal stop [ะะ]. According to Dendane (2013), “The explanations of the allophonic variant [ะะ] appearance has not been documented in accurate ways. However, a few hypotheses have been put forward as the origin of the glottal realization” (p.5). Yet, due to the constant contact of Tlemcenians with people from rural areas, the domination of [g] instead of [ะะ] is becoming a serious problem which may probably lead to a dialect shift in (TSC).

2- **Language, Identity, and Dialect Change**

In sociolinguistics, language is closely related to identity. In this context, Tabouret-Keller (1997) says that “the link between language and identity is so strong that a single feature of language use suffices to identify someone’s membership in a given group” (cited in Kawangamalu, p.263). Being concerned with identity is being interested in the sense of self as the person grows up from childhood to adulthood. It is the way through which any individual distinguishes himself from the others in a given society. Accordingly, the relationship between language and identity is complex. Thus, maintaining a language or a dialect means transmitting it to future generations. Norris (2007) asserts that: “Identity is constantly interactively constructed on a macro level, where an individual’s identity is claimed, contested and re-constructed in interaction and in relation to other participants” (p.657).

It is worth pointing out that several causes may put a dialect in danger of extinction. For example, when a person from a specific speech community is uninteresting, useless or unattractive when using that dialect, people show negative attitudes towards that speaker. As a result, the non-desired speaker may obviously feel the desire of being distant from the group or out of it. Consequently, the speaker may loose his/her social as well as his cultural identity. In addition, and according to Ennaji (2005):

Cultural identity is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of a person’s self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social
class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture. In this way, cultural identity is both characteristic of the individual but also of the culturally identical group of members sharing the same cultural identity. (p.19-23).

Personal identity and social one are two other types of identity. While the former focuses on the individual and identifies him/her as being different from the others, the latter considers him/her as a member of the society since social identity is the outcome of the individual’s interactions with other members of the society. According to Tajfel (1972), social identity refers to the individual’s awareness of belonging to a group, together with the emotional and evaluative significance of that group membership. In this respect, Giles & Smith (1979) assume that in intergroup social comparisons, individuals seek to find ways to make themselves positively distinct from the out-group to enhance their social identity.

Tlemcen, native speakers, especially old people generally show negative attitudes towards youngsters, more importantly, females using the rural variety, since this variety is considered of low status in terms of attitudes. Kaid Slimane. H (2017) says: “[…] the findings revealed that the urban variety is the most prestigious, the pleasant, and the well-considered variety in Tlemcen speech community” (p. 225). Thus, it is asserted that any language or language variety is closely tied to the speaker’s personal, social and cultural identity.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research methods and sample
To explore the issue of dialect shift in TSC, the present study relies on two research instruments: a questionnaire directed to Tlemcen inhabitants and a matched-guise technique used to measure the attitudes of Tlemcen native speakers towards the use of the mixed variety. The sample population consists of 60 people chosen randomly (30 males and 30 females) divided into three age groups ([12-25], [30-50], [55-80], for each age cohort, 10 males and 10 females were asked. It is worth mentioning that all informants live in Tlemcen speech community.

3.2. The Questionnaire
It is a mixed one which consists of closed-ended and open-ended investigative questions. It was administered to 60 Tlemcen native speakers from TSC. It aims at determining the effect of dialect shift on Tlemcen speaker’s cultural and social identity.

*Question n°1*: Does the rural exodus affect Tlemcen dialect and its change?

*Table 1*. Tlemcen native speakers’ assumption about rural exodus effect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1* Tlemcen native speakers’ assumption about rural exodus effect
From the results, we notice that the number of the positive answers are far more superior to those of the negative ones. Thus, most of Tlemcen native speakers agree that the rural exodus affects Tlemcen dialect which may lead to its change or substitution.

*Question n°2: Are you in favour of dialect shift in Tlemcen speech community?*

Table 2. *Tlemcen native speakers’ attitudes toward dialect shift*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure.2 Tlemcen native speakers’ attitudes toward dialect shift*

The findings reveal that most informants of both genders, more importantly, females, are not in favour of dialect shift. They are opposed to the changes that are occurring to Tlemcen dialect. Some informants assert that by losing their native dialect i.e. the urban variety, they will gradually lose their identity. According to them, if the rural variety substitutes the urban one, Tlemcen native speakers will inevitably lose their culture and traditions. Surprisingly, a few of them 9/30 are not against dialect shift, perhaps it may be due to the widespread of the rural variety in TSC.

*Question n°3: Do you think that dialect shift has an impact on your social and cultural identity? If yes, how?*

Table 3. *The impact of dialect shift on Tlemcenians’ social and cultural identity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure.3 The impact of dialect shift on Tlemcenians’ social and cultural identity*

The general findings show that the majority of informants, more importantly females, agree that dialect shift affects their social and cultural identity. In addition, Kaid Slimane (2012) says that “Because speakers live in different socio-cultural environments, their language is exposed to variation and thus, to change. For this we have to postulate that the speech community is an important factor in language change since it provides a great influence on the speaker who is a member of it” (p. 123). In addition, most of the informants say that if Tlemcen Arabic (the urban variety) may be substituted one day by the rural variety, the Tlemcenians will adopt a different
behavior, and may probably behave differently or sometimes change their attitudes. As a result, they will gradually lose their social identity. Moreover, they also agree that being a member of Tlemcen community does not mean using the rural variety. Hence, the use and widespread of this latter will inevitably lead to a loss of Tlemcenians’ social as well as cultural identity.

**Question 4:** In your opinion, will another variety substitute TA in the future? If yes, which one, the mixed or rural variety?

Table 4. *Tlemcenians’ opinion on the substitution of TA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4 Tlemcenians’ opinion on the substitution of TA*

Most informants say that TA will be substituted by another variety one day. Most of them believe that the rural exodus affects dialect change and may lead to the eradication of the local variety. Yet, it is worth noting that the total percentage of negative answers is considerable and not very far from the one of positive replies which explains that a great number of Tlemcen native speakers do not admit the disappearance of TA.

Table 5. *The substitute variety in TSC*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>The Rural Variety</th>
<th>The Mixed Variety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5 The substitute variety in TSC*

Table five demonstrates that 61% of the informants answered that the mixed variety may substitute the urban one. However, 39% of them think that the rural variety may be the substitute variety. As a result, it is noticed that the mixed variety is far more acceptable by Tlemcen native speakers than the rural one.

### 3.3. The Matched-guise Technique

The current procedure aims to gather more qualitative and quantitative data. It also seek to measure the judges’ attitudes towards language forms which are performed by the same speaker but without knowing that the performer is the same person.

The matched-guise technique is the use of recorded voices of people speaking first in one dialect or language and then in another; that is two...
“guises”…The recordings are played to listeners who do not know that the two samples of speech are from the same person and who judge the two guises of the same speaker as though they were judging two separate speakers. (Richards, Platt & Weber 1985, p. 171)

Lambert firstly introduced this technique in the field sociolinguistics. The target is to evaluate the judges’ attitudes (the judges consist of 15 native inhabitants of Tlemcen speech community i.e. the native speakers) towards the use of the rural variety and the mixed one instead of (TA) mainly among females. To check the informants’ attitudes towards the three varieties, we made them listen to a text passage which was performed in three language varieties: The urban, the mixed, and the rural. The judges were asked then to fill in a table considering their attitudes towards each guise-speaker taking into consideration: pleasantness, status, and consideration (see Appendix C).

- **Prestige and Attitude**

  **Question n°1:** Which variety, according to you, is the most prestigious?

  More prestigious…………………………….Less prestigious

**Table 6. Tlemcen native speakers’ evaluation of prestige**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guises</th>
<th>N=15</th>
<th>1=6pts</th>
<th>2= 5pts</th>
<th>3=4pts</th>
<th>4= 3pts</th>
<th>5= 2pts</th>
<th>6= 1pts</th>
<th>7=0pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females’ Tlemcen Urban Variety</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females’ Tlemcen Rural Variety</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females’ Tlemcen Mixed Variety</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 1: Tlemcen native speakers’ evaluation of prestige](image)

The discernible findings show that Tlemcen urban variety has the highest score with 87.5% which explains that this variety is considered as the most prestigious. A lower score is attributed to the mixed variety. It is worth mentioning that the rural variety is considered as having no prestige at all.
Pleasantness and Attitude

*Question n°2:* How pleasant do you find each variety?
Pleasant .................................................. Unpleasant

Table 7. Tlemcen native speakers’ evaluation of pleasantness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guises</th>
<th>1=6pts</th>
<th>2=5pts</th>
<th>3=4pts</th>
<th>4=3pts</th>
<th>5=2pts</th>
<th>6=1pts</th>
<th>7=0pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females’ Tlemcen Urban Variety</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females’ Tlemcen Rural Variety</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females’ Tlemcen Mixed Variety</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, the findings reveal that the urban variety is perceived as being the most pleasing in Tlemcen speech community with a percentage of 75%. In addition, we noticed that the mixed variety is considered to some extent by Tlemcen native speakers as pleasant. Here again, the rural variety does not each any degree of pleasantness.

- **Status and Attitude**

*Question n°3:* How do you consider the status of each variety?

- High status ........................................... Low status
Table 8. Tlemcen native speakers’ evaluation of status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guises</th>
<th>N=15</th>
<th>1=6pts</th>
<th>2=5pts</th>
<th>3=4pts</th>
<th>4=3pts</th>
<th>5=2pts</th>
<th>6=1pts</th>
<th>7=0pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females’ Tlemcen Urban Variety</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females’ Tlemcen Rural Variety</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females’ Tlemcen Mixed Variety</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The urban variety is on the top with a percentage of 60% which proves that this variety has a higher status than the other two other varieties having a score of 10% and 30% respectively. Surprisingly, as figure 3 shows, Tlemcen rural variety is gaining a certain status just after the mixed one. This confirms one of these two varieties may substitute the urban variety in the future since they are both gaining a certain status in Tlemcen speech community.

4. Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

The questionnaire results have revealed that most of Tlemcen native speakers assert that the rural exodus is an important factor in dialect change in TSC. Most of them do not approve this change; they are rather for the local dialect maintenance. In addition, the great majority of informants, more importantly, females, support the idea that dialect shift has a negative impact on their social and cultural identity. Moreover, a considerable number of informants assert that another variety will one day substitute TA. They think that it is the result of the constant contact with people coming from neighboring areas, more importantly from the rural ones. According to them, the salient factors of in-migration and the rural exodus have led to the emergence of a new mixed urban vernacular, a variety which encompasses a mixture of urban-rural speech, it is the mixed variety.
In considering the findings of the Matched-guise technique, we have noticed that Tlemcen native speakers showed negative attitudes towards the use of the rural variety, mainly among females since this variety is having no prestige and most Tlemcenians consider it as being unpleasant. Yet, surprisingly, we have noticed that this same variety and the mixed one are gaining an important status in TSC. Thus, we may predict that if no measures are taken to preserve Tlemcen dialect, it will certainly be substituted in the future by the mixed or rural varieties.

5. Conclusion
Being considered as a highly stigmatized dialect in Algeria, the current research attempted to shed light on a sociolinguistic and attitudinal phenomenon, the one of bi-dialectalism with its impact on the speakers’ identity. The results discussed in this paper reveal that Tlemcen dialect is in a position of conflict since the rural and mixed varieties are gaining a non-deniable status in the community. They also show that most of the informants of both genders are not in favour of dialect shift and the change that is occurring in Tlemcen dialect which is mainly due to the stigmatization of the urban variety, including the use of the glottal stop [ʔ]. Some of them think that by losing their original dialect, the Tlemcenians will gradually lose their culture, traditions and may be their identity. In addition, the attitudinal procedure, shows that Tlemcen native speakers show negative attitudes towards the use of the rural variety, especially by females. Throughout this research, we attempted to modestly explore the intricate sociolinguistic situation which Tlemcen speech community is witnessing nowadays.

About the author:
Dr Hynd Kaid Slimane-Mahdad holds a PhD in sociolinguistics from the university of Tlemcen. She is now a lecturer at Belhadj Bouchaib University Centre of Ain Témouchent. Her main research interests turn around sociolinguistics and didactics. She had also taught English for almost twenty years at High School in Tlemcen (Algeria).

ID ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6025-5273

References
Appendices

Appendix A:

Table 1. Sampling and stratification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B: The Questionnaire

Question n°1: Does the rural exodus affect Tlemcen dialect and its change? Yes □ No □

Question n°2: Are you in favour of dialect shift in Tlemcen speech community? Yes □ No □

Question n°3: Do you think that dialect shift has an impact on your social and cultural identity? If yes, how? Yes □ No □

Question n°4: In your opinion, will TA be substituted in the future by another variety? If yes, which one, the mixed or rural variety? Yes □ No □
Appendix C: The Matched-guise Technique (translated version). The passage below was read in the urban variety (TA), the rural one, and the mixed one.

The passage: I told my classmate that I couldn’t revise my lessons since I was tired. I preferred going to the beach in order to relax. My mother told me to make some revisions but I disagreed, I couldn’t open a single copy-book. I really wanted to have some rest. I asked my father to take me for a journey. He accepted. So, I asked my friend to come with me. It was Saturday, we went to Oran. We made some shopping and then went to the beach. We spent all day out. We were very tired but so happy and excited. What a marvellous day!

Table 2. Tlemcen native speakers’ evaluation of prestige

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N = 15</th>
<th>X 6</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female’s Tlemcen Urban Variety</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female’s Tlemcen Rural Variety</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female’s Tlemcen Mixed Variety</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Tlemcen native speakers’ evaluation of pleasantness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N = 15</th>
<th>X 6</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female’s Tlemcen Urban Variety</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female’s Tlemcen Rural Variety</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female’s Tlemcen Mixed Variety</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Tlemcen native speakers’ evaluation of status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N = 15</th>
<th>X 6</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female’s Tlemcen Urban Variety</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female’s Tlemcen Rural Variety</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female’s Tlemcen Mixed Variety</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Promoting and Assessing EFL College Students' Critical Thinking Skills through Argumentative Essay Writing

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Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract
The significance of this study is heightened by the fact that critical thinking (CT) is vastly seen as a major objective of higher education and the basis for the development of learning outcomes. Thus, this quasi-experimental aims at promoting and assessing students’ critical thinking skills (CTSs) through argumentative essay-writing. It also investigates the correlation between CT and essay-writing skills. The main question addressed is: what is the effectiveness of promoting CTSs through argumentative essay-writing among English major students in terms of interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, and explanation? An instructional material was designed and implemented in classroom teaching to enhance CT. The study was conducted on 98 English major male participants enrolled in an essay-writing course at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU), Saudi Arabia. The participants were randomly assigned to either intervention (n =49) or control (n =49) groups. Quantitative-qualitative methods were employed. Pretest and posttest were applied to both groups. The Facione and Facione (1994) CT scoring rubric was utilized for assessing CTSs. Findings revealed that CT and essay-writing skills are significantly positively correlated. Assessment of students’ essays denoted that the intervention group significantly surpassed the control in the five CTSs: “interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, and explanation” (Facione 1990, p. 8). It can be concluded that explicitly teaching CTSs through essay-writing can be effective in the development of these skills. The study recommended that further studies be implemented in different universities and also using other CT definitions and skills, and comparisons between the findings could be made.

Keywords: argumentative essay, critical thinking skills, essay-writing skills, promoting and assessing, Saudi University students

Introduction

Promoting and assessing CTSs has become an urgent need to enhance the performance of students, especially in higher education. CT is not innate; it is a cognitive skill that can be acquired and developed through certain patterns of instructional training (Daniel & Auriac, 2011). CT comprises a set of skills such as inference, interpretation, evaluation (Facione, 1990), deduction (Furedy & Furedy, 1985), induction (Ennis, 1985), and recognition of assumptions (Watson & Glaser, 1994). Thus, when students are trained to employ CTSs through a set of steps, they may become creative thinkers (Facione & Gittens, 2015).

Yet, other researchers debate that CT cannot be taught learned or transferred to new contexts. For example, Willingham (2008) asserts that CTSs are domain-specific and that they are not transferrable at any time to other fields or disciplines. Willingham explains that the same student may exhibit CTSs in one situation, or ‘domain knowledge’, but fail to do so in another situation that seems similar. He also disputes the existence of multi-purpose CTSs.

Although there has been a debate over whether CTSs can only be taught in a specific domain of knowledge or be transferred to new contexts, the current study tends to support the earlier studies that suggested that CT could be developed through certain instructional training. The most compelling reason for this view is that previous studies, such as the American Psychological Association's Delphi Report (Facione, 1990), suggest that CT can be measured and assessed by providing operational definitions for CT and its related skills and sub-skills. Those studies also proposed scoring rubrics designed for the assessment of CTSs, and they provided detailed explanations of how to use those rubrics to assess CT.

There have been few empirical studies carried out on the correlation between CT and writing (Liu & Stapleton, 2018). Afshar, Movassagh, and Arbabi (2017) report "a significant positive correlation between CT and writing in a second/foreign language" (p. 8). They conclude that the higher CT level the students have, "the better their argumentative writing" becomes (p. 9). In a very similar way, WN, Syahri, and Simaibang (2018) indicate "that the students with the better [CT] have the better writing ability than the poor ones" (p. 64). They add, "the more critical students are, the more creatively they develop the writing ideas" (p. 64). Additionally, Goatly (2000) argues that writing activities can be the best way to teach CT. According to Goatly the existence of some sorts of argumentative and persuasive writing tasks is the reason why writing improves CT.

There are four approaches to teaching CT (Ennis, 1989, p. 5). The first is the "general approach", which involves teaching CT separately from the subject content. The second is the "infusion approach", where the instruction of CT and the subject content are combined, and CTSs are taught explicitly. The third is the "immersion approach", which results from students' immersion in a subject, and CTSs are not explicitly presented to students. Fourth is the "mixed approach". It "consists of a combination of the general approach with either the infusion or immersion approaches" (p. 5). According to Abrami et al. (2008), an excellent way to teaching CT is the "mixed approach" as it integrates the advantages of teaching CT as a separate course within a specific subject area.
There are four widely used standardized tests for the assessment of CT. First, there is the "California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST)", developed to assess CTSs of "interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, and explanation" (Facione, 1990, p. 8). Second, the "Cornell Critical Thinking Test (CCTT)" is a multiple-choice test that entails test takers "[using] inductive and deductive processes, identify assumptions and judge the credibility of arguments" (Plath, English, Connors, & Beveridge, 1999, p. 208). Third, "the Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test" (Ennis & Weir, 1985) is "an open-ended test of [CT] in which test-takers are asked to generate and evaluate arguments" (Ku, 2009, p. 71). The fourth test is "the Watson Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA)" (Watson & Glaser, 1994). It is a multiple-choice test intended to assess five CTSs: "inference, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation, and evaluation of arguments" (Bernard et al., 2008, p. 17).

Amongst many alternatives, the researchers selected "The Delphi Report" of Facione (1990) as the fundamental criterion to measure CT. The report defines CT as "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment that results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, and explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based" (p. 3). This definition is considered to be a reasonable consensus conceptualization of CT, and it is recognized as integral to the development of CT by a large Delphi study that included 46 prominent thinkers in the field (Dwyer, Hogan, & Stewart, 2014). Furthermore, the definition has earned wide acceptance, and it is still being used by the APA to assess CT (Catchings, 2015).

Facione and Facione (1994) established a "Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric" (HCTSR) that can be used for grading written work, with a set of instructions about how to use it. It assesses CT based on six key abilities derived from the Delphi Report: "interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation" (Facione, 1990, p. 8). The scoring rubric, which must be used by at least two raters, evaluates texts in a spectrum that includes assessment levels of significantly weak (no variety in CTSs), unacceptable (a limited variety in CTSs), acceptable (a variety of CTSs) and strong application of CTSs (a wide variety of CTSs).

Promoting CTSs has been deemed essential for teachers at all levels (Guiller, Durndell, & Ross, 2008). Although instructors may agree on its importance, previous studies show that CT "does not seem to be widely incorporated into college curricula" (Reed & Kromrey, 2001, p. 8). According to the experience of the researchers, many students are likely to fail to write reasonable essays because they do not use CTSs when they write on academic topics. Hence, the overall objective of this investigation is to promote and assess English major students’ CTSs through argumentative essay-writing and to delineate the correlation between CT and essay-writing skills. The current study investigates the following questions:

**RQ1:** What is the correlation between CT and essay-writing skills?

**RQ2:** What is the effectiveness of promoting CTSs through argumentative essay-writing among English major students in terms of "interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, and explanation"?
This paper derives its significance from its attempt to teach and assess CTSs through essay writing and to uncover the potential influence these skills may have on students’ writing. Thus, this study is needed to add to the existing literature on the correlation between CT and essay-writing skills. Additionally, the existence of debate over CT definition, skills, assessment tools, and the possibility of teaching it creates a pressing need for more studies to be conducted in the field in order to establish a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Method
Participants
The representative sample included 98 undergraduate male students during the first semester of 2016/2017. The Department of English at PSAU was chosen purposefully for the implementation of this study. One of the faculty members volunteered to teach the course material. The participants were enrolled in an essay-writing course, and their ages ranged between 19 and 22. They were randomized to either intervention (n = 49) or control (n = 49) group. The simple random sampling method was used to place the participants in four classes (with about 24-25 students each).

The participants are Arab university students in Saudi Arabia studying English as a foreign language. They are all in their second year of study, and their general English proficiency level is intermediate (according to the preparatory year program (PYP) scores). Students have limited opportunity to speak English outside the classroom. Entry to the Department of English requires them to complete a one-year-long PYP first.

Instrument

Instructional Material
Initially, in order to teach the intervention group, the learning material for CTSs was selected from the textbook "Critical Thinking: A student’s Introduction" by Bassham, Nardone, Wallace, and Irwin (2010), whereas the material for writing lessons was chosen from the textbook "Introduction to Academic Writing", by Oshima and Hogue (2007). The intervention group received learning material that consisted of eight CT skill-based lessons. Lessons were adapted to suit the students’ abilities and to promote CTSs. The control group did not receive any specific training in CT, and they did not use the modified material. Table 1 below shows a comparison between the two groups in terms of treatment:

Table 1
Treatment schedule of both groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>CT Training</th>
<th>Redesigned Material</th>
<th>CT Textbook</th>
<th>Writing Textbook</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Took the same pretest</td>
<td>Had the same instructor</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Used the same textbook</td>
<td>Took the same posttest</td>
<td>The same assessment procedure was used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The CT textbook was selected from among many that had been reviewed due to its coverage of the fundamentals of CT in a clear, reader-friendly language. It also provides extensive
real-world examples and presents a step-by-step approach and thus should be easy for the participants to understand. Furthermore, each unit has a theme that seems most appropriate for the course requirements and would challenge students to think critically.

**The Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric**

The Facione and Facione’s (1994) “HCTSR” was the instrument elected for the assessment in this study owing to several considerations. First, the rubric was developed using findings from the Delphi Report of the APA, which comprised 46 experts. Second, it was selected after reviewing several rubrics used by college professors for scoring students’ essays. Also, it can be applied to students' writing to evaluate their abilities in engaging in "analysis, interpretation, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation." (Landis, Swain, Friehe, & Coufal, 2007, p. 138).

The HCTSR is a four-level scale. One point is awarded for the overall demonstration of ‘significantly weak’ in CT. Two points represent ‘unacceptable’ level in CT, three points for ‘acceptable’ level of CT, and four points for ‘strong’ level of CTSs. In general, scores of 3 and 4 represent demonstration of CT and scores of 1 and 2 represent little or no evidence of CT. A four-point criterion scale in reference to Facione and Facione’s (1994) Rubric was utilized to measure the key skills of CT.

**Critical Thinking Training**

The researchers prepared CT lessons on each of the CTSs and their sub-skills for the intervention group. CTSs were taught in an eight-week, in-class training program featuring three sessions per week. Every session lasted for 50 minutes. The instructor taught the learning material in two phases. The first phase was the instruction phase. Two sessions lasting for a total of approximately 100 minutes were assigned to teach the lessons on CT. These lessons included direct instruction, exchange of reflective discussions, modeling, and practice conducted in groups or individually. The second phase was conducted individually during the third session of each week. Students were instructed to write essays in response to assigned prompts reflecting on their experience with the class lessons.

The teaching of CTSs to the intervention group involved activities of different types and levels of complexity, starting from simple CT activities and gradually progressing to more advanced ones. Once students had completed a number of training activities, they moved on to the essay-writing task. However, in the control group, no explicit CT instruction was incorporated into the regular curriculum.

When teaching the *inference skill*, for example, emphasis has been placed on gradually stepping up the level of complexity from two perspectives. The first is the stepping up of activities and their level of hardness, progressing from writing a few lines, to paragraph(s), to a weekly essay task. Second is the training of participants on the inference skill across its three steps. In the first step, *querying evidence*, students were taught how to query evidence by recognizing premises using their prior knowledge and the information presented in the task. In step two, *conjecturing alternatives*, students were taught how to go beyond the information given to formulating multiple options using the information they provided in step one. In the final step, *drawing conclusions*, the
The instructor helped students deduce new conclusions from the available information/evidence and multiple alternatives. Table 2 shows a sample of the training activities.

Table 2
A sample of the inference skill training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Querying Evidence</td>
<td>Conjecturing Alternatives</td>
<td>Drawing Conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students work in groups of four to recognize premises and formulate a strategy for gathering information about the images.</td>
<td>Students formulated multiple alternatives.</td>
<td>Students generated conclusions such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity and Reliability</td>
<td>Evidence:</td>
<td>Students formulated alternatives such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mayor of the unorganized and dirty neighborhood has to be dismissed from his post</td>
<td>Two neighborhoods belong to different areas:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents of the unorganized and dirty neighborhood should be educated about contributing to the cleanliness of their neighborhood.</td>
<td>One of which is very organized and clean and the second is random and unclean.</td>
<td>The problem might be imputable to the lack of financial support, so support must be increased for the unorganized neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Writing:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once students have completed a number of inference activities, like those listed here, they moved on to the essay writing task.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validity and Reliability

The validity of the instrument was achieved through a group of six specialists in the field who gave suggestions and critical comments for the improvement of the instrument. Modifications inspired by the experts were made accordingly. To examine the usefulness of the content and procedures, to achieve inter-rater reliability, and to determine if any changes were necessary, a pilot study was performed during September 2016 with 32 students that were not selected for the actual study. The pilot study used the same material as the main study and had the same instructor. A test-retest method was administered at two different times to the same sample, with a two-week interval, to demonstrate the reliability of the pretest/posttest over time. The pilot study exhibited that the instrument was effective and no further modifications were required. The Pearson Correlation between the two applications was (0.89). The reliability of the instrument was supported by calculating the value of Cronbach Alpha (0.83). These values give an indication of acceptable reliability for the application of the study.
To establish inter-rater reliability, the three raters – the researchers and the instructor – held a training session with practice discussions. Every rater coded twenty essays of the pilot study, and results were compared. Inter-rater reliability was determined using Cohen’s Kappa, and was computed at 0.71, 0.75, and 0.81. The scores of the main study were also analyzed to determine the reliability across raters. Kappa value for inter-rater reliability of the scores was 0.83 (raters: 1&2), 0.79 (raters: 1&3), and 0.81 (raters: 2&3). Therefore, the inter-rater reliability obtained was sufficiently high.

Procedure
Prior to the initiation of treatment to the intervention group, data were gathered from all participants in the two groups by subjecting them to the same pretest. The pretest was administered to participants to assess their level of CT and to ensure equivalence between groups. Participants were required to write an argumentative essay of five paragraphs, between 200-250 words, in which they debated the impact of the Internet on society. Subsequently, a meeting of the intervention group with their instructor was held to explain things and to answer any questions related to the material, procedure, or responsibilities. After that, the instructor started administering the lessons as planned. The students were required to submit one essay-writing task every week. Each essay-writing task had three main sequential steps: preparation, drafting, and revising.

The prewriting step: students were given a topic so that they could search for ideas about it outside the classroom time and then get ready for the next meeting. In the first session of each week, students were taught writing and CT skill-based lessons. They were given thirty minutes to study in class the lesson specified for the task of writing. Then they were given twenty minutes to exchange discussions about the lesson.

The drafting step: students would study a model essay on the topic and produce a parallel essay. They were then required to use the list of ideas they had produced earlier in the prewriting step to compose an essay utilizing the CTSs they had learned in their training lessons. This stage lasted for approximately fifty minutes.

The post-writing step: students would revise their drafts, and they would then share the drafts with peers to get feedback. Finally, students had some time to revise their drafts one more time before submitting the final essay to the instructor for evaluation.

The researchers and the instructor marked the essays and returned a copy of them to the students with comments. This formative assessment technique was used to assess the students’ progress in CT and to give them feedback on their writings. More importantly, students expect feedback from their instructor (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994) every time they produce their essays. Right after completion of the training sessions, all participants were given the same posttest.

Data Analysis
The researchers and the instructor analyzed the students’ essays based on the "HCTSR". Essays were evaluated on a scale from one indicating poor to four indicating excellent. The raters coded all the pretest, posttest, and the eight weekly essays independently. Regarding the few essays
(5 essays) where raters scored essays differently, discrepancies were resolved through subsequent discussion between the three assessors, and a final agreed-on score was assigned.

The essays developed by the participants were then assessed using the essay scoring rubric proposed in the students' textbook "Introduction to Academic Writing" (ibid). The scores were obtained based on five criteria: content, format, organization, punctuation and mechanics, and grammar and sentence structure. The obtained data were then computed using the SPSS.

Quantitative data were statistically analyzed to assess variations in CTSs between the two groups after the treatment period. Data were analyzed using the (SPSS, IBM version 16) to compute means (M), standard deviation (SD), Pearson correlation between variables, frequencies, and averages of scores, and one-way ANOVA to evaluate differences between groups. Values of p < 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

Findings

Means and standard deviations of CT and essay-writing skills of the pretest were compared to demonstrate initial equivalence between groups. Regarding CTSs, there was variation in mean scores of the intervention group (M = 2.04, SD = .706), and the control (M = 2.02, SD = .721). Also, there was variation in mean scores of the intervention group (M = 46.06, SD = 16.08), and the control (M = 45.94, SD = 15.549) relating to essay-writing skills. Accordingly, in Table 3, one-way ANOVA was performed to ascertain whether the variations were significant.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Essay-Writing Skills</th>
<th>Critical Thinking Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sum of Squares df</td>
<td>Mean Square F Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups Within Groups</td>
<td>.367 1 .367 .001 .970</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24015.633 96 250.163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24016.000 97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 indicates no statistically significant differences between the two groups relative to CTSs F (1, 96) = .020, p = .888, and essay-writing skills F (1, 96) = .001, p = .970. Therefore, the two groups were equal at the beginning of the experiment.

To address the first question, the researchers computed the Pearson Correlation between the sums of the posttest scores of the two variables: CT and essay-writing skills. The two variables were significantly positively correlated. For both variables, the correlation obtained was (.698), which is highly significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

For the second question, posttest means and standard deviations on CT and essay-writing skills were calculated. There was variation in the mean scores achieved by the intervention group...
with respect to CTSs ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .750$), and the mean scores gained by the comparison group ($M = 2.6$, $SD = .705$). Similarly, there was variation in the mean scores of the intervention group regarding essay-writing skills ($M = 59.65$, $SD = 14.959$), and the mean scores obtained by the comparison group ($M = 52.88$, $SD = 14.919$). Accordingly, in Table 4, one-way ANOVA was used to examine if the variations were significant.

### Table 4
One-way ANOVA results of essay-writing and CTSs posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Essay-Writing Skills</th>
<th>Critical Thinking Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sum of Squares df</td>
<td>Mean Square F Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.367 1 .367 .001 .970</td>
<td>.010 1 .010 .020 .888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>24015.633 96 250.163</td>
<td>48.898 96 .509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24016.000 97</td>
<td>48.908 97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One-way ANOVA reveals statistically significant differences between pretest and posttest of CTSs $F (1, 96) = 6.271$, $p = .014$ and essay-writing skills $F (1, 96) = 5.722$, $p = .019$. This indicates that both CT and essay-writing skills appeared to be significantly improved by the implementation of the study.

The frequencies and percentages of the pretest and posttest scores in both groups were calculated in order to report the students’ progress in each CTS. Percentages of scores 1 and 2 were combined for little or no evidence of CT, while 3 and 4 were combined into a single percentage that demonstrates the ability to use CTSs. Table 5 reports the results.

### Table 5
Frequency and percentage of scores on the CTSs scoring rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>73.45%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26.55%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>73.46%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26.54%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>77.55%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.45%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>71.43%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>73.46%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26.54%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Promoting and Assessing EFL College Students' Critical Thinking

Intervention Group

Sharadgah, Sa'di & Ahmad

1-2
3-4

38
11

77.55%
22.45%

9
40

18.37%
81.63%

1-2
3-4
1-2
3-4

42
7
41
8

85.7%
14.28%
83.66%
16.34%

22
27
13
36

44.89%
55.11%
26.55%
73.45%

1-2
3-4
1-2
3-4

26
23
29
20

53.05%
46.95%
59.19%
40.81%

18
31
9
40

36.73%
63.27%
18.37%
81.63%

Inference
Control Group
Intervention Group
Explanation
Control Group
Intervention Group

Table 5 shows that scores 1 and 2 indicating little or no evidence of CTSs were remarkably
high in both groups on the CTSs pretest, whereas scores 3 and 4 demonstrating the ability to use
CTSs were very low. This indicates that most students in both groups did not demonstrate CTSs
in their essays in the pretest. As for the posttest scores, Table 5 demonstrates a significant increase
in scores 3 and 4 for both groups. This indicates that most students in both groups showed evidence
of progress in their ability to use CTSs between the pretest and the posttest. Participants in the
intervention group displayed a greater ability to utilize CTSs than those in the control group.
Discussion
In addressing the first question, a clearly strong correlation was observed between CT and
essay-writing skills. The two variables were significantly positively correlated. This outcome is
compatible with the findings of previous studies that have revealed the positive impact of writing
on promoting CT (Dreher, 1990; Fahim & Hashtroodi, 2012; Hanson, 2004; Hu, 2017). According
to Dreher (1990), "writing enhances CT and produces writers who can write good compositions in
one draft" (p. 152). Hu (2017) suggests that "writing asks for more CTSs, and in turn, writing is a
proper media for teachers to develop student’s CTSs".
The findings of research studies emphasize that writing argumentative essays is a powerful
tool for teaching and assessing CTSs. Studies also emphasize that when students are trained to
think critically, they develop more profound ideas and better understanding and as a result more
developed writing. This conclusion is established by McKeachie (1994) and Dixon (1996), who
stress the value of training students to exercise CT constantly during writing so that writing can be
an expression of CT. Similarly, Niu, Behar-Horenstein and Garvan (2013) state that persistence in
teaching these skills leads to tangible growth in CT capabilities and quality of essay-writing.
Regarding the second question, which is concerned with the role of argumentative essaywriting in fostering CTSs, all participants in both groups showed evidence of progress in CTSs
between the pretest and the posttest. Participants in the intervention group, however, displayed a
significantly higher ability to utilize CTSs in terms of "interpretation, analysis, evaluation,
inference, and explanation" (Facione 1990, p. 8). The most likely reason for the improvement in
both groups was that students had been exposed to the course content. This improvement asserts
the role of writing in the development of CTSs even if students do not receive training in CTSs.
Interpretation was the first CTS that was assessed. As stated by Facione (1990), the
interpretation skill is expounded as "to comprehend and express the significance of experiences,
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situations, data, events, beliefs, rules, procedures or criteria." The interpretation skill contains three subsidiary skills: "categorizing, decoding significance, and clarifying meaning" (p. 13). Data from participants’ essays showed that 85.71% of the participants in the intervention group and 59.18% in the control employed the interpretation skill. Both groups showed improvement, but the intervention group showed significantly greater improvement on the scale. Based on Hounsell (1984), interpretation is the uppermost skill to convey a viewpoint and present it supported by evidence. Interpretation is a skill that "must be learned by practice and cannot be acquired by memorizing someone else's interpretations" (Baur, 1960, p. 107).

When students were told to write an argumentative essay of five paragraphs about “the enormous positive influence of the Internet on society”, student A demonstrated the interpretation skill as follows:

**Thesis statement:** The influence of the Internet has caused many positive changes in the way we shop, communicate, and learn.

**Paragraph 1, topic sentence:** Online shopping can save time and energy.

**Paragraph 2, topic sentence:** The Internet has also brought together many families separated by miles.

**Paragraph 3, topic sentence:** Another positive attribute is that the Internet offers access to wide sources of information.

Student A has showcased excellent indicators of CT by giving a clear and supportive thesis statement and intelligible topic sentences. He interpreted the task question by paraphrasing it and generating ideas relevant to the writing topic to clarify the meaning, as can be seen in his thesis statement. The student was also implementing categorization and decoding significance when he addressed the topic by describing its importance in three areas: “...in the way we shop, communicate, and learn.”

Likewise, student B has utilized the interpretation skill by decoding significance of the problem without bias. He treated the argument in a logical way and described many advantages and some disadvantages for the influence of the Internet on society. For instance, he stated clearly that “there are some drawbacks for the Internet.” Additionally, in the excerpt below, the student attempted to exploit interpretation by clarifying meaning. He described some personal experiences and related the topic of writing to what he already knew.

**Student B:** Unfortunately, there are some drawbacks for the Internet.

**Student B:** The Internet influences my life, and it makes my life easier. It helps me to complete my homework...

The analysis skill is another CTS that saw improvement in the intervention group (71.43%) and the control (57.15%). Quitadamo and Kurtz (2007) discovered that participants who practiced writing developed their analysis skills significantly while the non-writing group did not. The analysis skill is expounded as the ability "to identify the intended relationships among statements,
questions, concepts, descriptions…to express beliefs, judgments, reasons,…or opinions” (Facione, 1990, p. 14). Analysis encompasses: "examining ideas, detecting and analyzing arguments."

Exercising ideas applies to the skill of identifying related statements, comparing and contrasting ideas, statements or concepts, and defining terms (Facione, 1990). It was evident that the participants had exploited the analysis skill by examining ideas. For example, student C made an effort to identify closely related information which was significant to set up his opinion. As shown in the excerpt below, he had examined the idea given and stated a comprehensible, consistent, and logically organized opinion. His thesis statement is clearly stated in the first paragraph followed by some indication of how the essay is to be developed.

Student C: In my opinion, the Internet is the greatest invention of this time. It plays an essential role in every aspect of life, particularly in communication, entertainment, business and providing information.

Other participants utilized the analysis skill by detecting arguments. According to Facione (1990), detecting arguments refers to giving statements or descriptions, for supporting or contesting some claim or opinion, or to recognize unstated premises of a claim. Student D, for example, identified the relationship between two different views. As shown in the excerpt below, he identified some unstated assumptions related to the topic, particularly, “the Internet has some negative effects”. He discussed many advantages and some disadvantages of using the Internet, although disadvantages were not stated explicitly in the given question.

Student D: The Internet has become an essential thing in our life, although it has some negative effects.

Facione (2011) proposed argument mapping as an effective technique for analyzing arguments, which indicates one’s logical thinking approach through reasons, claims, and conclusions. Throughout the course, participants were taught CT and essay-writing skills thought to be appropriate to map ideas for their essays. Many participants structured their essays sequentially in order to convince their readers of their arguments and help them clearly understand the relationships between ideas. Likewise, they displayed their ideas and content of the essay logically through transitions/signals within and between paragraphs. For example, in his thesis statement, student E clearly stated the order of his next paragraphs:

Student E: The influence of the Internet has caused many positive changes in the way we shop, communicate, and learn”.

Evaluation was the third skill that was assessed. According to Facione (1990), evaluation is "to assess the credibility of statements…and…the strength of the…relationships among statements, descriptions, questions or other forms of representation" (p. 92). Evaluation comprises: "assessing claims and assessing arguments" (p. 92). The analysis of the essays showed increased CTSs in the intervention group (77.55%) and the control (63.26%). That is statistically significant in favor of the intervention group. This result suggests that the writing process assisted students in
improving their critical evaluation skills. According to Schwartz (1968), critical evaluation is a skill that demands constant practice and "repeated challenge."

Assessing claims involves recognizing the factors affecting the credibility, relevance, and acceptability of information or opinion, whereas assessing arguments is the ability to decide on the level of acceptance of a given argument, or "to determine whether an argument relies on false or doubtful assumptions" (Facione, 1990, p. 16). Blair and Johnson (1987) specified three standards of arguments: relevance, sufficiency, and acceptability. Student F made a comprehensible evaluation by assessing the credibility of the claim as well as assessing arguments. He wrote:

Student F: In my opinion, I absolutely approve the claim that the Internet has positively affected society up to a point.

The extract above shows that the student judged the claim to be true. As a result, he had developed a strong supportive argument for the claim that the Internet has an enormous positive influence on society. Additionally, In the process of assessing arguments, he clarified his level of acceptance by saying: “I absolutely approve”.

Inference was the fourth skill to be developed and assessed. The intervention group (73.45%) significantly outperformed the control group (55.11%). Inference is defined as the process of seeking information required "to draw reasonable conclusions," to devise anticipation and hypotheses, "to consider relevant information and to deduce the consequences…Inference includes the sub-skills of querying evidence, conjecturing alternatives, and drawing conclusions" (Facione, 1990, p. 16).

Querying evidence is to recognize and judge information which requires support or needs to be addressed (Facione, 1990). In the process of writing, particularly the pre-writing stage, many sources of information exist and seem to be relevant to the issue. The students’ ability to determine what information is relevant and credible reflected their use of CT querying evidence. According to Jones (1995), this can be demonstrated through students' ability to identify the dimensions of the issue they need to address, to set up a search plan to obtain information, to collect information that can lead to an understanding of the opinion, to judge whether this information is useful to have, and to determine the sufficiency of evidence to reach a conclusion.

Conjecturing alternatives involves the process of formulating various alternatives to resolve an issue, to assume a sequence of assumptions, and to develop a set of plans to achieve some goals (Facione, 1990). Halpern (as cited in Dwyer, Hogan, & Stewart, 2012, p. 235) posits that solving a problem involves the use of multiple problem statements to define the problem and identify possible goals, the generation and selection of alternatives, and the use of explicit criteria to judge among alternatives. Student G, for example, drew some implications of a different position. He assumed that the Internet might be used to lure young children and then assault them.

Student G: Unfortunately, teenagers sometimes misuse the Internet by seducing and meeting young children for assault. This type of behavior is illegal and needs to be handled very strictly by authorities. Also, parents should monitor children's use of
the Internet and warn them of some behaviors that might have negative consequences on them.

Drawing conclusions indicates the ability to make connections among relevant information and arrive at new conclusions (Mojica-Díaz & Sánchez-López, 2010). After students had presented evidence and made arguments throughout their essays, they drew reasonable conclusions. For example, student H deduced the consequences from available data, taking into account opinions, evidence, and judgments that were provided earlier. He also made a prediction about the future of the Internet.

Student H: In conclusion, I agree with most views that the Internet has more advantages than disadvantages. I believe the Internet will play a crucial part in developing our life, and it will have more advantages in the future.

The final skill was explanation. The essays from the participants in the intervention group indicated that 81.63% obtained 3 or 4 points in the explanation skill, vis-à-vis 63.27% in the control. The explanation skill is defined by Facione (1990) as "to state the results of one's reasoning; to justify that reasoning, and to present one's reasoning in the form of cogent arguments" (p. 18). Specifically, explanation comprises: "stating results, justifying procedures, and presenting arguments."

Stating results is "to produce accurate statements, descriptions or representations of the results of one's reasoning activities" (Facione, 1990, p. 93). A demonstration of stating results can be seen in student I’s essay. He included a situation in which he stated a result regarding personal information. In this situation, student I gave his opinion: “personal information...can be risky,” and in his own words he explained the result: “companies can gain...”

Student I: In addition, much of personal information that is posted on the Internet can be risky in the wrong hands. For instance, companies can have access to your personal information and use them for their interests.

Some students practiced the explanation skill by justifying procedures. Facione (1990) defines the skill as the ability to set forth all considerations "used in forming one's interpretations, analyses, evaluation or inferences, so that one might accurately record, evaluate, describe or justify those processes" (p. 18). Student J, for example, after discussing some disadvantages, justified the procedure of his thinking thus:

Student J: This certainly doesn’t mean the Internet must be abolished, otherwise some caution has to be exercised while surfing the web.

Presenting arguments is the skill of giving reasons for agreeing to claims, or to argue and express objections on a claim (Facione, 1990). Student K argued against the Internet by saying:
Student K: the Internet can represent a threat to children. Children can access almost outcast websites such as porn ones. Thus, children need to be monitored by their parents when using the Internet.

Limitations & Future Research

Although the findings of the current study provide useful information and suggest future avenues of research, several limitations can be noted. First, this study is restricted to a sample at PSAU. Similar work could be repeated with students from different universities and the findings can be compared. Secondly, the current paper surveyed CTSs according to what is proposed in the definition of Facione (1990). It would be worthwhile to conduct further studies on this topic using other definitions in order to procure a greater understanding of the issue.

Moreover, this study is limited to the material used herein. Further research is needed to confirm the results using different materials. Also, this study involved male participants only. It was not possible to include female participants in the present study for cultural reasons. Further research will need to include female participants to ascertain if the findings in the present study also apply to females. Finally, because the intervention group might have received more attention from the instructor, there is the possibility of a halo effect at stake.

Conclusions

This study concluded that a highly significant correlation existed between CT and argumentative essay-writing skills. It appears that the more proficient the students are in CT, the better they are at writing skills and vice versa. The analysis of the participants’ essays also demonstrated increased CTSs in the five skills: "interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, and explanation" (Facione 1990, p. 8). Hence, participants in both groups benefited from this study; however, the intervention group significantly surpassed the control group.

CT is a fundamental goal of higher education that college students must develop. Training students in a variety of CTSs can assist them in applying these skills to any situation in real life that requires reflection, analysis, evaluation, and planning. Instead of being simply passive recipients of information from the instructor, students will learn to become autonomous learners.

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References


A Collaborative Peer-Consulted Text Analysis: Students’ Perspectives

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Abstract
Collaborative learning has long been done in the field of language learning. Collaborative learning is one of the characteristics of student-centered learning. Students are actively engaged in activities in which the teacher acts as the facilitator. Different from a teacher-centered classroom, the teacher gives instructions and students have to do what is instructed by the teacher. One of the applications of collaborative learning is working in groups or what is commonly known as group work. This study deals with collaborative work involving peer consultations done by twenty second-year students in an Academic Writing class. The students were required to analyze journal articles in groups of two or three. Data was gathered from journals submitted at the end of the semester, which was the Compact Semester of the 2018/2019 Academic Year. There were two questions to be answered in this research. The first question was “How is a Collaborative Peer-Consulted Text Analysis (CPCTA) applied in an Academic Writing class, in ELEP at UKSW?” The second question was “What are students’ perceptions about the collaborative peer-consulted text analysis?” The aim of this study was to show how a Collaborative Peer-Consulted Text Analysis (CPCTA) was applied in an Academic Writing course, and what students’ perceptions were. Data was also gathered from observations and interviews with two students. The findings showed that 90% of the students (18 students) liked working in small groups. The reason mentioned by most of the students was because of the partners. The rest (10%) admitted that they did not like group work because they got partners whom they did not feel comfortable to work with and because of unfulfilled expectations. This study can hopefully be useful both for students and teachers of writing courses who are trying to apply a collaborative peer-consulted text analysis for their students.

Keywords: collaborative peer-consulted text analysis, academic writing, collaborative learning

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Introduction

Collaborative learning is not something new in the educational word. This kind of approach in language teaching has long been applied in many classes to teach various skills. Collaborative work has also been applied in writing classes, including Academic Writing class. A peer-consulted text analysis in this study refers to the analysis of a journal article done collaboratively in small groups in an Academic Writing class. Each member of the group works together with one another to find agreement on the content of the article.

This study aims to answer the following two research questions:
1. How is a Collaborative Peer-Consulted Text Analysis (CPCTA) applied in an Academic Writing class, in ELEP at UKSW?
2. What are students’ perceptions about the collaborative peer-consulted text analysis?

This study is also intended to describe how a Collaborative Peer-Consulted Text Analysis (CPCTA) was implemented in an Academic Writing class, and also to find out students’ perceptions when they were actively engaged in a collaborative work. This study will hopefully provide some benefits and insights for other Academic Writing lecturers about a collaborative peer-consulted text analysis and how it is applied in the class. Students of Academic Writing will hopefully gain some ideas and insights regarding what to do and how to behave while doing collaborative work and consultations with their peers.

Literature Review

As previously mentioned, collaborative learning has long been applied in second or foreign language learning and teaching. The forms can be various from the simple ones like games done in collaboration with other students, to the most advanced ones like working together on a project, or working together to solve problems. Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2014), as cited in Wida Research Brief (2014), argues that collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity are among the “4Cs” identified as 21st century learning and innovation skills. It also claims that group-based learning designs are good ways to foster these crucial skills in English language learners, especially when the group engages in collaborative learning (two or more individuals creating new knowledge together. Kessler (2013) strengthened this idea, saying that in many cases, teachers may better understand the characteristics of human collaboration in general. This understanding in turn will help teachers to design collaborative projects, groups, and activities that incorporate the elements that contribute to success while avoiding those that present threats.

In language teaching, there are three terms which refer to the concept of collaborative learning; that is, constructivism, collaborative learning, and cooperative language learning. They are interrelated, and basically refer to a similar concept in language teaching. In a so called teacher-centered class, the teacher controls the class, the teacher’s power is a determining factor in the learning process, and “every student in class is doing more or less the same thing, at the same time, and in the same way”. This methodology, nonetheless, tends to ignore individual differences and learners’ contributions in the learning process (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 49). It can be said that the teacher is considered as the only “possessor” of knowledge in the classroom, while learners are the passive “receivers”.
In contrast to a teacher-centered or instructivist classroom, in these three learning models, constructivism, collaborative learning, and cooperative language learning, learners are treated as active and important agents. This is in line with the paradigm of the new perspectives of teaching. The teacher’s power or control is not seen as the only dominating factor in the class anymore, which determines the success of the learning process. Learners now can actively interact with the environment and gain an understanding by constructing their own concepts, which are important in solving problems and helping them to become autonomous or independent learners. That is the idea of the constructivist paradigm (Thanasoulas, 2001).

According to Doyle (1990), this learner-centered approach requires teachers and students to construct meaning out of information, which they have been exposed to, through active participation and interactions. In this process, students’ points of view, teacher-student interactions, questioning, which can promote students’ critical thoughts, as well as nurturing students’ reflections and thinking, rather than producing one correct or wrong answer, are highly valued.

Kaufman (2004), in Aljohani (2017), explained that constructivism is rooted in Piaget’s theory of cognitive development and in Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory of language learning. The notions of constructivists have influenced the pedagogical development as well. Aljohani (2017, p. 97) further clarified that in the past decades, many researchers and scientists had “elaborated the historical precedents for the constructivist learning theory”. Constructivism represents the shift from education which is based on behaviorism, to education which is based on the cognitive theory. Constructivism has thus not played a visible role yet in language pedagogy and teacher education. However, the notions that are central to constructivism have been integrated into language education through other pedagogical models.

Kagan (in Çelik, Aytin, and Bayram, 2012) also strengthened this idea. He explained that the concept of cooperative learning is drawn from Vygotsky, Piaget, and Lewin’s philosophies. These philosophers emphasized that a positive learning environment can lead to better academic performance, develop social skills, improve communicative ability, and provide a positive model for lifelong learning.

This is also supported by Árnadóttir (2014). She asserted that in order to work with a group through cooperative learning, students must have some social and small-group skills. Teachers should also realize that social skills need to be taught. A person will not just wake up possessing the skill to work well with others. Unfortunately, it often happens within group work that students are simply thrown into groups and expected to work together. This often leads to poor execution of the projects and there is a lack of learning.

In line with Kaufman (2004), Bada (2015) also stated that the constructivist view of learning considers the learner as an active agent in the process of knowledge acquisition. Constructivist conceptions of learning have their historical roots in the work of Dewey (1929), Bruner (1961), Vygotsky (1962), and Piaget (1980).
Dealing with collaborative work, Kessler, Bikowski, and Boggs (2012) also reinforced this idea, claiming that the theoretical basis for these projects largely rests on the work of Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky put emphasis on the role of social interactions in learning and on the concepts underlying the communicative approach in second language learning. Hirvela (1999), in Kessler et al. (2012), developed the importance of social interactions when noting that collaborative writing provides opportunities for students to write as part of a community and use each other for support and guidance. Collaborative and pair writing in both first and second language settings has been recognized as contributing to a higher quality of writing, a better sense of audience, an increased pooling of knowledge and ownership in the writing process, increased student motivation, and attention to discourse structures as well as grammar and vocabulary usage. Storch (2005, p. 92) also noted the importance of “immediate feedback for optimal collaborative writing to occur”.

Being in a constructivist classroom, learners are provided with opportunities to build on their prior knowledge and to understand how they can construct new knowledge from authentic experiences. The “experiential learning” covers personal involvement, learner initiation, an evaluation by the learner, and persistent effects on the learner (Rogers, 1994, as cited in Thanasoulas, 2001). Thanasoulas (2001) further stated that students learn from what they hear and what they read. Learners construct their own knowledge by looking for meaning and order, interpreting what they hear, read, and see based on their previous learning and habits.

That knowledge is socially constructed rather than received or discovered clearly is the underlying paradigm of the constructivist theory. This was asserted by Richards and Rodgers (2001, pp. 109-10, 199-200), who stated that in the constructivist learning theory, knowledge is socially constructed, not received or discovered. Constructivist learners “create meaning”, “learn by doing”, and “work collaboratively in mixed groups on common projects”.

According to this learning theory, constructivist learners create meaning, learn by doing, and work collaboratively in mixed groups on common projects. In this situation, the teacher is more of a facilitator and active participant in the learning community than an expert who passes knowledge to his/her students. The teacher should create an atmosphere that supports collaborative learning, and is responsible for negotiating a plan of work with the learners. Learners, therefore, have a role as collaborators, collaborating with other fellow students as well as the teacher. Learners are also the directors of their own learning, while instructional materials become an essential part that creates opportunities for students’ cooperation.

Oxford (2001, p. 372) reaffirmed this idea of constructivism, claiming that according to the constructivist approach, to understand or know something, one must use cognitive powers of interpretation in order to construct meaning. This happens only when language and social knowledge are closely integrated with cognition. When working individually, humans are involved in the “integrated triad” of cognition, language, and social knowledge. To separate one of these means to weaken the process of constructing meaning.

Brown (2000, p. 11) added that constructivism emerged as a prevailing paradigm only at the end of the century. Constructivists argue that all human beings construct their own version of
reality. Brown also stated that constructivism focuses on individual engagements in social practices in a collaborative group in a global community. He clarified further how social interactions with other learners is the focus of constructivism. The social constructivist perspectives, which are closely associated with the current approaches to both first and second language acquisition, emphasize the dynamic nature of interplay between learners and their peers, learners and their teachers, and learners and others whom they interact with. The interpersonal context in which a learner is engaged takes on great significance, and therefore, the interactions between learners and others is the focus of the observations and explanations (Brown, 2000, pp. 286-7).

Constructivism, in conclusion, prioritizes the interactions between the teacher and learners, as well as the interactions among learners with their peers. As Brown claimed, social interactions are the heart of constructivism. Bada (2015, p. 65) further explained about the implications of constructivism for teaching and learning. The central principle of constructivism is that learning is an active process. Information may be imposed, but understanding cannot be, for it must come from within. Constructivism requires a teacher to act more as a facilitator rather than an instructor, and the teacher’s main role is to help students to become active participants in their learning and make “meaningful connections between prior knowledge, new knowledge, and the processes involved in learning”. Patil and Kudte (2017) also claimed that many researchers who use constructivist learning theory in their study have seen better results in terms of students’ achievements and learning success. Through the constructivist learning approach, students not only create their own knowledge, but also their interest for the course.

Brooks and Brooks (1993), as cited in Bada (2015), summarized the concept about what a constructivist teacher should be. Three of the characteristics of constructivist teachers are as follows. First, a constructivist teacher has inquiries about students’ understandings of concepts before sharing his/her own understanding of those concepts. Next, a constructivist teacher encourages students to engage in dialog with the teacher and with one another, and the last is that a constructivist teacher provides time for students to construct relationships and create metaphors. It means that a constructivist teacher encourages learners to collaborate with other peer students.

Another researcher, Oliver (2001), in Tarricone and Luca (2002), added to the concept of constructivism. Oliver argued that as there has been a shift from instructivist to constructivist pedagogy, lecturers in tertiary education need to use various teaching strategies and methods, and incorporate student-centered team-based learning like project-based, case-based, and problem-based activities. Students working in groups and knowledge being dynamic, not static, but changing with experiences, are two of the characteristics of a constructivist classroom (Giesen, 2008).

Johnson and Johnson (1995), in Tarricone and Luca (2002), further added that students should be immersed in learning environments that promote real learning in real contexts. Teams and teamwork will definitely help to promote deep learning that occurs through several activities like interactions, problem solving, dialog, cooperation, and collaboration.
Related to collaborative learning, there is another concept called CLL or cooperative language learning. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), cooperative language learning (CLL) is a part of a more general instruction known as collaborative learning (CL). Cooperative activities, including pair work and small groups in the classroom, are optimally used in this learning model. In line with them, Jacobs and Hall (2002, p. 53) stated that there are some benefits associated with cooperative learning. They are found in important areas such as learning, self-esteem, fondness for school, and inter-ethnic relations. In EFL and ESL classes, cooperative learning improves student talk, encourages talk which is more varied, creates a more relaxed atmosphere, provides greater motivation, does more negotiation of meaning, and has a larger amount of comprehensible inputs. This idea is supported by Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 192), who claimed that cooperative learning raises students’ achievements, helps the teacher build positive among-student relationships, replaces a competitive learning atmosphere with a team-based structure, and provides students with healthy social, psychological, and cognitive development.

The collaborative learning model is also the basis for community language learning (also shortened as CLL2). In that kind of a learning situation, learners are considered as members of a community with their teacher and fellow learners. Learning is not seen as an individual achievement, but accomplished collaboratively instead. Learners are expected to listen with great attention to the “knower”, freely express their intended meanings, repeat utterances without any doubt, support and become “counselors” for other fellow community members, and be open in telling their inner feelings, frustrations, as well as pleasures in learning, to the teacher. On the other hand, the teacher has a role as the counselor for the learners: to respond calmly, nonjudgmentally, and supportively, and also to help the “clients” understand problems better. A CLL2 course, in short, centers on the interactions of the community (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp. 94-5).

A classroom or curriculum that is cooperative is usually learner-centered and far from the idea of being competitive. When students work in pairs or groups, they share information and help one another. They work together to successfully achieve certain goals which have been set by the teacher. Underlining Jacobs and Hall, Oxford (1997) also highlighted the strengths of cooperative learning (in Brown, 2001, pp. 47-8). Oxford mentioned that research has shown an advantage of cooperative learning in such factors as promoting intrinsic motivation, heightening self-esteem, creating caring and altruistic relationships, and lowering anxiety and prejudice. A group learning activity is dependent on the “socially structured exchange of information between learners”. The learner engages with more capable others, who provide assistance and guidance.

Group work, in which there is peer consultation, is one of the manifestations of cooperative learning. Still according to Brown (2001, pp. 177-9), group work, being a step toward an individualizing instruction, offers some advantages. First, it generates interactive learning; it also offers an embracing affective climate, that is, it creates the security of a small group of students. When students are criticized or have an idea rejected in a small group, they will not feel embarrassed in public. Finally, it promotes learner responsibility and autonomy. An ideal group work is a small one, consisting of not more than six people. In a large group, not all students will have the opportunity to convey their ideas.
Reinforcing Brown’s opinion, Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 195) also mentioned that one of the objectives of cooperative language learning are to develop classrooms that foster cooperation rather than competition in learning. Another objective is to develop students’ critical thinking skills, and develop communicative competence through socially structured interaction activities. Johnson (1994), as cited by Richards and Rodgers (2001), stated the contradiction between competition and cooperation. Within cooperative situations, individuals try to find outcomes which are beneficial to themselves and also to all other group members. Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups through which students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning. It may be contrasted with competitive learning in which students work against each other to achieve an academic goal such as a grade of “A” (p. 195). Cooperative language learning and competitive language learning are thus two very different things.

From the facts above, it can be seen that students tend to be very competitive in a non-cooperative learning situation. A cooperative learning situation ideally will keep students away from a competitive ambitious atmosphere since they learn to help each other. Thus, it cannot be denied that language is closely related to, or, one might say, cannot be separated from social activities. As Halliday (1992) mentioned in Feez and Joyce (1998, p. 5, 24), “Language arises in the life of the individual through an ongoing exchange of meanings with significant others. Language learning is a social activity and is the outcome of collaboration between the teacher and student and between the student and other students in groups.”

It is true that in learning a language, learners need to interact with their teacher as well as peers. There is no way that a language learner can be successful by learning the language alone, without getting involved with others. As what Halliday mentioned above, language learning is indeed a social activity.

As described previously, collaborative learning gives many advantages for students. Besides learning how to interact with peers, exchanging ideas and the like, they also learn interpersonal life skills, which will be necessary as they go to the community later and help them get along socially. The cooperative skills include communication, cooperation, problem solving, conflict resolution, and team building (Burden & Byrd, 1999, p. 238). In line with this, Brown (2001, p. 48) added that in pair or group work, students learn how to negotiate. Meaning, Brown claimed, is a product of negotiation. Besides that, they also learn an important value of take and give.

This collaboration with others can be reflected in the form of group work, which, in Brown’s opinion (2001, pp. 177-9), refers to a generic term covering multiple techniques in which students “are assigned a task of collaboration and self-initiated language”. Brown further claimed the advantages of group work. First, it generates learners’ interactive language. In group work, all students have equal opportunities to talk; therefore, teacher’s talk is no longer dominating. Another advantage centers on the climate that it offers, that is, an affective or secure climate. In Brown’s insight, small groups become “a community of learners”, in which sensitive or vulnerable students may feel secure to speak out, without fear of criticism or rejection. The next positive side of group work is it enhances the learner’s responsibility and autonomy, because, as Brown asserted, it is
It is worth remembering a proverb, which says that every coin has two sides. The same thing happens to group work. There are some negative sides found in group work, unfortunately, like students’ tendency to use their native language with their peers, students’ errors that will be reinforced in small groups, and smaller teacher control over learning. However, Brown is positive that careful planning and good classroom management can solve all these problems, as long as they are rooted in learning style differences (2001, pp. 179-182).

Methodology

This study examined twenty Academic Writing students’ perspectives on the application of a peer-consulted text analysis. Data was collected from reflective journals, which students submitted at the end of the Compact Semester 2018-2019 from all students. Interviews with two students were also done. The journals were submitted at the end of July 2019, while the interviews were done in the middle of August 2019.

The design of this study was qualitative, and it was participatory in nature. Research was done in the Compact Semester 2018/2019, with 20 Academic Writing students as participants. Data was collected through direct observations, journals, and interviews. The data collection instruments were thus journals, observation protocols, and interview protocols.

Research was done in an Academic Writing class, in the English Language Education Program (ELEP) at UKSW, Indonesia. It was conducted in the Compact Semester of the 2018/2019 Academic Year. The respondents were 20 Academic Writing students, all of whom were 2017 class year students. They were about 20 or 21 years old. These students had never taken or repeated this class before. They were all new in this writing course.

Findings and Discussion

This section covers the answers to the questions of How is a collaborative peer-consulted text analysis applied in an Academic Writing class? and What are students’ perceptions towards a collaborative peer-consulted text analysis in their Academic Writing class? As mentioned before, peer consulted activities in this study refers to collaborative work in which students worked in small groups with one or two peer students which they selected by themselves. They were free to choose their peers whom they felt comfortable to work with. They were assigned to find one journal article which was related to language teaching, the use of technology in language teaching, or second language acquisition. Then, together with their friends in their groups, they analyzed the content of the journal article, and tried to find the main ideas and five key secondary ideas in the article. During the discussion, they consulted with each other about those points. Disputes and disagreements could happen during the group work. However, these students learned a lot of valuable things. The processes are described in Figure 1.
All the students in this Academic Writing class had to go through all the stages described in the figure. Altogether, there were three pieces of group work which they had to work together. The first group work was on May 8, the next was on May 19, and the last was on May 31, 2019. They had to select one journal article and analyze the content. They had to find the main ideas and five other supporting ideas in the article. The students could do the group work inside or outside the classroom. Students’ perceptions on the collaborative peer-consulted text analysis will be discussed in this section.

Observation Results

There was only one guiding question that had to be followed during the observations. The question in the protocol was: How do students work together with their peers? From the observations done during the group work, it was found that all students were serious in working, either with one or two partners. They all seemed deeply engaged in the activity.

Students’ Journals

There were basically three questions that had to be answered in the students’ journals. They were: How did you feel during the collaborative work with your peer students? The second question was: How did you find your peer students during the group work? The last one was: Do you prefer to work individually or in small groups? These journals were submitted at the end of the Compact Semester, on 25 July, 2019. The students were asked to write the answers in the form of paragraphs, either in their mother tongue (Bahasa Indonesia) or in the target language, English.

Ten percent of the students (2 students) admitted that they were not happy working in groups, while the rest (90%, or 18 other students) said vice versa. They said that they were happy working in small groups. There were various reasons why the students were happy or unhappy to work...
collaboratively in groups. Some students, like Student 1, Student 3, Student 6, and Student 11, for example, felt happy because they could share their thoughts and ideas with their other classmates.

Another reason for the students’ happiness in doing group work was because they did not have to work alone, which in turn, could cause stress for them. This was stated by Students 4, 12, 15, 16, and 19. Cited below is Student 6’s statement:

Excerpt 1: Student 6’s opinion:
Actually, I feel better when I have group work for reading a journal article because with group work I can share my opinions with my partners, and also when I get confused with the journal article I can ask my friends; thus, it helps me a lot.

Another student, that is Student 19, mentioned that she was happy to have group work because this could change her habit towards something positive. She liked reading journal articles since she had group work in this course. She had a new positive habit. One answer which was stated by most students (50%, or 10 students), was that they enjoyed reading the articles because they could work with good friends. Good in this case means helpful, responsible, and comfortable to work with. In the second position was reason number 7, which was stated by five students (25%), that is, because they could share burdens with others, and there was no obligation to work alone. All these students’ opinions about their journal articles can be summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Students’ Reasons for Enjoying Group Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Being Happy Working in Small Groups</th>
<th>Stated by Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Opportunities to share thoughts and ideas</td>
<td>1, 3, 6, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Good cooperation/ conversations/ communication with friends</td>
<td>1, 9, 11, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Working with close friends</td>
<td>1, 4, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Working with compatible friends</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Opportunities to develop their own thoughts</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Working with good friends who were helpful, responsible, and comfortable to work with</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Opportunity to share burdens, no obligation to work alone</td>
<td>4, 12, 15, 16, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Getting valuable inputs/ suggestions/ criticisms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Feeling weak or inferior in writing</td>
<td>14, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Freedom to choose their own partners</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Changing reading habit, becoming more diligent in reading</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Every coin has two sides. The same case happened with students’ perspectives on the collaborative peer-consulted text analysis in this Academic Writing course. Two students were unhappy to work in groups. There were four main reasons for their unhappiness or reluctance. Student 8 revealed that he did not like group work because the results of the discussions with his partner were different from his expectations. He and his partner also had to go through a lot of negotiations which took time and he felt that it wasted his time. Student 8 further said that his partner often had changing moods, not to mention that Student 8 himself had problems with mood swings.

The good thing is that Student 8 realized that in the future, when he goes to the workplace, he has to work with everybody, and he cannot choose his colleagues. Stated below is Student 8’s statement about his difficulty:

Excerpt 2: Student 8’s statement:

_I cannot mention one word that describes my peer because she might have mood changes. It cannot be expressed as good or bad because it depends on the situation. Working with friends can be hard sometimes, but it helps me a lot especially in the future where I cannot choose who my friends are, so this is a practice prior to having a future job._

In line with Student 8, Student 10 also had a difficult time working in small groups. Previously, she worked with two female friends who did not appreciate her opinions and thoughts. She did not feel happy working in small groups with partners who could not appreciate her.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Not Being Happy Working in Groups</th>
<th>Stated by Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A lot of negotiations which wasted time</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Different expectations</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Having a moody friend</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Time consuming</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Partners who are not appreciative</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Partners who did not show respect</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_**Table 2. Students’ Reasons for Not Enjoying Group Work**_

**Interviews with Students**

Data was also derived from interviews with four students. These four students were selected because two of them stated that they did not like collaborative writing. They were Student 8 and Student 10. The other two students, Student 14 and Student 20 were also selected because they had surprising reasons for liking group work. On August 12, 2019, two personal interviews
with two students were conducted. The interviewees were Student 14 and Student 20. The reason for selecting these two students is, as stated above, because they stated something which was out of my expectations. Student 14 mentioned that she felt inferior in writing classes. Despite the fact that she was a very good achiever, she always felt that her friends were better than her in terms of writing. In her eyes, her friends had better vocabulary, even without the help of a grammar or spelling check, they could write well. This was something surprising, considering that this student was actually a good one, and there was no need to be worried about her ability in writing. In the interview session, she mentioned, “I always feel that my friends can do better than I do. I feel inferior. That is why I like group work.”

Another student who experienced a similar thing is Student 20. She felt that working in groups helped to reduce her stress. Similar to Student 14’s case, Student 20 was a very good student in terms of achievements. Through group work, she felt relieved because she did not have to work alone. She thought that understanding journal articles was something difficult. The language in journals was “highly academic”, she explained. That is why she needed friends to help her understand the journal articles.

On August 17, Student 8 was interviewed. He admitted that working in small groups always gave him different expectations. He expected that all students in the group would work hard and share ideas. In fact, only one student did that. The unequal sharing of work among the group members made him desperate. He also added that he himself had to control his mood swings, considering that he was considered as a moody student. His statements are shown below.

Excerpt 3: Student 8’s statements:

I expected that group work would be really helpful if the members are reliable. It means that we share ideas and thoughts evenly. However, the fact is sometimes against my expectation, for example in a group there is only one or two persons who give ideas and who really give their best to finish an assignment. So I personally prefer working individually rather than doing group work in terms of a writing class. I would certainly have to control my mood because there should be a balance in doing group work. I did feel some pressure because of the difficulty of the course, but I tried my best to also deal with my partner by lowering my ego.

Another student who disliked group work was Student 10, who was interviewed on August 18, 2019. As mentioned previously, Student 10 was in a group where her ideas were not appreciated and she was not respected as a group member. She mentioned that during peer consultation, she knew that her ideas were not appreciated, but she just kept silent. This might be related to the feeling of dominance that the other friends had. Student 10 mentioned,

When I tried to say my opinions, they wouldn’t listen. When a task was submitted, I saw that my suggestions were not written on the paper. They should have explained to me about my opinions which might be improper or not good enough, so that I could know my weaknesses. I just kept silent knowing what they did to me, and tried to find other friends to work with.
Student 10 seemed to be under pressure when working with her partners in the first group work. She did not enjoy the whole process of the collaborative learning, including peer consultation and interrelating ideas together.

*Students’ preference of working in the future*

When asked about their preference of working in groups in the near future, three different answers were derived. Only three students wanted to work individually. Six other students liked both individual and group work. The rest, 11 students, which means more than 50%, preferred working in small groups.

**Discussion**

From the findings, it can be seen that not all students liked working in groups. This is in line with Listyani’s (2006) study on students’ opinions on collaborative essay writing. There were 17 students taking an Essay Writing class. Among the students, six students disliked groupwork, one had a changing attitude from dislike to like, and the other ten students liked working in groups. The reasons for disliking collaborative writing were because of incompatible peers, a lack of ideas, schedule clashes, and unfair distribution among the group members. Those who agreed with CL said that they learned to share and accept others’ ideas, criticisms, and corrections; to express ideas more freely; and to cooperate with others. They admitted that CL also helped them in their individual writing. Besides that, they got a feeling of security while working in groups.

Another study in the past was also done by Listyani (2017). There were 20 students involved as respondents. Research was done in an Academic Writing class as well. From twenty students, ten (50%) showed dislike towards collaborative writing, and one student had both positive and negative attitudes towards group work. The remaining nine students showed a favorable opinion towards group work. The ten students mentioned that difficulties in interrelating ideas was the biggest problem.

Just like Student 10 in this study, she felt that she was not appreciated in the first group she had. She needed a good *nesting pattern* (Ellis, 1990, p. 100). A nesting pattern is the need for a secure and orderly home base before learning can effectively begin. Student 10 lacked this secure and orderly situation which made her unable to learn well within her group.

Košir, Sočan, and Pečjak (2007) highlighted that the perception of peer and teacher support is considered as an especially important factor in the students’ achievements of learning goals. Students who put trust in their peers’ support and care are usually more engaged in positive classroom behaviors than those who do not perceive such a support. The latter group of students represents a group which has a higher risk to develop learning difficulties. Košir et al. (2007) further stated that students who are accepted well by their peers are usually also more accepted by their teachers, as well. In contrast, teachers are more critical towards rejected students and offer them less help, which can lead to lower academic outcomes for these students.

Dealing with moody partners can also be a problem. Changing moods also needs to be controlled in order to collaborate successfully with peers. Dealing with the choice of partners, Hunter (2011), in Kessler et al. (2012, p. 2), claimed that collaborative writing will be more
successful when the writers share “common ‘habits of mind’ and contributors hold less ‘author-centric perspectives’ of textual ownership”. It means that collaborative writing will work well when partners are compatible, so that no one depends on others, or no one is too domineering in the group.

The fact that collaborative work is not always successful is supported by Kessler et al. (2012). This can be caused by many factors, such as inaccurate peer editing, inexperience, interpersonal conflicts, or concerns about fairness. However, with the advancement of technology which enables document sharing and online discussions like what some participants in this study did, it is possible that group work will thrive in the future. There will be more collaborative writing projects. As Kressler et al. (2012) mentioned, collaborative writing can provide good opportunities for students to write, as part of a community and help each other for support and guidance.

Another problem that may emerge is classroom management. Çelik, Aytin, and Bayram (2012) conducted research on 14 Turkish English teachers. These teachers were asked about their perspectives on the implementation of cooperative learning in a language classroom. Some of the participants had a good understanding of the concept of group learning in general. They believed that cooperative activities were beneficial in a foreign language classroom.

On the other hand, some of the participants noted difficulties while implementing group learning. Pica (1994) and Thornton (1999), as cited in Çelik, Aytin, and Bayram (2012, p.1858), claimed that classroom management can be very problematic when the instructor gives up some of the control to the learners. Besides that, the respondents in Çelik, Aytin, and Bayram’s (2012) study found that certain students took on most of the responsibility, thus allowing others to avoid participating actively in classroom exercises. Despite all those facts, overall, the teacher respondents expressed the belief that collaboration is an important element of communicative language learning.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, there are several things that need highlighting. First, group work is needed in writing classes. Students not only learn to share their ideas, suggestions, and thoughts, but also their soft skills in cooperating with others that they may not receive from printed or online materials. Secondly, there are always students who like and dislike collaborative work. They have their own preferences and their experiences later will be useful when going into the real world.

The teacher’s role in assigning tasks for students in this case is also significant. It is better for teachers to assign students with compatible levels of competence to work together, so that everybody works hard for the best results. Assigning students to work with peer students by a lottery method or based on a certain system seems fair and seems to work well. However, this can cause problems of incompatibility among friends and may further cause discomfort while working. A study conducted by Murda, Flora, and Huzairin (2015) showed that there was a significant improvement in students’ speaking skills after they were taught by using collaborative learning. It was proven from the students’ improved mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test. In the pre-test, the average was 42.94, while the post-test was 72.43, with a t-table of 42.300 and a t-value of 2.028. It can be concluded that collaborative learning can improve students’ speaking skills.
Besides those two things mentioned above, students should also be able manage their own feelings and moods when working in groups. Self-control and self-restraint are two key traits which students should have when dealing with ‘difficult’ partners or finding problems in interrelating each other’s ideas. Non-verbal communication skills like facial expressions, the pitch of the voice, or paralanguage and eye contact (Human Communication Lecture, 2011) should be well-managed. Displaying anger, disrespect, and a lack of appreciation will lead to unsuccessful work.

Future researchers can conduct in-depth or phenomenological studies on students’ reasons for liking or disliking group work. Other studies using questionnaires can also be conducted involving more participants in other kinds of writing classes. Thus, more thorough findings can be derived to enrich the literature on doing collaborative tasks.

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References:


Giving more Voice to Post-graduate Students’ ESP Lecture Comprehension Needs

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Abstract
The present paper reports on a small investigation that took place in the author’s teaching environment to highlight her students’ academic lecture comprehension needs related to the new subject matter of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The aim of this research endeavour was to ponder over students’ perspective of the difficulties emerging from, and strategies needed for lecture comprehension, in a way to improve the author’s lecturing practice and ensure better academic achievement in the ESP subject. To this end, 26 Algerian post-graduate students in Didactics of English submitted written feedback about the ESP-subject lectures (including their difficulties and learning strategies). Additionally, the author’s lecturing strategies and perspective of learners’ academic lacks helped complete such learning/teaching situation. The findings revealed that students’ difficulties in ESP lecture comprehension were due to the complex skills required of them while listening to the lectures besides their unfamiliarity with the new ESP topics and terminology. To grasp better, student participants demanded more emphasis on some lecturing strategies (such as, pre-lecturing revision.reminder, while-lecturing explanation/repetition, and final recapitulation/comprehension check) while projecting a preference for particular visual supplements to oral lecturing (i.e., the whiteboard, handouts, additional reading materials). Because student participants showed little inclination towards note-taking from the lecturer’s speech and PowerPoint slides, the paper concluded with suggestions for pedagogical treatment to such difficult-to-attain academic lecture comprehension/listening strategies.

Keywords: Academic lecture comprehension, English for Academic purposes, learning needs/strategies, lecture/listening comprehension strategies, teaching situation analysis

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Introduction

The complex communicative requirements of the academic context have exerted a direct influence on the skills and strategies that second language (L2) students need to use to succeed in their field of study. L2 students, who are in the process of developing both their subject knowledge and L2 proficiency, need to participate in a wide range of academic events where the spoken, written, visual or sometimes electronic modes of academic communication interact (Hyland, 2006; Wang, 2017; Field, 2011). The most representative of such target academic event is the academic lecture, “the principle genre of academic instruction... [and]... effective way of delivering information to large groups of students’ (Wang, 2017, pp. 7-8). How much L2 students grasp from the lecture determines their future academic achievement (Wang, 2017). Yet, the lecture’s highly nomological delivery mode requires L2 students to handle a complex set of activities to grasp the delivered information. While showing no apparent active interaction, L2 students need to engage in learning processes that activate different comprehension strategies required for lecture understanding/information retention.

Highlighting such learning processes, challenges, and strategies L2 students need to activate for lecture comprehension is the interest of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), whose research activities take place “at the heart of university teaching and learning’” (Hyland, 2006: 20). Unlike second language researchers, EAP practitioners examine ‘students’ immediate needs and experiences in academy” (Hyland, 2006, p. 23). By adopting a needs-oriented perspective -known to the parent field of ESP- to students’ communicative requirements or study skills, EAP researchers, who are also language teachers, aim to help better students’ academic performance in their chosen field of study, bridging, therefore, the gap between research and practice. Additionally, EAP researchers may adopt a genre perspective to the academic lecture not to isolate students’ communicative practices from the specialist knowledge they aim to acquire (Hyland, 2006; Malavska, 2016).

The present paper aligns with the above research approach to survey students’ lecture comprehension needs related to ESP as a subject matter while addressing specific challenges and lacks in academic performance. The aim is to reach a compromise between the author’s and her learners’ preferred lecturing strategies; thus, to maximize academic achievement in ESP as a subject matter related to the particular ESP-subject. During this research endeavour, the author activated two roles known to the community of ESP/EAP practitioners, namely, those of teacher and researcher or needs analyst (see Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Granted that the types of needs investigated depend on the theoretical position of the needs analyst, Ample sketch of the theoretical conceptions of needs appears in the next section in a way to highlight the NA scope of the present investigation.

Theoretical Concepts

The types of needs of interest to the present paper are those that emerge out of the students’ learning experiences during the lecture. Hutchinson and Waters’ (1987) term of learning needs is appropriate here as it emphasizes what “learners need to do to learn” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p. 54) to successfully participate in the target event. Also, learning needs carry a process-oriented interpretation as they derive from the learners during the learning process. As detailed below (see Brown, 2016), Hutchinson and Waters’ (1987) learning needs encompass learning
preferences, expectations, or even learning strategies. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) used another concept, Learning Situation Analysis, to highlight students’ perspectives of the most effective ways of learning the skills and language relevant to particular learning situations.

Similarly, Belcher (2009) used the term ongoing needs analysis to describe the teacher’s constant examination of learners’ needs while the learning process is on to adapt the teaching strategies to students’ preferences. Considering learners’ own perspective of needs (i.e., learning needs, expectations, and wants) signals a shift of vision in ESP research rational that translates an incentive, as Belcher (2009, p. 3) states, “to help those especially disadvantaged by their lack of language needed for the situations they find themselves in, hope to enter, or eventually rise above”. This perspective highlighting the learners’ right to have their voice heard in ESP NA research brings another understanding to the concept of learner needs.

Newly coined related types of needs analysis are Brown’s (2016, pp. 23-25) individual differences analyses and classroom teaching analysis. According to Brown (2016, p. 23), individual differences analyses examines “what students’ individual preferences are with regard to learning processes” and takes into account students’ preferred learning styles (introvert, visual, aural, kinaesthetic, field-dependent/field-independent) and strategies (cognitive/comprehension strategies, social/cooperation strategies, etc.) to inform teaching. In conjunction with the above learning or individual differences analyses, classroom teaching analysis in Brown’s (2016, p. 24) terms is also used to reveal both “teacher’s preferred teaching styles and teaching strategies and how they relate to the learners’ preferred styles and strategies” (Brown, 2016, p. 25).

Common to the above conceptualizations, adopting a needs-responsive ESP approach in researching students’ learning needs means considering their learning preferences, interests and concerns to adjust the teaching strategies accordingly. Using the needs analysis (NA) information that emerges while the teaching/learning is in progress assures that the teacher considers learners’ preferences as to the choice of teaching aids, materials, type of practice, inter alia. Otherwise, discarding the learner’s voice will negatively affect learners’ perceptions of the course/module as Belcher truly puts it out (2009). Hereafter, a brief description of the data collection procedures undertaken in the present investigation is proposed.

**Research Context and Methodology**

The small learning needs investigation described in this paper took place at the beginning of the second semester (2018-2019) to rethink the author’s lecturing practice as well as the students’ academic lecture comprehension needs and strategies (related to ESP lectures). The NA target sample consisted of 26 Master1 students in their first year of post-graduation in English Didactics, department of English, Saida University, Algeria. English didactics specialism lasts for three semesters during which post-graduates acquire knowledge that addresses their immediate academic needs (including dissertation writing, methodology, and research proposal) as well as delayed needs related to the future teaching profession (via modules including ESP, educational psychology, psycholinguistics, *inter alia*). Hence, even in the English language department, English serves both as an end and a means of instruction, in the sense that post-graduate students need to develop both their academic English (study) skills and English didactics knowledge. This makes it a relevant setting where to investigate such study skills and strategies from an EAP stance.
As to the content of ESP as a subject matter, the first two semesters (Master1 Didactics Specialism) aim to develop students’ theoretical knowledge about ESP, and its areas/skills of research (needs/genre analysis). The third semester (Master2 Didactics Specialism) however, is about ESP course design and teaching methodology, among other things. Until their post-graduation, the case students had no prior solid knowledge in ESP including the above concepts. Though they had some instruction in introduction for languages for specific purposes (LSP) subject at the undergraduate level, it was only an introduction to some broad concepts like intercultural training and LSP, the use of ICT in LSP communication, attributes of the LSP learner/teacher, etc. As to ESP lecture delivery, it was under a spoken mode. Slides projection or whiteboard explanation often interfered with teacher speech while students were invited to take notes. The author often concluded the lecture with handout provision, homework assignment, and /or suggestions for further reading.

Having noticed that some of the students’ enthusiasm was not at its peak as when it was at the beginning of the academic session triggered the present research endeavour. Another reason was failure of some students (known for their acceptable academic performance) to fulfill some of the requirements of the ESP module exam. This pushed the author to reflect upon her teaching practice and the best way to ensure maximum understanding among them. Under the author’s request, the student participants submitted anonymous written feedback about the ESP lectures, which helped report on the difficulties, learning needs and strategies with ease. The author proceeded to a quantitative analysis of students’ feedback, out of which she derived a percentage table of recurrent themes. Qualitative analysis in the light of representative quotes also served illustrate the quantitative findings. Hereafter, the author’s results section offers a thorough examination of students’ feedback.

**Results**

This section presents the results of this small investigation. It details the quantitative findings that a manual examination of the participants’ written feedback revealed. Additionally, it proposes a qualitative analysis of their feedback in the light of similar results from previous studies. After a manual examination of the student participants’ written feedback about ESP lecture, it was easy to discern four significant themes that their comments addressed. The author roughly categorized them as (dis-)preferred type of practice, (dis-)preferred teaching aids, preferred lecturing strategies, and lecture comprehension difficulties (see the first column of Table 1).

The author could also identify and derive percentages out of clearly distinguished, recurrent sub-themes that composed these major themes (see the second column of Table 1). The results appear in Table 1. It is of note that the themes appear under a random order. In the analysis underneath, however, the author will first address the easiest-to-handle then the most difficult or problematic lecturing strategies, from the students’ perspective. The author will then propose her perspective of missing lecture comprehension strategies in students’ academic performance. This will set the scene for a comprehensive discussion of the results together with some pedagogical suggestions.
Table 1. Learners’ feedback in quantitative terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred lecturing strategies</th>
<th>Teacher explanation</th>
<th>8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illustration during Explanation</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension question</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revision of previous lesson</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recapitulation/ Summary of the lesson</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Dis-)Preferred type of practice</th>
<th>More homework</th>
<th>46%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less homework</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>further reading</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guided reading</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Dis-)Preferred teaching aids</th>
<th>Handouts</th>
<th>27%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No overhead projector</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using the white/blackboard</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture comprehension difficulties</th>
<th>Teacher fast speech</th>
<th>8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complicated vocabulary/terminology</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note-taking during lecture delivery/ slide projection</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too much/complex information</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preferred lecturing strategies**

Student participants evoked four lecture comprehension strategies they needed the teacher to emphasize on at different stages of the academic lecture. This interestingly reflected Young’s (2004) academic lecture stages, i.e., the *content, examples, conclusion, evaluation,* and *interaction* stages.

![Figure 1](image-url)

*Figure 1,* Learners’ emphasized lecturing strategies

The importance granted to these phases appearing in percentages (Figure 1) shows participants’ preference for lecturing strategies that engage academic listening *per se*. In total, 19% of the
participants referred to *examples* stage, including 8% who insisted on the teacher’s explanation during the lecture and 11% who wanted more focus on ‘*illustration*’ (see table 1). This preference appears below in the comments of *student 9*. Others (8% of the students) preferred the teacher to proceed to more repetition, as the quote of *student 1* indicates.

*Student 1*: *I do like it when the teacher is repeating the main points...*

*Student 9*: *I understand better through vivid examples.*

From the comment of Student 1, emphasis on repetition seemed to stress out the conclusion stage (summing up the main points) rather than the examples stage (i.e., repeating while explaining). In both cases, the importance of repetition in helping students take more notes has been highlighted by Bligh (2002), whereas Cervantes and Graner (1992) stressed out how repetition facilitated listening comprehension. From table 1, 19% of the student formulated clear comments insinuating the conclusion stage, through using the words summary or recapitulate:

*Student 23*: *I suggest at the end of the lecture, you give us an overview of what has been said.*

*Student 11*: *I would like that you recapitulate the essential things of the lesson that we need*

The learning need for a *recapitulation* or *summary* of the lecture’s main points seems to enhance their comprehension. The above-quoted learners’ wishes as to summarization evoke a lecture *comprehension strategy* that existing research (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005) already emphasized as pivotal to the lecturing process. Concerning the interaction stage, 15% of the student participants expressed another want through asking the teacher to conclude the lecture with comprehension questions. For them, this comprehension strategy helps “engage the learner (student 26)” or “check to understand at the end of the lesson (student 12)”. Henceforth, the above wants deserve consideration while lecturing to maximize learners’ understanding. In addition, some student participants (23%) demanded a *revision* of the previous lecture before starting the new one. This want is manifest in the comments below.

*Student 19*: *Revision of previous lessons before moving to the next lecture*

*Student 15*: *At the beginning of the lesson, I need a quick revision of the previous lesson*

*Student 9*: *I want the teacher to revise previous lecture at the beginning of the new lecture*

*Student 2*: *I want the teacher to .... do a kind of revision (as a reminder).*

For the students quoted above, a short reminder of previous lecture’s content (a lecturing strategy, which may recall Young’s (2004) content phase) seems essential in helping them establish links with new the lecture’s information. Seemingly, issues of information retention may denote their unfamiliarity with the new ESP subject. However, their attempt to link prior knowledge with the new one indicates their effort to grasp the lecture, as suggested by Buck (2001) and Field (2011). At this level, these students aspire to successfully handle the lecture in spite of their limited subject knowledge.
Difficulties in Processing New Information via Oral Lecturing Mode

Some students reported about the length and complexity of ESP lectures in general with an allusion to the lecture’s content stage. They used expressions similar to ‘I see that the lectures are a bit complicated’ or else, ‘ESP this year seems to be a little bit difficult’, (referring to the less complicated LSP lectures of the under-graduate level). As regards the presumed length, students commented that ‘the lectures are a bit long to grasp all the information’ or contain ‘too much information that we cannot handle or remember’. However, further examination of their written feedback revealed more details about the origin of these difficulties.

- **Student 8**: …the teacher speaks fast in addition to some tricky words that I cannot understand.
- **Student 2**: I found difficulties in understanding ESP-related vocabulary.
- **Student 3**: ESP as a subject matter includes many complicated or ambiguous terms.

Apparently, students’ being busy decoding new information found it hard to follow the lecturer’s fast speech rate. In quantitative terms, 8% of the student participants found that the teacher was speaking at a fast rate. Such real-time listening seems to new information seems to be a challenging situation gave students the impression that the lectures were long and complicated. Additionally, student participants’ projected unfamiliarity with the lecture’s technical/specialist vocabulary that 8% of them qualified as ‘difficult, complex words’ in the data. Again, this may denote their lack of knowledge about the topic of the lecture. While such key-word-related listening difficulty needs a particular pedagogical remedy, students’ preferred strategies to compensate for gaps in listening falls on visual assistance. However, participants discard some visual supports as the findings below will show.

Visual Resourcing Strategies: The Chalk-/Whiteboard as an Alternative to the Overhead Projector

To the author’s surprise, student participants expressed their dis-preference for the overhead projector by qualifying it as the least appropriate visual resource.

- **Student 11**: Using the overhead projector and reading (from the slides) was not helpful/was boring
- **Student 15**: It is impossible to listen to your explanations, concentrate on the overhead projector, and take notes at the same time.
- **Student 17**: I find it helpful to learn without the overhead projector because it distracts my concentration

Students in question seemingly seem to find PowerPoint slides a distraction rather than a helpful visual aid. They are overwhelmed when facing the multi-task of listening to the teacher’s explanation and looking at the projected content. Following the comments of **student 15**, the process of lecture comprehension can be problematic when they have to perform different tasks, picking information from two media, the oral medium (the lecturer’s speech) and the visual medium (here, overhead projector). As a result, the slides projection distracts rather than help students understand the lecture. Instead, student participants expressed their preference of an alternative to slides projection, that is the whiteboard. This appears in the feedback below.
**Student 4:** It is better to write on the board (than to use the overhead projector)
**Student 5:** I understand more through the chalkboard
**Student 6:** I would like that you explain more on the whiteboard (more often) to explain things that need to be explained.
**Student 14:** Please, write down the most essential concepts of the lecture on the whiteboard.

Students in question seem to grasp better through seeing the key concepts/primary information written down on the whiteboard. Unlike the transient projected content of PowerPoint slides, this more classical teaching aid seems to provide learners with a, more or less, permanent written record of the lecture’s key concepts. It is like a reference, a resource, “a linguistic...visual support” in Field’s (2011, p. 103) terms, or “visual assistance” in Wang’s (2017: 8) that helps process orally delivered information. Decidedly, some student participants’ preference for, a more or less, permanent, written supplement to the oral mode of lecturing suggests that they find it difficult to pick up information through solely listening to the lecturer’s speech.

**Handout Provision: Another Resourcing Strategy**
Participants’ wish to be provided with more permanent visual assistance transcended to handouts. 27% of them found handouts as a suitable visual aid to help them in their lecture comprehension process. In more qualitative terms, selected samples of their feedback are quoted below.

**Student 15:** I prefer the handout because I can read and grasp better on my own pace (when I see information written down).
**Student 18:** It is better to provide us with handouts during the session to make students grasp better
**Student 8:** I suggest you give us handout and we discuss their content in the classroom

From Student 18 quoted above, students’ inclination to secure a written record of the lecture - instead of picking up information through listening per se- is manifest. However, some student participants preferred using them during the lecture may be to cope with the lecturer’s fast speech as clearly indicated in the comments of Student 8 and student 18. clearly, the above-reported preferences for more interactive, resourceful, visually assisted lecture-style show that these students moved away from the rigid, one-way academic lecturing mode that requires active listenership and note-taking of students.

**More Homework for Practice**
Another -not necessarily in-class- lecture comprehension strategy that won the favour of most of the learners (46% against 4%) is homework. This is expressed in the students’ feedback below.

**Student 19:** Please, give us more homework since I see that the lectures are a bit complicated
**Student 10:** I understand the lecture better through homework
**Student 14:** It would be better if the teacher gives us more homework to understand the topic more... please, give us references for further reading with comprehension questions that check to understand because it will help us understand the lecture and the primary information you have spoken about.
From the above-quoted feedback, this method of practice, that the author used to implement with them, seems to either compensate for their partial understanding of the lecture or enhance information retention. To accomplish their homework, student participants prefer to be provided with additional, reading materials (student 14). This remark is in fine tune, with 21% of the participants literally formulating their wish for practice through guided reading. Apparently, their demand for teacher-chosen reading materials -not to fall in the trap of relying on irrelevant content – seems to reiterate their limited knowledge about the topic. Nevertheless, this latter teacher-implemented strategy appears to have worked well with them during the previous semester. Hereafter the author will discuss the main findings.

**Discussion**

From the outset of the analysis of the results, student participants projected their familiarity with the different phases or lecturing strategies involved in the lecture as an academic genre. This familiarity appeared in their evoking the comprehension strategies they needed the teacher to reinforce at different phases of the academic lecture that Young (2004) called, the content, examples, conclusion, and interaction stages. In this vein, learners in question demanded that some lecturing strategies occur more frequently during the lecture, such as illustration, repetition, summarization and comprehension check. Their additional request for a short revision at the beginning of the lecture reflects difficulties in retaining the main information of the previous lecture. Otherwise, it indicates their effort to grasp the lecture by linking prior knowledge with the new one as suggested by Buck (2001) and Field (2011).

As regards the above-insinuated difficult content, further examination of students’ feedback revealed that their difficulties mainly concerned the new ESP subject-specific vocabulary that the lecture contained. After all, relying on content words to process information is strategy that L2 learners often opt to fill in gaps in listening (Field, 2011). Hence, the negative influence of their unfamiliarity with ESP-related topics and vocabulary on lecture listening/comprehension seems to be a logical outcome here.

Other student participants complained from the lecturer’s fast speech that was difficult to handle at times showing, therefore, a difficulty to adjust to the demands of real-time lecture listening. Flowerdew & Miller (2005) reported on similar students’ comprehension obstacles during lectures due to the lecturer’s fast speech. In fine-tune with the present findings, their informants also complained of the great amount of information that they had to process in a short time. Similar echo about “the rapidness of professor’s English speech” while lecturing also appeared in Huang’s (2004: 212) study with Chinese students. For Mason (1994), L2 students with acceptable language ability face such real-time listening difficulties. Then, in response to participants’ earlier request, repetition as a lecturing strategy is helpful here. It responds to L2 students’ need for more time to process lecturer’s speech, according to Cervantes and Graner (1992) suggest.

The findings unearthed a divergence between the student participants’ and the author’s preferred lecturing style as regards which visual aids to use. To the author’s surprise, some students’ preference for old “chalk-and-talk” (Malavska, 2016, p. 82) lecturing style was in sharp contrast with the author’s presentations based on commenting –instead of reading- PowerPoint slides’ content. Participants’ struggling to combine between what they heard and what they saw
on the slides apparently turned to be an ‘attention dividing activity’ Field, 2011, p. 108, citing Styles, 2006) rather than an effective visual medium. This finding echoes Field’s (2011, p. 106) comment on the “counterproductive effect” of PowerPoint slides for L2 students in general.

In parallel, convergence between teacher and learners’ strategies appeared in learners’ approval of some classroom-implemented teaching strategies, such as hand-out provision or reading-based homework. From the findings, students’ repeatedly expressed the need to back up their lecture comprehension and information retention through such reading-based homework. According to Mason (1994), even reading seems to be compatible with the students’ learning strategies as it compensates for the gaps in partial knowledge that students developed form the speaker’s fast speech during the lecture.

Handouts were additional resourcing strategies (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005) students helped themselves with to fill their gaps in knowledge and solve the problem of partial understanding (previously reported as resulting from lecturer’s fast speech or complex keywords). It is of note here that the author used to provide her students with handouts after the lecture under the form of lecture notes to avoid dictation (see Exley & Dennick, 2004). Student participants’ asking for an in-class-discussion of the handout content with the teacher, in an interactive way, in Exley & Dennick, (2004) sense of the term, was their preferred learning strategy to come into grips with the lecture’s new topic.

While handout provision is practical to some extent, a cautionary note from the author’s teacher perspective imposes itself here. The author of this paper warns against an over-reliance on such ready-made notes that the author noticed among students, which may dis-engage their note-taking and listening ability. This urged the author think about other ways to use the handout. Following Exley and Dennick’s (2004, p. 114) suggestion, the latter should be used more appropriately in a way that ‘would enhance the quality of learning.’ To the same authors, appropriately designing this teaching aid can be done through leaving space at the bottom of handouts or between paragraphs to enable students insert their own notes. Another way that the author sets out to implement is to convert the text-only handout to tabular summaries or diagrams (with key ideas and words) that students have to reconvert to a text using their style.

The above-reported students’ over-reliance on other written forms of the lecture, nevertheless denotes a certain linguistic limitation or lack of listening experience that characterizes most L2 students (Field, 2011; Huang, 2004). The author believes that the case students’ failure to generate their own notes from lectures (that students themselves reported and the author noticed) is a weakness in their academic performance that needs serious pedagogical consideration. After all, note-taking from academic lectures or presentations is both a process-oriented strategy and an academic study skill that university students should be familiar with (Wang, 2017; Malavska, 2016; Hyland, 2006). Hyland (2006) put forth that lecture comprehension is a combination of lecture comprehension strategies, listening, and note-taking skills. The positive effect of note-taking strategy on lecture comprehension and information retention is what Wang (2017) and Kılıçkaya & Çokal-Karadas (2009) also confirm.
Therefore, teaching students how to take notes appropriately while listening to academic lectures should figure among the core elements of a listening class for undergraduate students to develop their academic listening competence before reaching the post-graduate level. This is why, the author suggests that instruction in listening comprehension addresses such students’ immediate academic needs. Following Wang (2017) and Bligh (2002), note-taking is not a matter of passively picking up words from the lecturer but the fruit of attentive, selective listening. While used for future reference, students’ own notes foster information retention far better than rehearsed handouts, as Kiliçkaya & Çokal-Karadas (2009) and Bligh (2002) confirm. Following Rost’s suggestion (2011, p. 89), developing students’ note-taking skills may entail showing them how to use personally coined/common keyword abbreviations; how to record the lecture’s main ideas under the form of an outline or diagram showing a linear relationship or a sequence, a matrix or a personal mind map showing how ideas relate to each other; then, reviewing and rewriting the notes in a more orderly way.

The author believes that lecturers -including herself- can also help discourage students from falling back on the handout as a straightforward strategy to gaps in lecture understanding. For example, announcing the main elements of the topic before starting the lecture is likely to help them cope with the new topic and listen more actively. In relation to problematic content reported in the findings, lecturers can apply Rost (2011) teaching strategy to help students cope with the burden of decoding new vocabulary related to the new knowledge. He suggests that the lecturer prepares a list of key terms for students to search for their definition/meaning before the lecture.

In spite of the case students’ overt disapproval of slide projection, it would not be reasonable to conclude from this small investigation that using PowerPoint presentation is not a suitable visual aid when lecturing to L2 learners. This is because projected content during lecturers’ speech is often the norm than the exception in academic lectures nowadays (Field, 2011; Wang, 2017). Still taking account of the findings, university students have to be taught about the requisite behaviour of the academic listener by getting them to pick up information from PowerPoint slides during lectures rather than continually relying on the more permanent written word of the whiteboard or hand-out. Nevertheless, adapting its use to students’ needs is the most judicious. Following Field (2011) suggestions as to slides content, the latter should be concise and comprehensive without secondary information. Differentiating the main points and key terms (by using different font sizes, style or colour) from extra information/illustration is of equal importance. Synchronizing slide content with oral presentation is of equal importance (Field, 2011). That said, to abide by lecture comprehension demands on the academic listener, learners should also familiarize with the longer classical lectures that are not forcibly interactive, nor visually-assisted, in which the typical behaviour of an academic listener consist of note-taking per se.

**Conclusion**

This little investigation attempted to highlight post-graduate students’ (dis-)preferred, and sometimes missing, lecture comprehension strategies during ESP lectures delivery. The findings showed how student participants’ concern with subject knowledge acquisition went hand in hand with these particular academic learning needs. To maximize the learning outcome of the ESP subject matter, adjusting the teacher’s preferred lecturing styles to the students’ expectations of and vice-versa was therefore necessary. This is why, the study concluded with some pedagogical
suggestions as to the students’ problematic and missing lecture comprehension strategies in a way to reach a compromise between their wants and the target academic requirements of lecture comprehension.

By adopting an EAP approach to researching particular students learning needs related to the academic situation of ESP lecture, the author attempted in this paper to transfer some ESP-related NA research skills to her teaching environment through giving more voice to the learners’ wants and priority learning needs. The preliminary results gathered served as a model of how teacher’s perspective and sensitivity to students’ lecture comprehension challenges, could inform practice. More importantly, the paper advocated a learner-centered teaching methodology whereby the choice of teaching aids, the type of practice/homework, lecture comprehension strategies, inter alia, were teacher-cum-learner-negotiated.

In a bid to increase lecturers’ sensitivity to students’ lecture comprehension challenges, the present research-based account was based on a real teaching experience. However, this attempt to provide an insider perspective from academia was the fruit of an individual endeavour. In this vein, it is hoped that Algerian EAP practitioners and English language teachers throughout Algerian universities work in collaboration through national seminars and workshops to share similar teaching experiences and insider knowledge that would further improve their teaching practice in Algerian higher education.

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References


Diagnosing Saudi Students' English Consonant Pronunciation Errors

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Abstract
Diagnosing the pronunciation difficulties second language (L2) learners encounter assists in identifying their training needs. Since a clearer profile of Arab students' English pronunciation difficulties is yet to be reached, this study tried to identify which English consonant sounds and clusters Saudi English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) students have difficulty in pronouncing, and examine how students' language proficiency levels may influence their English consonant pronunciation performance. Forty Saudi female university students with two different English proficiency levels (lower-intermediate versus intermediate) took part in the study (20 students in each group). They completed a 4-section productive pronunciation test diagnosing their errors in pronouncing problematic consonant sounds and clusters in varied word positions. The data analysis showed that the participants' highest error percentages were in pronouncing: /ʒ/, /ŋ/, /p/, /ɹ/ and /ʧ/; /t/ and /d/ of the regular past morpheme -ed; and the 4- and 3-consonant clusters. It was also found that the lower-intermediate level students made more errors than the intermediate ones in pronouncing the majority of the consonant sounds and clusters, and that the variance between their errors is generally higher in the word-initial positions than the word-medial and -final ones. The study indicates that the consonants in the word-initial and -final positions are likely to cause more pronunciations difficulties than the ones in the word-medial position.

Keywords: Arab students, consonant pronunciation, English pronunciation, pronunciation errors, Saudi learners

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1. Introduction

Pronunciation plays an essential role in communication because it makes speech comprehensible and intelligible (Varol, 2012). Proper pronunciation can promote L2 acquisition, while poor pronunciation may lead to hindering it (Zhang, 2009). L2 learners encounter more difficulties in mastering the target language pronunciation when they are exposed to a linguistic system whose characteristics are different from those of their first language (L1). Pronunciation errors can also influence other linguistic features such as spelling. In some cases, learners' foreign accent is affected in one way or another by their native one (Vergun, 2006). Other factors potentially influencing L2 learners' pronunciation include age, gender, motivation, language learning experience and attitude towards the target language.

Several studies have tried to provide insights into the main pronunciation difficulties ESL/EFL learners encounter (e.g., Ambrozová, 2014; Centerman & Krausz, 2011; Nguyen, 2007; Varol, 2012). Some other studies have focused on identifying the English pronunciation errors commonly made by Arab learners. Specifically, these studies investigated the English pronunciation difficulties of students in Yemen (Al-Shuaibi, 2009), Jordan (Al-Saidat, 2010), Sudan (Hassan, 2014), Oman (As-Sammer, 2014), and Saudi Arabia (Ahmad, 2011; Ahmad & Nazim, 2013; Al-Jasser, 1978, Alqarni, 2013; Ammar & Alhumaid, 2009; Binturki; 2008).

Though many of these studies revealed significant findings about the English pronunciation difficulties Arab learners encounter, there is a need for reaching a clearer profile of such difficulties. In an attempt to contribute to such profile, the study reported in this paper focused on diagnosing Saudi EFL students' English consonant pronunciation errors. Given the purpose of the present study, the following section provides a description of the difficulties Arab learners are likely to encounter in English consonant pronunciation and their potential factors.

2. Consonants in English and Arabic

In order to understand how a new phonological system is acquired, we need to consider linguistic differences in both L1 and L2 systems. It is commonly noted that the influence of L2 speakers' mother tongue is characterized by their accents. Arabic and English have quite different phonological systems. While Arabic is descended from the Afro-Asiatic Central South Semitic language family (Al-Huri, 2015), English is a member of the Indo-European West Germanic language one (Baugh & Cable, 2002). Due to these phonological system differences, Arab learners are expected to encounter many difficulties in English pronunciation, particularly English consonants.

There are some main differences between Arabic and English consonants. Arabic has 28 consonants, whereas English has 25 ones. Most of the consonants in Arabic and English are identical, but some of them are only found in one language rather than the other. Second language learners can easily acquire consonants shared in the two languages whereas they find difficulty in learning the pronunciation of the ones that exist only in one language (El Zarka, 2013). Some English consonants are not found in Modern Standard Arabic such as /p/, /v/, /g/, and /ʧ/.

Apart from the English consonants not found in Modern Standard Arabic, the phonological systems of the two languages differ in the characteristics of their consonant clusters. A consonant
cluster is a syllable structure feature and a group or combination of consonant sounds occurring together with no intervening vowel; it can come at the beginning or end of words. While English permits initial clusters of either two or three consonants (e.g., pray and spray, respectively) and two, three or four final-consonant clusters (e.g., ask, asked, and texts, respectively), Arabic has no initial-consonant clusters but allows final 2-consonant cluster (Amer, 2010). Accordingly, English as compared to Arabic has more varied and longer consonant combinations. With these different English consonant cluster features, Arab EFL/English-as-a-second-language (ESL) learners may tend to insert a vowel somewhere within a consonant combination (Ammar & Alhumaid, 2009; Al-Shuaibi, 2009; Na'ama, 2011).

Another factor of Arab learners' difficulties in English consonant pronunciation is the differences between the writing systems of English and Arabic. While the Arabic orthographic system is a shallow one in which a letter corresponds closely to phonemes, the orthography system of English is deep and goes beyond sound-to-letter correspondence (El Zarka, 2013). Thus, the complexity of the English orthographic system allows sounds to be spelled in more than one way and letters to represent more than one sound and most rules for spelling have many exceptions (Bassetti, 2009). For example, while spoken English has three ways of pronouncing the morpheme -s (the regular plural and third- person singular simple present suffixes), written Arabic uses a single spelling. This inconsistency makes English consonant pronunciation a complicated process for nonnative speakers.

In light of the above-mentioned differences in the characteristics of consonant sounds and combinations in the phonological system of Arabic and English, Arab learners of English are expected to encounter difficulties in English consonant pronunciation. It is noteworthy that not much research has been reported about the types or frequencies of these difficulties. This will be highlighted in the next section.

3. Previous Related Studies

Some studies probed the pronunciation difficulties encountering non-Arab learners of English. For example, Nguyen (2007) looked at the errors made by Vietnamese learners in pronouncing the final consonants in English. The pronunciation performance of 5 learners of different ages was evaluated by six native-speakers of English. The results of this study revealed that when pronouncing English word-final consonants, Vietnamese learners tend to add schwa or replace them with sounds closer to their mother-tongue consonants. In another study, Varol (2012) investigated the influence of Turkish phonology on the pronunciation of English words which exist in Turkish as Indo-European loanwords. The results of this study indicate that Turkish adult speakers face difficulties in pronouncing the English phonemes θ, ð, ɹ, and t which do not exist in their L1. These sounds were replaced by the participants with the closest Turkish phonemes t, d and r. In the Swedish context, Centerman and Krausz (2011) investigated the errors made by public school students in pronouncing the English speech sounds /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʃ/ and /ʤ/ in initial and final positions. The results indicate that Swedish L2 students have more difficulties in pronouncing these sounds when they are in initial positions than in final ones due to their absence in Swedish language. In a study of the English pronunciation difficulties encountered by Czech learners of English, Ambrozová (2014) found that their four main problematic sounds are dental fricatives /θ/, /ð/, aspirated plosives /p/, /t/, /k/, bilabial approximant /w/ and velar nasal /ŋ/. The cause of these
pronunciation difficulties was attributed to the influence learners' L1 phonetic system. As can be noted, difference between L1 and L2 phonological systems was the main cause of consonant pronunciation as noted in these studies.

The researchers examining the consonant pronunciation difficulties of Arab learners of English depended on the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) and/or the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) as a point of departure for their studies. Collectively, these studies support the conclusion that differences in Arab backgrounds and Arabic dialects result in different mispronunciations in English. In the ESL context, Barros (2003) examined the pronunciation difficulties of 6 Arabic native speakers who arrived in the USA after the age of puberty. Though the results of the study showed that /ŋ/, /p/, /v/, /d/, and /ʤ/ were their most frequently mispronounced consonants, the degree of pronunciation difficulties varied among the learners due to their different L1 dialects. In the Jordanian context, Al-Saidat found that Arab learners of English tended to insert a short vowel between consonants at the beginning and end of certain English syllables. On the other hand, Na'ama's (2011) study revealed that Yemeni University had difficulty in pronouncing the 3- and 4-final-consonant clusters in English words because these clusters are not found in Arabic segmental features. Finally, Hassan (2014) found that Sudanese learners of English have pronunciation difficulties in consonant sound contrasts such as /z/ and /ð/, /s/ and /θ/, /b/ and /p/, /ʃ/ and /tʃ/.

A group of studies focused particularly on the pronunciation errors made by Saudi learners of English. An earlier study was reported by AL-Jasser (1978) who found that /p/, /v/, /g/, /r/, /ʧ/, /ʒ/ and /ŋ/ which do not exist in Arabic as independent phonemes are problematic sounds for Saudi learners of English. In an ESL context, Binturki (2008) found that Saudi students have difficulty in pronouncing the voiced interdental fricative /v/, /p/ and /n/, and that such difficulties depend on their word positions. Ammar and Alhumaid (2009) investigated Najdi Arabic's phonetic interference in the acquisition of English consonants and consonant cluster by Saudi female undergraduates. Their study looked at the sounds /p/, /v/, /ŋ/, /ʧ/, /ʤ/, /ʒ/, /ð/, /θ/, /r/, and /l/ in all initial, medial and final word positions. The results of this study have emphasized the influence of L1 interference on Arab L2 learners of English. Besides, Ahmad's (2011) study indicates Saudi learners of English have difficulty in pronouncing the following consonant sounds: /p/, /d/, /v/, /ʧ/, /ʒ/, /ŋ/, and /ŋ/. Drawing on the CAH, Alqarni (2013) investigated Najdi Saudi ESL learners' production of the English voiceless postalveolar affricate /ʧ/. This study showed that the learners encountered difficulties in pronouncing the sound /ʧ/ usually replacing it with /ʃ/ particularly in final words positions. Adopting a different approach, Ahmad and Nazim (2013) explored teachers’ views on English consonant pronunciation errors made by Saudi EFL learners. In this study, the teachers reported that their students generally make frequent errors in pronouncing /p/, /d/, /v/, /ʧ/, /ʒ/, and /ŋ/.
a wider range of the potential consonant pronunciation difficulties in varied word positions. Important also is to look at how these errors vary among learners with different language levels. Addressing these issues in the Saudi context, the present study tried to answer the following two research questions:

1. Which English consonant sounds and clusters do Saudi female EFL learners have difficulty in pronouncing?
2. How do learners with different language proficiency levels vary in their English consonant pronunciation performance?

3. Method
3.1 Participants of the Study
The sample of this study consisted of 40 Saudi female students. They were enrolled in an undergraduate program at a Saudi university and their ages ranged from 19 to 24 years at the time of collecting the data. The participants were divided into two groups, each consisted of 20 students. The students in the first group were of an intermediate English language proficiency level, whereas the ones in the second group had a lower-intermediate level. Identifying the participants' language proficiency was based on their academic study levels, i.e., intermediate students were studying Level 4 courses and lower-intermediate ones were attending Level 1, and on the language ability evaluation made by their teachers. All the participants studied English formally in Saudi schools for six years (four classes per week with each lesson lasting 45 minutes) before joining the university. They took part in the study on a voluntary basis and informed consent was obtained from them prior to collecting the data.

3.2 Instrument of the Study: the English Consonant Pronunciation Test
To fulfill the purpose of this study, a productive pronunciation test of English consonants was developed to assess the participants' oral performance. The test was developed based on reviewing the instruments used in the studies reported by Barros (2003), Binturki (2008), Ammar and Alhumaid (2009) and Ahmad (2011). Three drafts of the test were developed based on the consultations between the two authors. The final draft of the test consists of four parts, each includes a list of words (see Appendix). The first part includes a list of 30 words with 10 problematic sounds, /p/, /v/, /ʃ/, /ʤ/, /ŋ/, /ʒ/, /ɹ/, /l/, /ð/ and /θ/, distributed in three word-positions (initial, medial and final), with the exception of the sound /ʒ/ which only occurs in word-medial and -final positions, and the sound /ŋ/ was tested in final position only. Additionally, 20 words were used as distracters. Focusing on these 10 sounds in particular was due to their absence in the Arabic phonological system. Relying on the contrastive analysis, differences between Arabic and English phonological systems lead to the prediction that these 10 consonant sounds are likely to be problematic for Arab learners of English. The second and third parts tested the difficulties related to the phonetic realization of the morpheme -s (the regular plural and third-person singular simple present suffixes) and its three pronunciation alternatives- [s], [z] or [rz]- and the regular past tense morpheme -ed with its three pronunciation ways- [d], [t] or [ɪd]. These two parts included 16 words, eight words for each morpheme, beside 6 words used as distracters. Finally, the fourth part includes a list of 12 words used to examine the difficulties encountered in pronouncing English consonant clusters. Six words were used to test the word-initial consonant clusters and other 6 words were used for the word-final consonant clusters. Besides, 6 other words were used as
dieters. The measure tested the students’ pronunciation of consonant clusters in initial and word-final positions, and it includes 2- and 3-constantan clusters (CC and CCC, respectively) in word-initial positions whereas 2-, 3- and 4-consanant clusters (CC, CCC and CCCC respectively) were used for final ones. Thus, five types of consonant clusters were included in the test.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Prior to collecting data, institutional and participant informed consent was obtained. The first author explained to the participants the general purpose of the study and the recording procedures, and notified them that the test would be used only for academic and research purposes. The pronunciation test developed was given to each participant in a quiet room at their university. They were given a printed version of the test and asked to read the four lists of words silently for five minutes to get familiar with them. Following this, the researcher recorded each participant's pronunciation performance using a high sensitive recorder while they were reading the words in the four lists. The participants were informed they could reread any word if they thought it has been mispronounced.

After collecting the data from all the participants, the recordings were saved as digital sound files and labeled individually by numbers "S1, S2" etc. for easy access and to ensure the protection of students' identities. Following this, the recordings were co-analyzed by the two authors. Each target sound was phonetically transcribed by using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Then, a female American English native speaker, was consulted to check the accuracy of the transcribed data. The data obtained from analyzing students' pronunciation performance was calculated. Any pronunciation error made was counted as one and a score of zero was given for a correct answer. The pronunciation errors made by each participant were tabulated and converted into percentages. Then, the average percent frequencies of the pronunciation errors were calculated for all problematic sounds and consonant cluster in different word positions in each group.

4. Results of the Study

The results obtained from statistical analysis of the students' performance on the pronunciation test are presented in this section. These results are presented in the light of the two research questions. First, the results of analyzing all the participants' pronunciation are presented quantitatively. Second, a comparison between the pronunciation errors of the participants in the two language proficiency levels is provided.

4.1 Frequencies of Students’ Consonant Pronunciation Errors

In this section, the authors provide the frequencies of the participants' errors in pronouncing the 10 problematic consonant sounds, the morphemes -s and -ed of the regular plural and simple present, and the past tense suffixes, and consonant clusters. Table 1 shows the frequencies of the participants' errors in pronouncing the 10 problematic consonants. As shown in the table, the participants have pronunciation difficulties in many of these English consonant sounds. Specifically, the highest frequencies of the participants' errors were in pronouncing the following 6 consonants: the voiced postalveolar fricative /ʒ/ (error percentage = 84.20%), the voiced velar nasal /ŋ/ (error percentage = 80.80%), the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ (error percentage = 63.33), the voiced alveolar approximant /ɹ/ (error percentage = 56.70%), the voiced interdental fricative /ð/ (error percentage = 46.70%), and the voiceless postalveolar affricate /ʃ/ (error percentage =
30%). They also made errors in the other 4 consonants but with much lower frequencies: the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ (error percentage = 14.20%), the voiceless interdental fricative /θ/ (error percentage = 10.83%), the voiced alveolar lateral approximant /l/ (error percentage = 7.5%) and the voiced velar plosive /g/ (error percentage = 5%).

Table 1. **Mean percentages of all students' mispronunciation of the problematic consonants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>problematic consonants</th>
<th>initially</th>
<th>medially</th>
<th>finally</th>
<th>All positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ʒ/</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>77.50%</td>
<td>87.50%</td>
<td>84.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ŋ/</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>80.80%</td>
<td>80.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/p/</td>
<td>57.50%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>62.50%</td>
<td>63.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/χ/</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>62.50%</td>
<td>62.50%</td>
<td>56.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ð/</td>
<td>42.50%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>46.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʧ/</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/v/</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/θ/</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/l/</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/g/</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted also in table 1, the percent frequencies of the pronunciation errors made in different word positions vary from one sound to another. For example, the participants made more errors in pronouncing /p/ and /ʃ/ in the word-medial and -final positions than in the word-initial ones. Similarly, they made more pronunciation errors in the word-final position than the medial and/or initial one of /ʒ/, /ð/ and /l/. In contrast, more errors are noted in their pronunciation of /ʧ/, /v/ and /θ/ in word-initial positions than in the medial and final ones. Compared to word-initial and -final positions, the errors made in pronouncing the test words in word-medial positions are not of the highest frequency in all the 10 sounds with the exception of /p/ and /g/.

The frequencies of the participants' errors in pronouncing the morphemes -s and -ed of the regular plural and simple present, and past tense suffixes are given in table 2. As noted in the table, the highest number of errors was made in mispronouncing the sounds /t/ and /d/ of the morpheme -ed (error percentage = 68.75%). In many cases, the participants made this error by deleting the morpheme, or replacing it with -d and inserting a vowel prior it; for example, pronouncing "jumped" [ʤʌmp]t as [ʤʌmp] or [ʤʌmpd]. The second highest frequency of errors was made in pronouncing the sound /z/ of the morpheme -s (error percentage = 20%). The participants made a few number of errors in pronouncing the sounds /s/ or /z/ of the morphemes -s, and the sound /d/ of the of the morpheme -ed. The pronunciation errors of the sounds of the two morphemes were mainly due to the participants' tendency to generalize their pronunciation by uttering them as /s/ or /d/, and to the difficulty in pronouncing word-final consonant clusters (the final consonant + -s or -d).
Table 2. Mean percentages of all students' mispronunciation of the morphemes -s and -ed of the regular plural and simple present, and past tense suffixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-s</th>
<th>Total of errors</th>
<th>-ed</th>
<th>Total of errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15.02%</td>
<td>/t/</td>
<td>68.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/z/</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td>/d/</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɪz/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/ɪd/</td>
<td>36.88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (3) gives the mean percentages of all students' mispronunciation of consonant clusters in word-initial and -final positions. As noted, the participants' errors in pronouncing word-final clusters (error percentage = 48.33%) are much higher than their mispronunciation of the word-initial ones (error percentage = 12.08%). Additionally, they made much more errors in pronouncing 3- and 4-consonant clusters than the 2-consonant ones. This indicates that the more consonants these clusters contain, the more difficult their pronunciation becomes. The participants made the least errors in pronouncing the 2-consonant clusters in word-initial position (error percentage = 0.83%). This can be interpreted by the fact that their Arabic dialect allows the combination of this consonant cluster type in the onset of the syllable (Al-Saidat, 2010). The highest number of errors, on the other hand, is in pronouncing the 4- and 3-consonant clusters in word-final positions (error percentage = 83.75% and 51.25%, respectively). A main reason for this is that such cluster combinations are found in Arabic

Table 3. Mean percentages of students' mispronunciation of consonant clusters in word-initial and -final positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Clusters</th>
<th>Total of errors</th>
<th>Final Clusters</th>
<th>Total of errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>0.83%</td>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>12.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>51.25%</td>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>83.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCC</td>
<td>48.33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While analyzing the participants' errors, the authors noted that many of them used two processes in their consonant cluster pronunciation: (1) vowel insertion and (2) consonant deletion. In some cases, the participants inserted a short vowel, for instance, they mispronounced the word "street" [strɪt] as [strɪt] or [strɪt], "terms"[tɜːrmz] as [tɜːrmz] or [tɜːrm]. There was a single case in which two vowels were inserted: "against" [æɡənst] was mispronounced as [æɡənst]. As for consonants deletion, it was noted the participants reduced the cluster by deleting one or two of its consonants. The deletion can occur in the medial consonant(s) such as reducing "sixths" [sɪksəʊs] to [sɪks] or [sɪs], and or in the final consonant(s) when deleting the inflectional suffix; for example pronouncing "worlds" [wɜːldz] as [wɜːd] or [wɜːld].
4.2 Consonant Pronunciation Errors of Students with Different English Proficiency Levels

The second research question was concerned with examining the extent to which learners' English proficiency level may influence their consonant pronunciation errors. To answer this question, the authors compared the consonant pronunciation errors made by the students with intermediate English language proficiency level (I-L learners) and those with the lower-intermediate one (L-I-L learners). Table (4) gives the percentages of the errors made by the two groups in pronouncing the 10 problematic consonant sounds. As the table shows, the lower-intermediate level students had more or equal percent frequencies of errors than the intermediate level ones in pronouncing the very vast majority of the 10 problematic consonant sounds. The only exceptional cases in which the intermediate level students had the higher percent error frequencies are pronouncing /v/ in the word-final position and /g/ in the word-initial position. This might be ascribed to some pronunciation habits developed by some students in this group. Remarkable also is the variance between the percent errors of the two groups in pronouncing the 10 sounds in the three positions. As noted, the variance between the percent errors of the two groups is generally higher in the word-initial position than the word-medial and final ones.

Table 4. Percent frequencies of the errors made by the lower-intermediate-level (L-I-L) and intermediate-level (I-L) learners in pronouncing the 10 problematic consonant sounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematic consonants</th>
<th>Word-initial position</th>
<th>Word-medial position</th>
<th>Word-final position</th>
<th>All positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ʒ/</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>82.50%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ŋ/</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/p/</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/θ/</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tʃ/</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/v/</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/θ/</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/g/</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/l/</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their pronunciation of the regular morphemes -s and -ed, the lower-intermediate students also made a higher number of errors than the intermediate ones. Table (5) gives the percentages of the errors made by the two groups in this category of consonant sounds. As seen in the table, with the exception of /hiz/, the lower-intermediate level students had higher or equal percent frequencies of errors than the intermediate level ones in the other morpheme pronunciation alternatives (i.e., /s/ or /z/, /t/ or /d/, and /d/). Noted also is the small variance between the percent error frequencies of the two groups in pronouncing this consonant category.
Table 5. Percent frequencies of the errors made by the lower-intermediate-level and intermediate-level learners in pronouncing the regular morphemes -s and -ed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total of errors</th>
<th>-s</th>
<th>Total of errors</th>
<th>-ed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LI-L learners</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>18.75%</td>
<td>15.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-L learners</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>21.25%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, table (6) shows the percent frequencies of the errors made by the two groups in pronouncing word-initial and -final consonant clusters. As the table shows, the lower-intermediate-level learners had higher error percent frequencies than the intermediate-level ones in pronouncing all the five types of consonant clusters. Two issues are noteworthy in the table. First, both groups had more errors in pronouncing 3- and 4-consonant clusters than 2- consonant ones, and in pronouncing word-final clusters than word-initial ones. Second, the variance between the two groups' error percent frequencies is much higher in word-final clusters than in word-initial ones.

Table 6. Percent frequencies of the errors made by the lower-intermediate-level and intermediate-level learners in pronouncing word-initial and -final consonant clusters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initial Clusters</th>
<th>Final Clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CC</td>
<td>CCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LI-L learners</td>
<td>1.67%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-L learners</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>21.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study has provided further evidence with regard to the difficulties Saudi EFL learners find in pronouncing some English consonant sounds and clusters. Specifically, the study found that they make many errors in pronouncing: /ʒ/, /ŋ/, /p/, /ɹ/, and /ʧ/; /t/ and /d/ of the regular past morpheme -ed; and the 4- and 3-consonant clusters. The results also indicate that the position of particular consonant sounds and clusters in the word plays a significant role in the difficulty of their pronunciation. This was noted, for example, in the more errors made in pronouncing: /p/ and /a/ in word-medial and -final positions; /ʒ/, /θ/ and /l/ in word-final positions; /ʃ/, /v/ and /θ/ in word-initial positions; and word-final consonant clusters. Overall, the data show that more consonants in the word-initial and -final positions are likely to cause more pronunciation difficulties than the ones in the word-medial position. The study also found an important impact of the learners' English proficiency level on their consonant pronunciation errors. The lower-intermediate students made more errors than the intermediate ones in pronouncing the majority of
the consonant sounds and clusters. As noted, the variance between the percent errors made by the two groups in pronouncing the 10 problematic sounds is generally higher in the word-initial positions than the word-medial and -final ones.

The findings of the current study provide further evidence for the CAH and concur with those of previous studies suggesting that Arab and Saudi learners of English have difficulty in pronouncing such consonant sounds and clusters (e.g., Al-Jasser, 1978; Barros, 2003; Binturki, 2008; Ammar and Alhumaid, 2009; Ahmad, 2011; Alqarni, 2013; Altamimi, 2015); although the degree and order of difficulty of each sound are relatively different from one study to another. Unlike English, Arabic does not have a big variety of consonant clusters, and therefore many English syllables are expected to be difficult for Arab learners. In light of these congruent findings, it can be argued that many of the pronunciation errors made by the participants were due to the influence of their L1 phonological system. Due to these phonological differences, they also had difficulty with the types of consonant clusters that are not found in Arabic. This major influence of L1- as Ammar and Alhumaid (2009)- suggest is inversely proportional to the language proficiency level which is the second factor of pronunciation difficulty addressed in this study. This is consistent with the results of the previous studies reported by Saadah (2011), Varol (2012) and Al-Jasser (1978). The role of adequate input or learning experience is also supported by Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis.

A third factor that accounts for the pronunciation difficulties noted is the lack of consciousness raising. Arguably, this is the main cause of the errors the participants made in pronouncing the regular morphemes -s and -ed. Since there are learnable rules for mastering the pronunciation of these two morphemes, it is believed that the students could have avoided these errors had they provided with some activities targeting raising their awareness of such pronunciation rules or guidelines.

Future English consonant pronunciation training of Arab students in general and Saudi ones in particular need to be designed in light of the empirical evidence provided by the present study and previous related research as well. Specifically, teachers providing and designing such training are to be aware of which consonant sounds and clusters are less or more difficult to their students, and how the word-position of the sound and learners' level may influence pronunciation difficulty. Teachers should be also aware of the differences between English and Arabic phonological systems in order to predict learners' sources of pronunciation difficulties. Important also is making use of computer-aided pronunciation training (CAPT) which offers many advantages to ESL/EFL students, including having a stress-free learning environment rich with unlimited instructional materials, personalized and independent practice, and immediate feedback, and receiving instruction in the pronunciation features related to L1 background and language learning objectives (Pennington, 1999, Neri et al., 2002).

There is a need for further research to support the evidence provided by the present study and the previous ones about Arab students' difficulties in English consonant pronunciation. Since the current study tested the participants' pronunciation through getting them to read word-lists, future studies may explore the same issue using other measures such as sentence reading and spontaneous speech. Future research can also examine English consonant pronunciation
difficulties encountered by male Saudi university students, or by Saudi pre-university students or learners with other Arab backgrounds. This in fact would help in exploring the influence of factors such as gender, language input, and L2 learning age on consonant pronunciation difficulties. Another important issue that is worth investigating is the relationship between consonant perception and production. Finally, it will be of interest also to test the effectiveness of courses making use of various training treatments in improving Arab students' English consonant pronunciation.

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Appendix

The English Consonant Pronunciation Test

A- Please read out the following words
1- pass - language - happy - left - stop - poor
2- value - house - valid - wander - over - leave
3- gate - bed - neglect - class - big - agree
4- rouge - occasion - garage - town - beige - sky
5- chip - loud - nature - blue - couch - approach
6- reading - pencil - bringing - book - sink - thinking
7- rain - small - dream - cottage - car - red
8- thin - foot - bathroom - freezer - math - thousands
9- therefore - brother - silk - window - smooth - either
10- leg - fan - building - ball - carpet - class

B- Please read out the following words
1- hats - cups - book - sleeps - starts - English
2- fans - wives - beautiful - belongs - wears - wood
3- dishes - buses - roof - watches - changes - garden

C- Please read out the following words
1- jumped - look - missed - worked - drank - watched
2- closed - learned - went - planned - sleep - lived
3- added - painted - ate - voted - decided - play

D- Please read out the following words
1- drink - joy - print - green - pencil
scream - doll - spray - street - four
2- cold - note - insect - sea - camp
against - terms - silks - first - surfs
sixths - dress - bed - attempts - worlds
An Overview of Flipped Learning Studies in Malaysia

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Abstract
Flipped learning has become a strategic approach for educators to implement a technological-based learning environment. In line with the Malaysia Education Blueprint, more and more educational institutions adopt flipped learning into their establishment in a vision to achieve students’ maximum potential. With a focus on technology, flipped learning is often linked with strategic management, excellent performance as well as the positive impact on instructors and students’ skill. The implementation of flipped learning is a way to introduce different teaching and learning ideas that can develop an active classroom. The concept is to have a balance between education and advanced technology. This paper aims to review the three research elements, which are the level of participants involved in this study, the instruments, and disciplines done by 19 researchers on the flipped learning approach. Findings show that most of the studies have significant results in the implementation of the flipped learning approach. Conclusively, flipped learning is a well-rounded approach where it can be applied in any level of education regardless of the discipline. However, longitudinal studies can be performed in order to see the long-term effects of the flipped learning approach.

Keywords: Active learning, educational technology, flipped learning, information technology, technology-integrated learning, technological pedagogical content knowledge

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Introduction

For several decades, online learning has been implemented in Malaysia, typically through the internet. It has widened the accessibility in education as well as improving the teaching and learning using technologies. In line with this development, the Ministry of Education Malaysia has strategically taken a step ahead by introducing the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013) that contains 11 operational shifts in achieving the vision of the Malaysian education system. The 7th shift is highlighting the importance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Meanwhile, the ICT based-learning, which is called Globalised Online Learning (GOL), is highlighted in the Malaysia Education Blueprint for Higher Education 2015-2025 in the 9th Shift section. By having the GOL, it could enable Malaysia in achieving access, quality and efficiency of higher education. Therefore, in order to tackle the necessities of 21st-century education, technology must be incorporated into the instructions, concept, content, and approach of teaching and learning (Yeop, 2019). In addition, blended learning is also incorporated in this shift or initiative to increase the quality of teaching and learning. Communication between local and international students can be initiated and provides a meaningful learning environment.

In fulfilling the needs of 21st-century education, Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs), blended learning and digital technology have been integrated into Malaysia higher education system. In September 2014, the first-year undergraduate students from four universities had taken compulsory courses, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), and exploiting the MOOCs concept. It is very significant to our country as it brings all of the students from all over universities in Malaysia together in just a single platform (MEB, 2015).

What and Where

Ever since blended learning has become a phenomenon all over the world, various type of blended learning has been implemented in teaching and learning. Flipped learning is one of the teaching ways that has been implemented in teaching practices (Zainuddin & Attaran, 2016). In 2007, high school educators Jonathan Bergman and Aaron Sams introduced a new learning model called flipped learning. They offered lectures in PowerPoint versions online to athlete students who could not make to their classes (Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight, & Arfstrom, 2013). Within a year, this new model has changed the world perspective of online education when their non-profit organization has multiple its members from 2,500 people to 11,000 people (Overmyer, 2012). Different from blended learning where it is a mixture of two elements of online teaching and learning and face-to-face, flipped learning focuses on before and during class activities. Students prepare for the class beforehand by listening to instructions or videos uploaded by educators. And then they do some readings or tasks to understand the topic. Meanwhile, in class, educators will dedicate most of the time for more meaningful learning such as workshops or discussions regarding the given topic they did before coming to the class. It is the stage where students engage in interactive activities for better comprehending (Hughes, Inzko, Oberdick, Small, & Young, 2011).

Flipped learning is a reverse method of traditional teaching and learning styles (Kaur, Singh, Mei, & Abdullah, 2017). Jonathan and Aaron Sams have introduced flipped learning in 2007. As educators, they had one particular problem. Their students missed too many classes for basketball
games and speech tournaments. When they skipped classes, they missed the crucial contents or educators had to repeat the essential lessons for them again. During spring 2007, they began to record their lectures using screen-casting software. At some point, they started to prerecord instructions and use class time for meaningful activities and also to use the time for questioning and answering session. Flipped learning has been growing in popularity throughout the world ever since. By using flipped learning, lecturers no longer have to lecture for two hours straight, classes are meant for meaningful events and project based-learning activities (Acton & Knorr, 2013; Roach, 2013; Tucker, 2012). A pilot study conducted by Flumerfelt and Green (2013) shows students’ outstanding achievement and effective communication between students and educators. It also found that that flipped learning could generate chances for active learning (Leicht, Zappe, Messner, & Litzinger, 2012). Flipped learning also enhances engagement and provides better performance (Wilson, 2013).

There are many reasons to apply flipped learning conferring to Bergmann and Sams (2012). Flipped learning can benefit busy students as it is flexible, and students can enjoy learning anytime anywhere. Flipped learning supports students with different abilities, from beginner to advanced students as they can play the video hundreds of times if they have trouble understanding the instructions. As for advanced students, they can watch as little time as they needed. Flipped learning allows students to pause or rewind their educators (in video form). It also boosts interaction between students and educators. Educators could be absent without worrying about giving lectures. Flipped learning tackles better engagement compared to traditional lectures. There are also some misconceptions about flipped learning have formed throughout the years of implementing it (Bergmann, Overmyer, & Willie, 2011). Flipped learning is not about substituting teaching with recorded videos or let students learn on their own. Flipped learning is intended and created to provide personalized learning space and encourage students in autonomous learning. It is also providing engagement while in the classroom, and it can be accomplished through activities done in the classroom (Bergmann et al., 2011).

**Current Stage and Concern**

Online learning has increased enormously in recent years in both public and private universities. It is to support both general and long-distance studies (Aris, Ali, Harun, Tasir, Atan, & Noor, 2006; Embi, 2011; Goi & Ng, 2009; Hussain, 2004; Salleh, 2008). The implementation of technology in higher education in Malaysia institutions is growing, particularly in teaching and learning practices even though it has been used widely since 2000. Research and practice of inline learning should be done more in order to increase and encourage the implementation of technology in higher education classrooms as well as to engage the digital populaces (Embi, 2011). Hussain (2004) mentions that the expansion and introduction of technology-enhanced education in Malaysian universities have begun throughout the technology-integrated education period to offer online learning to students. It has become a significant problem in sustaining online teaching and learning; thus, the second phase arises. Steered by the Ministry of Education, the incorporation of technology in the classroom to stimulate the use of technology in online learning, few strategies have been listed. The strategies are the preparation for more up-to-date infrastructure to all institutions, evaluation and curriculum that integrates technology in the classroom, the upgrading of ICT skills for both learners and educators, the growing of technology in management and lastly, the improvement of ICT equipment in all educational institutions. In a study of flipped learning
readiness among UKM undergraduate and postgraduate learners, results show a satisfactory level of readiness in flipped learning. However, appropriate training is crucial in the adoption of flipped learning among lecturers. Lecturers should be trained well in real classroom practice; meanwhile, students should be familiarized and confident to comprise this whole new approach (Embi, 2014).

Table 1. *Flipped Learning Studies in Malaysia*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Author/year</th>
<th>Level of Participants</th>
<th>Instrument(s)</th>
<th>Discipline(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Arumugam Raman, Raamani Thanimulai &amp; Mohan Rathakrishnan (2019)</td>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>Pre and Post Test</td>
<td>Information Technology (IT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Siti Fatimah Abd Rahman, Melor Md Yunus, Harwati Hashim (2019)</td>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>English as A Second Language (ESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mohammad Musab Azmat Ali, Melor Md Yunus, Harwati Hashim, Azwin Arif Abdul Rahim, Nor Yazi Khamis (2019)</td>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>Design and Develop</td>
<td>English as A Second Language (ESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teo Woon Chun &amp; Ramesh Sathappan (2018)</td>
<td>Elementary School Students</td>
<td>Pre and Post Test</td>
<td>English as A Second Language (ESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Michelle Jones (2016)</td>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>Meta-Analysis</td>
<td>Varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Amutha Sambandumurthi (2015)</td>
<td>Malaysian and Indian Undergraduate students</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Umawathy Techanamurthy, Norlidah Alias &amp; Dorothy DeWitt (2015)</td>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Culinary Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chelster Sherralyn Jeffrey Pudin (2017)</td>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Engineering/Psychology &amp; Teach English as A Second Language (TESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Brenda Danker (2015)</td>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>Qualitative &amp; Quantitative</td>
<td>Performing Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Farina Tazijan, Agelyia Murugan, Suzana Abd.Rahim, Rosmaliza Mohamed, Emily Jothee Mathai &amp; Rushita Ismail (2016)</td>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>Qualitative &amp; Quantitative</td>
<td>English as A Second Language (ESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kumar, Shobha Vijaya, Shoup, Diana Lea Baranovich (2018)</td>
<td>Elementary School Students</td>
<td>Pre and Post Test</td>
<td>English as A Second Language (ESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Esyin Chew (2018)</td>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Siti Hajar Halli &amp; Rafiza Abdul Razak (2018)</td>
<td>Preschool students</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>English as A Second Language (ESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bawadi Abdullah &amp; Muhammad Tazli Azizan (2017)</td>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>Qualitative &amp; Quantitative</td>
<td>Chemical Engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Brief Explanation of Each Study**
Table 1 shows a few recent studies in Malaysia from 2015 until 2019. Ali, Yunus, Hashim & Khamis (2019) in their early research focused on the strategic improvement of the flipped learning framework on educators and learning constructs for ESL environment. Later, Ali, Yunus, Hashim, Hidayat & Zaman (2019), in the same principle, conducted another research to determine students’ engagement constructs in establishing a framework for flipped learning in an ESL background. With the second study, Ali et al. (2019) found a more refined item for a strategic flipped learning in an ESL environment. A study of flipped learning approach in order to explore deep learning in large classrooms done by Danker (2015). The participants are the students of Performing Arts at Sunway University. They were given a video to watch as homework. During the class, the lecturer was present to facilitate the students. The results show that flipped learning is able to remodel a large classroom into one active-learning class. Students also get the opportunity to get personal feedback during class time. Jones (2016) also found that there are significant profits to learners in Malaysian Higher Education institutions in applying flipped learning approaches.

A case study done by Zainuddin and Attaran (2016) found the significant results when applying flipped learning in classrooms as flipped learning generates positive impacts especially for shy and quiet students as well as for the international students who have a lower proficiency level of English language. The study was done at University Malaya. Studies of flipped learning in teaching communication skills in ESL had been reviewed by Singh, Jaswant, Singh, Mohtar, and Mostafa (2017) in the higher education setting. They focused on the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students. The study hopes to see a positive enrichment and learning environment with well-planned flipped learning lesson plans. They found out that flipped learning gives positive impacts to second language learners, and it is not just a model or a medium in delivering the instructions (Singh et al., 2017). Chun and Sathappan (2018) conducted a study on Chinese ESL learners to see the effectiveness of the flipped learning approach. They conducted their study with two groups of students, the control and intervention groups, with pre and post-tests. Based on their findings, there is a significant distinction between intervention and control groups. Flipped learning approach scores higher results than the traditional teaching approach. Abdullah and Azizan (2017) also studied the flipped learning technique in improving students’ grades. They concluded that flipped learning is useful in refining the students’ achievement, especially to their comprehending and overall performances.

In exploring educators’ Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) areas in developing activities, Ishak and Abu (2018) have researched two non-option ESL educators. The results show that both educators are motivated to integrate flipped learning into their classroom activities (Ishak & Abu 2018). Last but not least, a case study was done by two University Utara Malaysia (UUM) lecturers and a teacher from secondary school in Kedah (Raman, Rathakrishnan, & Thaninimalai, 2019). Their objective is to see the implementation of flipped learning for undergraduate students. The students were divided into two different groups which are the intervention group and the control group. The results show that the intervention group has higher self-efficacy than the control group. Meanwhile, gender has no significant difference in self-efficacy (Raman et al., 2019).
Instruments

A total of 19 studies were found, and various instruments were used, which include survey, pre, and post-test, qualitative and quantitative, design and develop research, meta-analysis, and literature review. The instruments are chosen based on the appropriateness in answering the research questions. Furthermore, it has also chosen to adapt to the targeted respondents. Four of the studies above used surveys as the instrument as it is applicable for descriptive, explanatory, and explanatory purposes (Babbie, 2012). The usage of a questionnaire is the best way for a social researcher who is fascinated by assembling raw data to describe a large population. Rahman, Yunus & Hashim (2019) used a survey to investigate whether computer self-efficacy and computer anxiety have any significant relationship towards Malaysian ESL educators’ attitudes in implementing the flipped learning approach. A survey is also suitable in exploring perception, experiences and challenges. Sambandamurthi (2015) surveyed to analyze the experiences and challenges faced by postgraduate students as well as to match the resemblances and dissimilarities of exploiting flipped learnings. Meanwhile, Juhary and Amir (2017) used a survey to assess the students’ insights into the latest model of teaching and activities.

Moreover, Pudin (2017), used a survey to explore the flipped learning significant. Another instrument that is widely used by the researchers above is pre and post-test. Pre and post-test design is a chosen instrument to compare participant groups and evaluate the degree of alteration resulting from investigational actions (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). Chun and Sathappan (2018) used the pre and post-test instruments along with a questionnaire to observe the dissimilarities between the control and experimental groups in grasping adjectives. Ishak et al. (2018) have also design pre and post-test digital learning for their research. Vijaya and Baranovich (2018) in their research to explore the effectiveness of flipped learning have also used pre and post-test methods. With pre and post-test method, the researcher can see the difference on both groups, after the pre and post-tests, whether one of the groups has changed over time and any significant change can give the researcher an idea of the general efficiency of the interference or treatment (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003).

Meta-analysis is one of the approaches chosen by the researchers in observing the benefits of flipped learning (Jones, 2016; Rahman, Aris, Rosli, Mohamed, Abdullah, & Zaid, 2015). Through meta-analysis, researchers can evaluate critically and chain the results of equivalent studies (Fagard, 1996). The meta-analytic approach used here has enabled the researchers to maximize their observation in investigating the benefits of flipped learning in various group samples. Various instruments can be used to help the researchers in completing their studies. One may use more than an approach to their studies. It depends on the objective of the study and the selected respondents. Nevertheless, the approach selected must be suitable for the intended objective.

Disciplines

Flipped learning is a promising teaching approach that can motivate students. Researchers have shown the efficiency of flipped learning through an assortment of disciplines such as in information technology, Raman et al. (2019) and also engineering (Abdullah & Azizan, 2017; Chew, Jones, & Wordley, 2018; Juhary & Amir, 2017; Pudin, 2017). Furthermore, ESL discipline is also appreciating the flipped learning by using the method to expand the learning experience for the students (Chun & Sathappan, 2018; Pudin, 2017; Rahman et al., 2019; Vijaya & Baranovich,
2018). Hence, demonstrating that flipped learning is a very flexible approach, and any discipline can apply it as a medium to enhance their learning.

**Future Research**

Flipped learning has been shown to have a constructive influence on education based on the studies above; most of the researchers focused on the effect of flipped learning toward students. It can also be observed that flipped learning is appropriate for any level of education. However, relatively little has been reported on the long-term effect of the employment of flipped learning. More studies can be done in understanding how flipped learning can shape the student’s way of thinking and to ensure effective execution of flipped learning.

**Conclusion**

Generally, flipped learning has shown an encouraging influence on student’s behavior and achievement. It can be implemented in various disciplines such as engineering, IT, ESL, and performing arts. Flipped learning is an advantage for the educator to cater to any learning possibilities. From the discussion above, the flipped learning can be seen as a suitable method for any discipline. It can also help the educator to deliver new ideas in teaching and learning sessions. With flipped learning, educators can be creative and use the technology to the maximum so that students can be engaged fully to active learning.

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References


Assessing the ESP Needs of Saudi Engineering Undergraduates: A Diagnostic View

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Abstract
The recent development in the field of science, technology and commerce has revived the significance of English language teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi educational policies are envisioned to configure the students’ communicative competence in English to the demands of the specific professional disciplines as well as the global market. Engineering undergraduates studying at Saudi public universities rely on the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) to meet their English language needs. However, it seems that no empirical study to date has been conducted to analyse the English language needs of the engineering undergraduates. This study aims at analysing the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) needs of engineering undergraduates studying at a Saudi university. It intends to identify what academic tasks they often carry out in English. The researcher adopted a mixed-methods approach by employing a questionnaire and interviews to collect data from 257 engineering undergraduates and 32 content-subject teachers. Quantitative data analysis was performed using SPSS, while qualitative data were analysed through NVivo software. The participants’ perceptions of target tasks were compared and examined to see if there are significant differences between the groups based on the specialty of department or year of study. Overall, 27 tasks were identified as most frequently performed by undergraduates across all engineering departments at the university. The findings also revealed significant differences in the undergraduates’ responses across all four levels of study. The findings suggest incorporating those tasks into the current ESP syllabus which are aligned to the immediate needs of undergraduates of engineering departments.

Keywords: academic tasks, engineering undergraduates, English for Specific Purposes, needs analysis, Preparatory Year Programme

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1. Introduction
In higher education of Saudi Arabia, most of the public universities use English as the medium of instruction for specific academic programmes, primarily, including medicine, engineering, business administration, computer science, information sciences and applied sciences (Alfehaid, 2018). The main source of intake at these universities comprises students graduated from government schools where English is taught as a foreign language. However, the majority of students from these schools, in spite of studying English for nine years, i.e., from grade 6 elementary to grade 12 secondary, lack basic English language skills to meet the linguistic demands for success in their university core courses (Asmari, 2016). With a low level of English competence, they face significant difficulty in their English medium classes and courses (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). According to Omar and Alrubayea (2012), this disproportional gap between the secondary school level and the university level causes students to drop courses or quit college entirely. To bridge the gap between the two levels and acculturate students to university education, almost all Saudi universities have started introducing a one-year-long Preparatory Year Programmes (PYP). The Preparatory year is the first year of the study plan at the university level preparing newly admitted students for their undergraduate study by developing their basic communication skills in English, general study skills and computer skills. At this stage, they also have to study prerequisite subjects for entering the next level of their specialized discipline.

The university, where this study was carried out, is one of the oldest universities in Saudi Arabia which implemented the preparatory year system in 2004 (College of Engineering and Islamic Architecture [CEIA], 2019). The English language Programme of the PYP is committed to empower students to achieve an intermediate level (i.e., B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale) in general English language and an adequate level of competence in English specifically used in their content subjects to pursue their academic education at university and later in their professional careers (Melibari, 2015; Arnó-Macià & Mancho-Barés, 2015).

The College of Engineering and Islamic Architecture (CEIA) and the College of Computer and Information System (CCIS), followed by Health colleges and the College of Business Administration, are the largest beneficiaries of the existing PYP of the university. At the time of entering their subject-specific departments, i.e., the departments of Civil, Computer, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, the PYP graduates are perceived to be prepared both in general and technical English as per the standards of ABET-accredited engineering programs of these four departments. However, the engineering faculty often expresses dissatisfaction with the English language abilities of their students in carrying out various academic activities. This suggests that the present English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses do not properly harmonize with the academic and professional needs of the engineering undergraduates. Consequently, students’ low language skills seem to hinder progress in studying their specialized subjects and, later, in meeting the communication needs of their professional practices.

Since the inception of the PYP at the university, it has been relying on commercially published instructional materials in teaching both EGP and ESP courses. Therefore, without conducting a needs analysis, it is difficult to say to what extent the present course materials are in line with the
students’ mainstream curriculum. However, even the best commercial materials, available in the international arena, are often criticized for being generic or not well-informed about the cultural and educational context of a specific group of learners (Howard & Major, 2004). In this vein, the present study will help in providing recommendations to tailor the present ESP teaching materials according to the immediate needs of the engineering undergraduates of the university.

In this Needs Analysis study, the ESP needs of the undergraduates will be retrieved in the form of target tasks which the undergraduates and their content-subjects teachers perceive essential for the successful completion of engineering students’ undergraduate level study. Thus, the objectives of the study are: first, to identify and prioritise the most frequent tasks engineering undergraduates carry out in English in their engineering study; and second, to compare the undergraduates’ and the subject teachers’ perceptions of tasks based on their importance to their respective departments (i.e., the Civil, Electrical, Mechanical, and Computer Engineering) as well as four levels (years) of study (i.e., 2nd year to 5th year). Based on these objectives, the study aims to answer the following two research questions:

Q.1: What are the academic tasks that engineering undergraduates carry out in English across all engineering departments at a Saudi public university?

Q.2: Are there significant differences in the participants’ perceptions of tasks, which can be attributed to the specialty of department or year of study?

2. Literature Review

ESP is “the role of English in a language course or program of instruction in which the content and aims of the course are fixed by the specific needs of a particular group of learners” as defined by Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 198). Thus, the selection of teaching materials and techniques is dependent on the learner’s needs, which means that the success of teaching and learning process in ESP contingent much on a needs analysis (Cowling, 2007). However, without conducting a needs analysis, how can those specific needs be identified? So, needs analysis is used as a tool to identify the types of activities and tasks performed by students in different disciplines and their needs of English language skills to complete their major courses successfully (Alasta & Munir, 2012).

The present study is embedded in the theoretical framework of needs analysis (NA) based on ESP theories, especially, established by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), Brown (2016), and Long (2005).

There are several terms used in the literature to refer to different types of learner’s needs, such as objective and subjective needs, perceived and felt needs, process-oriented and product-oriented needs, and target situation and learning needs. Target needs split up further into three distinctions, namely “necessities, wants and lacks” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 54). The relatively new model of needs analysis in ESP, suggested by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) considers these different perspectives of needs by subsuming them under three categories: TSA (Target Situation Analysis), LSA (Learning Situation Analysis) and PSA (Present Situation Analysis). In target situation analysis, we investigate objective, perceived and product-oriented needs; a learning
situation analysis inquires about subjective, felt and process-oriented needs, and a present situation analysis estimates strengths and weaknesses in language or learning skills.

Dudley-Evans and St John’s (1998) model focuses on the following types of information or situations needed to establish a needs analysis:

A. professional information about the learners: the tasks and activities learners are/will be using English for – target situation analysis (TSA) and objectives needs
B. personal information about the learners: factors which may affect the way they learn such as previous language learning experiences, cultural information, reasons for attending the course and expectations of it, attitude to English – wants, means, subjective needs
C. English language information about the learners: what their current skills and language use are – present situation analysis (PSA) – which allow us to assess (D)
D. the learners’ lacks: the gap between (C) and (A) – lacks
E. language learning information: effective ways of learning the skills and language in (D) – learning needs
F. professional communication information about (A): knowledge of how language and skills are used in the target situation – linguistic analysis, discourse analysis and genre analysis
G. what is wanted from the course
H. information about the environment in which the course will be run – means analysis (p. 125)

Given the time and resources restrictions, the current study considers only the first component (A) of the above model to identify the ESP needs of the engineering undergraduates.

Once decided that needs analysis is indispensable, the next thing is to determine what the students need to learn. This is the first but a difficult stage in a needs analysis process, it is because of the different views held by different stakeholders involved in an ESP programme. Brown (2016) categorized these needs viewpoints as (a) democratic view: whatever the most people want (b) discrepancy view: whatever is missing (c) analytic view: whatever logically comes next, and (d) diagnostic view: whatever will do most harm if missing. The present study considers the last viewpoint, the diagnostic view, in which the students’ necessities or prerequisites in the target situation are identified and then prioritized based on their critical or pressing value. Brown (2016) maintains that “the needs analysts will first identify potential student needs, then prioritize those needs that are likely to have the most negative consequences if not addressed, then include less crucial needs if there is sufficient time” (p. 16).

Long (2005) endorsed taking a task-based approach to needs analysis as well as with the learning and teaching process. This recommendation is based on the view that “structures or other linguistic elements (notions, functions, lexical items, etc.)” have a secondary role in fulfilling a task requirement. “Learners are far more active and cognitive-independent participants in the acquisition process than is assumed by the erroneous belief that what you teach is what they learn, and when you teach it is when they learn it” (Long, 2005, p. 3). In line with this approach, tasks
or communicative events (for instance, listening to lectures, participating or leading academic discussions, writing lab or project reports, and delivering presentations) are taken as the unit of a needs analysis. Then the researcher gathers “exemplars of those language uses” by recording lectures, seminars, teacher-student discussions, etc. or by collecting the written texts like exam papers, and project reports.

Some of the recently conducted needs analysis studies that are relevant to the current study in terms of context, research methods, scope, etc. have also adopted a task-based approach. An in-depth task-based needs analysis was conducted by Malicka, Guerrero, and Norris (2017) who studied the English language needs of hotel receptionists. They interviewed five expert hotel receptionists and five novice receptionists to get information about daily tasks and their frequency, while observations were carried out in the workplace to catch the linguistic aspects and difficulty of the target tasks. The study concluded that the information about the target tasks and their frequency would help in prioritizing the tasks to be included and ordered in a curriculum. It also added that the insights about the linguistic difficulty could be used to select lexical items for the pre- or post-task phases of a task. The study relied only on qualitative data on oral tasks.

Adopting a mixed-methods, triangulated needs analysis, Caplan and Stevens (2017) conducted a study to revise the present EAP programme at a US university. An online survey was given to 191 students and 226 faculty members, while five international students were interviewed. The faculty members and students showed consensus on 21 tasks/activities that are important for undergraduate classes. However, the faculty did not agree to the students’ views about their ratings in the successful completion of these tasks.

To identify target needs of the students of the Fine Arts in a private university in Turkey, Kazar and Mede (2015) collected both quantitative and qualitative data using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews respectively. The results revealed that presentation skills, learning key terms, writing email messages, and reading academic texts are important tasks and ESP program should focus on those learning strategies required by these tasks.

Serafini and Torres (2015) conducted a multiphase needs analysis to design a university business Spanish course. First, the researchers generated a list of 40 relevant target tasks with the help of business graduates and professionals. Secondly, university business majors rated the frequency and difficulty of each task on a 40-item Likert-type questionnaire. Finally, the researchers analysed and grouped target tasks identified in the needs assessment to create five major target task types that informed course objectives and classroom tasks.

Apart from the abovementioned studies, a number of needs analysis studies based on general language skills, syntax, lexical items, etc. have been conducted to inform different types of academic syllabuses for engineering students in Saudi Arabia (Abu-Rizaizah, 2005; Alsolami, 2014; Habbash & Albakrawi, 2014; Mahmoud, 2014; Alsamadani, 2017; Alshabeb, Alsubaie & Albasheer, 2017). However, no attempt has been made to conduct a task-based needs analysis to design an ESP syllabus for engineering undergraduates in the Saudi context. This study sets out to fill this gap by providing empirical data on tasks obtained through a target situation analysis (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) carried out in the engineering departments of a Saudi university.
3. Method

New studies are giving attention to task-based analyses by using triangulating data sources/methods that enhance the validity of research findings (Cowling, 2007), and subsequently, reflect a clear picture of the complex reality of the learners’ needs. Aligning with the notion of triangulation, mixed-methods approaches are recommended by researchers (Long, 2005; Brown, 2016). Mixed methods can be described as one of a variety of combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods within a single project of inquiry. In the current context, integrating these two approaches will help to best understand the research problem as well as provide a more comprehensive view of the needs of the ESP learners.

3.1 Participants and Sampling

The main source of relevant information for this study included two different populations: undergraduates and content-subject teachers from the departments of Civil, Electrical, Mechanical, and Computer Engineering. The student participants of the study are Arab speaking Saudis currently studying at different levels ranging from the 2nd year to the 5th year. The subject teachers are content specialists teaching different engineering subjects to the students of the four departments. The role of domain experts, as a reliable source of accurate information, has often been emphasized by researchers (Huh, 2006). The findings of Gilabert’s study (2005) also support “Long’s claim that, if only one source is to be used in a needs analysis, domain experts should be that source, rather than students, scholars, company representatives, or applied linguists” (p. 197). Likewise, Attan, Abdul Raof, Hamzah, Mohd Omar and Md Yusof (2016) highly recommend domain experts’ point of view as more accurate than the views of students who lack knowledge and experience of their future career.

For the quantitative part of the study i.e., using a questionnaire, Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) sample size table was used to establish a sample size from the engineering undergraduates. Then cluster sampling procedure was adopted to randomly select the required sample size from the undergraduates, while the content-subject teachers participated in this study as samples of convenience. Table 1 shows the distribution of the participating content-subject teachers by their department and undergraduates both by their department and year of study.

Table 1. Distribution of undergraduate & content-subject teacher participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>2nd year</th>
<th>3rd year</th>
<th>4th year</th>
<th>5th year</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electrical</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>94 (36.58)</td>
<td>10 (31.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67 (26.06)</td>
<td>7 (21.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37 (14.40)</td>
<td>7 (21.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>59 (22.96)</td>
<td>8 (25.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>257 (100)</td>
<td>32 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Data collection instruments

For collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, two different research instruments were used: a set of questionnaires for content-subject teachers and undergraduate students, and semi-structured interviews. Thus, to enhance the credibility and dependability of the findings of the
study, two types of triangulation were combined: stakeholder triangulation (students and teachers) and method triangulation (questionnaire and interviews) (Brown, 2016).

### 3.3 Procedure

Following a thorough literature review on the needs of the engineering students and a detailed discussion with the content-subject specialists from the engineering departments, a final list of 35 academic tasks was compiled. Based on these tasks which were divided into six task categories or super-ordinates, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was designed. Each category represents a type of situation where undergraduates perform different academic tasks. Next, two English language professors teaching at the PYP, checked the questionnaire for any language issues or ambiguous questions. Based on their suggestions, a few minor modifications were made in the questionnaire.

The content-subject teachers’ version of the questionnaire was piloted with five teachers followed by interviews. The interviews proved helpful in understanding the respondents’ choices and clarifying any of their confusion that might arise in understanding some of the items or terminology. Based on the feedback from the content-subject specialists, some more changes were made in the contents of the questionnaire.

Corresponding to the content-subject teachers’ questionnaire, another version of the questionnaire was developed for the undergraduates. Then it was translated from English to Arabic by a professor in English from Arabic background and piloted with a sample of 16 engineering undergraduates. The internal consistency of the 35 Likert-type items of both versions was established collectively through Cronbach’s Alpha with the coefficient value of 0.89.

During the middle of the second semester of the academic year 2017-2018, the English version of the questionnaire was distributed among the content-subject teachers in their offices, whereas the Arabic version was distributed among students during their class time. A total of 289 questionnaires were completed by the two participant groups. The quantitative data from the questionnaires were analysed through SPSS programme. For statistical purposes, the responses in frequencies were coded as 0 = Never, 1 = Rarely, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, and 4 = Very often. Then the first two low-frequency values (i.e., 0 and 1) were further recoded as “infrequent” meant the tasks which are not commonly practiced by engineering undergraduates and the high-frequency values (i.e., 2, 3 and 4) as “frequent” representing the tasks commonly performed across all the four departments. Next, the “infrequent” responses were assigned a value of “0”, while a value of “1” was assigned to the “frequent” ones. Thus, based on calculating frequencies and percentages, if an item received 50% or more of the total responses in “0” or “1”, it was categorized as “infrequent” or “frequent” respectively. Finally, the results were analysed through the Mann Whitney U test to see if there is a significant difference between the content-subject teachers’ and undergraduates’ responses, and Kruskal Wallis Test to estimate any discrepancies or similarities found among the four departments or the four levels of study.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 content-subject teachers from the four engineering departments. Each of the interviews was carried out in the office of the respective interviewee. The interviews’ time spans varied from 30 to 90 minutes, and they were audio-recorded. All interviews were transcribed and imported to NVivo 12 software to be coded. Initially, the data from the interviews were coded as nodes according to the six predetermined categories of
tasks derived from the questionnaire, and then they were further coded as sub-nodes representing different academic tasks. Next, they were thoroughly reviewed and summarised in a coherent and meaningful way. Finally, the summarised ideas were interpreted and evaluated in relation to the relevant research question.

4. Findings and Discussion
This section provides answers to the two research questions that were presented in the introduction section. Both the quantitative and qualitative data are parallelly aligned. Thus, the statistical results of the questionnaires were viewed and interpreted in the relationship to the findings of the interviews.

4.1 Engineering academic tasks
In table 2, the results of all 35 tasks from the questionnaires are shown in frequency counts and percentages for each respondent group individually as well as in total. In each of the six category-types, tasks are arranged in descending order based on the total frequencies of the responses.

Table 2. Participants’ responses on the engineering academic tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category-type</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Subject teachers</th>
<th>Undergraduates</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-student communication</td>
<td>1. Face to face meeting</td>
<td>29(90.6%)</td>
<td>197(76.7%)</td>
<td>226(78.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Email</td>
<td>20(62.5%)</td>
<td>182(70.8%)</td>
<td>202(69.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. University/personal website</td>
<td>19(59.4%)</td>
<td>132(51.4%)</td>
<td>151(52.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Phone call</td>
<td>12(37.5%)</td>
<td>91(35.4%)</td>
<td>103(35.6%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a document</td>
<td>5. Lab report</td>
<td>28(87.5%)</td>
<td>209(81.3%)</td>
<td>237(82.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Graduation project report</td>
<td>29(90.6%)</td>
<td>181(70.4%)</td>
<td>210(72.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Term paper</td>
<td>17(53.1%)</td>
<td>192(74.7%)</td>
<td>209(72.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Summer training report</td>
<td>26(81.3%)</td>
<td>164(63.8%)</td>
<td>190(65.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Research paper or article</td>
<td>9(28.1%)</td>
<td>173(67.3%)</td>
<td>182(63.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Summaries</td>
<td>16(50.0%)</td>
<td>167(65.0%)</td>
<td>183(63.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Curriculum Vitae (CV)</td>
<td>3(9.4%)</td>
<td>140(54.5%)</td>
<td>143(49.5%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Field trip report</td>
<td>14(43.8%)</td>
<td>105(40.9%)</td>
<td>119(41.2%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside the classroom or lab. activities</td>
<td>13. Listening to lectures/lab instructions</td>
<td>29(90.6%)</td>
<td>229(89.1%)</td>
<td>258(89.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Group 1 Comparison</td>
<td>Group 2 Comparison</td>
<td>Group 3 Comparison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Asking/answering questions from the teacher</td>
<td>27(84.4%)</td>
<td>214(83.3%)</td>
<td>241(83.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Taking notes while listening to lectures</td>
<td>27(84.4%)</td>
<td>208(80.9%)</td>
<td>235(81.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Explaining or demonstrating (e.g. an experiment or procedures, etc.)</td>
<td>23(71.9%)</td>
<td>204(79.4%)</td>
<td>227(78.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Watching videos or computer simulations</td>
<td>17(53.1%)</td>
<td>189(73.5%)</td>
<td>206(71.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Reading subject specific texts (e.g., textbooks, handouts, notes, etc.)</td>
<td>27(84.4%)</td>
<td>178(69.3%)</td>
<td>205(70.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Participating in group discussions</td>
<td>17(53.1%)</td>
<td>160(62.3%)</td>
<td>177(61.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Reading manuals, safety rules or notices</td>
<td>19(59.4%)</td>
<td>143(55.6%)</td>
<td>162(56.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of the exam or graded work</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Solving numerical questions with equations and formulas</td>
<td>31(96.9%)</td>
<td>226(87.9%)</td>
<td>257(88.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Drawing circuits, symbols and graphs</td>
<td>32(100.0%)</td>
<td>208(80.9%)</td>
<td>240(83.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Writing short answers</td>
<td>25(78.1%)</td>
<td>172(66.9%)</td>
<td>197(68.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Multiple-choice questions (MCQs)</td>
<td>21(65.6%)</td>
<td>133(51.8%)</td>
<td>154(53.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. An in-class open book test</td>
<td>17(53.1%)</td>
<td>111(43.2%)</td>
<td>128(44.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Daily end-of-lesson or -topic assessment</td>
<td>16(50.0%)</td>
<td>99(38.5%)</td>
<td>115(39.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Listening to presentations</td>
<td>29(90.6%)</td>
<td>194(75.5%)</td>
<td>223(77.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Delivering presentations</td>
<td>25(78.1%)</td>
<td>178(69.3%)</td>
<td>203(70.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Describing the content of tables, graphs and diagrams</td>
<td>24(75.0%)</td>
<td>178(69.3%)</td>
<td>202(69.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other situations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Using the internet for searching engineering-related information</td>
<td>28(87.5%)</td>
<td>237(92.2%)</td>
<td>265(91.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Using a computer for word processing or data analysis (e.g., Word or Excel)</td>
<td>28(87.5%)</td>
<td>224(87.2%)</td>
<td>252(87.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Translation (from English to Arabic or vice versa)</td>
<td>14(43.8%)</td>
<td>157(61.1%)</td>
<td>171(59.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Reading newspaper or magazine articles related to engineering studies</td>
<td>11(34.4%)</td>
<td>130(50.6%)</td>
<td>141(48.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of 27 out of 35 tasks was reported as “frequent” by more than 50% of the total 289 respondents including both content-subject teachers and undergraduates. Only eight tasks fell short of the cut-off point (50% of the total responses) to be considered “frequent.” Except for two tasks (number 9 and 32), all of the “frequent” tasks received more than 50% responses from each group. Although the two tasks were perceived as “frequent” by the undergraduates, the content-subject teachers seemed to hold these two tasks as “infrequent.”

Regarding the three frequent tasks of “teacher-student communication”, the most frequent task that the participants reported was “face-to-face meeting” (78.2%), followed by “email” (69.9%) and “university/personal website” (52.2%). There was only one task, “phone call” (35.6%), which was reported as “infrequent.” These results are in agreement with those of the interviews conducted with 16 content-subject teachers who confirmed that they often contact their students through emails, but very few students write emails in English. They added that the students usually preferred to talk to them in the class after lectures or visit their offices during office hours. Most of the teachers do not like sharing their phone number with the students, yet some of them feel comfortable to share things with the students through WhatsApp. Some of the interviewees reported that they used WhatsApp or social media to communicate with their students. This shows that the use of social media, especially WhatsApp, is becoming an increasingly popular means of communication between teachers and students.

In relation to the tasks “writing a document” category, “lab report” (82%), “graduation project report” (72.7%), and “term paper” (72.3%) were perceived as the three most frequent tasks that the engineering undergraduates perform in their departments. In the same category-type, an important technical document, “summer training report”, was considered as “frequent” by 81.3% content-subject teachers, but due to the rather low response rate from the undergraduates (63.8%), it could not find a place in the top three ranks. One task namely “curriculum vitae (CV)” (49.5%) was reported as “infrequent” in this category although it received a reasonably high response rate from the undergraduates. The results from the interviews indicated that “graduation project report”, “lab. report”, and “summer training report” were mandatory and, thus, the most important writing tasks for the engineering undergraduates. Despite assigning 3rd rank to “term paper” in this category by the questionnaire respondents, very few interviewees described it in the same way. They had different perceptions of the term “term paper” such as “a final term exam”, “a research paper”, and “a written assignment on a specific topic”. All the respondents said that CV writing is not part of their course. At least, students do not need it much during their studies, they might need it later for other purposes. Majority of the teachers confirmed that students did not need or write “research paper” to publish at the undergraduate level.

The largest category-type, “inside the classroom or lab activities”, comprised of eight “frequent” tasks in which the top three were generic academic tasks, that is, “listening to
lectures/lab. instructions” (89.3%), “asking/answering questions from teacher” (83.4%), and “taking notes while listening to lectures” (81.3%) followed by three technical ones, that is, “explaining or demonstrating (e.g. an experiment or procedures, etc.)” (78.5%), “watching videos or computer simulations” (71.3%), and “reading subject specific texts” (70.9%). Although a high percentage of subject teachers (84.4%) reported “reading subject specific texts” as a “frequent” task, fewer undergraduates (69.3%) opted against the same task. This category did not have any “infrequent” tasks. The majority of the interviewees stressed the importance of reading textbooks, handouts and PowerPoint slides in English. Very few interviewees mentioned “listening to lectures or lab instructions” as an academic task. One interviewee said, "most of the teachers use PowerPoint slides for their lectures. If a teacher is non-Arab, he teaches in English. If he is an Arab, he uses either both English and Arabic by mixing them or only Arabic." Although students ask or answer questions from teachers usually in Arabic, some good students ask questions in English. As for “explaining or demonstrating an experiment or procedures,” one interviewee said that this activity is needed in exams only, otherwise, the teachers themselves do such activities, not the students. Another said that students do it on the computer by preparing slides, one-page memo, and Excel charts. Students do not participate in discussions in their early stage of studies. According to an interviewee, discussions may be needed in some courses but not in others. A Mathematics teacher stated that students usually had discussions in Arabic while solving a question in groups, which is acceptable because their focus is on Mathematics not on English. Students are supposed to take notes every day. They usually write what the teacher explains and solves on the board or displays on the slides. They have very little English texts on the slides or board, mostly equations, numerical or formulas. As for computer simulations, one interviewee said that he usually wrote on the board, so it was difficult for him to use simulation as well. Two other interviewees said that they sometimes performed simulations in the class.

The category related to “types of exam or graded work” consists of four academic “frequent” tasks, namely, “solving numerical questions with equations and formulas” (88.9%), “drawing circuits, symbols and graphs” (83%), “writing short answers” (68.2%), and “multiple choice questions (MCQs)” (53.3%). Here, the first two technical types of exam questions received much higher responses from both the groups of respondents than the last two general types of questions. The first one was chosen as “frequent” by 96.5% content-subject teachers and the second one by 100%, making them the two most frequent tasks for the content-subject teachers, and, at the same time, the most unanimously selected option by any of the two groups. This category included two “infrequent” tasks, that is, “in-class open book test” (44.3%) and “daily end-of-lesson or -topic assessment” (39.8%). The results from the interviews showed that there were a lot of questions in the exams or classroom activities where engineering students need to draw diagrams of circuits or to solve a numerical question about a given circuit. Most of the engineering courses are based on numerical or mathematical solutions which have numbers, symbols, equations or formulas as the main elements to be assessed. This type of sub-activity is frequently used in exams in the form of MCQs or two to three pages long problem-solving questions. A large number of the teachers assess their students using MCQs in the exams or quizzes in which; however, students have to solve a numerical or equation by applying some formula to find the correct answer. “Open book test” is not a standard practice or activity to assess students' performance, so some teachers do not use it at all. Yet, in some computer subjects where students need to design a programme or apply it to a numerical problem, teachers let students get help from the book. Some teachers do “daily end-of-
lesson or -topic assessment” orally after each lesson by asking concept checking questions (usually in Arabic), while others give quizzes after finishing a chapter. For most of the teachers, the short answer is a single word or a number. It does not require a full sentence to write in English text.

Regarding the three tasks in “presentations”, all of them were reported as “frequent.” The first one (listening to presentations) received a total of 77.2% responses which were slightly higher than the responses of each of the last two tasks, i.e. delivering presentations (70.2%), and describing the content of tables, graphs, and diagrams (69.9%). During the interviews, most of the teachers emphasized the importance of presentations. In some courses, students need to make presentations to present their mini-projects or term papers at the end of every semester. They also need it for presenting their final graduation project. In other courses, like Mathematics, they do not need presentations. There are a lot of diagrams which they need to describe; they often present such things in the labs or their graduation project reports.

The last task category i.e., “other situations” included three “frequent” and three “infrequent” tasks. The first task, “using the internet for searching engineering-related basic information”, was given 91.7% responses by all the respondents. This was the highest response rate for a task among all the tasks included in the questionnaire. The second, “using computer for word processing or data analysis (e.g. Word or Excel)”, also received a relatively high percentage of the total responses (87.2%) from both the participant groups. However, “translations” received a relatively low percentage (59.2%). Out of the three reported “infrequent” tasks, the first one, i.e. “reading newspaper or magazine articles related to engineering studies” turned out quite close to the cut-off point by getting relatively high responses from the undergraduates, while the other two tasks, “reading journal articles or conference papers” (38.8%), and “attending seminars or conferences” (33.2%) received comparatively low responses from both the participant groups. According to some interviewees, students usually need internet to make presentations on a specific topic, copying diagrams, downloading software programmes, doing home assignments, etc. Some teachers said that students need “Word” and “Excel” to make presentation slides or write reports. Besides, they may need some other data processing software programmes like MATLAB. As for translations, some teachers use translations as a teaching strategy. After or during a lecture, when the teachers feel that students are still not clear about a concept or a term, they usually make use of translation. Similarly, students often use translation as a learning strategy; they usually resort to Google translation to translate either in Arabic or English. According to most of the interviewees, “reading newspaper or magazine articles related to engineering studies”, “attending seminars or conferences” and “reading journal articles or conference papers” are rarely performed by the undergraduates at the engineering departments.

The overall results across table 2 shows that the most frequent target task, according to the total percentage of responses, is “using internet for searching engineering-related basic information” (91.7%), the second-highest is “listening to lectures/lab instructions” (89.3%), and the third is “solving numerical questions with equations and formulas” (88.9%).

The responses, which were elicited from both the content-subject teachers and undergraduates through questionnaires, were then compared by conducting a Mann-Whitney U test. Due to the limited space, only results with significant differences are presented. Results from the test showed
that there were no significant differences between the responses of the content-subject teachers and undergraduates with regard to all the given tasks except for seven tasks. The following five tasks, responses of the undergraduates significantly exceeded those of the content-subject teachers: writing “term paper” (mean rank = 148.45, n = 257) comparing with (mean rank = 117.27, n = 32), (U = 3224.5, Z = -2.57, p = .01), “research paper / article” (mean rank = 151.27, n = 257) comparing with (mean rank = 94.64, n = 32), (U = 2500.5, Z = -4.32, p = .000), “curriculum vitae (CV)” (mean rank = 152.22, n = 257) comparing with (mean rank = 87.05, n = 32), (U = 2257.5, Z = -4.80, p = .000), “watching videos or computer simulation” (mean rank = 148.27, n = 257) comparing with (mean rank = 18.77, n = 32), (U = 3272.5, Z = -2.40, p = .02), and “reading journal articles or conference papers” (mean rank = 149.16, n = 257) comparing with (mean rank = 111.58, n = 32), (U = 3042.5, Z = -2.84, p = .004).

Similarly, comparing the content-subject teachers’ responses regarding the two other tasks with those of the undergraduates showed significant differences in favour of the former. They are writing “graduation project report” (mean rank = 170.95, n = 32) comparing with (mean rank = 141.77, n = 257), (U = 3281.5, Z = -2.41, p = .02), and “drawing circuits, symbols and graphs” (mean rank = 169.5, n = 32) comparing with (mean rank = 141.95, n = 257), (U = 3328, Z = -2.71, p = .01). The possible explanation for their disagreement on the first and the last two tasks could be the lack of knowledge or experience on the part of the undergraduates, especially from 2nd and 3rd years. The other remaining tasks (i.e. writing “research paper”, “CV”, and “reading journal articles or conference papers”) seem to be students’ wants or expectations (Brown, 2016) rather than their actual needs as no evidence could be produced from the interviews to support.

4.2 Comparing responses of participant groups
The aim of the 2nd research question was to confirm if there were any significant differences in the occurrences of tasks across all the four engineering departments and in each of the four years of study. A comparison analysis was made to examine the extent of differences in the participants’ perceptions of tasks, which can be attributed to the specialty of department or year of study.

4.2.1 Comparison of responses based on the specialty of department
To probe any significant differences among the four engineering departments regarding their responses to the given academic tasks, a Kruskal-Wallis test was run. The test results indicated that the departments’ responses differed significantly on seven tasks, while no significant differences were reported in the remaining 28 tasks. The detailed test statistics about the seven tasks are given in table 3.

Table 3. Statistical analysis of the tasks in which the participants from four engineering departments differ significantly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Engineering departments &amp; their mean ranks</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electrical</td>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>Civil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Phone call</td>
<td>133.79</td>
<td>169.66</td>
<td>146.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lab. report</td>
<td>159.88</td>
<td>133.90</td>
<td>134.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Field trip report</td>
<td>145.25</td>
<td>147.99</td>
<td>170.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Taking notes while listening to lectures</td>
<td>153.94</td>
<td>146.61</td>
<td>122.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Participation in group discussions</td>
<td>135.70</td>
<td>167.80</td>
<td>122.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Solving numerical questions with equations / formulas
7. An in-class open book test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>2nd year</th>
<th>3rd year</th>
<th>4th year</th>
<th>5th year</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. University/personal website</td>
<td>102.77</td>
<td>131.18</td>
<td>139.41</td>
<td>126.08</td>
<td>10.048</td>
<td>.018*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Term paper</td>
<td>97.25</td>
<td>116.92</td>
<td>139.50</td>
<td>142.81</td>
<td>23.060</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Research paper/article</td>
<td>94.51</td>
<td>121.17</td>
<td>140.90</td>
<td>138.29</td>
<td>20.132</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Field trip report</td>
<td>97.92</td>
<td>121.08</td>
<td>135.54</td>
<td>146.59</td>
<td>16.332</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Summer training report</td>
<td>74.54</td>
<td>115.18</td>
<td>139.61</td>
<td>161.48</td>
<td>53.416</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Graduation project report</td>
<td>62.98</td>
<td>114.55</td>
<td>146.16</td>
<td>157.65</td>
<td>78.544</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Taking notes while listening to lectures</td>
<td>122.90</td>
<td>119.41</td>
<td>140.70</td>
<td>118.45</td>
<td>10.771</td>
<td>.013*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

Table 3 presents statistics about the seven tasks, including four “frequent” (items 2, 4, 5 and 6) and three “infrequent” (items 1, 3 and 7) tasks, for which the responses of the four departments varied significantly. The maximum level of significant differences (p = .000) can be seen among the four departments on item 7, especially between Electrical and Mechanical departments. This difference is slightly low (p = .002) and (p = .003) for items 5 and 1 respectively. The minimum level of significant differences (p = .023) and (p = .021) can be noticed for items 4 and 6 respectively. Although the mean ranks of the above four “frequent” tasks show that the departments significantly differ from each other, all these tasks were given more than 50% responses by each of the departments. It means that the frequency of the common responses for each task is higher than the frequency of the responses in which the departments have differences. Thus, none of the above tasks could be related exclusively to one department and exempted from others. Therefore, the specificity of these tasks to a particular department could not be established. It rather implies that all the 27 “frequent” tasks are carried out to various extents across all the four engineering departments.

**4.2.2 Comparison of responses based on the year of study**

Another Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to examine the extent to which the responses of the four student-participant groups (i.e. 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year and 5th year) regarding the 35 tasks were significantly different. The statistical results in table 4 show 12 tasks which illustrated significant differences in the responses of the four participant groups.

Table 4: Statistical analysis of the tasks in which the student-participants from four different years of study differ significantly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Year of study &amp; their mean ranks</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. University/personal website</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>4th year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Term paper</td>
<td>97.25</td>
<td>116.92</td>
<td>139.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Research paper/article</td>
<td>94.51</td>
<td>121.17</td>
<td>140.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Field trip report</td>
<td>97.92</td>
<td>121.08</td>
<td>135.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Summer training report</td>
<td>74.54</td>
<td>115.18</td>
<td>139.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Graduation project report</td>
<td>62.98</td>
<td>114.55</td>
<td>146.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Taking notes while listening to lectures</td>
<td>122.90</td>
<td>119.41</td>
<td>140.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the test demonstrated that the four student groups significantly differed in responding to almost one-third (12) of the total tasks. Table 4 showcases statistics of the 12 tasks which include all “frequent” tasks except tasks 4 and 9. It is quite noticeable that the mean ranks of the 2nd year group’s responses to all the tasks except tasks 7 and 8 are substantially lower than the other three groups. Likewise, the overall mean ranks of the 3rd year group’s responses are to some extent lower than the 4th and 5th year groups. It may refer to the fact that most of the tasks (table 4) are related to the later stages of undergraduate studies. Therefore, the 2nd and 3rd year students might not perceive the importance of these tasks, especially at the early stage of their studies. They become more aware of what they need as they go through their studies getting exposed to more advanced courses in their field of specialization. For instance, only after completing 135 credit hours in the 7th semester, students become eligible to start working on the graduation project report. Similarly, students usually participate in their first summer training program at the end of the 3rd year course after completing 75 credit hours. Regarding “delivering presentations” and writing “term paper”, the 2nd year syllabus consists of basic engineering subjects like Mathematics, general physics, statistics, etc., and three to four university compulsory subjects (all in Arabic): all these subjects do not require students to make presentations or write term papers. It is in the 3rd year that students start to learn more technical or engineering-specific subjects. This is the reason that the responses of the 3rd year students, especially in relation to technical tasks, tend to be more towards 4th and 5th year students than towards those in the 2nd year. No significant differences were found between the responses of the 4th and 5th year students, which means that most of the tasks they perform in their respective levels are alike. Overall, the tasks of the 2nd year seem discrete from those of the 4th and 5th years, while the tasks of the 3rd year are comparatively identical to those of the 4th and 5th years.

4.3 Summary of the results of the study
In response to the first research question (i.e., What are the academic tasks that engineering undergraduates carry out in English across all engineering departments at a Saudi public university?), the results showed that out of 35 tasks given in the questionnaire, 27 tasks were identified as “frequent” or primary, since more than 50% of the total respondents chose high-
frequency options for each of these tasks. We can assume that these tasks are often carried out by the engineering undergraduates in their departments. Only eight tasks did not reach the cut-off point, that is, 50% of the total responses, and thus to be considered “infrequent” or secondary. By conducting a Mann-Whitney U test to compare the responses of engineering subject teachers and undergraduates, it was confirmed that both groups agreed on a considerable number of tasks (28). They differed significantly only on seven tasks. The possible reasons behind their disagreement on these tasks were discussed in the previous section.

The findings, from the questionnaire, were triangulated with those of the semi-structured interviews to get more in-depth insights into the nature of the tasks. It was found that the results of both the questionnaire and interviews were, overall, in agreement on the frequency of the maximum number of engineering academic tasks.

As for the second research question (i.e. Are there significant differences in the participants’ perceptions of tasks, which can be attributed to the specialty of department or year of study?), the findings, from the first statistical analysis by conducting a Kruskal-Wallis test showed that the participant groups based on the specialty of department, demonstrated significant differences in their responses to a small number of tasks. The significant differences were recorded on seven tasks only, while they exhibited unanimous agreement on the remaining 28 tasks. Despite these differences, no exclusive association could be established between a task and any one of the four departments. However, the statistics from the second Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that the participant groups based on the year of study diverged considerably in their responses to relatively a large number of tasks (12 out of 35 tasks). These differences were also discussed in detail in the previous section. It is just to add here that some of the tasks were found to have a closer association with one year of study than with another. For example, “graduation project report” is only related to 5th year, while “summer training report” is associated both to 4th and 5th years.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations
The main purpose of the present study is to identify the most frequent tasks engineering undergraduates carry out in English in their respective departments of engineering, and to prioritize the most common tasks based on the frequency counts for each department as well as the year of study. In response to the two research questions posited in the introduction, the results from the questionnaire indicated that overall 27 tasks were often carried out by the engineering undergraduates in their departments. However, the findings of the interviews revealed that some of these tasks did not demand much English proficiency to be completed successfully by the students. This is because some of the tasks are mostly based on numerals, symbols, diagrams, and formulas. Others are heavily supplemented with the use of Arabic. In both cases, the demand for English use is too limited to pose any challenge to the students to perform the task. Such tasks require students to focus more on problem-solution and less on spoken or written texts interaction.

Considering Brown’s (2016) “diagnostic view of needs”, the findings of the study also suggest that the needs of the engineering undergraduates are too broad and exhaustive to be covered in a one-year-long PY programme. Therefore, it is recommended that the current EAP/ESP syllabus of the PY should be reconsidered and restructured in light of the immediate and vocational needs of the leaners. The study also validates that all the four engineering departments have the same
combination of academic tasks, as they are following the same learning objectives recommended by the ABET. Therefore, the existing ESP materials may be utilized to focus on only those language aspects or skills which are common to all engineering departments. Moreover, to ensure the PYP remains effective and relevant, the current teaching and learning materials should be tailored, and the pedagogic tasks/activities as well as the assessment setting should integrate the “frequent” tasks based on the finding of this study.

6. Limitations of the Study and Avenues for Further Research
However, this study has the limitation in generalizing its findings and recommendations to other Saudi public universities, as they are different in their institutional policies and language requirements for their engineering undergraduates. It appears that extending the needs analysis to other universities with a different milieu would have produced different results.

This study offered a holistic view of the target tasks the engineering students frequently perform at their undergraduate level. It would be interesting to find out how the students perceive the difficulty level of the tasks and how they use their acquired linguistic resources to handle such tasks. Additional research may shed light on the complexity or difficulty of tasks that place some more linguistic burden on the students. It would also be revealing to investigate the strategies the students would prefer to employ to deal with such challenging tasks.

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References
Assessing the ESP Needs of Saudi Engineering Undergraduates

Muhammad & Abdul


ICT: An Effective Platform to Promote Writing Skills among Chinese Primary School Pupils

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Abstract
Recently, the emergence and rapid growth of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) have become an essential part of everyone’s life. People from all walks of life are utilizing social media for communication, especially the primary and secondary school pupils. Instead of restricting the usage of ICT among primary school pupils, ICT should be fully explored to nurture the habit of writing in the school. This study aims to explore the practicality of ICT in promoting pupils’ writing skills. Hence, social media serves as the core of the entire study. A qualitative research was conducted to illustrate the relationship between the use of social media and its role in promoting writing skills among 60 primary school pupils from Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia. The research findings revealed that ICT serves as one of the useful and practical tools in promoting writing skills among the pupils. The results obtained from the survey were divided into several themes, which would be further discussed in the paper. In a nutshell, it is believed ICT and social media helps to promote writing skills among pupils, especially in learning English as a second language. The recommendation that can be derived from this study is that, it would be better to expose the pupils to write through social media under the surveillance of adults or teachers to make sure the learners are on the right track.

Keywords: Chinese primary school, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), promote, social media, writing skills

Introduction

As part of society, we had not only witnessed but also experienced several constant changes and evolution to meet the needs of globalization. The revolution of ICT is one of the most remarkable changes that permit us with more potential to communicate (Shand, 2019). The advancement of the digital world has brought the world to more convenient and more significant opportunities nowadays. Whenever we talk about social media, ‘connection’ and ‘information’ would come across our minds. In today’s increasingly digital world, social media not only speed up our daily tasks, but it also plays a vital role in education. However, what is the impact of social media on education, especially learning about writing in schools?

Social media can be defined in various ways. Vidyakala and Nithyakala (2016) opine that a social networking site (or being known as SNS) serves as a platform to develop social networks and relations among people who share the same involvements, activities, background or real-life connections. Some typical and widely used examples of social media would be web sites for social networking such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Wechat, Tumblr and the recent craze among youngsters these days, Tiktok. These sites are not typical and monotonous sites like others do. They are equipped with the most current and updated information, trending news, and attractive functions. To date, there is even a feature called ‘Story’ added on Instagram and then followed by Facebook. Hence, the usage of social media is not only limited to public figures and adults only, but it has also been a craze among the youngster and even the children these days. This is an undeniable truth because even a kindergarten child is using social media as well.

According to Shah and Empungan (2015), it is undeniable that the use of ICT in the classroom is crucial to supply the learners with opportunities to learn and engage themselves in teaching and learning especially in the information age. Since the primary children are exposed to social media, there is no doubt that social media somehow helps to promote learning among pupils, especially writing skills. However, there is always a misconception whenever it comes to writing, as most of us would think that writing should be on paper. With the emergence of recent ICT, writing should not be restricted on paper only. Writing should be integrated with images, audio recording, and a system of fast writing. However, vowels and punctuation are sometimes irrelevant and time-consuming. Hence, ICT plays a vital role to facilitate and speed up the learning process well (Yunus et al., 2014). This is also further supported by Mardiana (2016) argues that utilizing social media in a learning process can give the implication to the pupils, educators, and not to mention the present education.

On the contrary, there are also some disadvantages if social media is being misused. For instance, youngsters tend to use ICT as a platform for them to involve themselves in gaming, watching dramas and knowing strangers. These are the activities do not relate to the learning process at all. In this case, the teacher acts as a facilitator to guide them on choosing and selecting the relevant contents on English learning. Furthermore, teachers can assign individual assignments, class projects, and mini research to them through Facebook. Since ICT has become part and partial of our daily life, why not we implement and integrate it into education as well? In 2018, Buriro and Charan noted “Doubtlessly, this single social media tool (which refers to Facebook) has forced people to stay engaged in reading and writing activities in a way which was never fathomed by the language teachers ever before” (p. 31). The stakeholders need to understand
ICT: An Effective Platform to Promote Writing Skills

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that one day, the conventional teaching method would be replaced with something more interesting and challenging. To adapt the learning styles of the pupils in this globalization era, teachers need to improve and keep themselves updated from time. With this, ICT and social media would come in the first consideration. The study was carried out to determine and investigate is social media a useful tool to promote writing skills and how can it help to boost up opportunities to write among the pupils nowadays. On par with this, this study intends to answer the “Is social media an effective tool to promote writing skills among Chinese primary school pupils.”

Literature Review
The Importance of Writing Skills

Writing skills serve as the core of communication (Naveed & Bhowmik, 2016). Writing is like part and parcel in our life. This is proven when we write to communicate our thoughts and let others understand what is in our minds every day. Hence, excellent writing skills allow an author to express his or her message with clarity and require a shorter time for the reader to comprehend what he wrote.

According to Dean-Rumsey (1998), writing skills serve as vital components of literacy; pupils are required to be skillful and well-trained to involve in the literate society of the future. Naveed and Bhowmik (2016) opine that writing comprises of many processes, which starts from pre-writing, then proceed to while writing, and lastly post activities. Pre-writing is a preparation stage, which involves thinking, reflecting, and planning about what to be conveyed. While writing is the effort of using the pen to transfer the ideas from the brain and translating expressions into meaningful sentences. Writing requires discovering, exploring ideas, and bringing out images onto a piece of paper. Post-Writing refers to the written work which needs reading and reviewing in detail. Post-writing also needs editing to amend and polish the written work to be perfect ones.

Suswati and Saleh (2019) also suggest that pupils do not solely need to be able to write to be successful in writing. Still, it is vital for them to have the ability to interpret some aspects before and after writing. In this study, the context does not solely focus on writing skills, but also to discover the relationship between the use social media and its impact in promoting writing skills. Writing skills comprise of punctuation, spelling, grammar, sentence construction, language used and to name a few. These skills help the pupils to organize their knowledge and beliefs into convincing reasoning, and to convey their ideas through well-constructed and error-free text. When the pupils are equipped with these skills, the audience can understand the content easily. However, most of us do not realize that pupils are writing through typing their ideas on social media every day.

In today’s education, reading and writing might be some of the fundamental elements in language learning. However, writing appears to be more important for a pupil, especially the primary school pupils. This can be explained by a pupil who can read or speak, but unable to write will confront difficulties, especially in the examination hall. In some schools or countries where the examination is considered as one of the yardsticks to evaluate pupils’ language learning progress, writing would be the most suitable skill to test and verify the mastery in the language of the learners. This is further supported by Nurul-Alwanis et al. (2011) point out that the external centralized public examination is the most influential tool of assessment in the Malaysian
education system. For instance, the pupils in Malaysia are required to sit for the Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) or also known as the Primary School Achievement Test at the end of six years primary school education. In this context, the learners are required to master writing skills to perform well on the papers. In some cases, pupils prefer to express their feelings or disagreement through writing. A learner who encounters problems with writing may face challenges in more than one element of writing skills. The elements comprise of the appropriate usage of spelling, grammar, punctuation, conventions, capitalization, and some initiating and essential aspects in writing skills (Ghabool, Mariadass & Kashef, 2012).

**ICT and Its Impact on Education**

Before discovering how ICT works on education, we need to understand the use of ICT at the first point. ICT is widely used in our daily life nowadays, such as speeding up burdening workloads, solving difficulties, enhancing teaching and learning process and not to mention making online payments. ICT is formed by various sets of high-tech devices and resources used for communicating, inventing, disseminate, store, and manage information purposes (Meenakshi, 2013). Apart from that, Mullammaa (2010) also believes that the use of ICT and web-based learning solutions offer opportunities for learners to experience a more engaging and challenging teaching and learning process.

The application of ICT in daily life is considered common nowadays due to the rapid emergence of various types of gadgets. According to Sánchez (2017), “ICTs are widely used in many aspects of life, as leisure, work, and studies, and today’s children and teenagers are growing up with computers and mobile devices embedded in their daily lives” (p. 3). Surfing through the Internet and social media has no doubt become the daily routine of pupils nowadays, especially among primary school. Mullammaa (2010) further describes the exploitation of ICT in allowing the teachers to stimulate student-centered learning through building up a sense of belonging in the society among the learners. In accordance with this, the teacher plays a vital role in implementing social media in learning, especially promoting and motivating a sense of writing among pupils nowadays. For instance, assigning tasks through social media as a platform for them to practise and encourage them to write. This is on par with the seventh shift in National Education Blueprint which is, Leverage ICT to scale up quality learning across Malaysia. ICT has a massive ability to speed up the knowledge and thinking skills of a broader scope. Sadly, the potential has not yet been reached (Ministry of Education, 2013).

To date, several types of research had been done, mainly on collaborative learning through social media. Research in the use of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been known for creating a helpful and motivating surrounding in the writing classroom for the learners to learn at their own pace. Yunus et al. (2013) suggest that learning and language acquisition is much sustained by the modern principles of ICT. Utilizing ICT in education also enables Malaysia to be able to compete with other countries. There are some countries which started to introduce and implement the use of ICT in their education, namely India, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Uruguay (Trucano, 2010). Recently, our country, Malaysia also starts to initiate the use of Google Classroom among the school administrators, teachers and pupils. The application and integration of ICT in teaching and learning have been a preference in many advanced countries. However, they are also aware of the coherent concerns that the failure of doing so may create a more significant
digital gap and divergence between the developed and developing nations (Singh & Muniandi, 2012).

Nowadays, ICT serves as a platform for pupils to surf and create their personal account in various social media. Therefore, the pupils are exposed to social media in their daily life. It is common that, most of the children own a gadget in their hands. Hence, social media is used as one of the channels to collect data in this study. Most of the communications in social media requires written and unspoken language. Besides, it also enhances knowledge in vocabularies. “The role of social media in English language vocabulary development is like the brightness of the day because social media facilitate the English learners to learn new words and phrases and to improve their vocabulary” (Bakeer, 2018, p. 48). In fact, some learners acquire vocabularies more effective through gadgets rather than monotonous classroom learning. A good piece of writing requires a good command of English and vocabularies.

Recently, the former implementation of FROG VLE (a virtual learning environment platform in Malaysia) has been replaced by Google Classroom. The school authorities, teachers, pupils and parents are encouraged to conduct and participate actively in virtual learning through Google Classroom due to its convenience and availability. Apart from that, courses had been carried out to train teachers on how to use and implement FROG VLE meaningfully in their teaching. This shows that ICT slowly penetrates the Malaysian’s school education system. Shaharanee, Jamil and Rodzi (n.d.) suggest that the significance of Google Classroom is to redirect the concentration of the learners and change the classroom from a teacher-centered to a learner centered type of class. This can be done through exposing the pupils to think creatively, asking for information by questioning skills, and not to mention having discussions online. Although Google Classroom may sound entirely new and unfamiliar to some of the citizens. However, it is a good start to implement the advancement and effectiveness of ICT in education. Hence, it is hoped that ICT would be aligned with the use of social media in promoting writing skills among Chinese primary schools’ pupils in the future.

Methodology

Research Design
The research design of this study is quantitative. A quantitative survey study was carried out by distributing questionnaires to 60 respondents. The items in the questionnaire served a purpose of exploring pupils’ perception of utilizing various types of social media in promoting writing skills among Chinese primary school pupils. The concern of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of social media as a tool to promote writing skills among Chinese Primary School pupils. The researcher believes that social media promotes writing skills among Chinese Primary School pupils by fostering and encouraging them to write in English when they are using social media.

Research Instruments
The questionnaire consisted of six major parts. Part A is the demographic profile of respondents, Part B is their access to ICT tools, Part C is the use of social media, Part D is the competency in social media. Next, Part E is the factors affecting the use of social media and then followed by the last part which is Part F, the influence of social media towards promoting writing skills. In general,
Part E and F are the core of the survey with the ‘Likert Scale’, ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.’

**Research Samples**

This study was carried out in a Chinese Primary School in Kota Bharu. The school is located in an urban area and it is fully equipped with the facilities of ICT, including Yes, FROG VLE, e-board, and to name a few. In accordance to this, 30 respondents from Primary Year 4 and 30 respondents from Primary Year 5 were selected as the participants of this survey. Also, there was a total of 30 male and 30 female respondents responded to the survey. They are from mixed-abilities classes and also a combination of 22 Malay pupils and 48 Chinese pupils.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

A survey questionnaire developed by the researcher was used as the primary tool to gather data of the respondents’ perception on the use of social media to promote writing skills among the pupils. The questionnaire was proofread by three option teachers (Teaching English as Second Language) before they were distributed to the respondents. The respondents were distributed with a set of questionnaires each and were given a single period (30 minutes) to answer the questionnaires. The explanation was given since they were from two mixed-abilities class, but the discussion was not allowed.

**Data Collection Method**

The questionnaire comprised of six parts, the first part highlighted the demographics information, the second part is to discover respondents’ access to ICT tools, and they were only required to make the choices between ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. Next, the third part was expected to be able to explore how frequent the respondents use social media in their daily lives; the fourth part was supposed to discover the competency in social media. The fifth and sixth part, which served as the core of the study were measured using a Likert four-point scale.

The respondents were required to complete the survey within a period of English lesson (30 minutes). The survey questionnaires were distributed to the Year 4 and Year 5 primary pupils in their classes respectively. Due to the lack of facilities in the computer room, the questionnaires were provided in the printed paper. The items in the questionnaire were explained to the pupils. The reason was to cater the needs of some pupils who are not proficient in English. The survey questionnaires were then collected on the spot right after the particular lesson. The researcher gathered and keyed in the result obtained into the SPSS Statistics Data Editor. The results were automatically computed by the system and further analyzed by the researcher and will be explained below.

**Findings and Discussions**

**Demographic Data**

A total number of 30 females (50%) and 30 males (50%) respondents answered the survey questionnaire prepared by the researcher. All the respondents are in the age group of 10 to 11 years old. The school is located in the center of the town (Kota Bharu). The result shown a majority of 41 out of 60 respondents are living in the urban areas, whereas 19 of them are living in rural. The
survey also obtained a result of 14 out of 60 (23.3%) of them started using social media since seven years old, and then followed by eight years old (21.7%), and the third in the list is nine years old with the percentage of 15%.

**Access to ICT Tools**

Based on the result computed, it can be concluded that in this globalization world where ICT is part and parcel of our daily life, almost half of the respondents are equipped with ICT tools in their house. A total percentage of 91.7% has access to smartphones and the Internet, although some are them are living in a rural area.

It is undeniable that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) plays a vital role in today’s world even the rural area is provided with the Wi-Fi coverage to ease their life since we are now living in the era of the modern world. With ICT, the pupils can search a thousand and one types of information to meet their learning needs, especially in learning English, which is quite dull for them.

**Use of Social Media**

Table 1. Social Media Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL MEDIA</th>
<th>Never (%)</th>
<th>Seldom (%)</th>
<th>Sometimes (%)</th>
<th>Always (%)</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WeChat</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey questionnaire was further proceeded with the part to investigate how frequent the respondents use different types of social media in their daily life. Based on Table 1, there are four leading preferable social media among respondents, namely Wechat, Instagram, Youtube, and WhatsApp. The applications mentioned obtained the mean value of three and above.

However, among these four applications chosen, Youtube and WhatsApp are relatively accessible and commonly used by them. This could be proven by the higher mean score obtained by the items, which is 3.83 for Youtube and 3.65 for WhatsApp. This shown that respondents tend to use Youtube and WhatsApp more often than the other social media applications since they chose “Always” the most for both items. According to the pupils, Youtube and WhatsApp are more user-friendly to them, and both of them are frequently used by the people around them as well. As a result, they prefer to use these two applications in daily life. The result was followed by Wechat and Instagram, which obtained the same mean score of 3.05.
Competency in Social Media

The researcher also included the element of competency in social media in the questionnaires to discover the participants’ ability to use all sorts of social media.

Table 2. Competency in Social Media – The Frequency of Item (%) & Mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL MEDIA</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wechat</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youtube</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 2, the results obtained showed that they think they are competent in using Youtube the most, then followed by Instagram and WhatsApp. 75% of 60 participants had chosen the option that they are competent at using Youtube. They felt that Youtube is a platform for them to learn all sorts of languages and it helps them to grasp the idea better. Most of them use Youtube more than Facebook when it comes to learning languages, especially English. We can easily scroll through a thousand and one types of kid’s learning channel, such as fun learning English, and also cartoons that speak in English.

In other words, the younger generations prefer to learn and acquire knowledge by just tapping the screen rather than the ‘Chalk and talk’ method. This is further supported by Almurashi (2016) proposes that learners can obtain a significant number of benefits and motivations that promote active learning through watching Youtube videos. Hence, this explained what Youtube achieved the highest mean score among social media.

Factors Affecting the Use of Social Media

Table 3. Influence of Social Media Towards Promoting Basic Writing Skills- Frequency of Item (%) & Mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items / Frequency &amp; Mean</th>
<th>I use SM to follow the current trend (fashion, movie, music)</th>
<th>I use SM to communicate with my friends</th>
<th>I use SM to communicate with my family</th>
<th>I use SM to learn English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree (%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree (%)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree (%)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this section, the respondents strongly agree that they use social media to communicate with friends and family. A total of 68% of them strongly agree that social media is an ideal platform to follow their favorite artists such as Ed Sheeran, Justin Bieber, Demi Lovato, Dua Lipa, and to name a few. Surprisingly, there were a total of 26 out of 60 (43%) of them only chosen the choice “Agree” that they use social to learn English. This shown that among 60 Chinese primary school pupils, 26 of them use social media as a tool for them to know more about English and gaining knowledge. However, the rest of the pupils agreed that they are using social media to learn other languages such as their mother tongue, the Malay language and also mandarin.

**Influence of Social Media Towards Promoting Writing Skills**

Based on the questionnaire, the items in part F (influence of Social Media towards promoting writing skills) can be classified into five groups, namely Spelling, Punctuation, Grammar, Motivation, and Generating/Brainstorming of Ideas.

Table 4 shows the perceptions of pupils on the influence of Social Media towards promoting basic writing skills (Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar).

**Table 4. Influence of Social Media Towards Promoting Basic Writing Skills - Frequency of Item (%) & Mean**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>I can spell the words I have seen from Social Media</th>
<th>I learn the correct punctuation through Social Media</th>
<th>I learn the correct and simple grammar through Social Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree (%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (%)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree (%)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree (%)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 4, most of the pupils agree that the use of social media helps in promoting their basic writing skills. The items included the elements of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. These three aspects are considered basic writing skills since the pupils need to master spelling, punctuation, and basic grammar to construct a simple error-free sentence. This group of questions obtained a mean score of 3.27, 2.98, and 2.77, which show that generally, pupils are inclining towards the perception of ‘Agree’ in the questionnaires.

This can be further explained when the pupils are exposed to these elements when they tend to write and present their ideas on social media through typing in English. There are several relevant platforms for them to voice out their opinion such as blogging and Twitter. The writing occurs when they share their ideas through typing which could be considered as one of the ways to write. The pupils gradually gain the confidence to write through the feedback of the audience of their post. As a result, it motivates pupils to do more writing by practicing to share their ideas on social media. Moreover, they can also delete the posts with errors and retype whenever they feel to do so. This is similar to the corrections that they need to do in the exercise books whenever they have made a mistake in the sentence. Sometimes, the upper primary pupils refuse to do...
corrections just merely because they do not prefer writing through hands. However, they do not hesitate to correct the mistake in their social media accounts immediately since they do not want to be the joke among their peers. As a result, the errors and mistakes done will be corrected on the spot. Hence, this is the first evidence that we can conclude that social media helps in promoting basic writing skills among the pupils.

Table 5 shows the perceptions of pupils on the influence of Social Media towards the motivation in writing skills.

Table 5. Influence of Social Media Towards Motivation in Writing Skills - Frequency of Item (%) & Mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items \ Frequency &amp; Mean</th>
<th>I always comment on the post I’m interested in English.</th>
<th>I always write my captions/posts in English.</th>
<th>I feel happy and confident when my post is being read by my friends.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree (%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (%)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree (%)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree (%)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, the items were further categorized into the effect of social media in motivating the pupils to write. The reason that motivational aspects were being added into one of the items because motivation plays a vital role not only in second language learning, but it also enhances the learning process. Orio (2013) believes that the learners who are motivated more likely to achieve their goals compared to the learners who are not motivated. Motivation is a vital component for successful language acquisition, and it is also a continuous process (Dornyei, 2005).

Based on Table 5, the mean score obtained by the three items proven that in general, pupils agree with the condition that they feel motivated to write and comment on the post they are interested in English. For instance, they always comment on the post that they are interested in and post their status in English. When the respondents were further questioned, they said they prefer to do so because typing in English is easier and faster than typing Mandarin, although they know that there would be some errors in their sentences.

A total number of 34 out of 60 (57%) respondents strongly agree that they feel happy and confident when they posted something in their group (which is written in English) is being liked or recognized by their peers. This item also scored a mean value of 3.47. Hence, we could conclude that social media helps to promote writing skills among the pupils through various platforms such as Facebook group. Yunus and Salehi (2012) argue that a Facebook group also permits instantaneous feedback and interesting interactions that are believed to be able to motivate pupils.
in improving their writing. We could tell a majority of pupils strongly agreed towards this item since a total of 57% of them chose “Strongly Agree” for this item. This can be further supported by Kabilan, Ahmad and Jafre (2010) propose that using Facebook can influence the motivation of learners, and build up their social networking practices. This further motivates them to write in English since the gap between the peers is being narrowed. Besides, they are able to show an excellent example to their peers.

Table 6 shows the result obtained by the items under the category ‘Influence of social media towards generating and brainstorming ideas to write.’

Table 6. Influence of Social Media Towards Generating and Brainstorming Ideas to Write - Frequency of Item (%) & Mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items \ Frequency &amp; Mean</th>
<th>Social Media is a platform for me to share and type my ideas.</th>
<th>I express my feeling with my friends better through Social Media.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree (%)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (%)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree (%)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree (%)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items in the questionnaire were further categorized into the theme of brainstorming the ideas. As stated in the result, a number of 25 out of 60 (42%) respondents strongly agree that social media is a platform for them to share and voice out their ideas without any hesitation. In this case, the writing occurs when they try to type their thought (for example, sharing what happened in the school, voicing out something they are unsatisfied or reflecting on their own mistake). Based on the result shown, both items obtained a mean value of 3.08 and 3.07. Hence, we can conclude that in general respondents agree upon social media helps in generating and brainstorming their ideas to write, especially in English.

Besides, social media also promotes collaborative learning. This can be explained when the Internet permits communications by providing various platforms such as websites, blogs, and social networking sites for them to share the same thought and ideas. ICT provides and exposes the learners with skills that contribute to their future, especially when they are in their workplace one day (Yunus et al., 2013). The respondents also mentioned how they feel connected when they use social media to read their friend’s experiences or feeling, and they would comment and respond towards their posts immediately. Following this, social media promotes writing among the respondents through having them to think about what advice and words of support they should give their friends and indirectly make them think about the sentence structure.

Moreover, pupils also get several audiences reading their posts and feelings in social media compared to the traditional assessment systems by the teacher in schools. This further encouraged them to write as they want their work to be recognized by someone, especially their peers. The
pupils earn a sense of satisfaction through sharing their daily feelings with their peers, which is also the audience. Social media is a tool that offers the pupils an opportunity to share ideas and emotions. As a result, we can conclude that social media is a useful tool when it comes to promoting pupils to write to stay connected with their peers since it is something they are familiar and encountering with their daily lives. Table 7 shows the perceptions of pupils on the influence of Social Media in the application of writing skills.

Table 7. Influence of Social Media Towards Application of Writing Skills - Frequency of Item (%) & Mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items \ Frequency &amp; Mean</th>
<th>I write most of the texts/chats in English.</th>
<th>I apply the language that I’ve learned in SM in my homework.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree (%)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (%)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree (%)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree (%)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items were further divided into the theme of application in writing skills. From the result obtained, it was proven that the respondents agree that social media promote and motivate them to apply the knowledge that they have learned. They are not hesitated to write in English when they go online. The application here refers to applying the English language no matter in terms of writing or typing as long as it is purposeful and meaningful.

A total of 20 respondents (33%) agree that they apply the language that they have learned from social media in their homework because they want to apply and they are also eager to check whether what they have learned is correct or not. For instance, the respondents learn faster and more effectively from the response that they received from commenting, chatting, and posting status rather than the monotonous lesson in the class. Hence, the pupils are required to practise their language and apply the use of English in social media. Most of them agreed that they prefer to type in English because it is faster than typing in Mandarin. Since grammar checker is commonly available in all sorts of gadgets and computer nowadays, they can obtain instant feedback and learn from their mistakes immediately and this is how they apply the English language learned in their homework. As the adage goes, ‘Practice makes perfect,’ the learning occurs through the continuous practice of the English language in social media every day. Again, we can conclude that social media serves as one of the useful tools in promoting the pupils to apply their writing skills in daily life.

Conclusion
In a nutshell, from the data collected above, it can be concluded that social media is a useful tool used to promote writing skills among Chinese primary school pupils. The feedback from the respondents also shows the majority of them are applying ICT as one of their writing tools. The data collected also proven that social media serve as an effective platform to promote and nurture writing skills. In accordance with this, it can be concluded that social media serve as a tool to
promote the writing skills among Chinese primary school pupils by having them make an effort to write. The respondents are motivated to type in English to learn writing rather than learning writing in the traditional and monotonous English lesson, which is surrounded by four walls.

Based on the result, it is clearly proven that social media serves as one of the effective tools to promote writing skills and provide a variety of language learning opportunities for the children. Actions and measures need to be taken by the stakeholders to motivate pupils to write using social media on a daily basis. The Ministry of Education can take the initiative to organize some seminars and workshops on how to integrate ICT and Social Media, especially to English teachers. Teachers should also update their ICT knowledge from time to time to prepare themselves for future challenges and deliver knowledge to their pupils.

There are several implications that can be derived from the study. Despite of the effectiveness of ICT in promoting writing skills, parents and teachers should take into account the safety of the children when they go online. Pupils who are from lower primary nowadays should be given guidance when using social media to prevent from the happening of cyber-bullying and scamming cases. It is recommended that future researches can be done, focusing on vocabulary aspects since it is one of the vital components in writing skills. Besides, the research can also discover on social media as a tool to improve pupils’ writing skills instead of promoting writing skills. There are pros and cons of social media regardless of the usefulness of it. In conclusion, social media is not just a common tool of connecting people. It serves as a tool to motivate pupils to write and also expose them to various writing skills and strategies indirectly. All in all, speaking of social media, when it is fully utilized for a meaningful purpose, it can be an effective way towards not only writing skill but also all the skills in learning any languages.

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ICT: An Effective Platform to Promote Writing Skills  
Chua, Yunus & Suliman

References


Investigating the Students’ Writing Ability in Responding to Environmental Issue

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Abstract:  
The purpose of this study is to investigate Foreign Language (FL) learners’ ability in writing an essay by using an environmental topic in terms of how they write the introduction, the body of the piece, and conclusion through content analysis design. Twenty-nine students, who took an academic writing class in the academic year 2019-2020 in a private College of Teachers Training and Education (STKIP PGRI) in Pasuruan, Indonesia, become the sample of the study. The result shows that to write the introductory paragraph, the majority of the students (69%) uses general way to open the essay, while the rest prefers questions (24%) and anecdote (7%). The result also shows that almost all the students can state their thesis statement (97%). The body of the essay is organized by using a cause-effect relationship (17%), reasoning (38%), problem-solution (10%), and the combination of those (35%). Moreover, almost all the paragraphs in the body of the essay have their topic sentences (90%). In terms of the concluding section, all students can provide proper conclusions for their essays by using recommendation or advice (48%), summary (48%), and hope (4%). In sum, using an environmental topic can help the students to write better because the issue is close and personal. Furthermore, the issue triggers students’ self-awareness to protect their environment.

Keywords: environmental issue, essay, writing ability, writing elements

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Introduction
The world nowadays suffers from environmental damage. Natural evolution and human activities are two significant causes to ecological problems (Sukmawan & Setyowati, 2017). Yet, mostly, the environmental destruction is caused by human unfriendly behavior toward life, to name a few, such as illegal logging, forest fire, land conversion, polluting rivers, and sea with litters and chemical substances, and the excessive use of plastics.

The environmental issue in education is not something new. The environmental problems have attracted the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) long ago and made them held the 1st conference on Environmental education in cooperation with the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) in Tbilisi in 1977(Unesco, 1977). There are five objectives of ecological education set by UNESCO-UNEP in 1977, namely awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, evaluative ability, and participation (Unesco, 1977). The declaration sets out 12 guiding principles of how environmental education should be implemented. The guiding principles, among others, are to enable learners 1) discover the environmental problems’ symptoms and causes, 2) be aware of the complexity of the ecological issues, 3) propose critical thinking and problem-solving skills to give solutions, and 4) utilize various learning environments to learn about the environment to preserve nature (Unesco, 1977). In sum, participation and action are the key elements for ecological protection.

With the increased damage to the environment nowadays, the need to educate the future generation about environmental protection is becoming urgent. As stated by Bromley, Lerch, & Jimenez (2016), the possible way to do this is through formal schooling as it gives a chance for teachers to include the environmental topics in the learning materials. Furthermore, Gursoy & Saglam (2011) argue that within the scope of socially responsible teaching (SRT), teachers have the responsibility to cultivate learners’ awareness on global issues, in which environmental problem is among them. Pratama & Yuliati (2016) suggest that teachers should not only focus only on the academic side of the learners, but they should also focus on the learners’ affective side, such as being responsible for their surroundings, understanding, caring, and having a respectful attitude both to people and nature.

Language teachers can take part in the teaching of environmental awareness. As stated by Cates (1992), language teachers need to prepare future generations with the challenges they might face and how to solve them. He further suggests that language teachers can take part in making the world a better place while at the same time, help the learners improve their language proficiency. One way of doing this involves global topics in the curricula, especially in the learning materials and teaching approaches. In the area of teaching a foreign and a second language context, incorporating environmental issues is not something new. Research shows that teachers can integrate environmental problems and subject matter. Gürsöy (2010) states that environmental education is applicable in content-based and theme-based instruction. Furthermore, Hauschild, Poltavtchenko, & Stoller (2012) suggest that different teaching approaches for language instruction can use environmental issues. Meanwhile, Setyowati & Widiani (2014) incorporated an ecological issue for teaching writing by using a Genre-Based approach. Others propose the use of literature for teaching environmental education (Lustyantie, 2015; Sukmawan & Setyowati, 2017). These show that
the use of environmental issues is highly applicable for teaching language skills while at the same time, enhancing the learners’ ecological awareness.

Research on writing elements is abundant. Mostly, it focuses on the students’ ability to write an introductory paragraph (Umunnakwe & Pitse, 2017) and the quality of introductory and concluding paragraphs (Townsend, Hicks, Thompson, Wilton, Tuck, & Moore, 1993). Other research stresses the students’ structural part types for paragraph writing (Yunhadi, 2016), and difficulties in writing a well-organized paragraph (Alharbi, 2019). While some others investigate the overall quality of students’ essays (Qonitatun, 2016; Setyowati, 2016). Yet, no research is interested in investigating the students’ essay quality when they write about an environmental issue. Thus, the aims of the present research are to describe 1) the students’ ability in writing an introductory paragraph, 2) the students’ proficiency to develop the body of the essay, and 3) the students’ ability to write concluding paragraphs.

**Literature Review**

**The Essay Elements**

An essay has three major parts, namely the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. In the first part of the piece, the introductory paragraph is very essential. For the readers, it gives the first impression and provides a context about the discussion that follows, while for the writer, the first paragraph offers a frame to the body of the essay (Murray, 2012). In the introductory paragraph, there is a thesis statement. The thesis statement governs the whole piece, and its place is usually at the end of the introductory paragraph (Oshima & Hogue, 2007; Bastola, 2018). Yet, writing a good introductory paragraph is not easy (Murray, 2012). As stated by Harvey (2009), an excellent introductory paragraph provides motives or reasons for the readers whether they want and need to read the essay or not. Thus, the writer should ‘hook’ them to continue reading (Savage & Mayer, 2006), which is called the hook strategies.

There are several ways to hook the readers’ attention. As stated by Savage & Mayer (2006), the writer can use a story or anecdote, a question, a statement, or a fact to open the essay. Another way to hook the reader is by using a general comment or the ‘funnel introduction’ (Oshima & Hogue, 2007, p.151). The public report gives background information about the topic before it goes down to a specific one. The second part of the essay is the body. Oshima & Hogue (2007) claim that the shape of the piece is typically made up of one or more paragraphs. They further state that in each frame of the section, there should be a topic sentence and several supporting sentences. According to Savage & Mayer (2006), the supporting sentences in the body of the essay presents reasons, facts, and explanations. In sum, the organization should discuss the main idea, as stated in the thesis statement. The theme should be developed in such a way so that it is meaningful and logical. There are several ways to form paragraphs. The paragraphs can be generated by using spatial order (descriptive writing), time order (process writing), comparison and contrast order, and definition order (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Similarly, Savage & Mayer (2006) assert that the organization of an essay can use descriptive, narrative (chronological order), and opinion organization (reasons, facts, examples, comparison-contrast, cause-effect relationship). Besides, according to Gugin (2014), a paragraph can also be organized based on the order of importance and exemplification/illustration organization. As stated by Gray (2019), a good piece of writing
typically consists of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and sometimes, a concluding sentence.

The last part of an essay is the conclusion. Oshima & Hogue (2007) claim that there are three purposes of the concluding paragraph, namely to show the readers that the writing has reached its end, to remind the readers about the main points of the piece, and to leave readers with the final thoughts about the topic. Thus, there are several ways to write a concluding paragraph. The concluding section may summarize the main idea, make a prediction, restate the writer’s opinion, give suggestions or advice, and hope connected to the topic. (Zemach & Islam, 2004; Savage & Mayer, 2006). Oshima & Hogue (2007) give guidance on how to make a proper conclusion. According to them, there are two parts of a concluding paragraph. The first part talks about the main points or restating the thesis statement in different words, while in the second part, the writer gives the final thoughts or comments about the topic discussed previously without providing any new ideas.

**Previous Research on Writing Elements**

Research on writing elements both in the native language and foreign-language context are scarce in the literature. Townsend et al., (1993) investigate how and to what degree the introduction and the conclusion affect the grading of the composition. The result shows that the quality of the introduction section is more influential in the classification awarded for an essay rather than the conclusion. Secondly, Umunnakwe & Pitse (2017) conduct a study to find out the students’ ability to write an introduction for academic writing at the University of Bostwana. The result reveals that, aside from the lack of plan development in the introductory paragraph, making a thesis statement becomes the main problem in writing the essay. The result of their study also reveals that the students are not able to write a well-constructed introductory paragraph as the majority of the piece has no thesis statement. They suggest that the writing teacher should give a step-by-step guide to help the students write better.

A new study is conducted by Alharbi (2019), who explores the students’ difficulties in writing a well-written paragraph for academic writing in the EFL Saudi context. The result reveals that the typical problems the students encounter in academic writing are mechanics (spelling and punctuation), grammar, topic sentences, and supporting sentences. He suggests that the writing teacher should consider the students’ difficulties and challenges in writing before designing a writing course to be able to get a maximum result. Research also reveals that there is a correlation between critical thinking skill and writing quality. Nikou, Boyadi, & Amirikar (2015), claim that the relationship between analysis skill and writing quality is significant. It means that the more the students have the critical thinking skill in terms of analytical ability, the better the writing quality will be.

In the Indonesian context, where English is taught as the foreign language (EFL), few research is conducted investigating the students’ ability in writing paragraphs. Firstly, Rahmatunisa (2014) finds that Indonesian EFL learners have some problems in writing. Aside from the linguistic difficulties, the Indonesian EFL learners have questions in organizing the paragraph and making conclusions. Yunhadi (2016) conducts a study to investigate the students’ basic part types during their paragraph writing class in Kutai Kertanegara University. His
Document analysis reveals that the students do not have adequate practical knowledge of how to write a good and unified paragraph. The study also yields that the students have problems in writing a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Thirdly, Qonitatun (2016) investigates the students’ ability to write an essay at Widyagama University. The result shows that the students’ ability to write an essay is poor even though they have passed the prerequisite courses in writing, such as sentence-level writing, paragraph writing, and essay writing. Her study also reveals that the students perform poorly in essay organization and paragraph development. Moreover, most of them cannot provide a conclusion for their essay. The newer study is conducted by Budiharso (2017), who develops a writing prompt and scoring rubric for argumentative essay. Through research and development procedure design, he concludes that the development of a writing prompt should be accompanied with the development of scoring rubric appropriate with the prompt. The descriptors of the rubric, in his opinion, should refer to the characteristics of a good paragraph, such as topic sentence and controlling ideas, ideas development, and concluding sentences. Meanwhile, the descriptors of an essay in the scoring rubric should focus on the essay elements, such as the introductory paragraph with its thesis statement, the body of the piece, and the concluding section.

Method
This study uses a qualitative approach focusing on content analysis design. According to Hemphill, Richards, Templin, & Blankenship (2012), content analysis design typically used interviews, observations, and document or artifact analysis to collect the data. However, in the present study, the researchers used document analysis as the main instrument. The researchers took the students’ composition after they were assigned to write a short essay responding to a topic about the use of plastic packaging in everyday life. The writing lecturer chose this topic because one of the environmental problems experienced by modern society is the excessive use of plastic for everyday life.

The writing prompt gave a short description on the use of plastic for food packaging, and the students had to give their response about it. The prompt also said that they were free to use the gadget to look for difficult words and to read and quote references relevant to their topic to support their claim. The time to finish the writing was 90 minutes starting from pre-writing activities to collecting the work. The students’ compositions were taken by the researchers directly after they submitted their essay. The data collection was done in September 2019. The subjects of the study were 29 students who join academic writing class in the academic year 2019-2020 in a private College of Teachers Training and Education (STKIP PGRI) in Pasuruan, Indonesia.

The researchers used qualitative analysis since the data were in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. The data codification was written based on its category, namely the students’ name (initials and the last three digits of the registration number), and the part of the essay (the introduction, the body, and the conclusion). The researchers follow Miles & Huberman’s (1994) model in qualitative analysis, namely data collection, data display, data reduction, and conclusion drawing. The present study also uses descriptive quantitative analysis to answer the research question thoroughly by using the tally system.
Finding and Discussion

Introductory paragraph

There are many ways to write the introductory paragraph for an essay. Savage & Mayer (2006) state that at least there are four ways to start the opening paragraph, namely using an anecdote, a question, a statement or a fact. Meanwhile, Oshima & Hogue (2007, p.151) proposes the ‘funnel’ way to start an essay as figure 1 shows:

![Figure 1. The type of opening](image)

In the present study, the hook strategy used by the students is to open the essay by using question type, general statement type, and anecdote type. Figure 1 shows that the majority of the students prefer to start the article by using public information (69%), while the rest uses questions (24%) and anecdotes (7%). The data shows that the ‘funnel introduction’ (Oshima & Hogue, 2007) appears to be the easiest way to start the essay.

![Figure 2. The thesis statement](image)

Almost all the students, state their thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. Only one student who is not able to state the thesis statement. The students have sufficient ability to create the thesis statement because they have experienced paragraphs and essay writing courses before. Based on the result of the interview, the students said that they have learnt how to make a topic sentence in the paragraph writing class, and a thesis statement in the essay.
writing course. Moreover, the students said that the writing prompt is very obvious, that they can use it as the thesis statement. The writing prompt states, “Give your reasons why we should minimize the use of plastics and how to do it”.

The students’ thesis statements are written like these “we should minimize the use of plastic because...” or “we should minimize the use of plastic to...”. This shows that a clear writing prompt plays a vital role in directing what the students should write in the essay. The sample of one of the student’s introductory paragraph in the composition is presented in the following excerpt.

The use of plastic has indeed become a normal part of human life. The material is lightweight, and its practical use makes plastic usage increasing. Every day, as we look around us, plastic is everywhere. Like whenever I go shopping for groceries, the most common material I see in all stores is plastic. If likened, nowadays, plastic is the king of the retail world. Some of these plastics are meant for repeated use for a long time. Unfortunately, much of the plastic we use, however, is only used for a concise time. The plastic itself is one of the biggest causes of environmental damage. Therefore, we should minimize the use of plastic because it destroys the earth’s ecosystem. (Data1/Intro/KR/046/2017B)

Data 1 shows how the students open the essay. It starts with the general statement about the use of plastic in everyday life and the characteristic of Plastic, which is lightweight, easy to use, and practical. After the student talks about the positive side of the vinyl, she then refutes it by showing the negative side of it. The claim or the thesis statement is presented in the last sentence of the first paragraph, “Therefore, we should minimize the use of plastic because it destroys the earth’s ecosystem.” From the claim, readers can predict that the student would describe the reasons in what way plastic destroys the ecosystem.

The result of the present study does not support the finding of the research conducted by Qonitatun (2016), and (Umunnakwe & Pitse, 2017). The students in Qonitatun (2016) and Umunnakwe & Pitse (2017) were not able to make the thesis statement well, while this case does not happen in the present study. In conclusion, the students in this study have a good ability to make an introductory paragraph for their essay responding to an environmental issue.

**Body of the essay**

Several traits typically characterize good development of the body of the essay. First, Oshima & Hogue (2007) state that the shape of the piece is usually written in one or more paragraphs in which each of the paragraph consists of a topic sentence and several supporting sentences. Second, the supporting sentences in the body present reasons, facts, and explanations (Savage & Mayer, 2006). They are essentials because the reasons help describes the main idea. The data, in this research, shows that each paragraph in the body of the essay contains one topic sentence. The topic sentence mostly appear at the beginning of the section.
Figure 3. The topic sentence

Figure 3 shows that almost all students’ essay has the topic sentence in the body of the paragraphs (90%), and only one student (10%) who was not able to state the topic sentence. In terms of paragraph development, writing experts have proposed several ways to organize the paragraphs, namely by using reasoning, cause-effect relation, comparison and contrast, and chronological order relation (Oshima & Hogue, 2007; Savage & Mayer, 2006).

Figure 4. Paragraph Development

Figure 4 shows how the students develop the paragraph in the body of the essay. In the piece, the students expand the item by using cause-effect relationships (17%), reasoning (38%), problem-solution (10%), and the combination between two patterns (35%), either reasoning and problem-solution, or cause-effect and problem-solution pattern. From the data, the students mostly choose the reasoning organization. However, some students prefer to use two-paragraph organizations to develop the body of the essay. The example of the student’s work can be seen in the following data excerpt. The example is the continuation of data 1 presented in the introduction section above.

*The use of plastics can destroy our earth’s ecosystem. The condition of our earth is dirty. Countless amounts of pollutions come by vehicles, factories, and household waste. And as far we know, many sea animals died. Sadly, the cause of the death of sea animals is very pathetic, which is plastic waste poisoning. Much plastic debris found*
in the body of sea animals ranging from food plastics, plastic bags, to beverage bottles from plastic has made them suffered. Those animals died because of us. Normally, plastic goods can take up to 1000 years to decompose in landfills, while plastic bags that we use in everyday life take 10-1000 years to decompose, whereas plastic bottles can take 450 years or more (Pribadi, 2019). Plastic that ends up in the ocean will settle and damage the balance of the marine ecosystem. So, before it is too late, prevention can still be done, we must reduce the use of plastics regularly. For example, we are replacing plastic bags with shopping tote bags, carrying a drinking bottle, so we no longer use packaging bottles, and replacing plastic cutlery with materials that are more environmentally friendly. If you are going to the convenience store and you don’t have much shopping, there is no need to use a plastic bag. Just put your things in the bag, or have a bag that can accommodate your groceries. (Data 1/body/KR/046/2017B

The example of the student’s writing above describes how she develops the body of the essay. She develops the shape of the piece by elaborating on the topic sentence written at the beginning of the paragraph. She gives reasons and facts in what way plastic destroys the earth’s ecosystem, not only damaging land fields but also the marine ecosystem. Not only giving ideas, but she also provides solutions to minimize the use of plastics. Thus, in terms of the paragraph organization, she combines the reasoning and solution to develop the body of the essay. The composition can still be elaborated by giving more details in terms of how plastics damage marine life, and what happened to land if the substance poisons the soil and the clean water. However, the development of the body of the paragraph is considered adequate for a novice EFL writer where English is not the first language. In terms of the body of the essay, the result of the present study does not support the finding of the previous research. Qonitatun’s study (2016) reveals that EFL Indonesian students have poor ability to write an essay as they are not able to organize and develop the paragraph well. The finding of this research shows otherwise.

**Concluding Paragraph**

Writing a concluding paragraph is essential to make the essay intact. The last section shows that the discussion has reached its end. Theoretically, there are several ways of making an introductory paragraph. The concluding part can be in the form of a summary of the main points in the essay, a prediction, a restatement of the writer’s opinion, a suggestion or advice, and a hope (Zemach & Islam, 2004; Savage & Mayer, 2006).
Figure 5 shows that the students prefer to use recommendations or advice (48%) and summary (48%) to close their essays. The following is an example of the student’s concluding paragraph taken from data 1.

*In conclusion, the use of plastic for food packaging is widespread. We, as a young generation, have a significant role and responsibility to protect the environment. Shared awareness is needed to safeguard the future of the earth, and we can start with something simple. Starting from a small thing, it will continue to be big things and produce tangible results for the planet. If we continue not to care about the use of plastics, the damage, and the destruction of the planet is only a matter of time. Maybe in a few decades, the ocean will get dirty, the water quality will get worse, and the animals will slowly die. Then, what about humans? In the end, we will regret not caring about environmental safety. Since we only have one earth, with limited resources and space, let’s protect our planet by minimizing the use of plastic.* (Data 1/concl/KR/046/2017B)

Advice or recommendation for a concluding paragraph is considered appropriate with the topic. Mostly, the students recommend the audience first, not to use the plastic bags when shopping, but to bring their bag from home; second, not to throw away the plastic waste into rivers and oceans; third, to put items they purchase into their pack if they shop only one or two things; fourth, to put snacks and meals in their food containers, and 5) to create profitable products from recycled plastic waste.

*In conclusion, we should minimize the use of plastic because plastic’s food packaging has a bad effect on our environment, especially for our ocean. If we care about our environment, we can live comfortably, happily, and healthily. Let’s save our environment!*(Data 11/Conl/LL/023/2017A)

The use of summary for concluding paragraph is appropriate since it restates the writer’s opinion. When the topic is discussing the excessive use of plastic, the writer needs to strengthen the position and ask the reader to minimize the use of plastic to save and protect the environment. In term of the concluding paragraph, the result of the present study does not support previous research which found that EFL students in the Indonesian context have problems making concluding paragraph either for paragraph writing (Rahmatunisa, 2014; Yunhadi, 2016), or essay writing (Qonitatun, 2016). In the present study, all of the students can conclude the essay.

**Conclusion**

With the continuing damage the environment suffers nowadays, it is a time for the language teacher to start to think green. Language teachers should take active participation in conserving nature through the incorporation of environmental issues. The result of the study shows that incorporating environmental topics for teaching writing is highly applicable. The result shows that almost all students can write an acceptable essay with a complete structure, ranging from the introductory paragraph, the body of the piece, and the concluding paragraph.
This research, however, has some weaknesses. Firstly, the present study has no information about the students’ difficulties in using the grammar to express the ideas as it focuses only on the content and the organization of the essay. Thus, future researchers can do an error analysis study to find out the students’ linguistic problem when they write a composition about an environmental topic. Future researchers can also investigate the language used by the students to describe nature by using eco-critical discourse analysis. Secondly, the result of the present study cannot be used as a generalization because it is descriptive. Thirdly, future researchers can also investigate the level of the students’ attitudes toward environmental awareness. Thus, future studies is suggested to compare before and after they write the essay responding to the ecological issue, whether their awareness increases or not. Such information will give valuable insights for teachers to use an ecological topic to help create a better generation for sustainable development.

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References


Understanding EFL Linguistic Models through Relationship between Natural Language Processing and Artificial Intelligence Applications

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Abstract
Natural Language Processing (NLP) platforms have recently reported a higher adoption rate of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between NLP and AI in the application of linguistic tasks related to morphology, parsing, and semantics. To achieve this objective, a theoretical framework was designed to investigate the direct and indirect impact of the relationship between NLP platforms and AI applications, such as machine learning and deep learning. Theoretically, this study contributes to examining the relationship between NLP platforms and AI applications through selected linguistic models from the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) perspective. Practical implications are derived from syntactic and semantic variables when AI applications are used. The results of this study suggest that AI applications can use to support NLP tasks, particularly the adaptation of deep learning applications that can prove useful in extracting analytical inferences and enhancing NLP approaches applied to EFL texts. The conclusion drawn of this study is that if NLP caters to knowledge-rich AI techniques, it can make significant advances in the linguistics disciplines of morphology, parsing, and semantics.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, deep learning, English as a Foreign Language, linguistic models, machine learning, morphology, natural language processing, parsing, semantics

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Introduction
Natural Language Processing (NLP) has multifarious applications from computational linguistics to artificial intelligence (AI). It is generally defined as the computational processing of a text in a natural human language (Fukushima & Miyake, 1982). It makes use of arithmetic algorithms in order to process information from a language (LeCun & Bengio, 1995), or design and develop computational techniques to analyze spoken or written texts in EFL context. Contextually, due to the extensive use of machine learning applications, NLP is also accepted as a branch of artificial intelligence, exploited through tools such as speech recognition, tokenization, parsing, information extraction, and many others. In making use of live AI applications, NLP can contribute in several linguistic tasks including text summarization, sentiment analysis, parts-of-speech tagging, stemming, text mining, and automated question answering with dexterous use of predictive analytics and language modeling. In simple terms, AI helps the creation of such language models that improve performance on a variety of NLP tasks.

NLP relies on two primary techniques to accomplish its tasks: syntactic analysis and semantic analysis. In syntactic analysis, computer algorithms are used to understand several grammatical rules such as lemmatization, morphological segmentation, word segmentation, part-of-speech tagging, sentence breaking and stemming. Lemmatization involves reducing inflected forms of a word into a single form whereas morphological segmentation requires a division of words into morphemes. Similarly, word segmentation requires distributing a text into distinct units and part-of-speech tagging requires identifying the part of speech for every word. Likewise, parsing refers to grammatical analysis in each sentence, sentence breaking means placing sentence boundaries in a large piece of text; and finally, stemming refers to reducing the inflected words to their root forms.

On the other hand, semantic analysis requires the use of computer algorithms to interpret words and sentence structures to derive their meaning and relationship. The techniques used in semantic analysis include named entity recognition (NER) or identifying such portion of a text that can be categorized into preset groups like names of people or places. Other techniques include word sense disambiguation, or offering to a word a meaning based on its context; natural language generation, referring to databases and choosing the semantic purpose of the language.

NLP also plays a critical role in supporting machine-human interactions by using AI applications. There is an extensive use of AI application models that use computational architectures and algorithmic methods to provide data-driven statistics. With the help of resources like deep learning and machine learning operations, AI is capable of comprehending NLP operations and tasks (Jones, 1994). This study is an attempt to correlate NLP and Artificial Intelligence in order to ascertain whether AI applications could be useful in understanding the linguistic domains. While NLP has been a much recognized, well established, discipline of computational linguistics, artificial intelligence, on the other hand, is widely used in data mining and data retrievals. While NLP engages in reading, deciphering, and making sense of the human languages by machine operations like online chatbots, text summarization, and auto-generated keyword tabs and even sentiment of a given text, AI applications like deep learning methods promise to offer short and long-range applications.
This study will be an addition to many recent studies (Goldberg, 2017; Young, Hazarika, Poria, & Cambria, 2018) that show AI applications are used to solve current problems in NLP.

**Problem statement**

A big challenge before NLP is to teach computers the way humans learn and use a language, although NLP has penetrated into common applications such as language translation (e.g. Google Translate) or word processors which employed NLP to check grammatical accuracy of texts (e.g. MS-Word, Grammarly ) and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) applications (e.g call centers) or in personal assistant applications (e.g. Siri, Cortana, and Alexa). Despite its wide use, NLP is still a complex phenomenon. It is not the computer applications, but the nature of the human language and the rules that dictate a language which makes tasks difficult for NLP. The reason why a computer fails to understand regulations, because a few of these rules are high-leveled and abstract, making it difficult for computer algorithms to identify, convert and extract information from the unstructured language data made available to the computer.

In any NLP platform, a computer is required to extract meaning and collect essential data from the text provided, for which it utilizes pre-coded algorithms that are often insufficient to make a computer understand the meaning of a sentence. The ambiguity and imprecise characteristics of a natural language make it difficult for the computer to implement, and therefore, it gets obscure results. It was realized in many studies that in order to fully understand a natural language, machines need to take into account not only the literal meaning that semantics provides, but the intended message, or understanding of what the text is trying to achieve. This level is called pragmatic analysis, which is only the beginning of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications to be introduced into the NLP techniques.

To resolve these issues, NLP techniques are assisted by AI-based neural networks to assess negative/positive/ neutral feelings of a text. These AI applications, assisted by its tools such as deep learning, machine learning, and computer vision assist computers in understanding more complex language inputs. The AI algorithms help reduce human speech into a structured ontology, attempting to make it easier to detect such linguistic characteristics related to intent, timing, locations, and sentiments. This also leads to understanding the fact that in order to be successful, NLP platforms must adopt AI applications in a wide range of fields to make linguistic understanding much comprehensible and cognitive.

This study is an attempt to understand the collaborative aspects of NLP and AI applications such as deep learning as a tool in computational linguistics. No prior study has so far examined this relationship in the context of application of EFL linguistic tasks related to morphology, parsing, and semantics. This study contributes to this research gap, especially in the context of learning English as a foreign language. This proposition is consistent with several studies, including Bengio, Goodfellow, & Courville, (2017) who recommended the use of artificial neural networks (ANNs) and parameters such as machine learning techniques. These applications, with the assistance of associated learning algorithms, build up large datasets with the help of data collection procedures and deep architectures (LeCun, Bengio & Hinton,2015; Schmidhuber, 2015; Ciresan, Meier, Masci, Gambardella, & Schmidhuber, 2011).
Literature Review

i. Artificial intelligence and NLP

AI Algorithms of NLP is basically derived from machine learning approaches, where it uses the machine learning approaches to learn the rules automatically for analyzing large volume of data. Several studies (Bengio, et al, 2017; LeCun et al, 2015; Schmidhuber, 2015; Ciresan et al, 2011) have recommended various real-time applications for NLP tasks. In the case of feature extraction on a huge volume of big data, fast-automatic processing is quite not possible by machine learning approaches. Hence, deep learning is preferred instead of machine learning to provide fast and automatic real-time applications. Deep learning is one of the advanced machine learning approaches that extends the features of artificial neural networks. Deep learning can extract and classify features automatically and fast. The primary objective of a deep learning algorithm is to classify and analyze the different patterns generated out of natural languages. Deep learning provides a multi-layer abstraction approach towards non-linear feature and pattern analysis in the field of Natural Language Processing. Deep learning can able to obtain hidden features on a large volume of data automatically. Deep learning-based NLP follows the mantra “Word2Vec” which reduces the computation and comparison complexity.

ii. Morphology

Many studies have recommended the use of morphological analyzers to accomplish NLP tasks in larger linguistic systems. For instance, Belinkov, Durrani, Dalvi, Sajjad, & Glass (2017) have drawn attention to the use of neural machine translation models where morphological knowledge of a language is first acquired and then utilized to construct translating models from English to French, German, Czech, Arabic, or Hebrew languages. These models acted as encoders and decoders a few of which followed Long short-term memory (LSTM) based systems with attention mechanisms or built upon the WIT3 (Web Inventory of Transcribed and Translated Talks) corpus (Cettolo, Girardi, & Federico, 2012; Cettolo, 2016) as AI applications. LSTM, as well as, WIT3 are widely used applications in NLP, speech recognition, and computer vision over diverse recurrent neural networks (RNNs) or Recursive Neural Networks (RvNN).

To understand their significance in performing NLP tasks, these decoders are replaced with part-of-speech (POS) taggers and morphological taggers, ensuring to preserve the internal representations by managing the weights of the encoders and their effect on the decoders. The study concluded that attention mechanisms limit the performance of encoders in order to increase the performance of decoders. It was also revealed that translating models assisted by AI applications are superior to others for learning morphology and that the output language affects the performance of encoders. Ironically, this hints at the fact that the more morphologically rich the output language, the worse would be the encoders’ performance.

Luong, Socher, & Manning (2013) designed a model with RvNN, a pioneer attempt to design a morphological structure of English words by making use of Morfessor for word segmentation (Creutz & Lagus, 2007). The study generated a dataset of rare and obsolete words to construct two models—one using the context of the words and the other not. The first model insensitive to the context did not respond in certain morphological structures while the second one, sensitive to the context, performed better as it recognized the relationships between stems and also accepted such features such as the prefix “un” for constructing antonyms. The model was later...
tested on several other datasets (Miller & Charles, 1991; Rubenstein & Goodenough, 1965; Huang, 2012) and results proved better than previous models.

Morita, Kawahara, & Kurohashi (2015) investigated a similar language model for unsegmented languages. It was built upon RNN systems with a beam search decoder and an automated labeled (Kawahara & Kurohashi, 2006) corpus replacing the earlier manually labeled corpus. The new model was found to be capable of performing morphological analysis, POS tagging, and lemmatization. The model had later been tested on Kyoto Text Corpus (Kawahara, Kurohashi & Hasida, 2002) and distinct Web Document Leads corpora (Hangyo, Kawahara, & Kurohashi, 2012) with similar results, and it was reported that it out-performed all manual baselines used earlier to perform tasks.

iii. Parsing
Also, some studies have used applications like deep learning (Dehouck & Denis, 2018) in performing NLP tasks such as universal parsing or dependency parsing. More popular are however graph-based approaches that enable the construction of several parse trees in order to search the correct one. These graph-based approaches use generative models of formal grammar, based on NLP, to construct the trees (Jurafsky, 2000) and use transition-based approaches. A pioneering work of application of deep learning for NLP tasks is that of (Socher, Perelygin, Wu, Chuang, Manning, Ng & Potts, 2013; Socher, Bauer, Manning, & Ng, 2013), which utilized RNNs with probabilistic context-free grammars (PCFGs) (Zeman et al., 2018; Nivre, 2015; Fujisaki, Jelinek, Cocke et al., 1991; Jelinek, Lafferty, & Mercer, 1992; Chi & Geman, 1998). However, Le and Zuidema (2014) designed the first-ever neural model to achieve state-of-the-art parsing which employed both inner and outer vector representations enabling both top-down and bottom-up flows of data.

Vinyals, Kaiser, Koo, Petrov, Sutskever, & Hinton (2015) adopted LSTM and used a Recurrent Neural Network with attention mechanism in a syntactic constituency parser, in order to undertake highly focused research on Grammar in a Foreign Language situation. The authors believed that syntactic constituency parsing was a great concern in linguistics and NLP in particular and required a wide range of applications. They highlighted the weaknesses of computational requirements of traditional parsers such as their sentence length, linear-time and like due to which they never matched state-of-the-art. So they recommended the use of more standardized parsers using generic sequence-to-sequence approaches. For this purpose, they rejected the model of Sutskever, Vinyals, & Le (2014) as it was not data-efficient and discovered that the attention model of Bahdanau, Cho, and Bengio. (2014) was highly data-efficient and compatible to even small human-annotated parsing datasets.

Chen and Manning (2014) pioneered the state of the art in both English and Chinese datasets by using a simple feed-forward neural network and a transition-based parser. This enabled them to design statistical models. Weiss, Alberti, Collins, Petrov (2015) extended Chen and Manning’s experiment by using a deeper neural network and Andor et al. (2016) also used a feed-forward network for NLP tasks such as part-of-speech tagging, sentence compression, etc. Dyer, Kuncoro, Ballesteros, and Smith (2016) recommended recurrent neural network grammar models for parsing and emphasized upon taking a top-down approach while others took a bottom-up
Numerous other studies have investigated various linguistics models and mechanisms. Charniak (2016) viewed parsing as a language modeling issue, and recommended the use of LSTM for parsing; Fried, Stern, & Klein, (2017) tested such linguistic models built upon deep learning applications in order to determine the source of the power of these models. Similarly, Dozat and Manning (2018) analyzed the graph-based approach and found self-attentive networks suitable to parse a natural language. Duong et al. (2018) were innovative enough to use a Transformer architecture, as a possible solution to problems in semantic parsing. Last, but not the least, Tan, Wang, Xie, Chen, and Shi, (2018) suggested a self-attention model for semantic role labeling, a kind of semantic parsing and experimented with hyper-parameters for the self-attention mechanism.

iv. Semantics

Critical studies on semantics in the NLP context can be classified into two domains: first studies on comparison of semantic similarity of two texts; second, studies that have examined the use of neural language modeling to understand the meaning of words of a language.

In the first section of semantic comparison, the approach adopted is to test the efficacy of computing semantics mechanisms beyond human efforts; that is, to assess the difference made by humans and a computer program to extract the meaning of two similar phrases or sentences. Hu, Lu, Li and Chen (2014) attempted a semantic comparison with two CNN models: In the first model, each CNN shared the weights equally to evaluate given two sentences while in the second, connections were placed between two sentences, and made use of top-level feature maps in the final stage of the CNNs. The results outperformed a number of previously existing models (Hu et al 2014; Socher, Huang, Pennin, Manning, & Ng, 2011; Kalchbrenner, Grefenstette, & Blunsom, 2014). The second section shows how neural language models captured the meaning of words in vectors. Models prominently used were those of Le and Mikolov (2014), which dealt with paragraphs or larger bodies of text; or of Kalchbrenner et al. (2014) which represents sentences using a dynamic convolutional neural network (DCNN), represented by filters. A study was conducted by Poliak, Belinkov, Glass, & Van, (2018) which trained AI enabled encoders on four different language pairs: English and Arabic, English and Spanish, English and Chinese, and English and German and found that each pair required distinct decoding classifiers. The study concluded that NLP models fail to capture paraphrased information as well as semantic inferences e.g. resolving gender, plurality, etc.

A concurrent work (Poliak, Naradowsky, Haldar, Rudinger, & Van, 2018) had also analyzed similar datasets to draw natural language inferences with similar results. And so were the findings of Herzig and Berant (2017) who found that semantic parsers on a single domain are less effective than when used across many domains. The reasons assigned in this situation are that when a single encoder and single decoder are used, it requires the network itself to determine the domain of the input. Similar conclusions are drawn in Brunner, G., Wang, Wattenhofer, & Weigelt. (2018) which create multi-domain LSTM based encoder-decoder networks and analyze the resulting embedded vectors. It was found that a single encoder could work with four different
decoders. When the single encoder accepts English sentences as inputs the first decoder replicates attempting to reproduce the original English input. The second and third decoders attempt to translate the text into German or French. Finally, the fourth decoder serves as a POS tagger. This study proved that logical arithmetic mechanisms of simple AI application can be performed on word embeddings as well as sentence embeddings.

**Theoretical Framework**

A conceptual framework was designed for this study to analyze whether there could be a relationship between NLP platforms such as Morphology, Parsing and Semantics and AI applications for creating linguistic models and to investigate the direct and indirect impact of the relationship between NLP platforms and such AI applications like machine learning and deep learning. The purpose was to assess how their relationship would result in the creation of language models that could be used for different purposes such as translations, sentiment analysis, and chatbots. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework.

![Conceptual Framework](image)

**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

**Results and Discussions**

The findings and results of this study reveal that there are two kinds of intelligence, "verbal intelligence" and "mathematical intelligence." The former is expressed as human learning output, whereas the latter is machine-learning output. When any English words or sentences are used as inputs in any NLP method, it analyzes the big data freely available on the web. For example, such inputs are associated with syntactic elements, e.g., nouns, verbs, and clauses, or to their semantics, e.g., the individuals, groups in a given domain. The meaning of such inputs varies and is consistent with the domain it belongs to e.g. education, politics, research, government, etc. NLP and its embedded Web technologies can extract meaning for such inputs and represent ontology as linked corpora Data.

The results of this study also suggest that AI applications like machine learning can be used to support many NLP tasks as those applications would utilize the structured data with trained and tested sets through learning algorithms and prediction classifiers and indicators. Such machine
learning mechanisms have proved useful prediction, universal search and information retrieval, compliance checking and decision support and also for a better presentation of information. Figure 2 illustrates these machine learning tasks as AI applications. This is an execution of adoption of transfer learning enabled models as AI operation as seen in Figure 2 where datasets can be transferred through algorithms to perform different NLP functions and culminate into a predictable outcome.

![Figure 2. Machine learning approach](image)

Similarly, the adaptation of Deep Learning as one of the AI applications found useful in extracting analytics inferences and enhancing NLP approaches can be applied to EFL texts to address classification, knowledge representation, argument mining, information extraction, information retrieval, ontology population, and multilingualism in specific documents. Figure 3 illustrates how deep learning applications extracts text based or image based data from the unstructured corpora into comprehension and learning.

![Figure 3. Deep learning approach](image)
Both the AI applications have thus helped build up multi-purpose models in the NLP domain as revealed from the above two models. These models relate to machine translation, question answering systems, chatbots, sentiment analysis and other core issues of language modeling. With the use of AI applications, Google’s Transformer architecture too adopted recurrent neural networks (RNN) for language tasks including machine translation and question answering systems and outperformed both RNNs and CNNs (convolutional neural networks). The use of AI applications also reduced the requirement of computational resources for training models due to the use of the self-attention mechanism.

BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) is also another framework modeled upon AI applications and designed to do multi-task learning and perform different NLP tasks simultaneously. BERT is the first unsupervised, deeply bidirectional system for pre-training NLP models and uses only a plain text corpus. The bi-directionality of this framework (the ability to use from both sides; left and right a word or a sentence) helps any linguistic model to gain a much better understanding of the context in which a word or sentence is used, particularly when the Semitic languages are involved.

**Conclusion**

The study revealed several new avenues that can be made possible through AI applications, namely the use of high- and low-level features in large text corpora (Poliak, Naradowsky et al. 2018) predictive analytics to predict the next word or character in a sequence through applications like Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT). Additionally, these AI-enabled learning models are also capable of doing multi-task learning, that is, they can perform different NLP applications simultaneously. A few of these applications include building machine translation corpora, statistical parsing, and part-of-speech tagging, to name only a few. Findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study is a contribution to examine the relationship between NLP platforms and AI applications from EFL perspective. Practical implications can be derived by examining the trends of syntactic and semantic variables when AI applications are utilized. This study faced a few limitations: first, there exist no significant studies on the relationship between NLP platforms and AI applications. Secondly, identifying a sample in a given population was a big challenge as there is a lack of the usage of advanced technologies to sustain AI applications. Moreover, no studies have found to measure the impact of learning models that are powered by NLP applications in the EFL context, mainly to understand their application in the Arabic language. Future studies have a more enormous scope to investigate the use of AI applications in these domains.

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The Effect of Writing Knowledge on EFL Students’ Ability in Composing Argumentative Essays

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Abstract
Writing knowledge is the key requirement that students have to possess to compose a good argumentative essay. However, their unawareness affects negatively their writing ability to produce good quality essays. This article examines second year Libyan (EFL) university students’ awareness about the types of writing knowledge used in composing an argumentative essay and how it influences their essay quality. A methodological triangulation was employed in this study. Tools for collecting data were focus-group interviews, writing tasks and observations. Thirteen undergraduate female students at Al Asmarya Islamic University, Libya participated in the study. Data was triangulated and analyzed using thematic and content analysis. The findings show that the participants had different levels of awareness about types of writing knowledge while composing an argumentative essay. Most students had novice awareness of writing knowledge. The results also revealed that students’ novice awareness forced them to face many problems in writing an argumentative essay which in turn led them to produce very poor-quality essays.

Keywords: Academic essay, argumentation, genre, prior knowledge, writing knowledge

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The Effect of Writing Knowledge on EFL Students’ Ability

Rubiaee, Darus & Abu Bakar

Introduction
Writing knowledge is the key requirement which EFL students at the university level have to possess, particularly in the field of social science and humanities (Hewings, 2010). Writing knowledge is regarded as the key feature in developing an argument to produce a good quality essay. This is important because it enriches the content of the argumentation and strengthens the critical thinking skills needed for this type of an essay. However, many EFL university students face difficulty to compose good essay because they low understanding about the genre of writing. Thus, having low awareness about the types of writing knowledge associated with this genre forces them to produce poor essay quality. (Boscolo & Mason, 2003; Aldera, 2016).

The Concept of Writing Knowledge
Writing knowledge is the concept that refers to the prior knowledge that already existed in the students’ Long-Term Working Memory (LT-WM) (McCutchen, 2000) as a result of their past learning experience (Mufanti & Susilo, 2017). It concerns with the ability of students to transfer their past learning experience from their LT-WM about writing which was gained in academic context and then retrieves it in their Short-Term Working Memory (ST-WM) excluding the rest of unnecessary knowledge stored in their LT-WM (McCutchen, 2000) during constructing the essay (Wingate, 2012). It is also referred to as the kind of learning experience that students apply to help them plan and write their essays. In other words, students can recall that necessary knowledge stored in their LT-WM to bear on new instructional situations (i.e. to write a new essay). Perkins and Salomon (1997) strongly assert that students cannot make any improvement in their writing abilities unless they are aware of different types of writing knowledge and can transfer this knowledge in composing their essays.

Types of Writing Knowledge
The view of argumentative essay writing as an academic task requires students to hold a considerable awareness about writing knowledge. This knowledge has different types of writing tasks that need different types of writing knowledge. These types of writing knowledge are categorized mainly by the issue of whether the knowledge should concern procedures, content or form of the essay. The following section discusses the types of writing knowledge that students should be aware of to compose a successful argumentative essay.

(a) Genre Knowledge
Genre knowledge is defined as schemas for appropriate texts that often have to be reformulated as writers compose texts (Johns, 2008). This schema underlines the process of writing as it involves creating a text by making connections to prior knowledge (Hoey, 2001). Thus, students possess schemas of prior knowledge and can bring to their writing efficiently and effectively. Schemas keep writers on track as they approach to compose a text by following conventions for organizing messages so that their audiences can identify their purpose and follow the presentation of their ideas throughout the text. The concept of genre knowledge is also based on the idea that members of a certain community (i.e. learning context or domain) usually recognize similarities in the texts they are frequently exposed to and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with these texts to read, comprehend and possibly write them easily (Hyland, 2008). Hyland (2011) argues that this is especially true for writing because writing is a practice based on expectations from the past learning experience.
Following this argument, genre study is valuable not because it permits the creation of some kind of taxonomy, but because it emphasizes some social aspects of rhetoric. Rhetorically, defining genre must be centered not on the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish (Miller, 1984). The shift from the traditional focus on genre as a text type (i.e. medical text, newspaper articles, laboratory report or an argumentative essay) governed by specific rhetorical structures in the mid of 1980s to a broader sociological view of genre as social action has received a wide advocate (Gentil, 2011). Responding to this shift has added major inferences for the concept of genre knowledge. Consequently, Tardy (2009) through adaptation of rhetorical view of genre as social action then implies that ones’ awareness for genre knowledge should comprise much more than an understanding of text forms. It must integrate all types of knowledge needed to perform the genre (Gentil, 2011). Therefore, Johns et al. (2006) identify four dimensions of genre knowledge. These dimensions are rhetorical, subject-matter, process, and formal knowledge as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Integration of genre knowledge used by Johns et al. (2008, p. 239)](image)

**a. Rhetorical knowledge**
Booth (1963) states that “Rhetoric is the art of finding and employing the most effective means of persuasion on any subject, considered independently of intellectual mastery of that subject.” (p. 1). It is the comprehensive understanding about the critical thinking skills such as skills for persuading and persuading the reader that represents the writer’s awareness of the dynamics of persuasion within an academic-rhetorical context (Tardy, 2009). This awareness includes students’ ability in utilizing persuading and convincing skills. The implement of these persuasive skills is effective enough to influence successfully their target audiences, specifically those who have a different perspective or stand at the opposite side during the argument (Wingate, 2012). Rhetorical skills will help the text producer to provide short but coherent arguments that make logical claims and try to re-direct the viewers believe of that particular perspective (Wells, 2019). Transforming rhetorical knowledge then requires students to engage in the rhetorical act of persuading audiences of the significance, credibility and value of their work.

**b. Subject matter knowledge (Content knowledge)**
Another important type of writing knowledge which EFL students must grasp in argumentative academic essay writing is Subject Matter knowledge (Johns et al., 2008). It is also known as content knowledge (Mei, 2006). Students can evaluate and analyze the gathered information in developing the essay (Wingate, 2012). It concerns the interpretation of the selection of relevant information from different sources in developing and supporting the students arguing position in an essay. By applying the writing-related learning material presented for students during a writing
course, they can carry over what they have obtained about writing to write an essay in future. Tardy (2009, p. 21) defines it as the knowledge that “captures an understanding of the genre’s intended purposes and an awareness of the dynamics of persuasion within a socio-rhetorical context”. Therefore, students should grasp good content knowledge that is necessary for enhancing their abilities to portray their voice successfully during the argumentation.

c. **Process knowledge**
Process knowledge is an explicit and tacit knowledge about steps, procedures, strategies, and activities used to accomplish writing a completed text (Johns et al., 2008; Ramesh & Tiwana, 1999). It enables students to organize the essay in an action-oriented manner. Abualoush et al., (2018) describe process knowledge as a sequential and interrelated managing for the prior knowledge in the form of processes that help learners to acquire, generate, test, create, organize, use, and broadcast knowledge. It also underlines students’ ability to manage and apply writing stages and the writing activities relatively required at each writing stage to produce the final essay.

d. **Formal knowledge (Task-general knowledge)**
Formal knowledge is the term that outlines students’ familiarity with the organizing structure for the essay. It is also known as task-general knowledge (Smagorinsky & Smith, 1992). It is the skill that is being extended to serve as a foundation for text structure. It is also referred to as schemas that build up the essay hierarchy. This type of knowledge describes the ability of the writer to compose each part of the essay hierarchically staring with the introduction, expanding the five body paragraphs and summarizing his/her whole text in conclusion. In other words, task-general knowledge serves as an acknowledge device that functionally facilitates the organizational flow of argument which in turn allows the writer to attract the reader and persuade his/her mind (Mann & Thompson, 1987). In addition to Tardy’s (2009) four dimensions of writing knowledge: rhetorical, subject-matter (content knowledge), process, and formal knowledge (task-general knowledge), Smagorinsky and Smith (1992) also suggest another dimension for writing knowledge. It is Task-specific knowledge.

e. **Task-specific knowledge**
Transferring all knowledge of the writing process that fit commonly all types of tasks is known as task-specific knowledge (Smagorinsky & Smith, 1992). This notion is workable when it comes to the uni-rhetorical structure that all types of essays share. But since essays differ in their genre and each type of essay requires a different but specific genre awareness that triggers specific knowledge in composing such type, task-specific knowledge is relatively sought. This is true because, for example, argumentative essay in EFL context differs from descriptive, narrative, or expository essay and thus requires specific knowledge. Furthermore, the genre for the same essay differs from context to another (Wingate, 2012). This is because each of these essays, particularly argumentative essay, is used purposively in different ways, with different audiences and different arguments where these differences are diverse based on the writing task (Mitchell et al., 2008) and philosophical construct of premises and conclusions (Toulmin 1958; Wingate, 2012).

f. **Topic knowledge**
In addition to the four types of writing knowledge mentioned previously by Tardy (2009) and the Task-Specific Knowledge introduced by Smagorinsky and Smith (1992), Mucutchen (2000)
presents another type of writing knowledge that has a wide effect on students’ writing (Boscolo & Mason, 2003).

Topic knowledge in academic writing expresses the degree and accessibility of information relevant to a certain topic. It represents students’ attempt to write about and which is needed to activate and access the ability of understanding of ideas and events that are described in the text (Horiba & Fukaya, 2015). From the metacognitive perspective, topic knowledge is a student’s metacognitive capacity that enables him/her to manage and engage information processing behavior that usually takes place before composing the essay (Cole et al., 2010). Kellogg (1987) describes it as a type of knowledge that is directly associated with gathering, generating and organizing information, sources, and ideas.

The discussion so far shows that types of genre knowledge overlap. Thus, scholars agree that assigning some types of genres and excluding others in investigating students’ writing knowledge is somehow difficult but necessary (Johns et al., 2006; Wingate, 2012; Winzenried et al., 2017). This difficulty resulted from whether a researcher should choose to analyze texts based on their textual features, social actions, structures, or the networks and modalities in which they operate. For this reason, Johns et al. (2006, p. 248) suggest that “individual researchers nearly always need to limit themselves to only some of these”. Thus, five types of writing knowledge were used examine students’ writing knowledge in the present study, namely Rhetorical knowledge, Subject Matter or Content knowledge, Process Knowledge, Topic Knowledge, and Formal or Task-General knowledge. They were used because they integrally provide a frame for the researcher to analyze to what extent students can organize new essays successfully (Beaufort, 2008).

Table 1. Summary of types and definitions for writing knowledge used in analyzing students’ essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Writing Knowledge</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical Knowledge</td>
<td>It refers to student’s ability in applying the most effective means of persuasion in composing argumentative essay. It is the comprehensive understanding about implementing persuasive critical writing skills to convince her target audience specifically those who stand in the opposite side during the argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Matter or Content Knowledge</td>
<td>It refers to student’s ability in interpreting the selected topic and relevant information from different sources in developing and supporting her arguing position in the essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Knowledge</td>
<td>It refers to the writing stages used by the student to draft the available information as well as the type and number of activities and strategies are applied to carry this process forward in order to reach the final essay product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Knowledge</td>
<td>It refers to student’s interest toward the topic, her method in selecting the topic, background information, amount of vocabulary, and the degree of reading practices are done in order to increase her understanding about the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal or Task-General Knowledge</td>
<td>It is the term that outlines student’s familiarity with the organizing structure for the argumentative essay (i.e. format including five-paragraph structure: introduction, three body paragraphs and conclusion).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They were also used because they contribute effectively to enable writers to draw on for success with writing academic essays as they move from one text to another (Beaufort, 2012). Table 1 summarizes and defines specifically these five types of writing knowledge used for this study.

**Research Objectives**
The current study examines Libyan EFL university students’ awareness about types of writing knowledge that are required to compose argumentative essay successfully. It also aims to examine how a lack of awareness about these five types of writing knowledge will affect students’ writing skills and the quality of their essays.

**Research questions**
The following research questions guide this study:
1. To what extent do Libyan EFL university students are aware of using types of writing knowledge in composing argumentative essays?
2. How does students’ lack of awareness about types of writing knowledge impact their writing skills?
3. How does students’ lack of awareness about types of writing knowledge influence their essay quality?

**Review of literature**
Some studies were conducted to examine the effect of writing knowledge on students' writing quality. Therefore, this literature review sheds a brief light on researches carried out in this area to justify the feasibility and validity of the current research. The following are studies that examine the influence of writing knowledge on students’ writing ability.

Langer (1984) conducted a study to examine the effect of the topic knowledge (availability of information) on the overall quality of 97 students’ coherence, syntax, complexity, audience and function in writing the academic essay. Findings derived from the analysis of students’ written essays in this study suggested a strong relationship between students’ prior topic knowledge and the quality of their produced essay. The results revealed that students with high topic knowledge produced better essays compared to those who had low topic knowledge. Results justified that having high topic knowledge helped students to master good skills in managing information from different sources and imposing their arguing positions by providing more supporting pieces of evidence.

Chesky and Hiebert (1987) examined the effects of low- and high-prior writing knowledge on 40 high school students’ writing quality. This study showed that students with high-prior writing knowledge wrote quantitatively more and qualitatively better. Besides, findings showed that they were more involved in their writing and found the task of writing easier than students who wrote with low-prior knowledge.

In 1996, McNamara and Kintsch (1996) conducted two experiments to investigate the effect of the prior knowledge on students’ learning, particularly learning writing, from high- and low-coherence texts. In the first experiment, students’ comprehension was examined through multiple-choice questions, keyword sorting task and free recall. In the second experiment, students’ comprehension was examined using methods of sorting task and open-ended questions. Both of
these methods were applied immediately and after a 1-week delay. The findings from experiment 1 and 2 indicated that students with high content knowledge performed better than those with low content knowledge.

Webb and Chang (2015) carried out a study to examine the effect of students’ prior writing knowledge on their written essay quality. To do so, 60 EFL students were grouped into high-, intermediate-level group and low-level group based on their scores which they achieved on pretests of target vocabulary and Vocabulary Levels Test scores. Before examining the students, students read 10 Level 1 and 10 Level 2 graded readers over 37 weeks during two terms. Findings indicated that students’ writing quality has been improved as a result of their improvement in prior vocabulary knowledge. Conclusions in this study further suggested that this was because prior vocabulary knowledge has a large effect on the size of learned words made through extensive reading which in turn will incorporate in enriching the growth of the text.

Alderas’ (2016) study analysed the cohesion and coherence in written discourse produced by 8 Arab EFL female M.A student at Najran University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study indicated that lack of writing knowledge particularly rhetorical and content knowledge had an impact on the quality of the written texts among the participants in this study. It showed that lack of cohesion and coherence knowledge pose a problem for them in writing even at a relatively higher level of education. Thus, these results showed that students’ unawareness about writing knowledge forced them to have weakness in presenting their logical thoughts logically as well as in using organizational patterns. The findings also revealed that because the students in this study were unaware of writing knowledge, they lack the fundamental understanding of syntactical rules, inter-sentence relations, cohesive devices and other advanced methods of composition.

The enhancing effect of content knowledge, as one type of prior writing knowledge on students’ writing quality, was the concern of a handful of modern studies. For example, in 2018, Philippakos used task analysis process to investigate the effect of content knowledge on students’ writing quality. In this study, Philippakos (2018) strongly suggested that students must have a considerable content knowledge that expose them excessively to a great number of reading activities where these activities will help them acquire the genre needed to construct successful academic essay. Philippakos (2018) further explained that having content knowledge would foster students’ understanding about how they carefully analyze a given topic. It also could orient their ideas and overall critical thinking to develop their ideas as well as focusing on the requirements of the writing assignment. This study concluded that content knowledge makes students better understand the function of genre in reading text related to the topic they want to write about and transfer this understanding in writing essays successfully.

The effect of topic knowledge (reading) on students’ writing quality was also investigated by other researchers. Graham et al. (2018) examined whether students’ writing performance would improve by exposing them to excessive reading exercises or not. Findings from this study showed that teaching reading strengthened students’ writing. This was due to the fact that students were able to do excessive reading activities about the topic before they start to write an essay. Graham et al. (2018) added that exposing students to reading activities also enhanced their overall measures
of writing such as writing performance, writing quality and spelling. These findings provide the support that reading interventions can enhance students’ writing performance.

Another study by Negretti and McGrath (2018) investigates how genre knowledge and metacognition can scaffold doctoral students’ ability in producing high essay quality. The findings of this study showed that the metacognitive tasks elicited an integrated view of genre and encouraged students’ conceptualization of this knowledge as a tool for writing.

In conclusion, we argue that using a variety of types of writing knowledge will lead not only to enhance the quality of students’ written essays but also develops their metacognition that contributes essentially in developing their critical thinking skills and the writing conventions needed in composing argumentative essays.

Methodology
This study adopted a single-case holistic research design where a qualitative research method was implemented. Data was gathered using a focus group interview (FGI), writing task (WT) and observation. The study was conducted at Al-Asmariya University for Islamic Sciences, Libya. The medium of teaching at this university is Arabic and English.

A purposive sampling procedure was utilized in this study. It allows the researcher to select the sample that represents or possesses the necessary information about the population (Freakel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). Participants who volunteered, were selected based on their level of academic writing ability. Two criteria were used for the selection of participants which are as follows:

a) Students who had low writing ability in the academic writing course. These were participants who scored grades from F to C+ or 0.00 to 64 out of 100% and below including students who failed this course.

b) Students who had intermediate writing ability in writing course. These were participants who scored grades from B to B+ or from 65 to 74 out of 100%.

These two selecting criteria were utilized in selecting the sample because they helped the researcher to get participants who have different levels of writing ability. Such a difference would engage the collaborative interaction between novice and good students. By using these criteria, it guaranteed students’ novice cognitive development will emerge in social interaction with an abler member of society (Storch, 2005). This will ensure that good students with intermediate level of writing ability will provide the novice students (students who have low writing ability) with the appropriate level of scaffolding in other words, they help them beyond their current level to reach their potential level of improvement (Donato, 1994). These two criteria were used based on the social constructivist perspective where learners with intermediate writing ability should possibly encourage low writing ability students to participate in learning activities that foster interaction and co-construction of knowledge. Moreover, utilizing these two criteria has a pedagogical perspective too. This is further supported by the communicative approach to language instruction (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979). Based on the communicative approach, involving students from low and intermediate writing ability in collaborative work, provides collaborative learners with
opportunities to use the language where students with low writing ability could get benefit from their peers with intermediate writing ability (Storch, 2013). Thus, based on the collaborative nature of this study, these two criteria were used in selecting the sample for the present study.

Thirteen female Libyan EFL 3rd year university students were chosen based on their final grade points in their final-results transcriptions in the second year at the university. In their third year of study, argumentative essay will be taught. Qualitative data analysis methods were used. Interviews were recorded and participants' responses were transcribed verbatim. Data was labelled and coded using ATLAS.ti7 software. The themes from the participants’ perspective were identified. Data were analyzed qualitatively through a systematic process of searching for the meaning of all information obtained from the interview, written texts and observations.

The study used prescribed procedure for performing thematic analysis based on Cohen et al. (2007) and Creswell (2012). These were: data transcription, organizing data, familiarization, coding, themes, ensuring rigor in data analysis, reliability, validity, triangulation, and computer software packages for qualitative analysis.

Data from the interview and observation were analyzed qualitatively using a thematic analysis. Content analysis method was used to analyze the data derived from writing tasks. Two levels of analysis were included for content analysis: micro-level and macro-level analysis. Micro-level analysis was used for measures of fluency, complexity, and accuracy, while the macro-level analysis took into consideration the critical thinking skills to compose and fulfill the writing task. This level of analysis focused on two elements: (a) language-related elements, and (b) non-language related elements.

After analyzing the writing tasks using the micro- and macro-level analysis, a qualitative analysis of the writing tasks was applied based on the results from these two levels. A 5-scale holistic rubric scale based on Facione (1994) was adapted to evaluate the writing tasks qualitatively.

Findings and Discussion
This study presents findings from writing tasks and observation. This analysis was used to support the findings from the FGI and discuss the effect of these writing knowledge and their accompanying skills on the students’ ability to compose their argumentative essays.

**Students’ awareness of writing knowledge used in composing an argumentative essay**

The findings from FGI, WT and observation indicated that Libyan EFL university students possessed different levels of awareness of the types of writing knowledge used in composing an argumentative essay. The majority of the students’ responses did not reflect a satisfactory awareness of any of the five types of writing knowledge defined in this article.

The data obtained from the primary source (FGI) showed that most of the students had different writing knowledge on how the argumentative essay should be constructed. This data was used to divide the students into three groups based on their writing knowledge. The three types of writing
knowledge were: novice writing knowledge, basic knowledge and well-developed knowledge (see Figure 2).

![Levels of students' awareness of the writing knowledge](image)

**Figure 2: Levels of students' awareness of the writing knowledge**

The first level of knowledge was novice writing knowledge, which included students who were unaware of the five types of writing knowledge defined in this article. The basic writing knowledge was the second level, which included students who were only aware of the task-general knowledge of writing (i.e. students who were only familiar with the organizing structure of the essay). The third level was the well-developed knowledge which included students who were aware of most of the five types of writing knowledge defined in this paper. Table 2 explains these three levels of essays, the number of students at each level and the type of writing skills corresponding to each level.

**Table 2. Levels of writing knowledge, number of students in each level and type of writing skills corresponding to each level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of writing knowledge</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Type of writing knowledge included in each level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice writing knowledge</td>
<td>S1, S2, S5, S6, S7, S8 &amp; S9</td>
<td>None of the five types of writing knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic writing knowledge</td>
<td>S10, S11, S12 &amp; S13</td>
<td>Task-general Knowledge only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Well-developed writing knowledge   | S3 & S4               | 1) Task-general knowledge  
2) Topic knowledge                  
3) Content knowledge                
4) Rhetorical knowledge             
5) Process knowledge                |
The findings from the FGI showed that most of the students possessed novice knowledge because they were unaware of the fundamental constructing elements of an essay. Seven out of 13 students were unaware because they had no specific writing genre to follow when composing their argumentative essay. These students (S1, S2, S5, S6, S7, S8 and S9) said that they just used freestyle writing. An example of their responses was, “I start by composing the essay directly. I don’t follow a particular style when writing an essay”.

These students also possessed a novice writing knowledge because, to the best of their best knowledge, essays were usually constructed with only one or two paragraphs. Such paragraphs were either the body, the introduction and the body or the introduction and the conclusion.

The second group included students who possessed basic writing knowledge because they were aware only of task-general knowledge. The findings indicated that these students were aware of the fundamental constructing elements of an essay and focused on three fundamental paragraphs. For example, three out of 13 students answered that the argumentative essay was basically constructed with three main paragraphs, including the introduction, the body and the conclusion (S10, S11, S12, and S13). An example of their responses was: “I start the introduction by giving information that identifies the topic...as for the body, I begin to present information on the TOPIC. I support my writing with examples. In the end, […] I move to the conclusion”.

Although S10, S11, S12 and S13 possessed basic knowledge, the findings revealed that they still lacked awareness of the other types of writing knowledge. Their responses revealed nothing that might reflect their understanding of process, rhetorical or content knowledge. The response of S11 indicated that she applied a few skills on the topic knowledge. For example, stating the thesis statement in the introduction or providing supporting examples in the body. These examples indicated her minimal awareness of content knowledge and its accompanying skills. S11 said, “As for writing the introduction, I focus on the thesis statement. In the body, I focus on supporting the ideas”. Although stating the thesis statement and providing supporting ideas were considered as important critical-thinking skills, these skills still cannot stand alone without the skills from the other types of writing knowledge in writing a satisfactory academic essay.

By contrast, the findings from the FGI revealed that the third group of students had a well-developed writing knowledge because they had a satisfactory awareness of topic, content and rhetorical as well as task-general knowledge (S3 and S4). Their responses showed that they combined more than one type of writing knowledge to compose their essays. For example, they used topic knowledge to gather and manage information on the topic. To do this, S4 said, “I search as much information as I can,” and S3 further commented, “I start to compile my thoughts about the selected topic. I list down my thoughts in another sheet”. In addition, they used topic knowledge to arrange their ideas and to prepare to compose the text. S3 said, “I often arrange my thoughts and ideas before I start to compose the essay”. The two students were also aware of content knowledge. S3 and S4 stated that they interpreted all the gathered information from different sources when composing the text. To do this, S4 stated, “First, I determine what information I should use for the main idea. Then, I try to create an attractive, strong introduction and thesis statement that I will later develop in the next paragraphs. Then, I move to the body and the
conclusion”. These students mentioned that they followed this process because it would help them develop their essay and support their arguing positions.

Moreover, S3 had a well-developed writing knowledge because she had a satisfactory understanding of process knowledge. This understanding emerged because S3 composed her essay by sequentially focusing on the three writing stages. Unlike the rest of the students who focused on one stage of writing in composing their essays, S3’s responses revealed that she divided her essay composition into three stages. The first stage was the prewriting stage wherein she selected the topic, gathered information, brainstormed and arranged her arguments from the most to the least important. To do this, S3 said, “I often arrange my thoughts and ideas before I get started on composing the essay”. The next stage for S3 was the actual writing process wherein all of the drafted and arranged ideas and gathered information were written down. S3 explained, “I look at this gathered information and articulate it in the essay based on the arrangement I did before starting to compose the essay. I repeat this process two or three times in writing one essay”. After S3 completed her essay, she proceeded to the third stage. This stage was the post-writing stage wherein she reread the essay and corrected all her mistakes. To do this, S3 commented, “…and then I perform an overview as a final step”.

The Effect of Students’ Lack of Awareness about Types of Writing Knowledge on their Writing Skills

The Findings from the WT and observations highly supported the results derived from the FGI. The analysis of the students’ written essays revealed that the students possessed three different levels of knowledge on the critical-thinking skills related to the five types of writing knowledge in constructing an argumentative essay. These levels were novice, basic and well-developed knowledge. The novice writing level included students who were unaware of any type of writing knowledge and critical-thinking skills. The basic knowledge level included students who were only aware of the critical-thinking skills used with task-general knowledge. On the contrary, the well-developed knowledge level included students who had a broad awareness of the other critical-thinking skills used with content, rhetorical and process knowledge.

The critical-thinking skills, used in this paper, were categorised into two main types, namely, language-related elements (skills) and non-language-related elements (skills). The former concerns skills used to construct the language of the text, develop the writer’s argumentation, support the arguing position and persuade the readers’ minds. This type of skill can be further divided into two subtypes. The first subtype is linguistic skills that include fluency, complexity, and accuracy. The second subtype is critical-thinking skills that consist the interpretation of ideas, persuasion, and management of information from different sources and coherent and logical flow of ideas in the text (Facione, 1991). The non-language-related skills represent a student’s ability to use figures, citations, charts and so on to explain and support certain issues in the essay. These language- and non-language-related elements (skills) are analysed from the micro- and Macro-Levels. The Micro-Level is used to analyse linguistic skills, and the Macro-level is used to analyse critical-thinking skills.

The findings from students’ WT indicated that most of the students possessed novice knowledge in constructing an essay because they were unaware of the task-general knowledge.
These students did not compose the three fundamental paragraphs of an essay, and most of their essays consisted of only one or two paragraphs. Furthermore, the findings showed that these paragraphs were also inconsistent among students with novice knowledge. The analysis of their essays showed that the focus might be only on the body, the introduction and the body or on the introduction and the conclusion.

Students, who wrote an essay with one or two paragraphs, showed a very novice writing knowledge on micro- and macro-levels. The results of the micro-level analysis revealed that students with novice writing knowledge were categorised as such because they possessed a very novice topic knowledge (i.e. linguistic skills). The findings derived from the micro-level analysis indicated that these students produced the most novice essays compared with the others in terms of fluency, complexity, and accuracy.

In terms of fluency, nearly all participants composed their essays with a very limited number of words and sentences. Although they were instructed to compose a 250- to 300-word essay, the students only managed to write less than 100 words. They were also unable to increase the number of their sentences to more than 15. The words the students used ranged from 31, as with the case of S11, to a maximum of 85, as with the case of S4 (see Table 3). By contrast, students, who possessed a well-developed writing knowledge in the FGI relatively, mastered a satisfactory fluency knowledge compared to their classmates. For example, S9 used the most number of words for her essay and also wrote a high number of sentences. She was able to write a 108-word essay consisting of 13 sentences. Table 3 shows the results of the micro-level analysis for students’ awareness of topic knowledge (fluency) in terms of words and sentences produced in the WT.

Table 3. Micro-level analysis for fluency: Number of words and sentences in students’ essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8</th>
<th>S9</th>
<th>S10</th>
<th>S11</th>
<th>S12</th>
<th>S13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentences</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students, who possessed a novice understanding of topic knowledge, were also unaware of complexity. This finding was reflected in their inability to structure complex sentences. The micro-level analysis indicated that the novice students produced the most novice essays in terms of the number of complex sentences. A total of 10 out of 13 students were unable to structure any complex sentences, and only two students are able to do so (S4 and S9) (see Table 4). For more explanation for low number of words and sentences in the essay, see the essay written by S6 in Appendix C.

Table 4. Micro-level analysis of complexity: number of complex sentences compared to the number of words and sentences in students’ essays in WT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8</th>
<th>S9</th>
<th>S10</th>
<th>S11</th>
<th>S12</th>
<th>S13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complex sentences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lack of accuracy was another facet of the students’ unawareness of topic knowledge. This facet referred to the errors that the students made in terms of lexis (inappropriateness of word choice).

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syntax (word order in the sentence) and morphology (correct use of verb tenses, articles, prepositions, capitalisation and pluralisation) (Storch 2005; 2013). Regarding lexis, the micro-level analysis of the essays indicated a high reoccurrence of the choice of inappropriate words to denote certain meanings in the text. This high reoccurrence was due to the students’ low reading abilities. This trait was strongly demonstrated by S12’s response to committing such mistakes because of her lack of reading abilities, “I could not use the right words for certain meanings. It was due to my lack of reading”. She believed that her scant reading prevented the semantic knowledge on how different words in passages corresponded to appropriate meanings. S12 reflected, “I need to read about different topics so that I can enrich my vocabulary”.

High reoccurrences of lexical errors were detected in the essays which were written by the novice students. For example, S2 made 14 lexical errors in her a 67-word essay (see Table 7.6). She wrote “to figure out this problem, parents should control what their children watch”. S2 used the verb “figure out” instead of “overcome” to express how parents should solve a serious problem of keeping their children safe.

By contrast, the student, with few lexical errors, was categorised with those in the FGI who possessed a well-developed writing knowledge. For example, the analysis of S9’s essay revealed that she had the least number of lexical errors compared to the high number of words in her essay. She had only five lexical errors from a total of 108 words. Therefore, S9 was perceived to belong to the group with a well-developed knowledge because she possessed a satisfactory lexical knowledge. The shaded rows in Table 5 show the results from the micro-level analysis.

### Table 5. Lexis errors compared to the number of words in the essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8</th>
<th>S9</th>
<th>S10</th>
<th>S11</th>
<th>S12</th>
<th>S13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of words in the essay</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Lexical errors (word choice)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students, who were unaware of syntax, were likewise categorised as possessing a novice writing knowledge. The findings from the micro-level analysis showed that most of the students had minimal understanding of the correct structure of words and their sequences within a sentence. Only a few of the students possessed satisfactory syntactic knowledge based on the number of mistakes made in ordering and/or structuring words compared to the number of sentences in their essays. The result showed that S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S10, S11, S12 and S13 made the most syntactic mistakes. Table 6 shows the number of syntactic errors in the students’ WT.

### Table 6. Number of syntactic errors compared to the number of sentences in WT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8</th>
<th>S9</th>
<th>S10</th>
<th>S11</th>
<th>S12</th>
<th>S13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of sentences</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-Syntax errors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings from the micro-level analysis also showed that students had a considerable awareness of morphological knowledge when writing an argumentative essay. This type of knowledge is concerned with students’ abilities to use verb tenses, articles and prepositions.
Morphological knowledge was analysed based on the number of morphological mistakes made compared to the number of sentences in the essay. Table 7 shows the number of morphological mistakes compared to the number of sentences composed in the students’ essays.

Table 7 Morphological mistakes compared to the number of sentences composed in students’ essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8</th>
<th>S9</th>
<th>S10</th>
<th>S11</th>
<th>S12</th>
<th>S13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of sentences</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphological mistakes in:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb tense</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second analysis used for the student’s WT was the macro-level analysis. This type of analysis also investigated the students’ writing knowledge in composing an argumentative essay. Unlike the micro-level analysis, which focused on analysing task-general, process and topic knowledge, Macro-Level analysis was used to investigate the students’ degree of awareness of the content and rhetorical knowledge. Thus, the analysis focused on critical-thinking skills and non-language-related elements within these two types of writing knowledge (Facione 1990; MuCutchen 2000; Liaw 2007; Storch 2013; Wingate 2012; Amrous & Nejmaoui 2016) (see Appendix A).

The findings from the macro-level analysis showed that the majority of the students possessed novice writing knowledge in constructing an argumentative essay, particularly in composing the introduction and the conclusion. Possessing this type of knowledge made it difficult for the students to compose the body of the essay. Such students had a very poor understanding of content and rhetorical knowledge and the critical-thinking skills related to the two types of knowledge (see Appendix A).

The first group of critical-thinking skills that belong to content knowledge are: stating a clear topic sentence and thesis statement, summarising the essay, and restating the thesis statement (Adler-Kassner et al., 2015). The analysis indicated that the inability of the students to master these skills made them unaware of content knowledge, thereby causing them to possess novice writing knowledge.

Starting with the introduction, several students seemed unable to state clear topic sentences and thesis statements. Four students did not state their topic sentences in the introductory paragraph. For example, S5 composed a 5-line introduction in her essay, ‘Should people be allowed to sell their body parts’? Although this introduction consisted of one long sentence, the main idea of the topic was not presented at all. This case was also recursive in essays written by S6, S8 and S11.

Developing and supporting the arguing position are other critical-thinking skills under content knowledge (Wingate, 2012; Liaw, 2007). Most of the students had a very novice content knowledge when developing and supporting their arguing positions in the essay. The students were unaware of the critical-thinking skills used for this purpose. A total of 10 out of 13 students were unable to compose satisfactory essays because they were unable to develop their positions in the
argument. S1, S3, S5, S6, S7, S8, S10, S11, S12 and S13 composed the body of their essays without discussing the different perspectives for the thesis statement. Their essays were merely a narrative that contained a novice description or, in many cases, a meagre explanation of what they understood about the topic.

Another critical-thinking skill under content knowledge, that the students could not master, is the ability to interpret their thoughts (Wingate, 2000). Students, who were unable to develop their arguing positions, also showed very low interpreting skills. The results revealed that such inabilities were due to their unawareness of how to interpret their thoughts, beliefs, and understanding of a topic. As a result, this inability made the students unable to capture their readers’ attention.

The findings showed that students, who lacked other critical-thinking skills, also possessed a novice content knowledge. This lack was the students’ inability to analyse and evaluate the contents of their essay. The analysis of the essays showed that 11 out of 13 students had a novice content knowledge (see Appendix A). The findings related that this result was due to the students’ low understanding of how the information in the body of the essay should be analysed and evaluated. In addition, the findings showed that the students’ inability to provide examples, evidence or proof was also a facet which caused them to possess a novice content knowledge. The essays written by S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, S7, S9, S10, S11, S12 and S13 demonstrated a widespread failure to harness sources as evidence to support their arguments. These essays compiled raw data and merely described or listed the information without processing them. These students merely stacked their sources without moulding them into a series of premises.

Coherence is another critical-thinking skill under content knowledge (Aldera, 2016; Boscolo & Mason, 2003). The students’ inability to use this type of critical-thinking skill reinforced their novice writing knowledge. The results indicated that most of the students demonstrated a lack of coherence in the sentences of their paragraphs and the paragraphs of their essay. The analysis of the essays revealed that 10 out of 13 students were unaware of the importance of coherence among sentences within the same paragraph (see Appendix A). The sentences constructed by these students did not show any interconnectedness and were assembled in incoherent paragraphs. The findings confirmed that 10 out of 13 students had a minimal or a complete lack of knowledge on how to connect paragraphs (see Appendix A). The students’ constructed paragraphs did not reflect any logical flow of meaning and did not have a gradual progression of their arguments. This finding was because the students were not skilful in using cohesive devices for connecting paragraphs that would lead to a meaningful presentation of their positions. Such inability in using cohesive devices was demonstrated by the repetitive use of a few particular cohesive devices. The analysis showed that students used nearly the same cohesive devices to connect the paragraphs in their essay (see Appendix B).

As for composing the conclusion, the findings showed that students, who possessed novice rhetorical and content knowledge when composing the body of their essay, also experienced difficulties in composing their conclusions. Their composed conclusions did not reflect any application of critical-thinking skills, particularly in summarising and restating their thesis statement. Only six out of 13 students were able to summarise their essays (see Appendix A).
Students’ unawareness of rhetorical knowledge and its accompanying critical-thinking skills was another reason for their novice writing knowledge. The findings, derived from the Macro-Level analysis of the students’ essays, indicated a low understanding of the application of persuasive critical-thinking skills when composing an argumentative essay, particularly for convincing readers. The findings showed that 11 out of 13 students were completely unaware of these types of skills (see Appendix A), forcing them to compose their essays in a freestyle or storytelling narrative, rather than a persuasive form. No clear and sophisticated attempts were made to capture their reader’s attention. The essays simply presented the text that bleached out all the effective means of persuasion.

Consequently, students’ unawareness of content and rhetorical knowledge also has a widespread negative affect on their non-language-related knowledge. This knowledge is related to their ability to select and administer information from different sources to explain and support their positions (Wingate, 2012). For example, the use of figures, quotations, charts, citations, pictures, and so on. Most of the students’ essays did not include any of these elements. Table 8 illustrates the non-language elements used by students to compose their essays.

Among the 13 students, only two were able to use non-language elements in their essays (S3 and S9). Along with the findings derived from the observations, the Macro-Level analysis for S3 and S9’s essays indicated that they were able to use only one of the six elements (see Table 8), that is, citation, which was in its simplest form. S3 and S9 only mentioned the name of their source without including any source information, such as the year of publication or edition. Therefore, such widespread unawareness among the students regarding non-language-related elements and their inappropriate use reflected their low understanding of content knowledge, which had generally caused them to possess a novice writing knowledge.

Table 8. Non-language elements used by students in composing their essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-language Related Elements</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8</th>
<th>S9</th>
<th>S10</th>
<th>S11</th>
<th>S12</th>
<th>S13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figures</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charts</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Effect of Students’ Lack of Awareness about Types of Writing Knowledge on their Essay Quality

The evaluation of the 13 students’ essays by using a holistic rubric scale revealed that most were evaluated as ‘very poorly written’. As shown in the analyses, having low abilities in producing satisfactory essays was a result of the students’ unawareness of critical skills related to each type of writing knowledge. Table 9 shows the students’ essay quality.

Table 9. Relationship between students’ critical-thinking skills used in essays and essay quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Skills Used by Students</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Recommendations of the Study
On the basis of the results of this study, the following recommendations have been made for English writing instructors and pedagogical implications. Since writing a good argumentative essay can be hard to achieve, students may be taught writing knowledge. This will increase their chances for widening their awareness about how the argumentative essay should be composed appropriately. By teaching the formal knowledge, teachers should concentrate on the organizing structure for the argumentative essay. Overcoming the linguistic problems of accuracy, fluency and morphology can also be enhanced successfully by teaching them topic knowledge that will
help in increasing the size of vocabulary. It helps them to gain more awareness about how language should be structured. This is possible because it allows students to do more reading practices more suitably to increase their understanding about the topic. Difficulties resulted from students’ lack of critical thinking skills are easily enhanced if students develop their Process Knowledge, Subject Matter or Content Knowledge and Rhetorical Knowledge. If the learners pay attention to these areas of their writing, it is expected that their writing will largely be free from cohesion and coherence errors between sentences in a paragraph and between paragraphs in the essay. If they learn these types of knowledge, they can form paragraphs that are well-structured and well composed with a selection of clear-presented ideas to be expanded. Consequently, it would be easy for students to write five-paragraphs essay maintaining a clear topic and thesis statement, logical development argumentation, and persuading conclusion. Emphasis also should be given on the identification and rectification of mistakes that cause inappropriateness and ambiguity in the essay. This should be carried out by giving the students ample expose to rhetorical knowledge that firstly allow them to recognize and use these cohesive devices isolated and then integrate them into the total composition of the essay. Students should also be provided with more time to practice these types of writing knowledge in form of activities inside and outside the class room while teaching academic essay writing. Finally, it may be emphasized that as the failure in learning argumentative academic essay writing is usually due to an inappropriate learning methods and an inexperienced writing instructors with limited knowledge in teaching essay writing, the educational authorities and academics, who are concerned, should therefore give this matter the priority.

**Conclusion**

Based on the discussion from the findings in the FGI, the WT and observation, Libyan EFL university students at Al-Asmariya University possessed different levels of awareness of the five types of writing knowledge as defined in this article. The students were divided into three different groups that represented different levels of knowledge. The levels of knowledge were: a) novice knowledge, b) basic knowledge and c) well-developed knowledge. The findings indicated that most of the students belonged to the novice knowledge level. Furthermore, the students’ lack of awareness of critical-thinking skills along with the different types of writing knowledge caused them to possess a novice knowledge in composing an argumentative essay. Having such novice knowledge consequently forced the students to produce essays with very poor qualities.

It is clear that Libyan students' awareness of writing knowledge is low therefore most of them can hardly write a good essay quality. When they compose the essay, they merely heap up their sentences and paragraphs in an incoherent structure. This fact has been revealed by analyzing the samples of their composition. The results show the students’ novice awareness about the Formal or Task-General Knowledge and Topic Knowledge affected their linguistic skills at the micro level inefficiently. In this aspect, most students faced difficulty in formatting the essay appropriately. It also makes them have very low ability in gathering and managing the needed information about the topic. Results shows that the lack of these two types of writing knowledge disables students to enhance their fluency in increasing the size of the vocabulary and sentences in the essay, their lexical skills in choosing the appropriate words, their syntactical skills in structuring the sentences in the essay and their morphological skills in using the correct tenses, prepositions and articles.
Besides, students’ novice awareness about the Process Knowledge, Subject Matter or Content Knowledge and Rhetorical Knowledge of writing makes them face many deterring difficulties on the macro-level related to language aspects of writing. They are critical thinking difficulties. As a result of this type of problems, students cannot compose good essay quality because they are unable to: a) construct the essay as a process, b) state the these statement, c) manage the available information from different sources to develop and support their arguing position in the essay and d) apply the effective means of persuasion and arguing different grounds about the topic, e) presenting the ideas, interpreting their thoughts, evaluating different issues on the topic and f) bind the flow of meaning for ideas coherently through the essay. Therefore, the lack of these types of skills deactivates students’ writing ability and produce novice argumentative essay.

Having novice writing knowledge also affects students writing ability inappropriately at the non-language level of writing. Results reveals that students are completely unable to apply skills like using quotations, citations or examples in composing their argumentative essay and support their arguing position or persuading the reader. This makes students compose novice essay that leads to produce very low essay quality. In conclusion, it is clear that most of 2nd year Libyan EFL university students at ALasmaya university can hardly write a good essay quality because they are having novice writing ability and unaware about the types of writing knowledge needed to compose good argumentative essay at university level.

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References


### Appendix A

*Critical thinking skills used by students in composing their argumentative essays*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Thinking Skills</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8</th>
<th>S9</th>
<th>S10</th>
<th>S11</th>
<th>S12</th>
<th>S13</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<tr>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The development of position/ argument</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>The presentation of the position</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>To analyze and evaluate the content of the knowledge</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>To convince and persuade the reader</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coherence among sentences in the paragraph</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coherence among paragraphs in the essay</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
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<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>To summarize the essay</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</table>
Appendix B

Type and frequency for using cohesive devices used in connecting paragraphs by students with novice writing knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohesive device</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **S1**          | 1         | • *Furthermore*, they may keep studying for the sake of passing exams.  
|                 | 1         | • *As* they are being rewarded, they may get encouraged and keep trying to get the best marks. |
| **S3**          | 0         | 0       |
| **S5**          | 1         | • *The first thing* that the government should do is put the difficult laws for those people who sell their body parts without reasons.  
|                 | 1         | • *The second thing*, people must know that the body parts... complete with other.  
|                 | 1         | • *In conclusion*, the government must put a big punishment for those who push people to sell their body parts. |
| **S6**          | 1         | • *Firstly*, why women be not be allowed for driving cars?  
|                 | 1         | • *Secondly*, yes we can women be allowed to drive a car.  
|                 | 1         | • *Finally*, why don’t allowed to drive cars? |
| **S7**          | 1         | • *Firstly*, she can talk with them when the thinks appear on their body.  
|                 | 1         | • *Secondly*, her style of speech should be normal  
|                 | 1         | • *However*, the parents shouldn’t talk about that as a group. |
| **S8**          | 0         | 0       |
| **S10**         | 0         | 0       |
| **S11**         | 1         | • *Secondly*, us this body parts for saves some people their needs them.  
|                 | 1         | • *Finally*, when allowed selling their body parts with these rules are very important. |
| **S12**         | 0         | 0       |
| **S13**         | 1         | • *First reason*, because when the company advertises its products in schools then, it will take student’s attention by put posters on the walls.  
|                 | 1         | • *Secondly*, when pupils see the advertisement in front of them on the walls and doors, then they will tend to buy anything.  
|                 | 1         | • *In connecting*, advertising in schools is unacceptable. |

Appendix C

*Number of words and sentences in the essay written by S6*
Is there a connection between violence on TV and on the streets?

Violence on TV, there big numbers of channels very violence on TV, and that is dangerous on children. It redounds on case psychological in the children, cause cases mapping in children, and many of ills, it is necessary for family is to make children feel safe and love, a connection between violence on TV and violence on the streets it is the children when the watch channels violence do it in streets, if watch war and guns and bold would be play thing in guns, and all violence on the streets cause channel violence on TV, and watch channel violence cause causes aggression between the children.
Scaffolding Effects on Writing Acquisition Skills in EFL Context

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Abstract
This paper is aimed to examine the effects of scaffolding on the development of higher-order thinking skills as evidenced in the academic writing of undergraduates at tertiary levels in the university education system. A lot of empirical research so far has examined the applicability of scaffolding in acquiring writing skills; however, few of them have studied the motivational aspect of scaffolding and its impact on the acquisition of writing skills of English as foreign language (EFL) learners. This study argues both motivational and demotivational factors with respect to scaffolding. During this study, the learner’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in accordance with Vygotsky’s principles shall also be studied to determine whether the learners in the process of writing are following teacher’s implicit instructions and teachers are dealing appropriately with the deployment of scaffolding techniques. References shall be drawn from the findings of Nunan (1991) who felt a positive feedback functions as an incentive to students and fairly motivates them and those of Ellis (2008; 2010; 2012; 2013) who apprehended that a negative feedback may be “potentially dangerous” to students and can damage their receptivity to learning. The findings of the study bear evidence of how the teachers, as well as the learners, follow similar patterns in understanding the scaffolding technique in the acquisition of writing skills.

Keywords: EFL, Motivation, Scaffolding, Writing Skills, ZPD

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Introduction
Teachers of English language strive regularly to find out the means in which students learn and acquire skills. The pedagogical principles require the instructors to understand the cognitive abilities of a learner or in other words, know how their brains develop. The teachers of the English language also must understand what knowledge and skills learners are expected to acquire. Thinkers and cognitive scientists have investigated the way students learn and hence developed theories and strategies to enable a student to learn. Soviet psychologist Vygotsky (1978; 1986), for instance, has contributed greatly in the area of cognitive development through the zone of proximal development (ZPD), a theory that has helped teachers customize their teaching methodology in the classroom. According to Vygotsky, anything that a learner needs to learn, say, writing skills, for instance, must be within his cognitive capacity or the ability to acquire that particular skill. Vygotsky called this cognitive ability as a student’s ‘zone of proximal development.’ The teacher uses the scaffolding techniques to reach this ZPD for the desired learning outcomes.

In the second language (L2) acquisition studies, scaffolding has gained growing attention (Haghparast & Behdokht, 2015; Miller, et al, 2015; Lantolf, 2000a, 2000b) particularly after the introduction of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD), a theoretical perspective has developed which postulates that scaffolding facilitates and enhances language skills of a L2 learner (Cotteral & Cohen, 2003; Hammond et al, 2012). However, there are differences of opinion on the definition and measurement of scaffolding. Bickhard (1992), for instance, argues that scaffolding exists only in controlled situations with preferably formal instructions. Pea (2004) regards it as a “cultural tool” happening naturally with informal interactions. Rogoff’ (1990) called scaffolding a “guided participation” highlighting the analogy of parent–child learning interactions. Likewise, Wood et al. (1976) defines scaffolding as “an adult controlling those elements of the task that are essentially beyond the learner’s capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence” (p. 9). One thing common to all these perspectives is that scaffolding is understood as an expert’s supportive behavior for the novice learner to become independent, to be able to solve a learning problem and carry out a task.

In this study, an attempt has been made to study three perspectives of scaffolding to understand its role in developing writing skills, namely instructional, cognitive, and motivational scaffolding perspectives (Cromley & Azevedo, 2006). It has been observed consistently that instructional perspective helps scaffold learners to understand concepts and provide answers, to summarize and plan their learning tasks. The second perspective, cognitive, helps learners to correct their own errors when the instructor scaffolds through hints and prompts and thus draw their attention to the solution. The third perspective, motivational, includes teachers’ positive or negative feedback for learners’ responses, which work as a motivation to them. In addition, there are a few other perspectives. For instance, Ellis (2013) propagated the pedagogic view about corrective feedback and recommended scaffolding techniques to be used by the teacher. In another study, Kim and Cho (2017) recommend the teacher to improvise writing oriented gestures to scaffold L2 learners to develop writing skills.

This study was motivated by the fact that a few instructors of writing often develop a tendency about the usage of patterned practices to teach writing skills by adopting a kind of structural-behaviorist approach. A few ESL writing textbooks also expect the writing instructors
to choose a fixed pattern to help students acquire writing skills. Ironically, such a process approach frustrates both instructors and learners as it does not contribute to the reduction or elimination of students’ errors. At this stage, the scaffolding method is being adopted by a few teachers to develop writing abilities in the students. The scaffolding method enables the teacher to devise or invent several techniques such as gesture scaffolding. Writing gestures when combined with speech or handwritten paper or pen, might collaborate in developing the writing skills of a L2 learner. However, not much is known about the use of the specific scaffold gesture used by the teacher as an aid to L2 learners’ writing. A need was therefore felt to conduct an empirical study to examine how a writing tutor can utilize the scaffolding techniques to assist the L2 learners of deficient proficiency levels.

**Statement of the Problem**
A study on scaffolding can be carried out on two propositions: the first deals with scaffolding or providing support to students to acquire a skill with a supportive mentor who acts as a scaffold until students are comfortable to do it on their own. At this point, the teacher may remove scaffolding if the students are deemed to have acquired expertise in a particular concept or skill. The second presupposition involves Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, which observes that often acquisition of a skill is beyond students’ learning even if support or scaffold is provided. A pertinent example could be asking a novice student, who has just learned how to write a sentence, to write an argumentative essay with distinct thesis statements, body paragraphs and conclusion. Since the student has learned only how to write elementary sentences, the in-depth essay writing would definitely be outside his zone of proximal development.

The current study is an attempt to identify and bring to light such scaffolding techniques deployed by writing tutors in their classroom teaching. An attempt will be made to find out how scaffolding tools such as gestures, in combination with speech, or pen and paper, can facilitate L2 learner in developing writing skills. Moreover, keeping in mind the subject of the current study, an attempt shall also be made to study the motivational aspects of scaffolding techniques during the process of acquisition of L2 writing skills.

**Significance of the Study**
The following considerations reveal the significance of the present study:

1- The study attempts to investigate a recent innovative teaching practice, the scaffolding that promises to provide external support to learners, in developing writing skills. It is one of the few empirical studies that will ever be conducted in the acquisition of L2 writing skills.

2- This study promotes the concept of learners’ autonomy as a fundamental concern of new trends in education that foster student-centered learning. Hence, techniques to be adopted must also be student-centered.

3- The results of this study on scaffolding as a technique to develop writing skills may highlight the need to reformulate the widely-used teaching techniques in those educational institutions that wish the promotion of learner autonomy in the acquisition of skills.

**Literature Review**
Throughout history, language teaching has been characterized by changes and alterations in its trends. This has occurred to improve its effectiveness. The audio-lingual approach was in full
swing in the 1950s through the 60s (Hendrickson, 1978) However, the period from the 1970s through the 1980s witnessed a significant paradigm shift in language teaching. Eventually the quest for alternatives to old methods led mainstream language teaching to embrace the growing interest in communicative approaches to language teaching. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Gradually, the use of mother tongue (L1) was denounced and discontinued in foreign language education. However, with the emergence of the socio-cultural perspective, L1 use has been reconsidered as a key mediating tool for second language learning. Moreover, this instrument can be used to scaffold the understanding of tutees (Cho & Kim, 2017). Simultaneously, research suggests that interactional motivational scaffolding benefits low performing readers: It helped them to build a positive and engaging motivational environment for reading challenging texts (Reynolds & Goodwin, 2016). In accordance with the above views, moderate use of L1 in language classes might motivate learners, reduce cognitive load, and scaffold learning.

Research has illustrated that scaffolding makes an impact on student’s motivation and learning performance (Chen, & Law, 2016). It also has shown that feedback facilitates learners to observe and anchor their errors and enable them to become aware of how to progress their writing with their peer’s scaffolding assistance. (Zhang, et al. 2014). Scaffolding, one of the key constructs of SCT, had a considerable effect on the complexity and accuracy of EFL learners’ narrative writing. (Ali, 2015). Mackiewicz, & Thompson, (2014) quantitatively investigated tutors’ instruction, cognitive scaffolding and motivational scaffolding and revealed that tutors’ use of the motivational scaffolding strategy of showing concern was most frequent (Haghparast & Behdokht, 2015). Miller, et al (2015) conducted a study on the efficacy and writing competence and found competence in writing correlates with the ability to think clearly. They recommended scaffolded writing tasks to improve nursing students writing skills. Based on these findings, it can be argued whether these contemporary theoretical trends are in line with current pedagogic practices.

Wells (1999) referred to scaffolding as "a way of operationalizing Vygotsky's (1987) concept of working in the zone of proximal development" (p. 127). Meyer and Turner (2002) and Miller (2005) entrust the responsibility of scaffolding upon the students and Daniels (2001) emphasizes collaboration between the teacher and the learner to co-construct the acquisition process. However, Pea (2004) and Pawan (2008) consider scaffolding as a one-way communication process between the scaffolded (learner) and the scaffolded (teacher). Stone (1998) had earlier explained a similar notion highlighting the narrowness of the term scaffolding. In this critical analysis of scaffolding, he called scaffolding as a metaphor to describe a learning disability to write a good essay. He analyzed several limitations of the scaffolding technique in acquiring good writing skills. He suggested that even though the metaphor resonates with Vygotskian view of teaching as guided by others, it doesn’t assist an understanding of the nature of such guidance. Liang (2007) emphasizes the need of providing flexible, systematic language guidance, particularly grammar instructions to learners throughout the writing process until they gain confidence and competence in the writing process.

There is a critical debate on the manner and the extent to which scaffolding techniques are helpful in developing writing skills. However, a fear has also been expressed that too much support can make it a teacher-driven or adult-driven technique; a point of view that has been included in the scope of this study. It is possible that scaffolding can convert learning into one-sided or teacher-
centered process through classroom teaching. Stone (1998) finds a solution to the probability of scaffolding to become one-sided and emphasizes the importance of introducing Piaget’s concept of a learner becoming an active creator of his own knowledge. Piaget had proposed a new vision of learning or acquiring skills through traditional instructional methods, but had also put the pre-requisite that the curriculum must be learner-centered, placing the emphasis on student’s ability to take the initiative. Such a version of independent learning relates to a student’s natural interest and motivation to acquire a skill and eventually become self-motivated lifelong learners.

Theoretical Basis of the Study
Scaffolding had its origin from a few theoretical studies (Wood and Middleton, 1975; Wood et al., 1976) that described it as a process between mature and proficient tutors such as parents and instructors particularly for preschool-aged children. In the context of L2 instructions, scaffolding resonates with the socio-cultural perspectives, a theory that draws parallels from Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD; 1978). Theoretically, scaffolding has now been understood as a special force offered to the learners up to the possible level of assistance until their cognitive potential is exposed to new learning or acquisition of new skills. Vygotsky’s theory of ZDP too believes in this phenomenon and therefore it is widely accepted and successfully implemented in many learning and teaching areas such as languages, mathematics, sciences, and information communications and technology (ICT). This paper will, therefore, derive theoretical ramifications to understand scaffolding from the Vygotskian concept of ZPD and discuss some similarities and characteristics of learning and acquiring the writing skills, the focus on the current study.

Research Methodology
For the purpose of this study, two teaching groups were identified: one group used traditional, direct method of teaching to acquire the writing skills and the other group was aided by the scaffolding technique. The purpose was to make a constant comparison of different methods of teaching writing skills. The researcher videotaped and transcribed the writing sessions of both the groups to detect how the second group that was taught the writing skills with verbal and gesture scaffolding techniques was different from the first group that adhered to the traditional method of teaching writing skills. The purpose of video-taping the teaching session was also to identify codes and categories of various techniques used in both the groups, particularly to capture the gestures, verbal and nonverbal in the second group and in order to understand the usefulness of scaffolding techniques in acquiring the writing skills. Subsequent to identifying the gestures and other verbal methods used to scaffold the students, the researcher also carried out an investigation of the writing scripts of the students. Writing specimens were collected from both the groups to ascertain how the learners handled communication obstacles caused in acquiring writing skills.

The variables of the study included the teacher’s oral gestures and motivational aspects of scaffolding techniques during the process of acquisition of L2 writing skills. The sample was divided into two teaching groups- the first group used the traditional, direct method of teaching and the second group was aided by the scaffolding technique. Results reveal that the second group taught through scaffolding techniques performed much better than the first group. This study would be very helpful for educators, teachers and researchers who wish to find out the impact of scaffolding in learning situations.
Sampling
Each writing group comprised of 10 students of level 4 who were studying Academic Essay writing. Four teachers were also sampled from the Department of English for the interviews, out of which two were asked to use scaffolding technique in their classroom for teaching writing skills and the remaining two were asked to adhere to their traditional, direct instruction method. All twenty students and four teachers formed the sample of this study. All the teachers in the sample held university degrees; two of them masters’ degrees and two held Ph.D. degrees. All four teachers had between five and ten years of teaching experience.

Procedures
After the sampling process was complete, the researcher formed two groups of students. The first group (Group A) that had been taught writing skills through direct instructions was videotaped when they were following instruction from the teacher in the writing classroom. The researcher also took notes during the session in order to supplement the transcripts of the session. Similar videotaping was carried out in the second group (Group B) where the focus was more on the teacher using scaffolding techniques through verbal and nonverbal gestures. A special attention was also given to the learners’ responses in both groups. This process was repeated in all the four sessions until the researcher was convinced that the design of the study could be validated by the data collected and also that data saturation had reached.

Students of both groups involved in the experiment were oriented to the objectives and procedures of the study. Therefore, the writing specimens were immediately made available to the researcher after each session. The researcher made a constant comparison of the transcripts of both the sessions as well as the notes that supplemented the videotaped transcripts. A few codes and categories were identified in the data collected from both the groups, using a manual coding method. These codes later helped the researcher to formulate themes as well as opinions and justifications of the scaffolding techniques far more useful than the traditional one.

As the next step, the researcher matched the codes with the writing specimens intending to find the impact of scaffolding on the writing skills of the students. The findings of this constant comparison and searching evidence of scaffolding in writing specimens were done mainly to validate the scaffolding technique as useful and effective in acquiring writing skills.

After the conduct of this experiment, interviews with four teachers were scheduled with open-ended questions (See Appendix). The focus was on finding why they preferred a traditional or scaffolding technique in their respective classrooms.

Results/ Findings and Discussions
In order to facilitate the data collection, the researcher videotaped, transcribed, and coded all the writing sessions carried out during the experiment. There were interesting findings revealed in this experiment. For instance, it was found that the teacher in Group A presented instructions with the help of blackboard and created model sentences expecting students to replicate the teacher’s model in their own writing. The teacher in Group B would employ gestures primarily as instructional scaffolding either to explain L2 vocabulary and grammar to the learners or help the learners repair the sentence through self-editing attempts. The teacher would also use gestures
involving pen and paper to scaffold the L2 learners writing performance to elicit greater involvement and establish inter-subjectivity in the classroom.

Another finding was that while in Group A the teacher dominated the classroom and projected writing as a one-sided, teacher-centered activity, in Group B the teacher and the students worked together to create a writing composition. In group A, the students could learn how a text is written through the modeling of the teacher. But in Group B, the students practice with what they had learned previously through sharing their awareness and discussing the process of writing a text, along with its content, organization, and language. For instance, in Group A, the teacher provided a topic sentence on the blackboard and provided a few supporting ideas to develop them into a paragraph. In Group B, the teacher did provide a topic sentence but he performed the brainstorming together with students to identify supporting ideas to support the topic sentence.

In both situations, the teacher acted as a facilitator. But in Group B, she/he was also more as a partner in the writing process. In group A, the students were passive recipients of the ideas; in group B, they were the active participants, playing the role of critique and supporting each other in completing the writing task. In Group B there were open negotiation, discussion, and immediate teacher feedback, to serve as a motivation and to enhance the students’ understanding of writing strategies, which was not evident in Group A. Last but not the least, in Group B, students were also prompted to edit their own writing or edit each other’s writing under the guidance of the teacher, where the teacher would only remain as a judge and not a prosecutor. This developed self-editing techniques that promoted editing autonomy among the students and motivated them to take up more writing sessions. In Group A, however, the teacher prompted the students whenever they made a mistake, thus acting as the editing guide himself or in a few cases asked students to refer to the editing guide prepared by the teacher for the use in the classroom.

The teachers prompting an error correction in Group A while the teachers providing corrective feedback in Group B was another interesting evidence to differentiate between the two teaching techniques. The researcher also witnessed that through self-editing techniques, Group B students were able to correct their most common errors themselves without being distracted by a more generic editing guide developed by the teacher. Students may not be able to correct all of their errors, but they were able to develop an awareness of their problematic structures and could make conscious, active and self-corrective attempts to initiate an appropriate and correct linguistic choice in creating a writing specimen.

Interviews with the teachers of both groups were conducted immediately after the teaching sessions and transcribed for the ease of analysis. These transcripts were content analyzed on a question-by-question basis. Based on the constant evaluation of the transcripts, a number of themes were established. E.g. positive attitudes to grammar and vocabulary during the writing process or a special like or dislike for a particular subject like science or sports. Two techniques were used to analyze the interviews: One, analysis of words from the respondents and two, counting frequencies of occurrence of ideas and themes in the form of words (Cohen et al., 2007: 368). Using the latter technique, ideas which occurred frequently from the respondents were sought. The assumption behind this technique is that the repetition of words and ideas indicates that these ideas are important for the respondents. Generating meanings and classifying utterances were also used
(Cohen et al., 2007). This technique helped establish themes based on teachers’ perceptions of their respective teaching techniques.

The findings reveal that the teachers in Group A believed in the conventional methods of developing writing skills mainly for two reasons: it allowed a quick and time bound replication of the writing specimen from the students without any effort by the student to check its correctness. Second, the writing process, according to respondents, must be structured and follow a step-by-step method to develop writing skills. The researcher while analyzing the interview transcripts of Group A, however, encountered a feeling of regression or backsliding among the students whenever the teacher gave negative feedback. While in Group B, the researcher found students motivated even when there was an instance of the negative feedback by the teacher as they took the feedback as a mistake which they were capable of correcting by self-editing skills. These findings are consistent with those of Nunan (1991) who felt positive feedback functions as an incentive to students and fairly motivated them and those of Ellis (2013) who apprehended that negative feedback may be “potentially dangerous” to students and can damage their receptivity to learning.

Over the amount of time and technique to be spent, the respondents of both groups had differing opinions. While the respondents of Group A recommended a fixed and rigid level of instructional technique to be used within the given time, the respondents of Group B expressed the fear that inappropriate amount and timing of scaffolding in writing classes would lead to poor performance by students. So both the technique and timing must be decided by the contextual factors or the current comprehension level of the students.

Conclusions and Recommendations
The aim of this study was to examine the impact of motivational scaffolding on the acquisition of writing skills in the L2 situation. This study unfolds and demystifies a few facts about the effects of scaffolding on the development of higher-order productive skills such as writing. This study was carried out with a view to resolving the issues of poor and ineffective written communication skills of the students at the tertiary level as without effective writing skills they would not be able to rise in their career nor become eligible to courses requiring a god amount of writing skills. This study recommends that, in order to solve this problem, there is a need to make changes in strategies of teaching writing skills and the use of effective scaffolding techniques in the teaching of writing skills is the most appropriate in the current L2 situations.

In order to implement new study plans that insist on learning outcomes through key performance indicators, it is explicitly required of teachers to employ scaffolding strategies to differentiate their instructional strategies. The results of the current study also suggest that the use of scaffolding strategies is beneficial for students’ development of language skills. Findings of this study also suggest that teachers could benefit in the form of professional development opportunities by focusing on the use of scaffolding strategies as a linguistic intervention in the teaching process.

In the absence of trained teachers or infrastructural constraints, online resources are a good substitute to practice scaffolding. Hsieh (2016) finds a positive impact of online resources on the learners writing abilities except that in learning situation online scaffolding is time-constrained.
that is, the learner must respond immediately in order to rectify his errors and present the correct
model lest the learner might lose both interest and motivation. However, rectifying the error is
probably not possible all the time in online scaffolding unless both the expert scaffolder and novice
learner are highly motivated and are not restricted by geographic time zones.

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Appendix

Teachers’ Interview: Evaluation Questionnaire

I – Preliminary Information:
Name (Optional):
1. Last academic degree:
2. Years of experience in education:
3. What teaching methodology do you use in your writing lectures and why?
4. How do you introduce a new topic in your classroom?
5. How do you explain the new concept?

II. Motivational Scaffolding:
6. How do you motivate your students before starting a new topic?
7. How do you motivate your students during the lecture?
8. How do you motivate your students when you finish your lecture?

III. Scaffolding Students’ Writing
9. How do you scaffold your instructions?
8. How do you monitor your students?
9. How do you give feedback to students?
10. How do you divide the classroom while doing activities? Please explain your choice.
11. Do you model the text for your students, or you work with them to create a writing-composition. Please explain your choice.

IV- Future Implications:
12. What are the advantages of scaffolding students’ writing?
13. What were the challenges that you faced during your lessons?
14. How can this scaffolding technique be improved?
Towards a Multi-source Performance Appraisal Model in Omani Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract
Higher education institutions (HEIs), across the globe, have been increasingly applying staff performance appraisals (PA) to ensure good quality educational outcomes, and to meet the requirements of national and international quality assurance and academic accreditation organizations. Staff at the forefront of PA since they are affected either positively or negatively by the outcome of the process. PA models and the way the process is conducted have long been a controversial issue among both academics and administrators in HEIs. The core of the debate is that PA models and their implementations may not always be sufficiently comprehensive, transparent, and fair enough to accurately and realistically reflect staff performance. Focusing on English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in an Omani private university, the present study is aimed to investigate EFL teachers’ views and perceptions about PA and the implementation practices with a view of providing some recommendations that could help improve the process. Most previous relevant studies in the literature seem to have addressed PA from a theoretical perspective, and there seems to be a lack of empirical studies. In contrast, the present study attempted to explore the issue more empirically, and to this end, the study adopted an exploratory qualitative research methodology with semi-structured interviews being the main method of data collection. Ten EFL teachers took part in the investigation through face-to-face tape-recorded interviews. Results indicated dissatisfaction with the PA system and its implementation, suggesting a number of deficiencies. Participants also questioned the validity of the prime role given to students in the evaluation of teachers in the PA process as well as the lack of effective criteria and transparency in the choice of peer appraisers. Moreover, the lack of communication and training of both appraisers and appraisees were among the major issues reported by the participants. Implications for PA practices improvement and advancement were presented and discussed.

Key words: multi-source model, performance appraisal, qualitative, EFL teachers, Omani HEIs

1. Introduction

Performance appraisal (PA) is a formal and systematic process whereby staff members of an organization are evaluated by managers in relation to their performance against a set of certain pre-determined measures in order to ensure and maintain accountability and the quality of institutional operations. In higher education institutions, PA is normally conducted for both academic and non-academic staff in line with the individual institution’s mission, vision, and core values. PA offers opportunities for both management and staff to identify, observe, measure, and develop human resources in organizations (Cardy & Dobbins, 1993, as cited in Park, 2009, p. 60). PA can also help highlight the continual professional development (CPD) needs of staff to sustain strengths and overcome weaknesses in order to improve performance and to meet the growing demands of the constantly changing academic world. According to Brown, Hyatt and Benson (2010), many empirical studies have suggested that PAs often produce an increase in employee performance and productivity derived from employee identification with and commitment to the objectives of the organization. Employees, with low performance, are normally identified during the PA and given timely feedback on how to improve.

Measuring and evaluating the PA of teaching staff in higher education institutions does not seem an easy and straightforward process, given the changing role of staff in advancing the knowledge of students (Guruprasad, Sridhar & Balasubramanian, 2016, p.1). However, different higher education institutions have different models of PA. These models reflect the main principles and guidelines set by national and/or international quality assurance and academic accreditation organizations. PA has significant ramifications on staff retention or dismissal. Institutions often use the PA outcomes to reward, promote, renew, or even terminate contracts. Accordingly, PA has both developmental and judgmental consequences. The former is viewed as a positive practice that reflects the institution’s good intention and keenness to retain its staff by continually evaluating their performance and identifying their performance deficiencies and needs with the aim of providing them with the necessary and relevant training and professional development programmes that can maximize and sustain their performance. The latter, however, often suggests an institutional practice that does not care about staff retention and CPD. This could lead to an organization losing out on recruiting and retaining employees. Indeed, if employees with low PA scores are not helped out professionally, they are more likely to be subject to job dissatisfaction, lack of organizational commitment, which might ultimately lead them to quit the job (Brown et al., 2010). The critical issue is the extent to which individual organizations can strike the balance between the judgmental and developmental nature of performance appraisal in order to maintain and sustain high-quality performance management. Focusing on the Omani HE context, the current study aims to investigate EFL teachers’ experiences about PA systems and their implementation mechanisms in their relevant institutions with the view to further improving performance management practices and broadening academic staff understanding of PA, as well as to exploring the extent to which current PA practices reflect a multi-source, comprehensive, fair and transparent model. The study is intended to propose recommendations and insights that could help improve PA practices in the context of the study and beyond in other similar contexts. The study primarily addresses three main research questions: how do EFL teachers perceive their existing performance appraisal practices? To what extent do these practices reflect the principles of a multi-source performance model? And, what could be done to improve the existing performance appraisal practices?
Towards a Multi-source Performance Appraisal Model

2. Context
The Sultanate of Oman (henceforth Oman) is a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) state located in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula with a population of around 4.5 million. Higher education in Oman is relatively young and is still growing. The first publically-funded university in the country was established in 1986. More expansion in the sector started in the 1990s and, since then, a large number of HE institutions have been established. Currently, Oman has a substantial number of both governmental and private universities, colleges, and institutes offering a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in various disciplines of knowledge. All these institutions are supervised and monitored by the Omani Ministry of Higher Education as the main regulatory body (Al-Lamki, 2002). The study was conducted in an Omani private university. The university strives to achieve excellence as a national higher education provider and to offer quality higher education. It is an English-medium university offering a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in humanities, social sciences, and applied sciences. The university has a PA system in place for the annual evaluation of the performance of its academic staff with consequences for staff retention (contract renewal) or dismissal (contract termination).

2.1 Quality assurance and academic accreditation in the Omani HEIs
Over the last decade, Oman has adopted a rigorous and comprehensive national quality assurance system encompassing a range of interconnected frameworks and processes to ensure high-quality education (Carroll, Razvi, Goodliffe & Al-Habsi, 2009). There have generally been ongoing national efforts to foster and promote quality assurance in Omani higher education institutions by establishing a national quality assurance system to implement and sustain institutional accreditation across the country (Carroll et al., 2009, Lontok, Al-Ghassani & Al-Saidi, 2013). As a practical step towards achieving this aim, a royal decree was issued in 2010 to establish an independent national authority: The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) to oversee and regulate quality assurance and academic accreditation for HE institutions. The royal decree clearly stated that OAAA is responsible for regulating the quality of higher education in Oman to ensure the maintenance of a level that meets international standards, and to encourage higher education institutions to improve their internal quality systems (http://www.oaaa.gov.om). The OAAA is an entity with legal, financial, and administrative independence. Introducing PA in higher education institutions was viewed as a means for increasing the overall effectiveness and efficiency of these institutions (Haslam, Bryman & Webb, 1993) to sustain quality education and obtain institutional accreditation. OAAA has mandated that PA is to be an integral part of Omani higher education institutions’ management. OAAA published a number of guidelines to promote and sustain quality assurance in the Omani HEIs with reference to PA. All staff are appraised annually. The supervisor discusses the implementation of the performance appraisal scheme with each staff member before he or she is evaluated, clearly specifying the performance criteria. Confidential formal consultations regarding the results of evaluation should be held with each staff member and should be supportive. Where performance is considered less than satisfactory, clear requirements for improvement should be established. The HEIs should have a performance planning and review policy as well as procedures for undertaking staff performance review and they should be readily accessible and effectively communicated to all staff. HEIS should also ensure that all academic and non-academic staff members participate in performance planning and review at least annually, with the opportunity to engage them into the PA process. HEIs should also ensure that formal performance planning and review outcomes are documented and retained.
confidentially and their relevant staff members have the opportunity to provide their own comments on the files, including points of disagreement with the opportunity to appeal against any negative performance review outcomes. Outstanding academic or administrative performance should be recognized and rewarded. Supervisors should discuss with their staff strategies for development of skills and career advancement. Supervisors should also assist in arranging professional development activities, including upgrading of qualifications (http://www.oaaa.gov.om).

3. Theoretical background

The process of the design, implementation, and management of the PA of academic staff in higher education institutions poses significant challenges due to the complex nature of the process and its consequences on both the individual staff and the institutions (Decramer, 2012). Since PA is a cyclical and systematic process whereby employees are evaluated for their performance, its management, defining, measuring, evaluating and rewarding people’s performance in an organization (Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe, 2004), is equally a complex and challenging process. It is used as a tool in HE to manage quality and enhance institutional performance and contributions to the wider community. Performance management (PM) is an instrument for achieving superior outcomes from the entire organization. PM, and particularly PA as an aspect of it, is a systematic process in which employees are given feedback on their performance and further reward and promotion (Igbojekwe, Ugo-Okoro & Agbonye, 2015). Additionally, PA is also viewed as a formal management system that provides for the evaluation of the quality of individuals' performance in an organization (Meenaksh, 2012). One of the main foci of PA is to address areas and skills such as team work, character, and leadership effectiveness, planning skills and goal-setting strategies that all assist employees to create their professional development plans and understand the relevant organizational needs. Measuring behaviors and competencies could provide insights into the types of skills and behaviors desired in organizations to accomplish their missions, visions, and core values. Another equally important area is the training of both the appraisers and appraisees on how to work out scores and effectively handle PA forms and formalities.

PA is primarily viewed as the process of identifying, observing, measuring, and developing human resources in organizations (Cardy & Dobbins, 1994, as cited in Pak, 2009, p. 60). The underlying theme among all these definitions and views is that PA serves both judgmental and developmental purposes with regard to staff performance evaluation in any organization. However, a multi-source PA has always been seen as developmental rather than judgmental, since the main goal is to assess individual performance in terms of strengths and weakness, and to identify unmet professional needs. In HEIs, data for such comprehensive models are normally expected to be obtained from multiple sources, including but not limited to the data from students, peers, self-assessment, stakeholders, supervisors, and line managers. A multi-source PA should be viewed as a performance management system and should underpin the overall strategic plan of the organization providing a more complete picture for staff performance and it should function as a reflective tool for all levels (Anjum, Yasmeen & Khan, 2011; Alexander, 2006; Fleenor, 1997; Fletcher, 2001;). Moreover, in order to achieve sensible and trustworthy PA practices, both appraisers and appraisees should be involved in the development of the PA system. Indeed, the importance of employee participation in the PA process is well documented and emphasized in the
literature (see e.g., Anjum et al., 2011; Brutus, London & Martineau, 1999; Holi, 2012). If employees feel that the PA process is unfair, unsystematic and not thorough enough, it is unlikely that they would accept its outcomes. To avoid such situations, there should be clear and agreed upon performance measures and criteria. Transparency should also be maintained throughout the process by clearly communicating PA results to the concerned individual staff members and these results should remain confidential.

3.1 Sources of information for PA in HEIs
There is a range of sources usually used in higher education institutions to implement and manage PAs. The most commonly used sources include student evaluations of their teachers, line managers’ ratings, peer and subordinate ratings, and research and teaching metrics (Brutus et al., 1999). However, the validity, reliability and the weightage of these sources have been questioned by researchers (see e.g., Borman 1998;). Line manager evaluation is considered to be one of the most important sources as supervisors control rewards and career progressions and promotions (Brutus et al., 1999). Furthermore, peer rating is also viewed as a valid source of performance information as peers work closely with each other, and they have the opportunities to observe and know each other more closely in the workplace settings. Peer ratings can be done in forms of classroom observations or checklists and narrative statements (Nair, Li & Cai, 2015). However, the selection of peers remains a controversial issue as, in some cases, peers may invalidate the information gathered due to work and personal relationships between the appraisers and the appraisees (Bell, 2011). Additionally, self-ratings are another integral source for PA where an individual staff member rates his/her performance according to certain given measures and criteria. However, self-ratings can be a poor source of performance evaluation as they may involve some kind of leniency and biases (Harris & Schaubroek, 1988; Atwater, 1998). Finally, research and teaching components of PA are also considered as two significant performance indicators in higher education. However, there is no clear definition of quality and quantity of academic work with regard to both research and teaching (Nair et al., 2015). Although HEIs have reasonably common goals for measuring staff performance with regard to their achievement, they still vary significantly in their focus in relation to teaching and research.

3.2 Critical issues in performance appraisal in HEIs
PA practices tend to have several issues that could potentially undermine the validity and reliability of the whole process. Among these issues is the rating inflation which is the tendency of appraisers to give appraisees higher ranking than they realistically deserve. This seems to be a serious problem with PA as it could make it difficult to discriminate an average performance from an outstanding one (Martin & Bartol, 1998). On the other hand, severity, as opposed to leniency, is considered as one of the common errors where appraisers give appraisees lower ratings than they actually deserve. Another concern is when appraisers choose the middle point in any range of the scale to play safe, but this may not effectively illustrate the actual performance. Yet one more serious issue is what is known as "Hallo effect", which is the tendency to judge the appraisee's performance by only one particular aspect (Boachie-Mensah et al., 2012., Prowse & Prowse, 2009; To, 2007). Additionally, another commonly known issue is stereotyping: the pre-judgment of a person's performance on the basis of general beliefs about characteristics such as gender, age, race, and nationality. Some appraisers also have the tendency to negatively view all behaviors or actions of a subordinate because the superior dislikes a particular behavior or action of the appraisee.
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(Lefkowitz, 2000, Boachie-Mensah et al., 2012). Finally, the error of strictness is another issue that occurs when appraisers give unfavorable or poor appraisal regardless of the actual performance level of the appraisee. In the view of Tziner and Kopeman (2002, as cited in Boachie-Mensah et al., 2012), the main reason for this practice is that the appraisers may be uncomfortable with that successful appraisees may replace them in the future. It is also they want to create the impression that they are hard and strict in their evaluation.

Furthermore, another major critical issue with PA, is the key role given to student ratings to measure instructors’ teaching performance and effectiveness has been an important but controversial tool in the improvement of teaching quality during the last past decades (Spooren, Mortelmans & Thijssen, 2012). The use of student evaluations of their teachers to measure their performance has become extremely popular in many universities around the world (Becker & Watts, 1999). However, there are a number of concerns regarding the use of student evaluations for managing staff performance. Student evaluations of teachers might divert teachers from activities that have a higher learning content for students and concentrate more on classroom entertainment to please their students and thus gaining high teaching ratings (Braga, Paccagnella & Pellizzari, 2014). Features of a good teacher evaluation system should reflect, among other things, the clarity of the purposes and criteria of the evaluation system, perceived fairness and accuracy of the evaluation system, teacher satisfaction with their performance and the evaluation process such as the credibility of the evaluators, the relationship between the evaluator and the teachers, and the utility of the feedback (see e.g., Holi, 2013).

4. Methodology
A total number of ten participants agreed to take part in this study through tape-recorded face-to-face interviews. All participants were EFL teachers with different ranks and years of experience in the profession. Their ranks ranged from lecturers, assistant to associate professors with a minimum of six and a maximum of twenty-five years of experience in the field of TEFL/TESOL and applied linguistics. They comprised both Omani nationals and international expatriates coming from diverse national, educational, and cultural backgrounds. They all have gone, at different times, through the experience of staff performance appraisal.

Being an exploratory in nature, the study adopted a qualitative methodology with semi-structured interviews being the principal method of data collection. Prompt cards were used during interviews at some points in a discourse-based format (Lillis, 2001; Odell et al., 1983) to help elicit more focused and detailed responses from the participants. Participants were given the prompt cards and given some time to go through the cards and they were then invited to react to the prompts by a number of questions, probes, and follow-up questions. One interview was conducted with each of the participants and each individual interview lasted between 25-45 minutes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded thematically and inductively. Inter-rater reliability checks were conducted (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Coding disagreements were resolved, and codes were modified and refined accordingly to ensure that they accurately represented and captured the participants’ views and perspectives.
5. Results and discussion

This section reports the key findings of the study. Participants expressed their views in regard to five key elements in PA namely, efficiency and effectiveness of the existing system, student evaluations, peer-ratings, staff involvement in developing appraisal tools and mechanisms, and research and teaching components in the PA system.

5.1 Efficiency and effectiveness of the existing PA system
Participants acknowledged the importance of having a PA system in place, and they appreciated the value of such a system in developing and monitoring their professionalism, while aspiring for further improvement:

If you look at the policy and the way it is conducted, it's not bad. Nothing negative about it. Intentions are good. The intention is to improve the overall situation, teaching, learning, research, community service. And it is linked with the performance, actually. How you perform. So, if the performance appraisal is not there, and [not] this elaborate and this strict, then the faculty member themselves will not know where they stand, especially their weak areas where they need improvement.

This echoes what is frequently reported in the literature and mandated by both the nationally and internationally recognized standards with regard to the significance of PA in the HEIs.

A teacher added:
I think that there's a huge emphasis on research and getting published. I think our course load is very high for that. I think that people need professional development. They need mentoring in how to get published, where to get published. We need to know what's available. We're given a list of Scopus journals. How do we know what's best for us in our subject area? Even I need help. I'm sure you do too. We all need help

Another teacher added:
Appraisal should be developmental rather than judgemental, on the whole, yes, the intention is to make a development, that weak areas are identified and the authorities have- like the Dean of the college and the Head of the department, they sit with the faculty member while you're finalising it and they highlight that these are the weak areas based on the results. What is your professional development plan? They take some kind of undertaking which will be reviewed in the subsequent similar meetings.

These findings lend support to previous studies (e.g., Nair et al., 2015) in that HEIs often do not adequately provide a clear definition of quality and quantity of the published work in the PA system with regard to research element. In some teaching-oriented HEIs, the research component is not expected to have a higher weight than teaching in the PA process. The view that appraisal is to be developmental rather than judgmental is also highlighted in the literature (e.g., Brown et al., 2009). This is because when not supported professionally following the PA outcomes, staff may feel less enthusiastic and less committed to the organization and might ultimately quit their jobs.
5.2 Student evaluations in PA
Teachers contested the prime role given to students as evaluators of their teachers’ performance, critiquing the high weight given to student evaluations, among other elements, in the teaching part of the appraisal system.

In my view, the best approach to address this problem, is that only the best students should be chosen to appraise and not everybody. There are students who are really careless, and they are lazy, and they are not interested in anything. How can they evaluate the active member of staff?

In the same vein, teachers also voiced their concerns about the student ability to accurately evaluate and judge their performance in the teaching:

Having all students evaluating you, you shouldn’t allow everybody, because some of them actually have no right to do the evaluation because their maths is very low, and they are always having problems with their attendance. And accordingly, it’s very difficult for them to give a proper, I can't say objective judgement or evaluation of their staff, especially if the staff are highly experienced.

On the contrary, another teacher said:
The best people to judge teaching and learning are the students who see and who form creating impressions about their teachers. So teachers and the students; this is mutual. So, we take students’ feedback and there is an online form for that. Maybe some representatives from each class, if they also do some kind of peer evaluation. If I’m appraising somebody for their teaching, I want to make sure that students’ voices are heard, which is the case in the university.

From the above, it is clearly that teachers have mixed views with regard to the role of students in PA. While it is generally acknowledged as the evaluation of one of the important stakeholders, some teachers, however, questioned the students’ ability to accurately judge and evaluate the teaching performance. Similar findings are highlighted in the literature (e.g., Becker & Watts, 1999; Braga et al., 2014) in that students’ views are not always without problems and biases. Braga et al. (2014), for example, suggested that if teachers feel that students have a strong role in the evaluation of teachers with implications for career and retention in the institution, teachers might run the risk of diverting their focus from real teaching and learning activities with higher learning content for students, and rather concentrate more on other classroom entertainment that please their students and thus gaining higher teaching ratings.

5.3 Teachers’ views about peer-evaluation
Participants critiqued the choice, validity, and reliability of peer appraisers, calling for rigorous criteria to maintain objectivity and minimize subjectivity in the role of peers in the PA system.

I think it (peer ratings) should be anonymous. In the past, it was not. A faculty member gets to select who should appraise them and that person is known to the individual. I think that increases the level of subjectivity because, at the end of the
day, this person is a colleague. You want to make sure that you don’t want to create any sort of negative relationship between the appraiser and the appraisee. I think it should be somebody who’s from the same field. Somebody’s field of study and field of research for evaluating a researcher. I also think it should be somebody who has established himself or herself as somebody respected in the field. I don’t want somebody who’s never done research before to evaluate a very active researcher unless it’s just for the sake of feedback and not for the sake of development and advancement. I also want to make sure that the appraiser knows the appraisee very well in terms of their activities and what they’re involved in.

**In the same line, another teacher said:**

The current peer appraisal is mostly like, "This is my buddy, wink, wink, nudge, nudge. I’ll give you all the fives. You give me all fives." To me, it doesn’t have any meaning at all. I also want to make sure that colleagues or peers have a say in what this teacher is doing, how he is contributing to the team and the community. If the peer chosen by the faculty member himself or herself doesn't give the grade or score of the individual's choice, it might affect their relationship.

These findings echo similar concerns reported in previous studies in that peers might not always provide objective and genuine accounts to evaluate their colleagues. For example, personal relationships might compromise objectivity (Bell, 2001).

### 5.4 Staff involvement in the development of PA

Participants articulated deficiencies in the current PA system with regard to the lack of staff involvement and participation in the design and implementation of the system.

It’s also extremely important to make sure that all the aspects or everybody involved in the teaching, learning, research or serving the community should be involved somehow in the appraisal system. We’re talking about teachers. We’re talking about students and line managers.

**Another teacher added:**

Faculty members or teachers, especially if they help in redesigning the system, should trust the system. They should know the system is fair. They should know it is not going to be used against them and it is for the sake of advancement and development rather than making judgments.

These findings confirmed what was suggested in the previous relevant studies in that staff participation and involvement in the design and development of PA systems are more likely to make them more effective and trusted than those which are solely designed by administrators and supervisors (Cox, 2000). Staff participation in the PA process could also yield positive effects on them and foster their motivation. Moreover, this participation should be preceded by adequate training for both appraisers and appraisees to help minimize any potential problems and errors with the PA process.
5.5 Research and teaching in PA

Data also showed that participants had some concerns with regard to the overemphasis placed on the research component in the PA system. Participating teachers expressed their views about the current PA with regard to publications by questioning the research weightage and the validity of information in the PA system. They believed that the institution should offer time and professional development activities with regard to research before incorporating it as an integral component in the PA.

The weightage given to research has been given more importance [in the PA system] compared to previous years. Previous years it was worth 40% of the total score. This year it’s been increased to 50% based on the recommendations of the Minister of Higher Education. Where the national goal is to publish more, to have the institutions move towards being research institutions rather than teaching institutions.

In a similar vein, another teacher added:

The major challenge is the lack of time allocated for staff to conduct and publish research. Staff do not have enough time to conduct research when the teaching load has not actually been reduced. The teaching load is still the same but faculty members are expected to focus more on research rather than teaching. That has been a challenge, and I think it is going to continue to be a challenge for at least a couple of years until the university revisits and designs a new PA policy.

These findings indicate similar concerns highlighted in the literature (e.g., Nair et al., 2015; Igbojekwe et al., 2015) in that HEIs often expect staff to engage actively in research as PA requirement and publication. Our findings, however, suggest that without considering the focus of the institutions (whether being a research or teaching-oriented) nor considering the existing facilities and time allocated to staff to individual staff to produce quality research, the research component in the PA should be considered with caution to avoid underestimating other relevant rating sources.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

This is a relatively small-scale exploratory qualitative study that focused on a single context with only ten participants, so some caution should be taken when interpreting the findings and implications. However, we believe that the study has provided some illuminating and useful insights to inform both academics and administrators in designing, implementing, monitoring, and managing PA in a more effective manner in higher education institutions. There is clear evidence that PA practices operate in a complex web of academic and social factors, and the appraisees have a range of concerns regarding the validity and reliability of the PA models and its implementation process.

Based on the overall objectives and the research questions addressed in the study, and in the light of the study findings, a number of recommendations can be offered to improve PA practices in Omani higher education institutions, and beyond in similar contexts.
As for student evaluation, it should be taken with care and should not be given higher weight in the appraisal process at the expense of other sources. Students should be trained on how to rate their instructors to reduce the impressionistic effects and also need to be encouraged to separate the quality of instruction from the grade they expect to receive in class. Balancing and weighting items within the PA forms/questionnaires or checklists could affect rating. Some researchers have suggested replacing student evaluation forms with teaching portfolios that could be updated and used annually (e.g., Cook, 1989; Marsh, 1991a). Moreover, training is equally important for raters and appraisers on how to rate others and carry out performance appraisal efficiently. There is evidence that not all staff members are actively involved in the design and development of PA mechanisms, tools, and plans. Involving faculty in the process may reduce skepticism and improve the validity and reliability of the PA systems. PAs should be based on a multi-source model in order to become more comprehensive, fair, representative, and acceptable. As for the choice and selection of peer appraisers, there should be clear, rigorous, and well-articulated criteria as well as effective mechanisms within the system to minimize any potential subjectivity and errors in the PA process. There should also be realistic PA for staff, taking into consideration the job descriptions. For instance, a staff member whose job is only teaching should not be appraised against any research measures. Given that the research component is often highly valued in the PA process, HEIs should strive to allocate enough time, resources, and funds for staff in order to produce high-quality research and publications not only for appraisal purposes, but also for the continuing professional development. Additionally, given the paucity of empirical research in the context of the study, it is expected that the findings of the study could motivate researchers and serve as a basis for further empirical studies in the field.

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Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: A Psycholinguistic Barrier Affecting Speaking Achievement of Saudi EFL Learners

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Abstract
This study is oriented towards the analysis of the speaking achievement of the learners of English as Foreign Language (EFL) in Saudi Arabia. It aims to examine the influence of foreign language speaking anxiety as a psycholinguistic barrier affecting speaking achievement of Saudi EFL learners. It primarily attempts to answer the research question, ‘is there a correlation between foreign language speaking anxiety and the speaking achievement of Saudi Arabian EFL learners?’ The data of the study were collected using questionnaires and speaking achievement tests. Samples of the study were 100 (50 male and 50 female) Preparatory Year Students studying English at Northern Border University, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Descriptive statistics and Spearman’s correlation coefficient were used to analyze data in Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 25. The results of the study revealed that there is a weak correlation between the speaking language anxiety and achievement of Saudi EFL learners in speaking, the effect size of the value of r is -0.242. Based on this result, the EFL learners with high language anxiety have less achievement in speaking test while EFL learners with low language speaking anxiety have high achievement in speaking test. The value P = 0.000 (sig. 2-tailed), which is smaller than 0.05%, indicating that language anxiety has significant negative effect on the respondents’ achievement in speaking. In other words, this indicated that 1% increase in anxiety would lead to a 88.8% decrease in EFL learner's performance in speaking at 0.000 level of significance. In conclusion, the study suggested different language anxieties such as personal and interpersonal anxiety, classroom anxiety, and learners' perceptions about foreign language anxiety need to be decreased.

Keywords: EFL learners, foreign language anxiety, psycholinguistic barriers, Saudi university students, speaking skills, speaking anxiety

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1.1 Introduction
Psycholinguistic barriers affect language comprehension, acquisition, and production (Örmeci, 2013; Shabitha & Mekala, 2013). Psycholinguistic barriers owe their source and origin to various factors, and accordingly, they are of many types, and they were found to affect learners in varying degrees. The most common psycholinguistic barriers affecting foreign language learning are anxiety (Elmenfi & Gaibani, 2016; Rafada, & Madini, 2017; Pérez, 2018), lack of motivation (Al-Qahtani, 2018; Abrar, Mukminin, Habibi, Asyrafi, Makmur, & Marzulina, 2018; Gearing & Roger, 2019; Fukuda, Sakata, Pope, 2019) and low self-confidence (Al-Khoudary, 2017; Bai & Yuan, 2018).

The EFL learners in the Arab region are no exception to such worldwide phenomena, and many Arab EFL learners fail to achieve the desired proficiency in English for the same reasons (Alrabai, 2014; Al-Saraj, 2014: Alsaawi, 2015; Albesher, Hussain, & Farid, 2018). Thus, the present study concerns with Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where English is taught as a foreign language and a good proficiency in English is a must for the students to continue in the university system for studies since except for language courses, the medium of instruction for all other university courses is English (Alzahrani, 2019). According to the educational system of Saudi Arabia, the teaching of English language begins from primary level and it continues to higher levels. Various recent studies in the context of Saudi Arabia (e.g. Ali, & Bin-Hady, 2019; Hakim, 2019) highlight that learners’ comprehension of the language – reading, writing, speaking and listening – commonly remains very low. Al-Seghayer (2011) categorizes Saudi Arabian EFL learners among low proficiency rather than the medium / high proficiency. According to Al-Seghayer (2011), in terms of progress with regards to expansion of teaching facilities Saudi Arabia busted teaching of English tremendously, but for the quality of teaching and learning achievements there is still need for improvement particularly the learning of the four language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia, in an effort to prepare the students for university education, puts all the fresh students in Preparatory Year where they learn English for one year. But the researcher’s experience is that even after one year of exclusive study of English language, there is noticed only a negligible improvement in students’ proficiency in English (Alsaleh, 2017). The present research is an outcome of a concern for this general failure of EFL learners in Saudi Arabia to achieve the desired proficiency in English. The study seeks to investigate the possible causes for such a failure. The researcher’s assumption is that, among other factors, psycholinguistic barriers play a major role in the learners’ failure to learn English.

The present study focusses on foreign language anxiety as one of these psycholinguistic barriers to language learning (Manipuspika, 2018). Huang (2012) defines anxiety as “a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object” (p. 1520). Anxiety is commonly understood as an emotion typically associated with the feeling of stress, tension, and worry. If a person is always anxious, psychologists consider it a pathological condition called “anxiety disorder,” diagnosed as having recurring intrusive thoughts, concerns or worries.
Anxiety is one of the sources of EFL learners’ difficulties in learning language skill especially speaking skills. Anxiety that arises from the pressure of learning a language can result in low productivity, dislike or fear of speaking (Elmenfi, & Gaibani, 2016). Many studies have confirmed that language anxiety has a negative effect on the performance of foreign language (FL) and second language (L2) learners (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Generally speaking, Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) refers to the fear that arises when learners are anticipated to conduct some job in a second or foreign language, and its prospective impacts are both common among second language learners and nuanced by different phases of language acquisition (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Several latest studies have highlighted how FLA has resonated with academics and teachers over the previous forty years to become the most researched affective variable in FL learning (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015; Gkonou, Daubney & Dewaele, 2017; Teimouri, Goetze & Plonsky, 2019). Furthermore, findings from research using neuroimaging methods found neural correlates of FLA, thus creating a biological foundation for this structure (Jeong et al., 2016). Kelsen (2019) postulates that, despite a wealth of research into FLA, many researchers have reported that anxiety remains one of the least understood affective variables in FL acquisition (Şimşek & Dornyei, 2017; Teimouri et al., 2019). This can be related to ambiguity surrounding its conceptualization and measurement of anxiety – such as the type of anxiety being measured – leading to discrepancy and possible sources of variability in the findings of several studies on the influence and effects of anxiety on foreign language learning (Şimşek & Dornyei, 2017; Teimouri et al., 2019). Bearing in mind all that is yet to be understood about FLA, Horwitz (2017) suggests considering of how anxiety varies across different learner samples and conditions and emphasizes the importance of providing second language students with positive and supportive learning environments (Kelsen, 2019).

It is usually recognized that learning a foreign language involves continuous excitement and motivation, and research into FLA has discovered it to be predominantly detrimental to cognitive processing, self-esteem, motivation, readiness to interact, dynamics and accomplishment in the classroom (Gkonou et al., 2017; Horwitz, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017; Teimouri et al., 2019).

Thus, the present study involves samples from Saudi preparatory year students of Northern Border University, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it purposely intends to answer this research question:

Is there a correlation between foreign language speaking anxiety and the speaking achievement of Saudi Arabian EFL learners?

2.1 Literature Review

Early studies into anxiety in FL situations offered inconsistent results (e.g., Scovel, 1978; Horwitz & Cope, 1986). MacIntyre (2017) identified this initial period as the Confounded Approach and attributed to the inconsistency of results pertaining to foreign language anxiety to the misplaced focus on facilitating and debilitating anxiety along with the view that some of the types of anxiety discussed were not associated with language learning environments. Horwitz and Cope (1986)’s
work became a landmark approach for investigation of FLA. Their study is based on a factor analytic approach encompassed three domains namely, communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. These domains constituted a milestone approach to study of foreign language anxiety known as the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)*.

Furthermore, Horwitz (1986) described the development and validity of the FLCAS, which offered clear evidence of FLA as a distinctive form of anxiety out of the three general types of anxieties stated in Horwitz et al. (1986). The FLCAS marked the beginning of various studies investigating the components of FLCA. In another influential study on FLA, Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) tried to differentiate between the types of anxieties in writing and speaking components of the FLCAS. In their study they used a principal component analysis delivering a two-component solution. The first component indicated low self-confidence especially with respect to English-language speaking ability, whereas the second component concerned with negative thoughts and emotions relating to English-language classroom performance anxiety. The outcome of their study revealed that there is negative correlation between English speaking performance of Taiwanese university students and FLCAS and its two components respectively, and that the two components accounted for 3.97% and 4.84% of the variation in English speaking course grades. Their findings indicated the presence of individual differences in language-specific anxiety, and the current research is a cross-sectional, confirmatory, correlational, descriptive study. Their study is cross-sectional since the sampled participating students represent a cross-section of the total population of EFL students at the selected university; the study is confirmative because the researcher took up the prefabricated hypothesis investigation and the primary purpose of the study was to confirm/test the hypothesis.

Hakim (2019) employed two qualitative approaches semi-structured interview and focus group discussion to investigate the language anxiety among English language learners in Saudi Arabia. This study is particularly aimed to explore the factors that contribute to language anxiety among Arab language learners. It dealt with EFL learners anxiety within the classroom setting and outside, i.e. in the social context. Various suggestions on how to tackle the issues of FLA among the EFL were given.

Kelsen (2019) examined the association between personality traits measured via the Big Five Inventory (BFI) and perceived anxiety associated with delivering presentations assessed by the Personal Report on Public Speaking (PRPSA). An exploratory factor analysis was employed in this study to identify four public speaking anxiety factors, including a positive mindset, physical symptoms, preparation anxiety, and performance anxiety. The lead of factor assessment with these factors as dependent variables in various regression equations and personality characteristics as explanatory variables showed that the variables of personality extraversion, neuroticism, awareness, and openness to experience were all important predictors of public-speaking anxiety – explaining 10 to 23% of the variance – depending on which factor. Variables of personality were then entered into hierarchical regressions while controlling English skills and the quantity of variance explained ranged from 16% to 32%. Avenues through which our understanding and knowledge of language learning are discussed through these studies.
Pérez (2018) examines how foreign language anxiety (FLA) and proficiency relate to second language (L2) utterance fluency during a final oral exam. Thirty-eight learners of Spanish (L1 English) completed unplanned narratives that were coded for ratio and length of pauses between and within Analysis of Speech Units, mean duration of run, phonation-time ratio, and articulation rate. Learners’ oral proficiency was measured with an aural/oral sentence imitation task. Multiple regression analyses showed that anxiety is a strong predictor for certain temporal features associated with subjective ratings of fluency. Overall oral proficiency, however, was not a significant predictor in any case. The findings confirm the interference of FLA with cognitive processing and contribute to our understanding of the challenges faced by anxious learners during classroom-based language assessment.

In a study conducted by Manipuspika (2018) which aimed at examining the relationship between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students’ language anxiety and their willingness to communicate. Using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Likert-type WTC Scale, the data were collected from 98 undergraduate students studying at English Department in Universitas Brawijaya Malang, Indonesia. Pearson’s Correlation test was utilised to analyse the data in SPSS. The results of this study indicated a strong positive correlation between learners’ foreign language classroom anxiety and their willingness to communicate. This study involved three types of anxiety, namely, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension. Furthermore, learners had a high amount of anxiety, which in turn made them hard to deal with the process of language learning and tended to have a low willingness to talk. This research therefore attempts to show whether anxiety is an important obstacle to WTC, to determine the kinds and levels of FLA, and to provide suggestions to assist minimize anxiety.

On the other hand, Albesher, Hussain and Farid (2018) investigated whether the use of L1 in the class decreases the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). The data were collected using five-point Likert-scale consisting of 12-items survey questions administered to lecturers and students. 100 Saudi university students and 100 EFL teachers have responded to the survey questionnaire. The main result of study revealed that L1 speeds up the process of language learning naturally when used occasionally and sensibly with the aim of keeping the learners’ self-esteem and self-image intact and bringing down their FLCA.

Rafada and Madini (2017) conducted a study with the aim to provide some effective solutions on ways to reduce Saudi EFL learners’ speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms. The researchers sought the perceptions of 10 Saudi female students, studying their foundation year at the English Language Institute (ELI), King Abdulaziz University, pertaining to speaking anxiety in language classrooms. Unlike previous studies reviewed here, the researcher employed qualitative approach in order to have in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon. For gathering data, Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten Saudi female students from levels 102, 103, and 104. The data were analysed thematically using Nvivo 10 software. The qualitative data showed that when the foreign language is spoken, Saudi female students feel worried and anxious in foreign language classrooms. However, they showed a favourable attitude and a desire to enhance their level of English speaking skills by watching English films, using English websites, traveling overseas and talking to native speakers.
On the other hand, Elmenfi and Gaibani (2016) investigated the role of social evaluation in influencing public speaking anxiety of English language learners at Omar Al-Mukhtar University, Libya. The data were collected using random sampling involving 111 students selected as respondents in the study. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations), parametric statistics (a three-way ANOVA analysis), and Pearson’s Correlation coefficients were used in the data analysis using SPSS. The result of the study revealed that social evaluation is a very significant aspect and is an important contributor to Public Speaking Anxiety of English foreign language learners at Omar Al- Mukhtar University.

3.1 Methods
This is a correlational research design. Correlation is a quantitative method of research study in which two or more quantitative variables are used from the same group of subjects and then the researcher tries to determine if there is a relation between the two variables. According to (Creswell, 2012):

Correlational designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators measure the degree of association (or relation) between two or more variables using the statistical procedure of correlational analysis. This degree of association, expressed as a number, indicates whether the two variables are related or whether one can predict another. To accomplish this, you study a single group of individuals rather than two or more groups as in an experiment (p. 44).

In the present study the correlation is established between quantitative results obtained from preparatory year students of Northern Border University, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

3.1.1 Participants
Data for the present study were collected from 100 preparatory year students (50 male and 50 female) from Northern Border University, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. All the students were Saudi Arabian indigenes age range from 19 to 21 years.

3.1.2 Instruments
The data for the main study were collected in two steps. First, the data were collected through questionnaires, as planned, to gather information on the selected students' attitude towards English language and anxiety as one of the major psycholinguistic barriers they may be facing that are chosen to be investigated for the present study. A total of 100 5 Likert scales questionnaires with 10-item questions, were distributed to the selected group of student participants (50 male and 50 female participants). All the 100 participants answered and returned the filled-in questionnaires. On a preliminary analysis, all the returned questionnaires were found complete. On further examination, all 100 questionnaires were found valid, and as a result, all the 100 questionnaires were accepted for analysis, Table 1, displays the responses rate of questionnaires.
Table 1. Response Rate of Students for the Research Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total questionnaires</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned:</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Returned</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 indicates that a total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to 100 respondents. All the questionnaires were filled and returned with 100 percent valid rate. This means all the respondents willingly and positively responded to the questionnaires.

The second instrument used in this study is speaking achievement test. Oral test was administered to the 100 respondents. The total number of students who had returned the survey questionnaires was one hundred, so, all the one hundred students turned up for the tests as well. The test contains 10 questions. In addition, the respondents were asked to write down their answers of speaking test on sheets of papers. Their utterances were analysed based on the phonological and syntactic linguistics patterns. The test was marked over 10. This indicated that each 1-mark unit is equal to 10 percent of the overall marks of the test. While 1/2 mark was assigned to a partly correct response, whereas a wrong response was assigned zero mark. So, the participants were assigned marks out of a total of 10 marks for the speaking. The marks obtained by each participant were tabulated and converted into percentage figures. But on careful examination of answer sheets, it was found that for the speaking test only ninety-four answer sheets were valid for inclusion for evaluation (from 50 male and 44 female students) Table 3.2, displays the responses rate of the speaking achievement test.

Table 2. Response Rate of Students for the Listening Comprehension Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Sheets</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total test sheets distributed</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned:</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Returned</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The data of this study were analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and Spearman’s correlation coefficient. Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 25 is utilised in this analysis.
4.1 Results and Discussion
A 5 Likert scales questionnaire with 10 item is used to collect data from the 100 EFL learners in this study. The data collected were analysed descriptive statistic and Pearson Correlation. Frequency and percentage were utilised to present the data collected from the questionnaires. On the other hand, Pearson Correlation was employed to find the relationship between the dependent (speaking performance) and independent (language speaking anxiety) variables.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics (Frequency and Percentage)

In the descriptive, the frequency of the respondents who agree with the statements is indicated as A and SA (Agree and Strongly Agree), N indicated neutral position, while the frequency of the respondents who do not agree with statements is indicated as D and SD (Disagree and Strongly Disagree). The main aim of this description is to show the number of the students who positively responded to the questionnaire and the number the students who negatively responded to the questionnaire and those who take a neutral position.

Table 3. Descriptive Frequency: Speaking Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am a shy person in general, so, I feel nervous to use English with others.</td>
<td>4(4%)</td>
<td>3(3%)</td>
<td>10(10%)</td>
<td>43(43%)</td>
<td>40(40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I’m afraid people will laugh at me if I use English to talk with them.</td>
<td>2(2%)</td>
<td>3(30%)</td>
<td>8(8%)</td>
<td>53(53%)</td>
<td>34(34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>When I feel nervous, I commit more errors in English.</td>
<td>5(5%)</td>
<td>9(9%)</td>
<td>30(30%)</td>
<td>41(41%)</td>
<td>15(15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I commit errors because I know I will commit errors in English.</td>
<td>3(3%)</td>
<td>8(8%)</td>
<td>10(10%)</td>
<td>60(60%)</td>
<td>19(19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>English is so difficult that I feel I can never learn it.</td>
<td>6(6%)</td>
<td>10(10%)</td>
<td>12(12%)</td>
<td>45(45%)</td>
<td>27(27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>If I feel something is difficult, I leave the attempts to learn it.</td>
<td>5(5%)</td>
<td>8(8%)</td>
<td>9(9%)</td>
<td>45(45%)</td>
<td>33(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>It is difficult for me to learn English at this age.</td>
<td>36(36%)</td>
<td>30(30.0%)</td>
<td>10(10.0%)</td>
<td>19(19.0%)</td>
<td>5(5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I feel nervous when teacher asked me to speak in a class</td>
<td>6(6%)</td>
<td>11(11.0%)</td>
<td>10(10.0%)</td>
<td>45(45.0%)</td>
<td>28(28.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I do not feel confident to</td>
<td>2(2%)</td>
<td>14(14%)</td>
<td>14(14%)</td>
<td>45(45%)</td>
<td>25(25%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows the result of the language speaking anxiety from the respondents' questionnaire which comprised 10 items. Item 1 of the questionnaire revealed that majority of the respondents 83(83%) (A+SA=43+40) believed that during speaking in English they feel shy and nervous, while, 10(10%) of the respondents held a neutral position and 7(7%) (SD+D= 4+3) disagreed with the statement. This item is about personal anxiety that is the feeling by the person about doing something or effect of something on him. Item 2, is also about personal anxiety, it indicated that majority of the respondents 87(87%) (A+SA= 53+34) believed that they are afraid of speaking English when thinking people will laugh at them, while, 8(8%) of the respondents held a neutral position and 5(5%) (SD+D=2+3) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Item 3 is about personnel and interpersonal anxiety, it revealed that majority of the respondents 56(56%) (A+SA= 41+15) believed that, they commit more errors in speaking when they are nervous, while 30(30%) of the respondents held a neutral position and 14(14%) (SD+D=5+9) disagreed with the statement. Item 4 is about learner beliefs about language learning anxiety which indicated that majority of the respondents 79(79%) (A+SA= 60+19 perceived that they are not good in English and when they speak in English, they are bound to commit errors. While, 10(10%) of the respondents held a neutral position and 11(11%) (SD+D= 3+8) disagreed with the statement. Item 5 is about personal anxiety, here the result indicated that majority of the respondents 72(72%) (A+SA= 45+27) perceived that speaking English as a difficult task, which they think it hard for them to learn it, while, 12(12%) of the respondents held a neutral position and 16(16%) (SD+D= 6+10) disagreed with the statement. Item 6 is about learner beliefs about language learning anxiety indicating that majority of the respondents 78(78%) (A+SA= 45+33) perceived that they stop attempt to learn things they considered difficult to learn, while, 9(9%) respondent held a neutral position and 13(13%) (SD+D= 5+8) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Item 7 is about learner beliefs about language learning anxiety, the result showed that majority 76(76%) (SD+D= 36+30) of the respondents disagreed with the statement showing age as a barrier to learn English, while 10 respondents held a neutral position, and 24(24%) (A+SA = 19 +5) of the respondents perceived that their age is a barrier to them to learn English. Item 8 is about foreign language classroom testing anxiety, it shown that majority of the respondents 73(73%) (A+SA= 45+28) believed that they are afraid of to be asked by the teacher to speak in an English language classroom, while, 10(10%) of the respondents held a neutral position and 17(17%) (SD+D=6+11) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Item 9 is about personal and interpersonal anxiety, it shown that majority of the respondents 70(70%) (A+SA= 45+25) perceived that they are lacking of confidence to speak English in public, while, 14(14%) of the respondents held a neutral position and 16(16%) (SD+D=2+14) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. The last, item 10 is
about personal anxiety, it revealed that majority of the respondents 75(75%) (A+SA= 39+36) perceived that they are not sure with their English pronunciation whether they do it correctly or not, while, 18(18%) of the respondents held a neutral position and 7(7%) (SD+D= 1+6) of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

4.3 EFL Learners’ Results on Speaking Achievement Test
This section presents the results of the speaking achievement test. Oral test was given to the 100 participants. The test was marked over 10. In the table below we presented the marks obtained by each participant in the test. Only 96 sheets were valid and included for further analysis. The results obtained here were used to correlate with responses of the questionnaires (see Table 4, Appendix A).

4.4 Correlation between EFL Learners’ Anxiety and Performance in English language Speaking Test
In order to examine the influence of speaking anxiety on EFL learners’ achievement in speaking test, a Pearson’s correlation coefficient was utilised to find the relationship between the two variables. This is a statistical measure of the strength of a linear relationship between paired data (Wherry, 2014). Positive values indicated positive linear correlation, while, negative values represented negative linear correlation, and a value of 0 denoted no linear correlation. The closer the value is to 1 or -1, the stronger the linear correlation (Manipuspika, 2018). This study, we used the suggestion given Evans (1996) about the absolute effect size of r.

.00 – .19 = very weak
.20 – .39 = weak
.40 – .59 = moderate
.60 – .79 = strong
.80 – 1.0 = very strong

Table 4.5, illustrated the results of the relationship between the two variables.

Table 4:3 Correlation between Language Speaking Anxiety and EFL Learners’ Performance in Speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking performance</td>
<td>Speaking language anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-0.242**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Respondents</td>
<td>100</td>
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**p < 0.05
Table 4.2, highlighted the value of the Pearson’s Correlation between EFL students’ performance in speaking test and speaking language anxiety based on 100 respondents. The value of the Pearson’s Correlation is -0.242 indicating that there is a weak correlation between the two variables. The result indicated that there is a weak relationship between language speaking anxiety and EFL learners’ achievement in speaking test. In that regard the speaking anxiety has negative influence on the participants’ achievement in speaking. Based on this result, the EFL learners with high language anxiety have less achievement in speaking while EFL learners with low language speaking anxiety have high achievement in speaking test. The value \( P = 0.000 \) (sig. 2-tailed) which is smaller than 0.05\%, indicating that language anxiety has significant negative effect on the respondents’ achievement of in speaking skills. In other words, this result indicated that 1% increase in anxiety would lead to a 24.2% decrease of EFL learners performance in speaking at 0.000 level of significance.

The present study had confirmed the findings of various studies on relationship between foreign language anxiety and achievement of foreign language learners in L2 from various contexts, for example Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) found a negative and significant correlation between foreign language anxiety and Taiwanese university students’ achievement in speaking. Furthermore, not consistent with findings of Manipuspika (2018) found strong and positive relation firstly, the finding of a positive association between ESL public speaking anxiety and presentation performance is consistent with prior research that has demonstrated that foreign language anxiety prevents non-native English speakers from communicating well orally Charoensukmongkol (2019). It also contradicted the findings of Pérez (2018) who insignificant relationship between foreign language anxiety (FLA) and proficiency relate to second language (L2) utterance fluency during a final oral exam among Spanish EFL learners.

Conclusion
This study has provided a quantitative analysis on the foreign language anxiety as a psycholinguistic barrier negatively affecting the speaking achievement of the foreign language learners. The study revealed the relationship between EFL students’ language anxiety and their achievement in speaking skills. The results indicated a negative but significant positive correlation between Saudi Preparatory Year students’ achievements in speaking and foreign language classroom anxiety.

This means that EFL learners with low language anxiety tended to have high speaking achievement and EFL learners who more anxious about language classroom tended to have low achievement in speaking L2 language. Importantly, the findings of the present study described some of the types of foreign language anxiety as suggested by Horwitz (2001), namely, personal and interpersonal anxiety, learner beliefs about language learning anxiety, language testing anxiety, and classroom procedures anxiety.

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References


theory, research and educational implications (pp. 51–69). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Apendix A

<p>| Table 4. EFL Learners’ Results of Speaking Achievement Test |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Participant | Marks Obtained in Speaking Test | Percentage |</p>
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Education 4.0 Technologies, Industry 4.0 Skills and the Teaching of English in Malaysian Tertiary Education

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Abstract
Unprecedented changes are happening in the way the world works; traditional jobs are being replaced by new ones that need critical skills for workers of the future. Enter the era of ‘Industry 4.0’. In this era, knowledge and skills are paramount for one to stay relevant and remain competitive in the job market. Terms like ‘reskilling’ and ‘upskilling’ reflect the kind of changes that are happening. Thus, it is only natural that the realm of education follows suit, with the construct of ‘Education 4.0’. This research article takes a broadly neutral view of Industry 4.0 and Education 4.0, although both constructs are criticized by certain quarters. In truth, the increasing automation of manual labor and remarkable growth in and expansion of technological developments, all point to an uncertain future for the next generation of future workers. Strategies must be drafted, and initiatives be taken, to ensure young people are not disadvantaged in the near future. This article examines the struggles of a small group of English educators at Malaysian public universities, who are frantically trying to apply Education 4.0 learning technologies to teach this international language to Malaysian students, based on three core research questions. Handicapped with little to no budget, limited technical expertise and no institutional assistance, and facing resistance from traditional educators, the ‘thick’ qualitative descriptions and stories shared by these educators cum learning technologists provide a glimpse into the realities of English teaching and learning at a time of ‘disruptions’ linked to Industry 4.0 and Education 4.0.

Keywords: Education 4.0, Industry 4.0, learning skills, learning technologies, Malaysia, tertiary education


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Introduction
Given that post-secondary or tertiary education is critical to national progress, it is only apt that the curriculum of colleges and universities be catered towards the needs of undergraduates who must face the challenges of the real world and ‘Industry 4.0’ (Ehlers & Kellermann, 2019; Schwab & Davis, 2018). Tertiary curriculum must also be innovative and relevant, both at the technological and personal levels (Adnan, 2018; Araya, 2015). Technological developments from different fields, must be brought into lecture rooms while taking into account the learning preferences of the current generation (Doucet, Evers, Guerra, Lopez, Soskil & Timmers, 2018); what was useful 10 or 20 years ago might not be relevant in the here and now, what more with rapid developments in technologies of teaching and learning (Adnan & Zamari, 2012a, 2012b). Simply put, the ways that ‘Gen X’ tertiary educators (born between 1965-1979) learn are now irrelevant to ‘Gen Z’ undergraduates (born between 1995-2015). The younger generation was born into technology and they need technology to make sense of the world. The critical question that needs to be asked is, do their (old) educators understand this and are they able to apply relevant technologies in the post-secondary/tertiary educational context?

This question must be answered by English educators working in tertiary colleges and universities. While English teaching focuses on the development of the four skills of listening and speaking, reading and writing (see Adnan, 2014; Adnan & Abdullah, 2014), this does not mean that learning methods of the past can cater to the learning styles of the present generation. The ‘chalk and talk’ approach, for example, might be unproductive for the teaching of English especially when better alternatives are now present that make learners more invested in their learning. ‘Education 4.0’ technological advances are indeed opening up opportunities for learning, anytime and anywhere (Adnan, Ahmad, Yusof, Mohd Kamal & Mustafa Kamal, 2019). This research article is an effort to highlight these issues, focusing on English language educators working at Malaysian public universities. The ability of young future workers to communicate through the English language as a lingua franca is not just added value to their professional repertoire, it is increasingly becoming a necessity when cross-boundary collaborations across space and time zones are now common. But, are English educators ready to face these challenges and become not just teachers but also content developers and learning technologists?

Industry 4.0 and critical skills for future jobs
Schwab (2016) in his ground-breaking book on the 4th Industrial Revolution, highlights not just the problems that the next industrial revolution might give rise to but also the opportunities that it might bring as technological developments start to combine and interweave with physical realities, biological systems and digital innovations. He explains, “Aside from speed and breadth, the fourth industrial revolution is unique because of the growing harmonization and integration of so many different disciplines and discoveries” (p. 15). For the person on the street, the easiest way to make sense of what is happening is by looking for patterns of ‘disruptions’ in established norms and society-related systems (Gleason, 2018). Yet, disruptions brought by the 4th Industrial Revolution also bring opportunities for growth that need to be managed so that Industry 4.0 does not increase the traditional chasms between developed and less developed nations and exacerbate the differences between the rich and the poor. As Schwab (2016) puts it:
The reality of disruption and the inevitability of the impact it will have on us does not mean that we are powerless in face of it. It is our responsibility to ensure that we establish a set of common values to drive policy choices and to enact the changes that will make the fourth industrial revolution an opportunity for all. (p. 17)

For the younger generation to be part of this movement and to gain better opportunities for themselves, the World Economic Forum’s ‘The Future of Jobs’ report in 2016 (and in 2018) outlined ten critical skills for the world of work for 2020 and beyond. The following two paragraphs review these skills.

The first critical skill for Industry 4.0 is complex problem solving. Future careers will require some sort of complex problem-solving skills. To solve complex problems, a worker must be able to quickly switch from one group of skills to the other and back again. The second critical skill is critical thinking. Critical thinking is the ability to think logically and rationally about what needs to be done or what needs to be believed. It also includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking while trying to see logical links between ideas. The third critical skill for the workplace of the future is creativity. Creativity is the tendency to generate or recognize ideas or alternatives that may be useful in solving different problems. The fourth critical skill to face the challenges of Industry 4.0 is people management. People management or people skills is important so that a worker can relate to others and understand other points of views. The fifth critical skill is coordinating with others. Coordinating to work with others means to arrange the workflow to execute a task and to aid in achieving collective effort. Coordinating includes attending to several tasks instantaneously or multitasking.

The sixth critical skill for the workplace of the future is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to know and manage one’s emotions to relieve anxiety, communicate, empathize, tackle problems and handle conflicts. Most ‘soft skills’ are directly associated with emotional intelligence. The seventh critical skill is judgment and decision making. Judgment is the ability to make logical conclusions and measured decisions. Judging and then deciding on something goes hand in hand but both need practice and experience. The eighth critical skill for the future of work is service orientation. Service orientation refers to personality traits and a worker’s aptitude to be helpful, thoughtful and co-operative with others. Some people possess these traits naturally, but most do not. The ninth critical skill for the Industry 4.0 era is negotiation. To negotiate requires strong interpersonal and communication skills to bring desired results for two or more parties (i.e., win-win situations). The tenth and final critical skill for the workplace of the future is cognitive flexibility. This is the ability to switch between different personas or roles, between thinking about non-connecting concepts, and thinking about many dissimilar concepts all at once.

Most interestingly, many, if not all the skills mentioned in the paragraphs above will involve language as an intermediary or mediating factor (see Davies, Fidler & Gorbis, 2011). Linking this back to the introduction section, it is possible to argue that a common international language like English will play a crucial role in interweaving the ten critical skills for Industry 4.0. Tertiary students cannot do without English and they need English not just as an added skill in
their professional repertoire but more importantly, to access the critical skills needed to look for, and to secure, jobs of the future.

Education 4.0 and the future of learning

If English language is placed at the core of the ten critical skills for Industry 4.0, then it is only logical that the teaching and learning of English must follow the design of future curriculums and be in line with the broad aims and objectives of Education 4.0 (see Ahmad, Adnan, Azamri, Idris, Norafand & Ishak, 2019; Rüfenacht, 2017). This section reviews the concept of Education 4.0 and the future of learning from several sources. In the United Kingdom, Education 4.0 is viewed as a set of trends and challenges as below (see Times Higher Education, 2019). The first trend is the transformation of teaching. Human educators need to rethink why and how they teach once Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other deep thinking technologies become more common in tertiary education. The second trend is personalized learning. Tertiary educators must be able to cater to the learning styles of individual students and consider their diverse behaviors, differences, and performances. The next trend is personalized assessment. As AI systems run tests, experiential learning through digital technologies and the advent of so-called ‘micro-credentials’ will become the norm. Tertiary educators must be ready to do without high stakes pen-and-paper tests. The final trend is the growth in intelligent digital environments. As these environments become more prevalent in physical classrooms, tertiary students need better experiences to be able to interact effectively and learn from and within those environments (see Mustafa Kamal, Adnan, Yusof, Ahmad & Mohd Kamal, 2019).

Fisk (2017) also talks about nine education trends that will demarcate the Education 4.0 movement from the earlier education movements in the post-Industrial Revolution era. The first trend that Fisk observes is diversity in learning opportunities whereby “students will have more opportunities to learn at different times in different places” (2017, online). As a result, more lessons will be ‘flipped’ where theoretical learning happens outside of the classroom while practical learning and testing happens in class (see Martin, 2011). The second trend is more personalized learning that will adapt to the personal needs of learners. This is useful for weaker students, who “will get the opportunity to practice more until they reach the required level” (Fisk, 2017, online). Compare this with traditional learning that teaches ‘to the middle’ of the class and ignores the needs of higher potential and lower ability students. The third trend is a free choice in choosing how to learn. Students “will be able to modify their learning with tools they feel are necessary” (Fisk, 2017, online). Learning technologies will allow for a multitude of gadgets, platforms, and techniques to be used based on the learning styles and preferences of learners (see Mohd Kamal, Adnan, Mustafa Kamal, Ahmad & Yusof, 2019). The fourth trend of Education 4.0 is a movement towards project-based curriculums. Project-based learning centers on students and allows them to acquire knowledge through the exploration of ‘real’ challenges in different spheres of life from industry to community.

The fifth trend is gaining experience from the field. As learning technologies become more common and learning becomes more natural, learners need to deal with real challenges in the field rather than learning based on theories. The sixth trend is data interpretation. As computers and AI systems become more adept at solving difficult problems, the roles of human workers become even more critical as data analysts, not just to make sense of the present but also to deduce future
trends that will affect human life. The seventh trend for Education 4.0 is a change in testing and evaluation. Tests and exams of the past are nothing more than an exercise in memorizing facts and figures, and then regurgitating them. In line with the critical skills for Industry 4.0, the application of learners’ knowledge “is best tested when they work on projects in the field” (Fisk, 2017, online). The eighth trend is student ownership in the process of formal learning. Educators must constantly gain input from their learners, not just political or industrial figures and parents. The younger generation must be given the space to become significant stakeholders in education signaling a revamp of the social functions of education in the past 20 years (Adnan & Smith, 2001). The ninth trend for Education 4.0 is that the process of mentoring will become even more imperative for educational success. The role of the educator as the ‘master’ of knowledge must be changed to that of facilitator and mentor, someone who guides learners on their journey of knowledge.

Some of these trends are already appearing in the education systems of developed nations (see Adnan, Ahmad, Mohd Kamal, Mustafa Kamal, A. M. Yusof & Azamri, 2019; Karim, Abu, Adnan & Suhandoko, 2018). But what about the rest of the world, like in Malaysia? Just because Industry 4.0 and Education 4.0 are bringing never-before-seen changes, are educators in developing nations ready to embrace them, and more importantly, to become learning technologists instead of traditional teachers? In the teaching and learning of English, which is the core concern of this article, are changes brought by Industry 4.0 and the technologies of Education 4.0 being applied in lecture rooms of Malaysian tertiary institutions? The next section addresses these concerns.

Research participants, data collection and analysis

Based on the research literature reviewed in the previous sections, an empirical inquiry was carried out for about nine months from January to September 2019 to examine what is actually happening on the ground, with reference to English language teaching and learning in the era of Industry 4.0 and with the availability of Education 4.0 learning technologies in Malaysia. As discussed earlier, unprecedented changes are happening not just in the way students are learning but more importantly, in the way that teachers should be teaching. There is a clear gap in the literature between both spectrums (see Yusof, Adnan, Mustafa Kamal, Mohd Kamal & Ahmad, 2019). To explore this gap, three research questions guided this empirical effort, as below.

First, how are English educators at Malaysian public universities applying Education 4.0 learning technologies to the teaching and learning dyad?

Second, what difficulties are English educators at Malaysian public universities facing in applying Education 4.0 learning technologies to the language teaching and learning process?

Third, why are some English educators at Malaysian public universities struggling hard to apply Education 4.0 learning technologies to their instructions? What drives them to do what they do?

The participants of this qualitative empirical inquiry

To answer the research questions, this study examined the lived experiences and daily struggles of 19 English language educators working at three Malaysian public universities who are actively involved in Education 4.0 learning technologies projects. These English educators were invited in January 2019 to participate in this study, based on distinct criteria for participant selection. First, their Education 4.0 learning technologies projects must be directly related to the
teaching of English in the Malaysian context and must involve the use of novel technological tools and methods. Second, their Education 4.0 projects must be innovations that have competed, are competing, and will continue to compete in international level teaching and learning innovation competitions. Their projects must also have won at least three different prizes in three different competitions and/or categories. Third, their Education 4.0 projects must be funded from their own pockets and they must not be financially backed by their tertiary institutions or other direct funders. Finally, the Education 4.0 learning technologies of the research participants must be recognized at the national or international level through electronic and/or print media coverage, as a testament to the innovativeness and novelties of these projects.

Based on these stringent criteria, three Education 4.0 learning technologies projects and their respective team members were invited to take part in this study. The first team/project applies virtual reality (VR) technology to teach English for Business, helping degree students at their campus in northern Peninsular Malaysia ‘experience’ business-related situations and tasks, anytime and anywhere. ‘Team Virtual Reality’ is led by a 43-year-old English educator and his team is made up of two smaller teams with four members in each sub-team (nine team members in all). Two of the team members are female and the rest are male, the average age of the group is 29 years. The second team/project uses smartphones and mobile technologies to teach English for Writing. This team uses mobile technology to teach the skill of writing using animated mind maps and ‘writing trees’ so that diploma level students at their campus in central Peninsular Malaysia can never run out of ideas on how and what to write. ‘Team Mobile Learning’ is led by a 38-year-old English educator with four younger members in that team. This all-female team averages 30 years in age. The third and last team/project makes use of a chatbot program to train diploma level students to respond to text conversations as a metacognitive technique to encourage students at their campus in central Peninsular Malaysia to start thinking and developing ideas to speak in English. ‘Team Chatbot Program’ is led by a 34-year-old English educator with four more team members. This all-male team averages 31 years in age.

**The qualitative data collection and analysis process**

Qualitative data were collected using two instruments, focus group discussions (Ho, 2006) and from continuous online discussions within a closed ‘Telegram’ group (Kozinets, 2015). Preliminary work started in January 2019 with the participants’ selection process and ended in mid-February. Once data disclosure forms were signed and the participants agreed to share ideas and opinions freely with each other, a Telegram group was set up. Telegram is a cloud-based instantaneous messaging app that is accessible through multiple platforms such as Google Android and Apple iOS. In the following months, two focus group discussion sessions were held with each Education 4.0 learning technologies team at their convenience. These sessions were held informally, outside of campus to avoid problems of access. The sessions were held even if only two participants could attend. This is a common dilemma when it comes to carrying out focus group discussions. To protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms are used instead of real names in this research article, and all other identifying details are removed to adhere to international standards in research ethics.

The focus group discussion data were then selectively transcribed, and a summary shared for ‘member checking’ (Chapelle & Duff, 2003). No clear-cut interview protocols were prepared,
and the participants were given the chance to comment and share their experiences freely. Sessions were conducted both in English and Malay, as informally as possible. At the end of the data collection process somewhere around August 2019, six discussion sessions were completed together with streams of online discussions from the app group. This massive collection of textual data are the ‘thick’ (Geertz, 1973) data record the researchers co-constructed with the participants. After transcribing and coding, the data were thematically analyzed in two stages, namely horizontal (group or collective data) and vertical (personal or individual data). Results of a broad thematic analysis of the data (Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) addressed the three research questions that guide this study. The controlled and disciplined process of data collection and analysis in this study significantly improved the quality of qualitative data, in tune with Lincoln and Guba’s (2000) notion of research ‘trustworthiness’.

Presentation and analysis of the qualitative data
Empirical data in this section are organized based on the experiences and stories shared by the three English language-related Education 4.0 learning technologies teams. The data presented are also linked to the three research questions that guide this study. The research questions deal with how English educators at Malaysian public universities apply Education 4.0 technologies for the teaching and learning of English; the complications and hitches they face in their continuing endeavors to use Education 4.0 technologies to teach English; and finally, the real reasons why they strive to use Education 4.0 technologies to teach English, and what drives them to continue their efforts even when they face stumbling blocks in their journey.

**Education 4.0 learning technologies and the hard work of ‘Team Virtual Reality’**

‘Dr. Ellmi’ who heads Team Virtual Reality describes himself as “a dreamer who tries to deal with real-life issues.” It so happens that the biggest issue that he faces as a university educator is the limited time given to teaching English to his degree level students. He laments during the first focus group discussion (FGD) session with his team members:

Ten years ago, we had six hours to teach one English code per week. It was tiring but the learning was bloody meaningful. Students had so much exposure that they had no choice but to learn the language. Now, we’re left with two measly hours each week to teach advanced English skills. You tell me then, what the hell can you teach in two hours?

But Dr. Ellmi did not take things lying down. Frustrated with the short time given to teach business and professional English skills, he quickly turned to technologies of learning. “I’m such a nerd and a bit of a techno-geek,” he confesses. Having the experience as a learning technologist working at two international universities helped too, as he searched for ways in which English exposure could be increased even with the limited classroom time. He explains, “I’m also a gamer just not so good. One thing I learned from PC gaming is the importance of immersive experiences to enhance our gaming skills. I started thinking, what if the same immersiveness is applied to language learning?”

After many months mulling over the idea of applying immersive gaming principles to English language teaching and learning, Dr. Ellmi started to reskill and upskill himself with knowledge related to virtual realities (see 3DLabs, 2019; AdvancED, 2015, Aniwaa, 2019). In late 2018, he saved some money to purchase a 360-degrees spherical video camera online and he
started experimenting with 360-degrees audio-visual technology to simulate, record and share business and professional English interactions and meetings with his students. ‘Kay Jungkook’ his right-hand man explains (FGD session #2):

The problem with the Dr. is that his brain thinks way too fast for us. When he first asked us to join his Education 4.0 team last year, we had no idea what he was really rambling about [laughs]. But within this one year, our team has done so much. We even won some awards, and most importantly, we can see the students are benefitting from our hard work so far.

‘Cute Girl’, the only female lecturer in the original Team Virtual Reality, is fully invested in the work that they are doing. However, in the Telegram group she explains, “The truth is we face so many technical challenges. So many! Especially when you deal with new technology. Many times, we had to redo the VR videoing because something went wrong somewhere.”

The “VR videoing” she mentioned is just one part of the long process to create useful immersive experiences to teach and learn English. Team Virtual Reality spent many weeks to write acting scripts and to perfect their business and professional English simulations. Then, comes the process of actual videoing followed by rendering and lengthy post-production. Money is also an issue and, up to the point of writing, the team had invested a lot of their own in this project. The proposals they sent to several government-linked companies have so far been ignored or outright rejected. As ‘Anuvar’ one of the team members describes in Telegram, “For me, I think what we’re doing is too advanced. People around us don’t even understand what we’re trying to do for the students. Well, we must do this for the new generation students, right?” In the final FGD session, Dr. Ellmi shares his point of view:

Are we doing the right thing? Of course, we are. Will we face problems? Definitely we will. Bringing change into our traditional [education] system is hard. Money won’t be enough, and the technical problems won’t go away. But I always remind the team, we’re doing this for our own students. They’re born into technology, so we must take advantage of this. As the students learn about English, we’re learning about new technologies. In the end, what really matters is the actions we take now to bring real changes to the system. I refuse to become a dinosaur lecturer… we should be like the guys in Ready Player One.

**Education 4.0 learning technologies and the struggles of ‘Team Mobile Learning’**

‘Dr. Raudah’ is the leader of Team Mobile Learning, a group of lecturers who are trying hard to promote the use of mobile technology to teach the skill of writing. In the Malaysian setting, teaching the art of academic writing at university is no easy task given the fact that English is only a second language within the education system. Furthermore, as she explains in the team’s first FGD:

The biggest problem you face when you want to teach English writing is that it’s too dry. I mean, the skill is so dry and so boring. You can’t blame students if they hate writing. But look, our lecturers still teach writing the way their grandparents are taught [laughs]. Our team is trying to bring English writing to the 21st century.
Using smartphones loaded with animated mind maps and so-called electronic writing ‘trees’ (see Massa, 2019), Dr. Raudah and her team members have been hard at work promoting these technologically enhanced methods to their own diploma students and also to other Malaysian tertiary institutions, for example, local polytechnics and community colleges. “The technology is already there. These apps are free and can be loaded onto your phone with just a few taps. Why is it so hard for English lecturers to teach writing using these Education 4.0 methods?” she laments.

‘Che Hafizah’, one of her team members explains in the Telegram group: “I think the reason why our method is slow for other lecturers to pick up is because they’re in the comfort zone. Also, maybe they believe that copying from the whiteboard is the supreme method to teach writing.” Her opinion is shared by another member of Team Mobile Learning, ‘Serina’. She had this to say in the second FGD:

What I see is that my colleagues, especially the old senior ones, they can’t live without whiteboards [laughs]. Yes, they do use PowerPoint slides too. But how can you teach English writing like that? You think students care or not? When me and my friends teach writing using apps, mind maps and electronic diagrams, our students are so amazed. Why? Because they never thought learning to write in English can be interesting and not impossible to master.

Indeed, the main target of this Education 4.0 learning technology team is to teach university students that they can never run out of ideas on how and what to write, if they are able to use technological aids that they downloaded onto their smartphones. In addition, smartphones now are so common and affordable that it is rare for a Malaysian university student not to have access to this gadget on a day-to-day basis.

“Our challenge now is to develop our own app, because we just use other people’s app and adapt to our teaching. For me, we’re adopters and not innovators. I want to learn to become an educational innovator,” writes ‘Azrawatie’ another member of Team Mobile Learning in the Telegram group. The members of this Education 4.0 learning technology team feel that the time is ripe for more educators to join them and apply advanced technology in English teaching and learning. Like what Team Virtual Reality found out, the younger generation is more than ready and they welcome technology in the teaching and learning process. “One of my diploma students said to me: ‘Miss, finally you can teach English like how we want to learn’. What that boy said to me really struck me hard. If only other lecturers would listen,” Azrawatie adds.

**Education 4.0 learning technologies and the efforts of ‘Team Chatbot Program’**

Whereas the leaders of the two other teams are Education studies and English language experts by training, the leader of Team Chatbot Program, ‘Dr. Zidkri’, started his academic career with a degree in computer programming. It was only after that, that he decided to take up English teaching. After having recently completed his doctoral degree in TESOL and technology-enhanced learning environments, he decided to focus on another Industry 4.0 and Education 4.0 technological revolution: Chatbots. A chatbot is an AI software that can simulate a discussion (i.e., a chat) with a human user in natural language through messaging applications, mobile apps and
other electronic platforms (see Onlim, 2017).

“The challenge is to design a program that can mimic human conversations. For the first time with AI, big data and natural language processing easily accessible, the future is really promising,” Dr. Zidkri explains during the first FGD with his team members. He continues:

My team, we focus on chatbots because not many lecturers are looking into chatbot development. Maybe they think it’s too technical? But even with my IT training, I had to reskill myself on my own, my team members too […] Our chatbot works on the metacognitive level. We want to help students to become good [English] language learners. So, to begin, they must start thinking in English. Our chatbot, ‘Little Shakespeare’, focuses on that. The bot chats with students about 1001 things related to English in an informal, engaging and fun way. Well that’s the target anyway [laughs].

“We’re lucky that we have Dr. Zed. He takes on all the coding and backend software work. We help too but we focus more on textual corpus. Our target is to add in more nuances and natural Malaysian English.” ‘Shahrel’ a member of Team Chatbot Program explains in the second FGD. Much of their development effort is focused on the process of code testing followed by deployment, and to make sure that students are aware of the advantages of using a chatbot in learning the English language.

Shahrel adds, “So far responses have been awesome. Tell me, which student doesn’t know Siri or Alexa? By the way, that’s our next target, to incorporate voice recognition. But no one is willing to give us money to start this.” What Shahrel mentioned is a common stumbling block for Education 4.0 learning technologists in the Malaysian tertiary education setting. Other than having to do all the content development and lengthy technical work on their own without support from anyone, funds are also basically non-existent to back their positive efforts either from their universities, state governments and even the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Hence, what ‘Yusrie’, another member of Team Chatbot Program, shared with the Telegram group is heartfelt by all:

If we don’t do what we do, then who are we waiting for? The Mat Salleh and Minah Salleh [Europeans and Americans], is it? We talk about education for change but us lecturers we teach like in the Jurassic period. How will our students learn? And this is Malaysia, no one will support us… unless you know somebody who’s somebody. All the political people talk about Industry 4.0, Education 4.0 like they know it when they really don’t understand nothing. For myself, this is our sacrifice, our Jihad for knowledge. And, we do this for the students. We owe it to them, to teach them to prepare for the fuzzy future in front of them!

Conclusion

“We do this for the students,” practically sums up the primary reason why some English educators in Malaysian public universities are working hard, as fast as they could, to apply Education 4.0 learning technologies to the teaching and learning dyad. The challenges and difficulties they face are perhaps not alien to change agents and technological trailblazers of the past: Feeling alienated, not getting any support, and not having access to resources and desperately
needed funds. At the same time, the eyes and minds of these educators are wide open to the need for applying learning technologies at such a critical time in human history; the disruptions and uncertainties brought by Industry 4.0 are real, and they are already happening whether we are ready to face them or not.

The experiences and stories shared by members of Team Virtual Reality, Team Mobile Learning and Team Chatbot Program clearly show that all of them understand the necessity to develop and use Education 4.0 technologies for the teaching and learning of English. Even though the three teams face challenges and difficulties in taking their work to the next level, and in trying to expand and share their efforts with other educators in Malaysia, it is heartening to see that they are not giving up on their journeys. What will be even more encouraging is to see more educators who understand that they need to deploy Education 4.0 technologies in the teaching and learning process, even with a slow pace. Truth be told, the reality in dealing with technology is we cannot move slowly not when technology is developing rapidly. As Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg exclaims, thinkers and innovators need to “move fast and break things” (Taplin, 2017, p.3). This is exactly what the three English-focused Education 4.0 learning technologies teams are doing now, for Malaysia.

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The impact of Saudi Arabian Teachers’ Beliefs on their use of L1 or L2 in the Classroom in the Context of Communicative Language Teaching: A Literature Review

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Abstract
Different pedagogies employed in English language teaching (ELT) show varying degrees of use of first language (L1) and second language (L2). The choice is between teaching L2 through L2, teaching L2 through L1, or teaching using a mix of the two. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is a second language teaching approach that aims to create opportunities for the productive use of L2 in the classroom. CLT has been officially implemented in the Saudi Arabian context since 2004, where the use of L2 in the classroom is now encouraged. However, it is important to consider how well teachers’ beliefs align with the specified use of L2 or L1 in the classroom. Importantly, this alignment is not generally taken into account, and so there is potential for resistance to this official pedagogy among teachers. This paper aims to explore the impact of Saudi teachers’ reported beliefs on the use of L2 in CLT in observed practice. The methodology this paper employs is a systematic review of the related studies from 2014 to 2019 that examine teachers’ beliefs and their alignment with their actual practice in the Saudi Arabian education setting. The results of this review of the studies show that SA teachers believe Arabic is still useful in the typical Saudi Arabian classroom where CLT has been officially adopted.

Keywords: communicative language teaching, English, grammar translation method, pedagogies, Saudi Arabia, second language teaching, teachers’ beliefs

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Introduction

There is variation in pedagogic practice in second language teaching with regard to the use of the first language (L1) and the language being taught (L2) in terms of amount and function in the classroom. Language teachers all make different decisions about this aspect of language use in their classroom practice. Such use can be classified into three decisions: the use of L1 to explain L2; the use of L2 to explain and practice L2; and the mixed-use of L1 and L2 (Richards, 2017). The use of L1 can help learners to understand what is being discussed as L1 is generally the language shared by teachers and students (if the teacher is from, or integrated into, the same language community).

The use of L1 as the primary medium of instruction is related to traditional methods, such as the grammar-translation method (GTM) (Celce-Murcia & McIntosh, 1979). GTM is a method whereby the teacher uses L1 intensively, using L1 to translate and explain L2. GTM, therefore, leads to L1 being used to describe the form and structure of the target language (L2) as well as to translate it. It is argued that using L2 to explain L2, however, increases the chance of meaningfully practicing the target language in the real context of classroom interaction. Such meaningful practice is encouraged in the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach (Nunan, 1999). This use of L2 as a medium of communication is not exclusively for high-level language learners, and indeed it can also be used with low-level learners. It is possible to use L2 in primary languages, such as commands and L2, which can also be used to manage the classroom. Finally, a mix of L1 and L2 can be used, which requires teachers to decide how much of each language to use and for what purpose in the classroom.

Communicative language teaching (CLT), on the other hand, encourages the use of L2 to provide opportunities for meaningful communication and to explain the target language based on the level of the learners (Brown, 2014). CLT is based on the idea of “communicative competence” first proposed by (Hymes, 1972), who defined “communicative competence” as “the most general term for the capabilities of a person” (p. 64). He argues that the ability to communicate meaningfully in a specific context to produce a language can be used appropriately and accordingly. This appropriateness to the context emerged as a response to the ideal speaker-listener proposed in Chomsky’s theory. Chomsky (1965) argued that language is created through “universal grammar”. Universal grammar is a device that exits in every mind and people use it to create language. Chomsky’s theory emphasizes that language is ideally acquired through this innate device regardless of the context. He argues:

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors random or characteristic in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3)

He divided this innate ability into two aspects: competence and performance. Competence in Chomsky’s theory is the innate ability that is a response to producing language. Performance is the production of this innate ability to use the ideal language.
However, “communicative competence”, which began with Hymes (1972), goes against the above as “appropriateness” is missing from Chomsky’s theory. Language does not work ideally; instead, language works appropriately depending on who is speaking, how they are doing so, when they need to talk and when they need to not talk (Hymes, 1972). This appropriateness is the basis of the CLT principle. CLT applies this philosophy of appropriateness, suggesting that it is also the way language can be learned in the classroom (Brown, 2014). CLT is thus a broad approach that highlights specific principles and philosophies. The first principle is that the language has to be authentic: such authenticity refers to the real text that the users can apply. Authenticity must be provided in the classroom so the students can see meaning in the language. The second is that the language being taught has to be meaningful: the language has to be used within a context that can make meaning for the student, thereby illustrating the purpose, and what and how to speak in the context. The third is that the language to be used by the students has to be productive. The fourth principle is that accuracy and fluency are essential. Finally, all skills related to communicative competence are important (Brown, 2014).

Saudi Arabia (SA) has faced challenges with regard to the quality of English teaching being provided in the country; many studies show that the outcomes of students are below what is expected (Abahussain, 2016; Al-Nasser, 2015; Alsalmi, 2014; Batawi, 2007). Therefore, there has been a reform in the curriculum with a view to improving the quality of English teaching. The reform aims to implement the principles of CLT as a way to teach English in the classroom. This came into effect in 2004 (Ministry of Education, 2002) with the aim of improving the outcome of teaching English at all stages of school (Abahussain, 2016). CLT is now being rigorously enforced as an approach in SA. The reform of the curriculum asked the teachers to change their teaching methodologies to fit with the principles of CLT. The teachers’ own practice is therefore vital to meeting the Ministry of Education’s goals. One of the goals that the ministry has explicitly outlined is encouraging the use of L2 by teachers; teachers have been asked to use L2 more communicatively and meaningfully (Ministry of Education, 2002). The enforcement of CLT as the approach to teaching English has been applied strictly, along with a centralized textbook to teach students based on the CLT principles and guidelines that explain how the teachers should behave at every step.

For the implementation of CLT to be successful, however, the teachers have to believe in it; indeed, a teacher’s beliefs is a crucial factor that affects whether the teacher practices this approach (Borg, 2017). The teachers’ beliefs theory proposed by Borg (2017) notes that many elements of the teachers’ beliefs impact what they teach and how they do so. These beliefs are influenced by many factors, such as their own experiences as learners, their best practices assumptions and their personalities. Their personal experience as learners is crucial to the beliefs that the teachers hold towards any pedagogy practice. In the Saudi setting, the CLT approach was implemented in 2004, so it does not match with the learning experience of many of the teachers currently in the system. Learners in the Saudi setting has thus been strongly influenced by traditional methods, such as the grammar-translation method (GTM) (Abahussain, 2016). It is also important to consider that the best practice assumption is different from one teacher to another, based on different personalities and lived experiences. The characters of the teachers also vary one to the next, impacting what skills the teachers have and how they approach and interact with other people.
Pedagogy practice is filtered through the teachers’ beliefs, thereby impacting the outcomes of classroom practice. While the SA Ministry of Education has pushed for a pedagogy practice that is more communicative and meaningful if this push is not aligned with what the teachers actually believe in it will not be successful. The officials implementing any pedagogy need to ensure that the teachers believe in what they want them to implement. Otherwise, the chosen pedagogy for classroom practice will not be successful. As Borg noted, teachers’ actual practice is not always aligned with their stated beliefs. There may, therefore, be a gap between these stated beliefs and actual practice that affects the pedagogy implemented in the Saudi Arabian context. This gap may exist because the teachers’ privately held beliefs are strong enough to act as a filter to block some aspects of the official pedagogy. SA encourages using L2 at an appropriate level to explain the target language. However, some teachers quickly switch back to L1 for comprehension purposes because, even at a low level, the target language cannot be understood.

This paper reviews studies conducted in the SA context that focus on teachers’ beliefs about using L1 and L2 in the classroom as a pedagogic tool to teach English in the Saudi setting. This review investigates how the typical CLT pedagogy of using L2 in the classroom to teach English matches with the actual pedagogy practice in SA. The paper begins by clarifying the methodology used in this paper and how the papers were chosen; it then considers how these empirical studies are related and the studies are presented. The results and the concept of teachers’ beliefs is then discussed in relation to the findings, and, finally, the paper provides a conclusion and recommendations.

**Methodology**

This paper reviews seven relevant studies regarding the use of L1 (Arabic) and L2 (English) in the classroom. The literature review approach used in this work involved a systematic selection of the relevant studies. The systematic review is an effective technique to help the researcher clarify what data is relevant and what should be rejected, based on specific explicit criteria (Mulrow, 1994). It is, therefore, a useful tool to use to filter through a vast amount of data. The systematic review technique used in this paper entailed several phases. The first phase involved searching using keywords — “L1”, “L2”, “teachers’ beliefs”, “Saudi Arabia”, “classroom”, “communicative language teaching”, “Arabic”, and “English”; this produced 138 studies. Next, all the studies not conducted in Saudi Arabia were rejected; this amounted to 66 studies. Then, the search was limited to those published between 2014 and 2019, leaving 25 studies. Finally, all non-empirical studies were excluded and only the articles that use both classroom observation (for actual beliefs) and interviews and questionnaires (for reported beliefs) were accepted. Based on this, the final number of selected studies was seven.

This paper uses Borg’s concept of teachers’ beliefs (2017) to analyze these studies. This concept considers how teachers’ beliefs impact the use of L1 and L2 to explain English in the SA setting. The concept of teachers’ beliefs is used to explore how the teachers expressed their beliefs with regard to using L2 to explain English and the suitability of L1 and L2 as a medium of instruction when teaching English. It explores what beliefs the teachers have towards the use of L2 and what impacts the Saudi teachers in their beliefs with regard to whether L1 or L2 is the most suitable for teaching English in Saudi schools. The “suitability” of the use of L1 and L2 is this paper is limited to what the teachers reported believing to be the most suitable for teaching English.
The impact of Saudi Arabian Teachers’ Beliefs on their use of L1 or L2

when using the official syllabus. The approach also focuses on the role of L2 and L1 and how they are used in relation to student assessments, and whether L1 and L2 are suitable in ensuring students’ proficiency. This concept is used to distinguish between the stated beliefs, which are found from interviews, and the actually practiced beliefs, which are drawn from classroom observations. The concept of teachers’ beliefs will be used to see how these two are aligned. The teachers’ beliefs may or may not be aligned with each other.

The studies investigated are limited to those that use interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations. The interviews and questionnaires link the teacher’s expressions of “I believe in” to the teachers’ stated beliefs. The classroom observations use assumptions made by the researchers to assess the teachers (observed practice) regarding the use of L1 and L2 to make English accessible in the classroom. This paper will thereby explore empirical studies.

Results

Table 1 presents the empirical results from the studies investigated in this paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alghammi and Shukri (2016)</td>
<td>Questionnaires and classroom observations</td>
<td>Stated beliefs: teachers believe in using L2 to teach grammar naturally, but they do not apply it in their actual practice. Implicit beliefs: teachers practice L1 to explain grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alrabai (2014)</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Stated beliefs: the teachers believe in using L1 because they are afraid that using L2 means there will not be enough time to cover the entire syllabus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamanger and Gashan (2014)</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Stated beliefs: teachers believe in using English as one of the strategies that can help in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alshehri and Etherington (2017)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires</td>
<td>The teachers believe that the students’ exam outcomes are more important than the students’ learning of English, and Arabic is better for explaining the lessons for the exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baeshin (2016)</td>
<td>Questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations</td>
<td>Teachers believe that using L2 is important, but they are forced to use Arabic because of the students’ low level of English, to let the students understand more easily and faster. Teachers feel guilty because they feel that they should use L2 more. Teachers’ beliefs are not always matched with their actual practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The impact of Saudi Arabian Teachers’ Beliefs on their use of L1 or L2

| Bukhari (2017) | Investigation of Students’ Responses to Arabic and English used by EFL Teachers Depending on their L1 Background in a Saudi Arabian University | Semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and questionnaires | The use of Arabic depends on the teacher’s background. Teachers believe the use of Arabic is necessary for low English student proficiency. They believe in using English more, but they are forced to use Arabic because of the student's proficiency. Their actual practice shows that there is no difference in the amount of Arabic used in different classrooms with a different degree of English proficiency. The teacher’s beliefs do not match with their actual practice. |

Analysis of these studies shows that the impact of Saudi teachers' beliefs with regard to the use of L2 in the classroom means that L2 is generally not used and L1 continues to be used as the language of instruction. Most of the studies show that teachers do not have a positive attitude towards using English (L2) in the classroom; they believe that L2 is not suitable for teaching English. Most of the teachers expressed beliefs in the interviews to this effect. They believe that using L2 to teach English is unhelpful for various different reasons, including the following: the use of L2 is time-consuming; L1 is better for student understanding; and exam orientation. The use of L1 is considered a helpful and suitable way to explain the lesson as both the teacher and the students have the same shared language. From this perspective, using L2 may not be as effective as using L1 because it takes too much time. The time pressure is made explicit in the studies of Alrabai (2014), Al-Seghayer (2015); Baeshin (2016), which find from the interviews that teachers believe that the use of L2 does not satisfy the need to finish the syllabus in the time allotted by the SA Ministry of Education. Completion of the syllabus on time is one of the criteria used by the school administrators to assess teachers and the participating teachers express concern in these studies that use of L2 (English) is not suited to this purpose.

By contrast, in Alshehri and Etherington (2017) and Alshehri and Etherington (2017), the teachers express a belief that an Arabic language is an effective language in which to teach L2. The teachers believe that an Arabic language is a tool that can be used to meet the requirements of the planned syllabus, rather than those of the student language learners, and they present examples of ways in which L2 can inhibit teachers from reaching this target. Arabic is the language most commonly used in their classrooms therefore. These teachers use Arabic to explain grammar, to translate, to check the students’ understanding and to transition to the next activity. These studies explore the preference for using L1 in the classroom as a way to ensure that the syllabus is covered within the time available. These teachers believe that the use of L1 allows them to manage the pressure from the school administration to complete the syllabus. This belief is aligned with their actual practice, which suggests that these reported beliefs are representative.

Another stated belief of teachers on the effectiveness of L1 is outlined in the study of Bukhari 2017: the participant teachers note that L1 can be suitable for students with a low level of English proficiency. They state that the use of L2 can limit such students’ ability to understand the lesson. From this perspective, the use of L1 makes the lesson go more smoothly compared to using L2, which requires more time and effort for both the teachers to use and for the students to understand.
the lesson. Al-Seghayer (2015) study provides some examples explaining this reported belief that L1 is more suitable in terms of pacing for low-level students. Examples include that it is faster to explain grammar and vocabulary that the students are not familiar with, and it is easier to check the students’ understanding of the lesson. These benefits are not found with L2. As the teachers and students have the same first language, the teachers note that using Arabic allows them to match the students’ level of proficiency as well as to keep pace with the required Arabic to finish within the allotted time. Baeshin (2016) and Bukhari (2017) also note the teachers’ belief that using Arabic as the language of instruction is necessary because of the students’ low level of English proficiency, which may stop them from understanding what the lesson is about.

Many of these studies blame the extensive L1 use on the students’ proficiency. These teachers suggest the students are not willing to use L2 with them. The low level of the students is therefore believed to be one of the main reasons why the teachers choose to use L2. It is argued that these low-level students are not ready to be exposed to L2 in any of the three uses of L2 mentioned above in this paper. It is also noted that L1 is used to meet the students’ needs due to the time-consuming nature of using L2. The use of L2 can impede the progress of these students as it slows the class down. In these studies, however, there is a tension between what is being practiced and what is expressed, as Phipps and Borg (2009) explain. The two studies note teachers’ preference for the use of L1 when working with students at a low level as a way to finish the syllabus within the required time. However, the use of L1 is not only found with low-level students, as the teachers in the above studies express a belief that L1 is also suitable for high-level students. These high-level students, such as university students, are able to understand higher-level English, but still, the teachers state that they prefer to use L1 and not L2. This may lead us to question the real reason underpinning the preference for L1 in relation to the students’ low level in L2. The commonality in all these studies is that there is pressure to finish the syllabus within the allotted time.

Not all the studies reflect this belief in L1, however. One study notes a positive attitude towards using English as the language of instruction. Alghanmi and Shukri (2016) illustrate that the teachers in their study believe that using L2 is essential to acquiring the language naturally. The study concludes that English has to be learned through communication in the classroom. The teachers in the study believe grammar has to be taught inductively rather than deductively: grammar has to be learned naturally. The students can, therefore, learn grammar by using the language. However, the actual practice in this study is similar to that found in studies that outline that teachers believe in L1 as an essential tool. This study is the only one to explicitly state teachers’ beliefs towards the use of L2 in the classroom. The preference for the use of L2 also does not match with these teachers’ practice. These teachers practice L1 heavily in their classrooms. I interpret this finding as there is potential to use L2 in the classrooms, but unlike the other studies the teachers’ beliefs do not filter their beliefs and they in fact practice what they do not believe in. I would suggest that this can be linked to the actual factors reported in other studies that stop them from using L2 grammar naturally. “Naturally” here refers to the use of L2 to communicate grammar implicitly through communication, which is the method advocated by the CLT principles and therefore the SA policy.

SA policy encourages the use of L2. However, different levels of use of L2 in the classroom were found and the teachers used L2 in different ways. Such usage can involve using L2 to explain...
the concept and the lessons, for example, to explain grammar or vocabulary. Another approach is to use L2 to communicate with the students about the lessons or to let the students communicate with the teacher through the use of L2 to engage in discussions about classroom management; this can be done by using L2 commands and communicating with the students in L2. These commands can be used to control behavior during the lesson. Commands are therefore what the teachers use to manage the classroom. This type of language can be used for classroom management in general, as well as being exercised through activities, such as group discussion or role-play, but in many cases, this is done in a controlled way. The last option is to let students communicate more freely. When it comes to SA policy, CLT encourages the usage of L2 and teachers explaining the lesson using L2, but through very controlled activities.

In summary, most of the studies researched classified stated beliefs and observed practice as advocating the use of L1 in the classroom. These studies note that, in the interviews, teachers expressed a strong belief in the need to use L1. They believe that L1 can explain L2 lessons, it can explain the structure of L2, it can be used to translate L2 and it is appropriate for low-level students. Only the study of Alghanmi and Shukri (2016) reports teachers believing that L2 is preferred, although it is not practiced; these studies show that most of the observed practice is aligned with the stated beliefs.

Discussion

In the above, I discuss Borg (2017) concept of teachers’ beliefs. Teachers’ beliefs, however, can only refer to what the teachers said they believed in these studies. This paper can therefore only explore what the teachers expressed as a way to access their beliefs. Borg further argues that there are always pedagogies and practices that teachers believe in and those that they consider being the most suited to practice in the classroom. In theory, what these teachers believe is best practice should be reflected in their actual practice. However, the practice may not reflect what the teachers actually believe because not all teachers practice what they believe in (Phipps & Borg, 2009). The studies reveal a clash between what the teachers practice and what the teachers believe, on the one hand, and CLT in the SA requirements, on the other hand. The teachers’ practice and their beliefs do not fit with the SA requirements. The teachers in most of the studies express a strong belief in the use of L1 as the most suitable language for the classroom.

SA provides teachers with a centralized syllabus. This syllabus requires extensive use of L2 to promote communicative practice in Saudi classrooms. However, these studies show that teachers disagree with the official requirements. These teachers stated that they believe the use of L1 to be most suited to their actual setting. They further detailed the reasons for its suitability, such as students’ low proficiency, teachers’ background, L1 as an effective way to teach grammar and the syllabus requiring the teacher to finish within the time planned. The teachers’ beliefs, therefore, impact the extent to which CLT, which asks them to use L2 more communicatively and meaningfully, is implemented, and ultimately their practice is heavily dependent on the use of L1 and ignores the strong push towards CLT in SA. The mismatch between practice and stated beliefs and the SA requirements can be interpreted as a disconnection between the teachers’ own education and the syllabus. These teachers’ education was mostly based on traditional methods (Abahussain, 2016) and many even learned to teach the traditional method. These teachers work for the Ministry of Education. The universities have a different ministry, called the Ministry of
Higher Education. Only recently have the two been combined into one (Taylor, Fleisch, & Shindler, 2019). Therefore, the teachers’ experience, according to Borg, doesn’t fit with the new requirements. In this paper, the teachers’ experience is linked heavily with teaching traditional methods and so the new methods are not aligned with the teachers’ beliefs because they have limited knowledge of them.

When unpacking these factors, teachers often begin with students’ low level. However, the studies did not clarify the type of L2 that was being used by teachers; L2 can be used in the form of three types, as noted above. It is also important to note that the level of language used to communicate with the students can vary significantly. The teacher can use basic English words and vocabulary in the classroom for all three types of L2 use. Nonetheless, Arabic is seen as a way to explain and make the lesson more understandable. This preference for L1 may not reflect the teachers’ actual beliefs, however; instead, it may reflect the teachers favoring what they consider to be the best way to produce practical results rather than considering the theoretical aspects of pedagogy.

With regard to the teachers’ background, this refers to what teachers themselves experienced as learners. They have learned GTM, which is very different from CLT in terms of how and what to highlight. As Richards (2017) noted, “The students’ native language is the medium of instruction. It is used to explain new items and to enable comparisons to be made between the foreign language and the students’ native language” (p. 7). GTM values translations from L1 to L2 and vice versa. It highlights the use of L1 to explain L2. L1 is used as a fundamental principle and basis of teaching. When it comes to using CLT, however, L2 has to be more communicative. CLT highlights the use of L2 to learn the language by showing the students how, when and what to speak as the foundation of communicative competence. CLT outlines that the use of L1 should be kept to a minimum and L2 should be used to communicate and increase the chance of conveying the language more meaningfully. This is because when the students communicate using L2 they can experience the context of L2 through the communication. This means that the teachers’ experience of teaching before the implementation of the curriculum based on CLT in 2004, as well as since that time, may have continued to impact the teachers’ beliefs. The teachers’ backgrounds and experience of GTM, with its principals and focus, can clash with what CLT is highlighting. In these studies, teacher education may have relied heavily on traditional methods and GTM in the teacher centers. The teachers, therefore, tend to remain loyal to what they experienced as learners in school, as well as their own early experiences of teaching.

The last factor relates to the pressure to finish the syllabus within the allotted time, which may affect the teachers’ beliefs or pragmatic attitudes towards the use of L1 and L2. In this regard, the findings are problematic as they do not clearly distinguish between the teachers’ actual and their stated beliefs. This distinction is missing in all the reviewed studies. Here the problem relates to their expressed belief that L1 is used because it is the most suitable, yet there is no clear distinction made between reasoning based on completing the syllabus and that based on the best way to teach English. Their expressed beliefs may, therefore, be heavily impacted by the need to adhere to the syllabus schedule. All of the studies use L1 as the syllabus is centralized in the SA setting. The Ministry of Education provides the textbook, which includes the students’ textbook, workbook and the teachers’ book as a guide that outlines the criteria by which to assess the progress of the
teachers in achieving the syllabus. Further, whilst the official syllabus encourages the use of L2 in the classroom, according to these studies the textbook syllabus is heavily dependent on the teacher using L1 to explain the lesson. This creates a clash between the teachers’ beliefs and practice and official requirements.

Despite the clash between the official guidelines and teachers’ beliefs and practices, these studies did not clarify whether their actual practice influenced the teachers’ beliefs or vice versa and it is difficult to distinguish teachers’ stated beliefs from their actual beliefs, and what aligned from what was not aligned with their actual practice. Since the actual teacher practice develops the teachers’ experiences, these experiences may influence the teachers to believe in or even to change their beliefs. Even if they are set in their beliefs this may not be distinguishable because their beliefs may be unobservable. Therefore, what are the actual beliefs underpinning this extensive use of L1? Is what the teachers say they believe in the interviews and questionnaires reflective, or is this what makes them feel secure? This feeling of insecurity can be related to the pressure to finish the syllabus in the time given, which can be interpreted as an expectation of what the teacher has to achieve, the expectation of what the teachers teach and not how they do so.

We would argue that it is not enough for language teacher cognition research to identify differences, or tensions, between teachers’ beliefs and practices; rather attempts need to be made to explore, acknowledge and understand the underlying reasons behind such tensions. (Phipps & Borg, 2009, p. 388)

The above points illustrate that the Ministry of Education has not achieved its goal of successfully implementing CLT. The studies illustrate strong teacher beliefs that go against the core goals of the general CLT approach.

**Conclusion**

This paper reviewed recent studies on teachers’ beliefs about the language of instruction in Saudi Arabia. The studies show that there is a mismatch between the recommended pedagogy and teachers’ stated beliefs and actual pedagogic practice of using L1 or L2. CLT encourages the use of English by letting the students interact and communicate in L2 with authentic text and meaningful language. The teachers’ pragmatic decisions, as opposed to their stated beliefs, play a role in their resistance to using L2 in the classroom. They use what they consider to be the most practical way to teach the lesson. These studies show teachers’ reasoning based on different factors that stopped them from using English to teach; however, importantly, all of them believe that using L1 is essential and an effective tool for teaching English. These factors have led them to believe that L1 is better for explaining grammar, introducing new vocabulary and checking students’ language proficiency. The teachers’ beliefs have a significant impact on what and how pedagogy is practiced in the Saudi Arabian classroom context. Based on the reported teachers’ beliefs, it is clear that L1 is being used and L2 is not seen as matching the students’ needs because their level of L2 is too low. Teachers consider that they need L1 to explain L2 despite the reality that basic L2 can be used, such as basic verbs or alternating between L1 and L2 depending on the students’ needs and responses to the teachers.
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References


Task-based Meaningful Literacy for Language Learners

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Abstract
This article reflects on the concept of meaningful literacy. It offers a classroom methodology, posting on a closed Facebook Group, that manifests this approach to English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom meaningful literacy instruction. This study aims to produce empirically informed teaching materials by providing a meaningful literacy writing task for ESL/EFL educational environments. This aim is guided by the main research question: What are the genre characteristics of posting a photo and writing a caption about it in a closed Facebook Group writing task? To answer the question, multiple instruments are employed including observation of task completion, Facebook Group posts, and post-task completion face-to-face interviews. These instruments help in understanding the participants’ contribution to the closed Facebook Group task. This article focuses on utilizing Facebook as a language learning tool to create meaningful experiences. It starts with a summary of empirical evidence that supports implementing the use of Facebook in ESL/EFL classes. Then, this article provides some descriptions of the practical aspects of applying it. This approach is presented as a way of focusing on the individual language learner as a center of the language learning process and as a way of facilitating the development of language learning. The findings revealed that the participants are able to create meaning easily and to express themselves better. Therefore, Facebook Groups can be extended spaces for writing tasks in educational contexts where students learn the language through bridging life experiences with school subjects.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, English as a second language, Facebook groups, meaningful literacy, personal experiences

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Introduction

The rapid expansion of technology around the world facilitates the emergence of social networking websites in educational environments. The impact of social networking websites on language learning has been growing exponentially. This growth indicates that educators and instructors need new tools and creative strategies to teach language learners and capture their interests (Godwin-Jones, 2008; 2018; Winke & Goertler, 2008). Currently, educators are increasingly using social networking websites in ESL/EFL educational settings. Through the utilization of social networking websites in educational settings, educators can help learners make their learning experiences meaningful by offering a community of practice where learners can be the center of their learning process, make sense of themselves and their surroundings, and share their life experiences with others. Educators must support learners’ meaningful learning and provide lifelong educational experiences for them (Wan, Prain, & Collet, 2014). Today, Facebook is one of the social networking websites that services a large online community around the world (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012). It offers a virtual community to its users where they communicate and interact with each other. This study uses Facebook as a social networking tool to enhance meaningful literacy in ESL/EFL educational environments.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate techniques in utilizing Facebook in ESL/EFL educational environments to develop meaningful literacy. Additionally, this study aims to find the genre characteristics of completing a task that requires posting a photo and writing a caption about it in a closed Facebook Group. This research enables educators and researchers to identify and comprehend how social networking websites, such as Facebook, can contribute to ESL/EFL language learning practices. Also, educators can have a better understanding of how ESL/EFL learners can improve their language practices, especially in writing, through social networking websites. With such knowledge, researchers and educators can develop appropriate and creative pedagogical ideas and methods to make effective use of social networking websites in ESL/EFL educational environments. To meet the study’s purpose, the proposed task requires its participants to share a photo that means something to them, write why they chose it and what it means to them, and then post it on a closed Facebook Group. This task mainly focuses on each participant as an individual language learner and as the center of the learning process. To have a better understanding of the developed task and its implications, it is important to first comprehend the concept of meaningful literacy learning in ESL/EFL educational settings. It is also significant to know about the group feature on Facebook to have a better understanding of meaningful Facebook use in ESL/EFL educational pedagogies.

Meaningful Literacy Learning in ESL/EFL Educational Settings

As this article focuses on utilizing Facebook as a meaningful educational tool, this section spotlights on the meaningful literacy learning approach. It defines meaningful literacy and examines how Facebook can be used to encourage meaningful learning in ESL/EFL educational settings.

The word “meaningful” is used widely in learning settings. In language learning settings, mainly, it means making the language learning process meaningful for learners and supporting them to understand the world and make sense of the surroundings (Hanauer, 2012). One manifestation of Hanauer’s meaningful literacy approach explains that the content of writing is
the student’s self and life. As learning a language may be a life-changing event, it is an event that involves the learner as a human being, rather than just focusing on their intellectual abilities. As Hanauer (2012) states, “human beings are characterized by their ability to make sense of themselves and their surroundings” (p. 107). Hence, learning a language involves the learner and his/her relation to the world. Thus, to reposition and re-contextualize language learning, it has to entail a process where “the language learner’s memory, experiences, feelings, beliefs, history, and social environment are the context of the language use” (Hanauer, 2012, p. 109). Also, the moment when a language learner can express thoughts and experiences in a second/foreign language is very powerful. It can change the learner’s perception of the new language as a tool to reveal personal expressions, and as a language that they own and use (Hanauer, 2012).

Moreover, making the language learning process meaningful integrates one’s personal history and future actions, more than just one’s intellectual activities. Thus, the process of understanding and making sense of the world “… is a holistic activity that defines the self at the moment of understanding and a perspective and orientation towards the world” (Hanauer, 2012, p. 107). Learning a language has many ramifications in how learners perceive their subjectivities as a result of knowing and learning about the world of the target language (Kramsch, 2009). It involves the human being as a whole, including learners’ experiences and emotions, beyond their intellectual abilities. Nevertheless, the process of learning a language in classrooms is decontextualized. Language can only be pragmatically real, and thus, meaningful if it is reconnected and bonded with the context of the same kind (Widdowson, 1998) and if it is used beyond educational environments. Therefore, its challenging for educators to provide an environment for learners where language is contrived to be engaged with and learned from, in which learners are at the center of the language learning process, and to find a way to make learning the language personally contextualized, and thus, meaningful for learners (Widdowson, 1998; Hanauer, 2012).

All these underpinnings and suppositions shape the learner’s personal experiences, history, and social contextualization, where the individual is at the center of the learning experience and more active and engaged in his/her learning process. This approach makes the learning process in the class meaningful for each language learner, both personally and socially. It also provides a sense of depth and ownership of the target language itself. The learner will be proficient in the target language to the extent that he/she can process it, make it his/her own, and bend it to his/her will.

Understanding Facebook Groups

Facebook is a social networking website that was created in 2004 as a social communication tool. Facebook is defined as “a social utility that helps people share information and communicate more efficiently with their friends, family and coworkers” (Facebook.com, n.d.). It is a website where registered users can be friends with each other, post comments, share photographs, post links to news or other interesting content on the internet, chat live, and watch videos (De Villiers, 2010). Users can share content publicly or privately among a selected group of friends or family, or with a single person.

On Facebook, there are various forms of interaction. Facebook has purely social activities, such as confirming friends and communicating with each other. However, some activities can be
more formal where a user interacts with other users without being friends, for example, joining ‘Groups’ (De Villiers, 2010). Facebook Groups “are dedicated spaces where [a member] can share updates, photos or documents and message other group members” (Facebook.com). Facebook users can be in groups with other users who share the same interest and click on the “to join” button to participate in the group. Group members can participate in discussions and post comments. They can also be up to date on what is happening in the group from the news feed through posts or notifications. More specifically, Facebook Groups can be private, closed groups, where only invited members can browse and participate in the group (Ekoc, 2014). Facebook users can be members of a group without being a friend of other group members. Facebook Groups are best described as forums for discussions where members initiate topics and, for each topic, conversations and debates ensue. Facebook Groups are simply designed to support discussions on defined topics between Facebook users.

Furthermore, any member can create a group that can be open for any Facebook user or can restrict its access and participation to a selected audience. Therefore, it is easy for an instructor to create a group associated with a particular course for his/her students. A group can be limited to members that have been invited by the course instructor only. Creating a closed group for a course builds a sense of community for learners and intimacy to write and share knowledge in a non-threatening, educational environment. Learners will then feel motivated then to contribute to a Facebook Group if they subsequently receive support and help from their peers.

Facebook Groups utilization in ESL/EFL educational settings helps learners to socialize with other group members, to better express themselves, and to shape their social identity (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). It leads to continuance development, and it strengthens relationships with others. Undoubtedly, being a group member enhances the sense of belonging, which is very important for language learners. Also, using Facebook in education helps learners to be active learners and more engaged in the learning process. In addition, such closed-groups offer a valuable educational experience for learners while maintaining privacy and safety (Blattner & Fiori, 2009; 2011). Thus, Facebook Groups can be commonly used as an educational tool, inside and outside classrooms, for language learning pedagogies (Ekoc, 2014; Guamán, 2012; Lantz-Andersson et al., 2013; Mazman & Usluel, 2010).

Nevertheless, although social networks, such as Facebook, are not complete learning environments, they are widely used to support learning. Social networks can be used to promote motivation, socialization, discussion, and sharing resources for language learners, as well as making learning the target language meaningful for them. Therefore, more and more instructors are implementing Facebook usage in classrooms, especially using closed Facebook Groups to facilitate lifelong learning experiences (Ekoc, 2014; Lantz-Andersson et al., 2013; Mazman & Usluel, 2010). Thus, this article argues that Facebook can act as an adequate educational tool for language learning in ESL/EFL educational settings. In this regard, a good number of empirical research studies (Ekoc, 2014; Guamán, 2012; Mitchell, 2012; Mazman & Usluel, 2010; Wang & Vásquez, 2014) examined utilizing Facebook Groups as an educational tool in ESL/EFL language learning settings, as will be discussed throughout the paper.
Meaningful Facebook Use in Educational Settings

As this article focuses on utilizing Facebook as a language learning tool for creating meaningful experiences, this section sheds light on Facebook’s general usage in language learning contexts and the common practice of Facebook’s Group feature, in particular. It shows that using Facebook in education can be meaningful for language learners by offering a sense of community and belonging, and a formal/informal learner-center virtual environment.

A sense of community is necessary to sustain a dynamic and meaningful educational experience for language learners. Educators must provide learners with opportunities to develop a sense of community to enhance their learning experiences (Kok, 2008; Mills, 2011). A study by Rovai (2002) states that social networking websites provide learners with a new and a strong feeling of community and belonging, which eventually increases the willingness to share their experiences, support, and encourage each other. These findings are consistent with Blattner and Fiori’s study (2009), which suggests that pedagogically meaningful integration of Facebook in language learning settings can develop a sense of community, foster rapport building, and support communicative competence. Also, McBride (2009) argues that utilizing Facebook can motivate learners to complete pedagogically, meaningful language learning experiences. More specifically, if learners develop their communicative skills in the second/foreign language, this will increase their autonomy to practice various aspects of their linguistic ability. Furthermore, when learners develop a sense of community and belonging in a virtual learning environment, such as in Facebook Groups, their posts in online platforms are consistently meaningful as they have a real audience with who they communicate and share. Thus, learners become more active and eager to write, respond, discuss, and interact (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012).

Moreover, being active and engaged in a learning process enhance the meaningful educational experience for language learners. In creating a meaningful learning experience, learners need to be involved in their own learning process. The language learning experience engages learners cognitively, emotionally, and morally (Kramsch, 2009). Learning a language is an emotional experience and a cognitive process. More specifically, learning a language is embodied individually in the physical, emotional, and intellectual life of the language learner. One of the study’s (Reid, 2011) explores language learning as a process of broadening ways an individual can understand, interpret, feel and express his/her personal and meaningful understanding to himself/herself in various social settings. This study reports that as learners in the closed Facebook Group expressed themselves, they drew on their diversity, identity, and culture. Also, learners’ voices were heard, and their unique sense of self was illustrated. Thus, integrating a meaningful literacy learning approach in language learning classrooms forms an instructional design that is rich with meaningful interaction and learning for language learners. Overall, learner-centered educational environments, where learners are actively participating and engaging with their peers, support the notion of meaningful literacy. Nonetheless, learners’ interaction in Facebook Groups differs from traditional classroom writing settings. In traditional classrooms, the learner is the writing party, and the instructor is the assisting party. In Facebook Groups, learners and their instructors can have informal interactions, besides learners’ interactions with their peers. Learners can be more engaged in the learning process as active learners and collaborators. Also, the authority will be distributed between the instructor and the learners, and learners will invest more in the learning process (Ekoc, 2014).
Furthermore, one of the primary needs of language learners is to gain the opportunity to use the target language beyond the classroom environment. Educators must support learners’ meaningful informal learning and provide lifelong learning experiences (Lantaz-Andersson, Vigmo, & Bowen, 2013; Wan et al., 2014; Saaty, 2015). Educators started to view Facebook as a useful tool in language pedagogy where it “has the potential to find means to link informal and recreational writing with academic writing” (Godwin-Jones, 2008, p. 7). Facebook could serve as an extended space for meaningful language learning activities when it is implemented in educational practices. A study (Lantaz-Andersson et al., 2013) investigates how learners frame their interaction and accomplish tasks on Facebook Group when used in school contexts. In the Facebook Group, the study examines the nature of the interactions and investigations to know how the learners accomplished the communication upon the social constructivist perspective. The researchers follow and log the learners’ interactions in a closed Facebook Group, and they analyze their activities as social practices. The results indicate that Facebook generated an extended space for collaborative language learning activities in educational contexts, where learners combine their school subjects with their communicative use of language in their daily life. Therefore, when learners are in command and take the space as theirs, they would use the target language for more meaningful and engaging interactions beyond regular school tasks. As a result, the learners’ use of language will be more personal. Learners will process the target language, bend it to their will, and make it their own.

Considering the literature above, the following research question is addressed in this article: What are the genre characteristics of posting a photo and writing a caption about it in a closed Facebook Group writing task?

Methodology

This study aims to produce empirically informed teaching materials by providing a meaningful literacy task for ESL/EFL educational environments. To answer the research question and to allow for the empirical understanding of the task to emerge, this study employs several data collection instruments: observation of task completion, Facebook Group posts, and post-task completion face-to-face interviews. These data collection instruments help in understanding the participants’ contribution to the closed Facebook Group task.

Participants

In this study, participants are three graduate students (two males, one female). All three are enrolled in the same graduate program. They all volunteered to participate. They all have private Facebook accounts and they use it frequently. They are Facebook friends. The participants’ first language is not English; nonetheless, they demonstrated an advanced English language proficiency level by scoring 6 or higher in the IELTS test or its TOEFL equivalent. The researcher selected these participants because of their advanced command of English, which would allow them to focus on the content and on constructing knowledge without being distracted by language issues. Table 1 provides general background information about the participants’ education and Facebook use.
Table 1. 
Participants’ Background Information

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<th>Factors</th>
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<th>Facebook Use Background</th>
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**Task**

The participants in this study are required to complete a writing task in a closed Facebook Group. The Facebook Group is specially created for this study and its access is limited to the participants and the researcher. The task prompt is given to the participants on a piece of paper. The participants are first asked to choose a photo from their cellphones or laptops that interests them or reflects a special moment. Along with that, the participants are asked to write a caption stating why they chose this photo, what moment this photo reflects, and why it interests them. Then, the photo with its caption should be posted on a closed Facebook Group. Thus, the selected genre of this writing task is a Facebook-group-post (Appendix A).

**Data Collection Procedure**

For participants to conduct the task, the researcher met the same day with each participant, individually, in a quiet area in the university library. While participants are working on the task, the researcher made visual observations and took notes. Participants completed the task at their own pace. There was no restricted time for participants to complete the task. Then, face-to-face post-task interviews were conducted afterward, individually, with each of the participants.

**Data Collection Instruments**

For the study’s purpose and to answer the research question, multiple data sources are employed, including observation of task completion, participants’ Facebook Group posts, and post-task completion interviews (Figure 1). The study’s data sources are utilized as follows:

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*Figure 1. Data collection instruments*
Observing Task Completion

Observation is considered one of the critical instruments for collecting data in qualitative research (Cresswell, 2014). One of the major strengths of using observation is that it permits researchers to study the processes of education in naturalistic settings. Here, the collected data from the observation focuses on the frequency of specific behaviors or types of a behavior that occurred when participants conduct the task. Also, the researcher in this study uses observation to measure the duration of the task completion of each participant.

In conducting this study, the researcher adopted Creswell’s (2014) observational protocol for recording observational notes. Following this protocol, the researcher used a notebook and a pen to write the field notes, which include “Descriptive notes” to record what happened, and “Reflective notes” to provide notes about her experience and learning from what is being observed. Additionally, the researcher provided appropriate identification information, such as the date, time, and place of the observation. In short, the researcher observed the participants complete the meaningful literacy task (closed Facebook Group post) and wrote notes about how each participant is conducting the task.

Facebook Group Posts

The Facebook posts are the texts that the participants wrote in the closed Facebook Group, photo caption, to complete the task. For this study’s purpose and time constraint, only the text (the caption of the posted photo) is used as a data source; photos are not used as a data source. Participants’ posts are copied and pasted in Microsoft Word 2016 for analysis purposes. Via the Microsoft Word, information about the reading complexity of the document is provided, this includes the Flesch–Kincaid readability tests (the Flesch Reading Ease, and the Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level). The posts are first analyzed individually and then holistically as a group.

Post-task Completion Interviews

Following the completion of the task, the researcher conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with each of the participants individually. The choice of interviews as a primary data collection method was inspired by its potential of providing rich and vital information on qualitative studies that seek to explore the way knowledge, interactions, attitudes, and perceptions are constructed and co-constructed among members of a specific community (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2010).

The interviews are conducted with the participants in English. The interview protocol consists of about ten questions, and a couple of probing follow-up questions asked when needed (Appendix B). The questions asked about participants’ perceptions of their Facebook Group post writing experience and its benefits and caveats. In interviewing the participants, the researcher, as the interviewer, rephrased or explained some of the questions if they needed further clarification. Also, the researcher restated and summarized the participants responses to confirm understanding their answers. Each participant’s responses are digitally recorded by the researcher’s cellphone. After that, interviews are consequently transcribed and coded by the researcher. The data analysis and the descriptions in the following sections refer to the participants’ contribution to the task both individually and holistically.
Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis is conducted in several phases. The first phase of analysis concerned observation notes, which showed a general series of stages that each participant went through while conducting the task. The second phase of analysis involved coding post-task interviews’ transcripts. Several close readings of the interviews’ transcripts took place to help in the coding process. After coding the interviews’ transcripts, individual and holistic descriptions of each interview was composed. Then, the analysis involved comparing the participants’ codes. The third phase of analysis is focused on the Facebook Group posts, which is the text the participants wrote in the closed Facebook Group. This phase also involved analyzing each post individually and then holistically to compare participants’ texts. The final phase of analysis featured triangulation across all three data sets.

Data Analysis and Results

Observation Analysis

The first stage to complete the task for Rayan was to choose the photo that he wanted to write about, and he prepared a photo before meeting with the researcher. Second, he read the task instructions once and then used the Facebook application from his cellphone. Third, he uploaded the photo and then looked at the task again, and then he started to type. He went back to read the task frequently. Fourth, after about three minutes and thirty seconds, he posted the task. However, afterward, he read through it and looked again to the task instructions, and edited the text. Lastly, Rayan then stopped typing and looked back at the task instructions, and on what he wrote, and then he nodded his head and posted it again. The total timing for Rayan to do the task was six minutes and twenty-five seconds.

The first stage to complete the task for Joseph was to read the task instructions once, and then he used the Iphotos application from his laptop to select a photo. The photo selection process took about a minute, and fifty seconds, he did not prepare a photo in advance. Then he browsed the Facebook Group to upload the photo; after, he looked at the task instructions again and started to type. Joseph also stopped for a while after writing the first sentence; then he continued typing. He went back and forth to read the task instructions every once in a while. After about seven minutes, he posted the photo along with the caption. Lastly, he read the text one more time after posting it. Joseph accomplished the task in eight minutes and thirty seconds.

The first stage to complete the task for Nancy was that she read the task instructions once. Then, she asked about the privacy setting of the Facebook Group before starting to do anything. She praised that the Facebook Group is private. Secondly, Nancy begun looking for a photo from her cellphone, and it took her about five minutes to find a photo because she did not prepare a photo in advance. When the photo was chosen, she also used the Facebook application from her cellphone and started to type. She stopped to stretch-out once and then looked back to the task instructions. As the other participants (Rayan and Joseph), she also went back to read the task instructions every so often. Lastly, she stopped writing after eight minutes, and she read it before once posting it. Nancy completed the task in ten minutes.

All participants read the task instructions once before they start typing. Nancy was the only one who asked about the privacy settings of Facebook Groups before doing anything, and it took
her more time to choose a photo compared to others. Rayan was the only one who chose the photo before meeting with the researcher to complete the task. Rayan and Nancy looked up for the photo after they were given the task. Rayan and Nancy used their cellphones to complete the task, while Joseph used his laptop. Additionally, Joseph wrote much more than the other participants. When they all started to type they were fluent, only Joseph paused after he typed the first sentence then looked at instructions. However, all participants typed fluently, yet they went back to read the task instructions every so often. After they finished writing, Joseph and Nancy revised the text, and then posted it. Only Rayan posted the text, then went back to revise and edited it and then read the text before he finally posted it again. Overall, the total timing for the task completion varied among the participants, six minutes for Rayan, eight minutes for Joseph, and ten minutes for Nancy.

**Facebook Participants’ Posts Analysis**

The Facebook posts that participants posted in the group, as photo captions, are analyzed linguistically and rhetorically to check the writing complexity and to understand the writer’s rhetorical self-positioning better. The posts are tabulated using features present in Microsoft Word 2016 to account for Flesch–Kincaid readability tests (Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level), word length, level, paragraphs, sentences, and words per sentence. Therefore, the quantitative data section came from using Microsoft Word 2016, whereas the qualitative data section came from the researcher’s interpretations of each post. Foremost, to understand writing complexity for the Facebook Group participants’ posts, the table below (table 2) shows the linguistic analysis of the data across participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Analysis</th>
<th>Rayan</th>
<th>Joseph</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Length</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>171.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words per sentence</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flesch Reading Ease</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flesch-Kincaid Grade level</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the table above, the Facebook Group posts word length varied among participants, 88 words for Rayan, 315 for Joseph, and 112 for Nancy. The average word length for all the posts was 171.6 words. For paragraphs numbers, both Rayan and Nancy wrote one paragraph; however, Joseph wrote two paragraphs. More specifically, Rayan and Nancy, who used their cellphones to complete the task, the number of sentences was very close (Rayan five and Nancy six). Nonetheless, Joseph, who was the only one of the participants to complete the task using his laptop, wrote 18 sentences in total. Additionally, sentences in the posts were not long, and were simply structured; the average of words per sentences was 17.9. For posts readability complexity, participants’ posts were simple. On average, all posts were at the 7.8 Grade Level, which means pre-intermediate reading level index, and vocabulary. Also, in the Flesch Reading
Ease test, the participants’ Facebook Group posts scored close results: Rayan post scored 70.7, whereas Joseph’s scored 69.5, and Nancy scored 67.7.

Furthermore, to understand each participant’s language characteristics, addressed topics, and rhetorical self-positioning, table 3 illustrates the rhetorical analysis of the participants’ Facebook Group posts. The characteristics of the used language were all narrative, and represent a story behind the photo with descriptions. All captions were based on real events. Addressed topics varied among the participants; however, they all wrote about personal topics that expressed their own feelings. Rayan talked about enjoyment and distressing moments, and the well-spent time with his wife. Joseph wrote about his wedding ceremony as a life-changing day in his life, and about life-reflection on his personality as he became part Chinese through marriage. Nancy wrote about a well-spent family vacation moment. Moreover, for the writer’s rhetorical self-positioning, all three participants used the first person singular pronoun “I” to refer to themselves. Besides, Rayan used the first person plural pronoun “we” to refer to himself and his wife. Overall, it is noticeable that all participants wrote simple and straightforward sentences to express and reflect on a meaningful moment for them that the photo they chose helped them recall the moment and write about it easily.

Table 3.
Rhetorical Analysis (Writing Complexity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetorical Analysis</th>
<th>Rayan</th>
<th>Joseph</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Characteristics</td>
<td>• Narrative; • Represents the story behind the photo with descriptions. • Feelings (stress-tired-feeling better-love); • Time well-spent with his wife.</td>
<td>• Narrative; • Represents the story behind the photo with descriptions. • Feelings; (enjoyment; nostalgic) • wedding ceremony; life-changing days of his life; reflection on his personality; part Chinese identity; responsibility to bridge both cultures.</td>
<td>• Narrative; • Represents the story behind the photo with descriptions. • Feelings; (love) • Summer vacation; family gatherings; relaxed moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressed Topics</td>
<td>• First-person singular pronoun (I); • First-person plural pronoun (we)</td>
<td>• First-person singular pronoun (I)</td>
<td>• First-person singular pronoun (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s Rhetorical Self-positioning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Form of Writing**

- Simple way of expressing his mixed feelings that were related to the photo;
- Short and direct sentences;
- It is meaningful to him.

- Simple way of sharing the moment of his wedding ceremony.
- He recalled all the aspects from the symbol that was in the photo.
- The text was meaningful to him, and he wrote it fluently.

- Simple and straightforward way of sharing the moment that the photo reflects.
- Writing the text was meaningful to her, and it revealed a lot of mixed feelings.

**Interviews Analysis**

To examine this study’s participants’ perceptions of the closed Facebook Group task experience, the researcher conducted oral interviews with the three participants after the completion of the task. In their interviews, the participants covered various aspects and codes of their powerful first-time closed Facebook Group task experience. Here, for this study, the researcher focuses on the participants’ most salient perceptions and summarizes their actual experiences as reflected in their interviews. Table 4 represents interview codes for each participant, including frequency of occurrence, mean, and examples. Below, an individual interview analysis of each of the participants is provided, then a review of the participants’ common features is presented.

**Table 4. Interviews Analysis Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Rayan</th>
<th>Joseph</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An emotional state.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enjoyment:</strong></td>
<td>express how fun and joyful was the moment or the task.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discomfort/Distressed:</strong></td>
<td>feelings that express an absence of comfort or ease.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memory:</strong></td>
<td>the mental capacity of retaining and reviving events, or recalling, or recognizing previous experiences.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection:</strong></td>
<td>on the moment.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Meaningful writing:** express full meaning, significance purpose, or value of the moment, photo, or task.

| 4 | 5 | 8 | 5.6 |

It’s meaningful because I can share some of my personality, and it made me remember details—wrote mostly about myself.

**Interaction/sharing:** to act upon one another action, and socializing and communicating with others.

| 4 | 5 | 6 | 5 |

I didn’t mind sharing, to socialize, interact—fun to share with friends—can respond.

**Meaningful Events:** short, once in a lifetime events.

| - | 4 | - | 4 |

Wedding day—coming here today

**Unease of choosing a photo:** Readily done. Requiring an effort or planning to be performed successfully.

| 2 | - | 4 | 3 |

Difficulty choosing a specific photo—Not very easy actually

**Opinion about the task:** a belief or judgment that reflects on personal view about the task

| 2 | 2 | 4 | 2.6 |

Very helpful, really fun, too easy to write

One of the codes that appeared clearly from Rayan’s interview was “feelings of enjoyment,” that was related to express how fun he was having at the moment in the photo, which he wrote about. He expressed how fun it was to go back and look at the photo and point back at a joyful moment. Rayan also said that “the task was cool and fun to do, and that posting it on Facebook was fun to do,” which meant he enjoyed conducting the task. Feeling “distressed” was another common code; it was related to how he felt before the photo was taken. Also, he pointed a lot about “memory;” he remembered and recalled that moment that he wrote about easily. He explained how the photo made it easy for him to reflect on the presented moment, and what he did then helped him to feel better and clear his mind. Rayan explained that the task was “meaningful” for him and that the photo helped him “relate to that moment and that something fun and meaningful happened.” Also, “sharing” and “interacting” with Facebook friends made it easy to socialize and talk to each other, he said, that was important to him.

One of the salient perceptions that was clearly coded from Joseph’s interview was “meaningful events.” This code was related to once in a lifetime events and to things he had done that have stories behind them. Joseph’s examples came from his wedding day, which he narrated through writing in his post and verbally in the interview as well. He “felt nostalgic;” he was...
expressing that by referring to it while writing about the photo. As he mentioned in the interview, the photo made him reflect and remember his wedding day and imagine exactly how it feels to be there. So, Joseph felt the desire to return to that time in his life, to that home where the photo was taken, and to his wife and her family. Another code was “meaningful writing,” which represents why the task was meaningful for him, and “sharing” as another related code made the task significantly purposeful for him. Joseph said sharing interesting parts of his personality, moments, and stories from his life with his Facebook friends made “interaction meaningful.” Also, the photo helped him to reflect on that moment easily, and put him on that place and time to imagine precisely being there. Overall, the code “feelings of enjoyment” was highlighted to express happiness throughout the interview to express his emotions. He stated how “reflecting” and “sharing” this moment on Facebook made him feel happy, and took him back to that moment in time. He said that this task “reflected an affective state of consciousness which happiness was experienced and felt.”

One of the codes that was first coded for Nancy was “unease of choosing a photo.” The code was related to the difficulty she claimed for choosing a specific photo because she has “too many photos and does not know what to write about them.” Another code was “memory,” which was related to how the photo helped her evoke memories from the past and take her places, fictionally. Nancy expressed that the photo brought her a yearning desire to a wistful longing for the old days. Also, a lot of “feeling distressed” were revealed, such as feeling a strong desire to return to the past that brought her extreme anxiety. She explained that she felt the “desire to return to that time and that place, where the photo was taken.” In addition, she clearly described how she felt nostalgic through the interview. Nancy explained that the task was “meaningful” to her because she wrote about herself and that “the moment in the photo means a lot to her.” She claimed that sharing posts with close Facebook friends give these posts meaning. “Reflection” was coded because she stated that the photo made it easy and helpful for her to reflect her feelings to that moment, and to take her to places and time to imagine precisely being there. She explained “interaction” as sharing photos with and writing comments to friends on Facebook, as well as their responses to her posts. In the end, she gave her “opinion” clearly on the task and how, after choosing the photo, it was really enjoyable and easy to write. She said, “It’s just a fun way to share things with your friends your day and your personality and some images of your life.”

In the interviews, the participants shared several salient perspectives about their closed Facebook Group task experience, they all talked about “meaningful writing,” “interaction,” “reflection,” and even talked about their “feelings.” Although each participant expressed different types of feelings that the task brings, Rayan revealed feelings were more “feelings of enjoyment” when he recalled the moment in the photo, as well as “distressed” when he recalled the moment before taking the photo. While Joseph expressed that writing about that moment made him feel happy. Nancy felt “nostalgic,” missing that moment, place, and people. For “meaningful writing,” Rayan and Joseph thought that the task was meaningful for them and that writing about a moment that meant a lot to them was fun and meaningful. On the contrary, Nancy differs slightly because she focused on herself and wrote about a moment that meant a lot to her. Nancy mentioned that writing about the moment in her chosen photo was “so meaningful” to her. As all participants are Facebook users, they highlighted the importance of “interaction” with Facebook friends and how sharing and responding made whatever they post meaningful. They also appreciated the idea of
sharing in a private group; they stated that this gave them privacy and willingness to share more personal experiences. Overall, the participants enjoyed the approach of choosing a photo to write about; they said the photo helped them to remember and reflect that meaningful moment clearly, then, write about it easily.

**Educational Conclusions**

In this study, participants showed how they created meaning individually from their personal experiences, and this made the task meaningful for each of them. It is worthy to note that selecting a photo to recall a moment helped the participants to reflect easily on the moment. The photo tied a range of experiences and expressions to it, as the participants said, which enabled them to visualize the moment and narrate it with ease. After selecting the photo, all participants wrote the caption easily. Also, they all chose to write about personal and remarkable moments in their lives. Results stated that participants expressed themselves through their posts, which draws on their diversity and identity. Thus, the task revealed their unique sense of self; each as an individual wrote about a meaningful moment for them. They were able to make sense of themselves and their surroundings. Besides, participants drew from their memories and experiences, and that led to meaningful literacy (Hanauer, 2010). All participants used the first person singular pronoun “I” in their writings, which made it a personal narrative. Moreover, all participants mentioned that they enjoyed the task of interpreting the photo and sharing a memorable moment with their classmates, on Facebook. Since all participants are classmates, they knew each other, and they are also Facebook friends. Besides, they all were familiar with the use of Facebook, they are all members and they use it regularly; they post and respond to others’ posts every so often. Therefore, in completing this task, there was no difficulty reported using Facebook.

**Contributions to ESL/EFL Writers**

The study’s writing task has the potential to contribute many positive effects on ESL/EFL writers. The participants in this task are interacting through sharing what they are thinking or relating their ideas to past experiences about any photo they choose, which gives it value to them and make interaction meaningful (Hanauer, 2010). Also, participants were able to express themselves better and to communicate easily with one another. Therefore, Facebook Groups can be extended spaces for collaborative language-learning activities in educational contexts where students combine their school subjects of language learning and their communicative use of the language in their everyday life. This means that learners will be able to learn the language through bridging life experiences with school subjects. This will encourage learners to stay connected and to continue interacting with each other even after class, and this is positively affecting their social life. It will also help them build close relationships with one another by sharing and responding to posts, and students will know more about their peers. The social function of this genre is to help learners build social networks, make friends, and stay connected through Facebook. Allowing learners to communicate with each other will help them to be more confident to write, share thoughts, and grow as writers. Learners then will share the photo in a closed Facebook Group, and what they have written about it, this will give each individual a unique “voice” between their peers.

Given that research on meaningful literacy in language learning environments in its infancy, this study serves as an initial step towards developing a better understanding of the role of technology, and more specifically Facebook, in ESL/EFL education. Although technology
appears to offer valuable benefits and opportunities for educators and learners in the field of ESL/EFL education, more research is needed to establish further the effectiveness of utilizing technology in the pedagogical realm. Additionally, there is still a lack of research in the textual analysis of writing products that learners co-construct in Facebook Groups. A close examination into linguistic, rhetorical, and discourse features of learners’ posts on Facebook Groups will contribute more to the research body of meaningful literacy, collaborative writing, and genre analysis, and it will be useful in designing appropriate classroom activities.

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References


Appendix A

Task prompt
(posting a photo along with a caption on a closed-Facebook Group)

Task Directions:
1. Take a photo by your cellphone or choose a photo from your cellphone or laptop that interests you or means something to you or captures your attention.
2. Write 1 or 2 paragraphs about the photo. Describe why you choose it. What is the story behind it? Why is it meaningful to you? Does it reflect on your personality? Does it represent your culture? Or remind you of something?
3. Post it on our Facebook Group.
4. Comment on at least one photo in the group

Appendix B

Interview protocol

Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Follow-Up Questions
1. What did you like about the task?
2. Why do you think the task is meaningful for you?
3. What difficulties did you face while conducting the task?
4. Was it easy? Why do you think it was easy?
5. How did the photo help you in writing the task?
6. Was it easy to recall and write about the moment in the photo? How? Why?
7. Talk about the emotions involved while writing the task and why do you think they appeared?
8. Is the photo old or new?
9. Did you face any difficulty using or posting on Facebook?
10. What do you think the purpose is behind commenting on Facebook group members’ posts?
English Majors’ Perceptions of Group Work and English Use in Group Activities at Dong Thap University

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Abstract
Pair/group work is now widely applied in virtually all types of classroom, and it is one of the prominent features of the learner-centered approach and the communicative method in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. This study aimed to investigate three core questions (1) What do English majors at Dong Thap University perceive of group work? (2) How much do they use English in group work engagement? (3) What do they think about the given suggestions for English speaking deployment in group work? The data were collected via a questionnaire from 150 third/fourth-year English majors, Dong Thap University, Vietnam, and interviews with ten target students who had answered the questionnaire and agreed to partake in the interview. The obtained results show that most students highly appreciated the significant role of group activities and English use in group work. They also confirmed that Vietnamese speaking is still dominant in practice, and mostly agreed on several given suggestions to maximize generic benefits and other language learning merits produced by group work. Accordingly, the current study strongly advocates English use as much as possible in group activities performed by English majors.

Keywords: English majors’ perceptions, English use, group work

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Introduction

Today’s teachers generally recognize that group work among learners of most subjects, levels, and learning courses is one of the prominent features of learner-centered classroom, especially in communicative language ones for it is supposed to provide learners of all abilities and learning styles an equal opportunity to work, express themselves, speak out their minds in confidence and interactively learn from others/peers in one way or another. Also, benefits students gain from group activities can be transferred for long-term uses because “by learning the realities of group dynamics as youngsters, they will be better equipped to handle such hangers-on and will face fewer frustrations as adults” (Herreman, 1988, p.11). In this vein, if administered properly, group work in EFL classes of most contexts is highly promising to be a freely available tool for teachers to help learners not only practice speaking English communicatively but also improve the ability to work with others in collaboration to complete common goals and acquire other humanistic skills and values. Having been trained in group work at some points during their college training programs and in-service time after graduation from college/university, EFL teachers in general and college/university ones in particular throughout Vietnam are now more or less exploring group work in their classes.

Likewise, teachers of English from Dong Thap University (Dong Thap province, one of the remote areas in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam) are widely implementing pair/group work in the classroom. For these teachers, this type of instructional activity is now useful, and conducting group work in a variety of activities with unfixed group members during a formal class is one of the required competences for a qualified EFL teacher. Few would deny that the ability to conduct group work in the classroom is one thing, but turning it into a productive activity, providing an optimal opportunity for learners to act and meaningfully communicate in English effortlessly is quite another. In other words, English majors in Dong Thap University are generally encouraged to get engaged in group work as much as possible both inside and outside the classroom, but whether or not these students understand the nature and values of group work and enjoy it in effect, and how much they use English in group work as regular practice is still open to questions because little has been known about such questions based on research in Vietnam’s setting, particularly from such provincial universities as Dong Thap University. Moreover, previous studies on related issues in EFL classroom such as Ababneh (2017), Alfares (2017), Baghoussi and Ouchdi (2019), Ekmekçi (2018), Ibnian (2012), John (2017), Othman and Murad (2015), Taqi and Al-Nouh (2014) in other countries have yet to gain conclusive results across the board or provide sufficient information about the role of the first language and how these EFL students (who all share the first language such as Vietnamese in the current study) used English while working in group activities or project-based assignments. More studies should, therefore, be done especially on English majors’ perceptions of group work and their actual English discourse as well as mother tongue use in group work to provide more evidence for the values of group work in EFL classroom from the learner’s point of view in current Vietnamese context particularly. This calling-for-deeper investigation status has motivated the present study as being one of the very first done in Dong Thap University to delve into the concerned issues related to English majors. To its end, the current study was aimed to address three core research questions: (1) What do English majors at Dong Thap University perceive of group work? (2) How much do they use English in group work engagement? (3) What do they think about the given suggestions for English speaking deployment in group work? Answers to these questions can further illuminate the role of group activities now
widely exercised in college EFL classroom (in Vietnam and other countries alike) and its expected effects on the learner regarding their target language development and other relevant gains. Thereby, alternative or modified strategies/techniques could be advocated for teachers to harness this useful tool in language instruction for the sake of the learner.

**Literature Review**

*What is group work?* In broader terms, group work comprises any learning tasks or activities that require students to work in pairs or groups/teams of three or more members. Group work is principally based on collaborative learning theory. Cooperative learning (Golub, 1988; Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Slavin, 1995; Smith & MacGregor, 1992) refers to a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help one another learn academic content; in cooperative classrooms, students are expected to help each other, to discuss and argue with each other, to assess each other’s current knowledge and fill in gaps in each other’s comprehension, i.e., mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product. It is “a deliberate attempt to take advantage of differing perspectives through the interaction of individuals and their ideas in a reciprocal or alternating action” (Sills, 1988, p.21). Notably, “collaborative learning has as its main feature a structure that allows for student talk: students are supposed to talk with each other....and it is in this talking that much of the learning occurs” (Golub, 1988, p.1). The learner’s role in this mode of learning is further modified by Jacob, (2006, as cited in Al-Yaseen, 2014, p.96): (a) facilitator is the member who coordinates the group’s works; (b) recorder’s responsibility is recording what the group has accomplished; (c) reporter tells others about the group’s work; (d) timekeeper helps the group be aware of time constraints, keeps the group on tasks and fills in for missing group members; (e) observer of collaborative skill checks if group members are using a particular collaborative skill deemed critical to the group’s interaction. In terms of individual accountability in group work, it involves students’ understanding that they will be held accountable for their contributions to the group, that free-loading will not be tolerated, and that everyone must contribute (Gillies, 2007). Meanwhile, the teacher’s role is “constantly on the move: monitoring the group's progress, offering advice if the youngsters seem confused or stuck, suggesting alternatives if student plans go awry, demonstrating how to behave as a contributing member of the group, and taking care of behavioral problems” (Whitworth, 1988, p.15), and “one must also train students to develop specific collaborative learning skills to ensure that they can work productively and harmoniously in pairs and small groups” (Golub, 1988, p.2).

Concerning the operational procedure, the 5D model should be applied: Direct (the teacher directs students how to go about the group work), Discuss (students discuss among themselves), Develop (students develop the content for presentation), Deliver (students deliver the content in front of the class), and Document (the teacher documents the feedback) (John, 2017, p.7).

**Group work benefits in the language classroom**

For its various advantages in second language learning, group work has long been supported by pedagogical arguments (Long & Porter, 1985). Harmer (1991) believes that group work facilitates students in readily taking part in activities and reducing anxiety to promote language fluency in language classes. Additionally, Brown (2001) confirms that group work provides a context in which individuals help each other; it is a method of helping groups as well as helping individuals; and it can enable individuals and groups to influence and change personal, group, and
organizational and community problems. In the same line, Alfares (2017) states that group work benefits language learners in the learning process from cognitive, emotional, and motivational aspects. Groups are helpful for students because of its independence, thanks to the encouragement from learners to learners. Language learning can be promoted by group activities in the following ways (Long & Porter, 1985): (1) Language input: Group work is one of the most valuable sources of input if it is properly handled; (2) Fluency: Students attain fluency in the use of language items already learned; (3) Communication strategies: Students learn strategy of (i) negotiations to control input (seeking information and confirmation, checking information, repetition); (ii) keeping a conversation going in speaking activities. Thus, if English is frequently used in group activities among English majors as much as possible, this will turn out to be a favorable channel for them to improve the target language fluency per se and other social skills related as well.

**Possible problems of group work in the classroom and teacher roles**

Beebe and Masterson (2003) confirm four following drawbacks: (i) there may be pressure from the group to conform to the majority opinion. Most people do not like conflict and attempt to avoid it when possible. By readily acquiescing to the majority opinion, the individual may agree to a wrong solution just to avoid conflict; (ii) an individual may dominate the discussion. This leads to members not gaining satisfaction from the group because they feel isolated in the decision making process; (iii) some members may rely too heavily on others to do the work. This is one of the most salient problems that face groups. Some members do not pitch in and do not adequately contribute to the group; (iv) it takes more time to work in a group than to work alone. It takes longer to accomplish tasks when working with others. Added to these, students do not always have improvement based on group work (Taqi & Al-Nouh, 2014) and tend to use their first language/mother-tongue (Parrott, 1993). Furthermore, Smith and MacGregor (1992) warn that “for students, learning to learn well in groups doesn’t happen overnight” (p.17).

As a consequence, rather than just watch and let students work by themselves during group activities, teachers (Brown, 2001) have to monitor students’ progress by moving around the classroom, pausing briefly beside each pair/group, listening to them and noting any language error or communication problems to facilitate their practice as well as help them manage disagreements. Additionally, it is useful for teachers to use a small notebook or a piece of paper on which he or she can jot down any common mistakes. Some of them can be corrected immediately, but some common problems should be reminded for the whole class after finishing the activity.

Thus, though advantageous to language classes, group work is by no means free from any problems, and EFL teachers should be well aware of and get prepared to deal with them promptly and rationally by taking on multiple roles as being not only a planner, organizer, observer, and evaluator but director, motivator, supporter in case problems somehow occur and especially a stimulator for English use on purpose. Teachers should also know that success in classroom group work can transfer its merits to real life because “in teaching our students how to work effectively in a group setting, we are teaching them far more than that day's material; we are teaching them about democracy and about life, and also about how to live more successfully” (Herreman, 1988, p.6).
Methods

Participants
They were all English majors, third-year and fourth students (2018 – 2019 academic year, aged between 20 and 22) from Dong Thap University, speaking Vietnamese as the first language and approximately reaching the intermediate-level proficiency of English or upper-level. They come from different provinces around the Mekong Delta, South of Vietnam. Thus, the participants (with none ever living in an English speaking country) share the social-cultural background, the field of study, learning setting, and years of the age range, which validates the collected data in terms of group homogeneity. Given the 4-year training schedule, the target group was chosen because with more than two years’ experience studying at college, i.e., more than half-way program completion; they are presumably familiar with working in groups and able to speak English comfortably in group interactions on both general/everyday and specific academic topics.

Research instruments and data collection
To obtain sufficient data for the target research questions, two instruments were used in the current study.

(1) The questionnaire: It was designed by the current authors and was based on a theoretical framework and previous studies. In the current study, the questionnaire was aimed to measure the target group’s perceptions of group work activities and their use of English while working in groups across different subject classes in their major training program. After two times of revision based on the experienced colleagues’ comments and suggestions, the final questionnaire version (in Vietnamese for ease and clarity in thorough comprehension to the participants) includes three main clusters of 17 items as follows:

Table 1. Questionnaire items division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster 1</th>
<th>Perceptions of group work</th>
<th>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
<td>English speaking in group work</td>
<td>6, 7, 8,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 3</td>
<td>Given suggestions:</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-for students</td>
<td>15, 16, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-for teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this 5-point scale questionnaire, the participants were asked to choose their answers by marking individual items, ranging from Strongly disagree/Never (1), Disagree/Rarely (2), Unsure/Sometimes (3), Agree/Often (4) to Strongly agree/Very often (5). All scale values are then summed to give overall positive scales. Therefore, it is decided that the high score on the scale will imply the positive perception/belief/engagement, i.e., items would be scored 5 for “strongly agree/very often” down to 1 for “strongly disagree/never”.

The questionnaire was administered right in the classroom during the regular break time on campus. Permission from the teachers in charge of the classes and consent from the students was fully obtained before the questionnaire administration. On mutual arrangement, the researchers came to each class, explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and delivering its copies to the students (who were allowed to ask questions concerning the questionnaire and decline
to complete it just in case). It took them approximately 10 minutes for completion. The completed copies were then collected. After two weeks of administration, a total of 150 completed copies were qualified for data analysis.

The data results were computed to confirm its reliability with the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS 20.0 for Windows). The Reliability Analysis on all the 5-point scale items showed that the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was acceptable (α=.835).

(2) Interview

The interview was applied to collect further evidence/confirmation for the target research questions. The participants were randomly selected from 150 students who previously participated in the questionnaire and were invited for the interview. Upon their consent, ten students took part in the interview with five semi-structured questions (see below). The interviews were done on campus (Dong Thap University), face-to-face, one by one, on adequate arrangements for the students’ convenience and avoiding possible distractions. The Vietnamese language was used for ease and sufficient clarity in interaction. Each interview took approximately 7 minutes and was recorded for later analysis. One week later, the interview transcriptions were written in Vietnamese were sent back to each interviewee by email for confirmation before further treatments.

Findings

Questionnaire results

Table 2. Students’ perceptions of group work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In your opinion, group work in the classroom is essential and helpful.</td>
<td>3.7200</td>
<td>.80368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You currently enjoy group work activities in the classroom.</td>
<td>4.0067</td>
<td>.66045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In your opinion, group work outside the classroom is also useful.</td>
<td>4.0467</td>
<td>.81378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Group work is more beneficial if all group members can communicate in English.</td>
<td>4.1800</td>
<td>.61382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Successful communication in group work will encourage students to foster their English learning.</td>
<td>4.3333</td>
<td>.58696</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the mean scores of all five items between 3.7 and 4.0 (out of 5), Table 2 displays that students have positive perceptions about its necessity and benefits that group work brings to the EFL classroom. Notably, the highest mean scores are recorded in Item 4 (M=4.18) and Item 5 (M=4.33) with small standard deviations of 0.61 and 0.58, respectively, showing that they all agree with the good impacts resulting from group members’ mutual attempt to communicate in English.

The following is the students’ reflections about their engagement and English use in group work activities across English majored classes:
Table 3. Students’ English speaking in group work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>In English majored classes, you participate in group work activities</td>
<td>4.2867</td>
<td>.70793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Do you speak English in group work activities?</td>
<td>3.1000</td>
<td>.88044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In your observation, students only speak Vietnamese in group work</td>
<td>4.2400</td>
<td>.58711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a mean score of 4.28, Item 6 indicates a high frequency of student participation in group work activities; however, English speaking seemed not to be optimally used in group interaction (Item 7, M=3.1). In other words, the Vietnamese language is usually found in group communication among the target students, which is confirmed by Item 8 (M=4.2).

However, Item 18 (Table 4) earned a high mean score (M=4.26 with a small standard deviation of 0.63), signaling that students now understand the benefits of speaking English while working in groups.

Table 4. Students’ opinion on given suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>In your opinion, students should reduce the amount of speaking Vietnamese and increase English use in group work inside and outside the classroom</td>
<td>4.1867</td>
<td>.62805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Students should develop the habit of speaking English in group work</td>
<td>4.2333</td>
<td>.70869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Students should develop the habit of speaking English in group work beginning with short, useful utterances such as “Stand up; Come here; Let’s get started; Let’s discuss….; I’ll speak first; Now your turn; Do you agree?; What about you?; What makes you think so?; We have only 5 minutes for discussion;…..”</td>
<td>4.0533</td>
<td>.78396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Students should self-compel one another to speak English in group work</td>
<td>4.2400</td>
<td>.66231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Students should assist one another how to improve English speaking in group communication</td>
<td>3.9333</td>
<td>.68215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Students should be self-regulated by the principle of equal English speaking opportunity for all group members in group work</td>
<td>4.1067</td>
<td>.56931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Teachers should encourage students to speak English in group work both inside and outside the classroom</td>
<td>4.1067</td>
<td>.56931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Teachers should grant some sort of rewards or added grades to those exclusively speaking English in group work</td>
<td>4.2800</td>
<td>.56900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Teachers should apply some sort of fine or reduced grades to those only speaking Vietnamese in group work</td>
<td>4.1533</td>
<td>.68284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>From now on you will increase English speaking in group work</td>
<td>4.2667</td>
<td>.63104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 4, all the items but one (Item 13, M=3.93) score above 4 (out of 5 points). Thus, almost all of the students appear to perceive well what they should do to improve English communication in group work (Items 9 – 14, 18), and they also mutually agree on expecting
teachers to give encouragement and apply some practical measures to foster English speaking in group activities (Item 15 – 17).

**Interview results**

As mentioned above, ten students who previously completed the questionnaire were randomly invited to join the interview by answering five questions raised by the researcher. Before the interview, they were informed of the purpose of the interview and that their answers had nothing to do with their learning outcomes (before or after the interview). Additionally, their names were strictly kept confidential. Upon their consent, the arrangement for each student was made to suit their conveniences, and the interviews were fully recorded by a smart-phone for later analysis. The interview was administered on campus and in Vietnamese for absolute clarity and comprehension between the interviewer and interviewee. The interviewed students were chronologically coded by S1 (Student 1), S2 (Student 2), S3 (Student 3), and so on, respectively.

**Table 5. Students’ answers in summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>Question 2</th>
<th>Question 3</th>
<th>Question 4</th>
<th>Question 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Yes; for socialization and problem-solving</td>
<td>Yes; for better understanding and scoring added</td>
<td>Most Vietnamese; at times English as requested by the teacher</td>
<td>Yes; helpful for English speaking, listening skills</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Yes; for mutual support, ideas shared</td>
<td>Yes; showing responsibility</td>
<td>Some English, most Vietnamese as a habit</td>
<td>Yes; helpful for soft skills, error correction</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Yes; for sharing ideas, a better understanding</td>
<td>Yes; showing confidence, soft skills improved</td>
<td>Most Vietnamese to express complex ideas</td>
<td>Yes; helpful for error correction in pronunciation</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Yes; for speaking and listening skills improved</td>
<td>Yes; showing responsibility</td>
<td>Most Vietnamese, challenging to express in English</td>
<td>Yes; making it a habit; the developing responsive ability</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Yes; creating an English speaking environment</td>
<td>Yes; enjoy using English communication</td>
<td>At first English, then Vietnamese mostly</td>
<td>Yes, definitely</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>Yes; helpful for problem-solving more quickly</td>
<td>Yes; improving communication skills</td>
<td>Most Vietnamese for lack of English vocabulary</td>
<td>Yes, for English fluency</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>Yes; learning experiences from others</td>
<td>Yes; finishing assignments more quickly</td>
<td>Most Vietnamese for quick expressions and responses, at times English</td>
<td>Yes; for error correction in pronunciation and grammar</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8</td>
<td>Yes; for supplementing one another</td>
<td>Yes; sharing experiences</td>
<td>Most Vietnamese, difficult for expressing in English</td>
<td>Yes, for improving communication skills; error correction</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9</td>
<td>Yes; speaking skills in public</td>
<td>Yes; solving problems more quickly</td>
<td>Most Vietnamese as a habit</td>
<td>Yes, forming a habit, for error correction</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10</td>
<td>Yes; improving soft skills, speaking, listening skills</td>
<td>Yes; showing responsibility</td>
<td>Most Vietnamese, challenging to express in English</td>
<td>Yes, forming a habit, for error correction</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English Majors’ Perceptions of Group Work

Question 1: Do you think group work activities (between 2 – 5 students) both inside and outside the classroom are necessary and useful to English learning? Why?

Question 2: Do you actively participate in group work activities assigned by the teacher in class? Why?

Question 3: In your observation, do most of the students speak English or Vietnamese when working in groups? Why?

Question 4: Do you think students should speak English when working in groups to improve their communication in English?

Question 5: Should you increase speaking English when working in groups in the coming time?

Discussions and Implications

As presented above, the current study attempted to address three research questions: (1) What do English majors at Dong Thap University think of group work? (2) How much do they use English in group work engagement? (3) What do they think about the given suggestions for English speaking deployment in group work? On the results obtained from the questionnaire and interview data collection instruments, the answers to the research questions are discussed below.

First, the target students generally perceive the nature and significance of group activities inside and outside the classroom. Four out of 5 items in Cluster 1 (Table 2) achieved high mean scores, and all ten interviewed students gave their positive responses to Question 1 (Table 5). Therefore, they reported that they enjoyed group work (Item 2) and actively participated in group activities administered by teachers (Item 6 with M=4.28, Table 3; Question 2 with 10 Yes responses). This is mostly because they solidly understand that this type of collaborative learning performance is an opportunity for them to practice and enhance English communication (Item 4, 5), especially speaking-listening skills (S4, S5, S9, S10), cultivating soft skills (S10), showing confidence and responsibility (S2, S4, S10), sharing ideas and experiences (S2, S3, S7, S8), better-solving problems, finishing assignments quickly (S1, S6, S7) and so on. Thus, at the second half of the training program and after more than two years’ experience of working at college, third/fourth-year English majors at Dong Thap University (current Vietnamese context) hold positive attitudes toward group work and recognize its multiple values of verbal communication, collaboration, social bonds, mutual benefits, and personality development. This again definitely confirms the substantive merits specifically attributed to group work in language classroom as having been repeatedly highlighted by many scholars and researchers in the language education line (Al-Yaseen, 2014; Brown, 2001; Gillies, 2007; Harmer, 1991; Hornby, 2009; Long & Porter, 1985; Slavin, 1995, Zhang, 2010; etc.). The students’ positive attitudes to group work found in the current study are also in line with previous research reported by Meteetham (2001) in Thailand, Taqi and Al-Nouh (2014) in Kuwait, Alfares (2017) in Saudi Arabia, Ababneh (2017) in Jordan and Masruddin (2018) in Indonesia. Noticeably, 7/10 interviewed students (S2, S3, S4, S7, S8, S9, S10 – Question 4) revealed that group work participation helped them correct errors in English pronunciation and grammar. This backs up the suggestion that “interaction in the classroom may help language learners to gain the appropriate feedback that will enable them to identify grammatical errors, thus leading them to produce accurate utterances in the target language” (Alfares, 2017, p.253), and further implies that the students can rely on their partners’
resources rather than exclusively on the teacher, thus leading their way to increasing collaborative and autonomous learning, which is one of the ultimate goals of tertiary foreign language education.

Secondly, as seen above, although the students’ perception and engagement in group activities are positive, English communication/speaking is rather (if not very) limited. As found in Table 3, Item 7 (Do you speak English in group work activities?) gains the lowest mean score (M=3.1), while Item 8 (In your observation, students only speak Vietnamese in group work) wins a high mean score (M=4.24). Added to this, the ten interview responses to Question 3 (Table 5) primarily go to Vietnamese rather than English. The interview discovers that Vietnamese mostly used as a communicative medium in group activities was due to the students’ established habit for years (S2, S9), a lack of available English vocabulary (S6), an inability to express complex, challenging ideas in English (S3, S4, S8, S10) and an ease to produce quick expressions/responses (S7). These accounts about the reasons why learners of EFL/SL (L2) use their mother tongue/first language (L1) in the English classroom have been reported in the previous studies (Al Sharaeai, 2012; Ekmekçi, 2018; Paker & Karaağaç, 2015; Parrott, 1993). Other reasons for L1 use (Choffey 2001, as cited in Ekmekçi, 2018) are (1) Students’ L1 is a means of relating the learning activities to the students’ experiences, (2) If students come across some specific lexical items between the mother tongue and target language culture, they will learn how to deal with, (3) L1 use enables students to establish a kind of strong relationship between L1 and L2. There is no doubt that L1 can serve as an effective mediator in the second language (L2) classroom, especially at the early stages of L2 learning ever seen in the Grammar Translation Method. However, since the participants in the present study are all third/fourth-year English majors with the intermediate or upper level of English proficiency, they should maximize the target language as much as possible for both accuracy and fluency reinforced and to gradually free themselves from relying on L1 too much. Past research has proved that “the more the learners hear the target language, and are exposed to it, the sooner they will learn and internalize the language” (Ekmekçi, 2018, p.75). This, as we – teachers of English - already know, is the ultimate aims of the Communicative and Task-based Language Teaching Methods, which have been widely applied throughout Vietnam over the past years. As a result, it would be far more beneficial if English communication is optimally deployed when it comes to group activities among EFL learners in Vietnam and in other countries, where English speaking environments are scarce outside the classroom.

Thirdly, though Vietnamese is still very often used by English majors, the current study shows very promising potential. As found in Table 4 above, the mean scores of all items are high, around 4 (out of 5). Also, all interview responses to questions 4 and 5 (Table 5) are affirmative. It demonstrates that virtually all the students at this point in their training program (the second halfway) do understand the importance of English communication. They all agree on making attempts to take concrete actions like “reduce the amount of speaking Vietnamese and increase English use in group work inside and outside classroom; develop the habit of speaking English in group work beginning with short, useful utterances; self-compel one another to speak English in group work; be self-regulated by the principle of equal English speaking opportunity for all group members in group work” and so on. Concerning classroom instruction, they also agree that teachers should “encourage students to speak English in group work both inside and outside classroom; should grant some sort of rewards or added grades to those exclusively speaking English in group work; apply some sort of fine or reduced grades to those only speaking Vietnamese in group work,” etc.
These, therefore, not only reflect the students’ awareness of the necessity to use English in communication but also serve as implications for teachers and students of English to optimize the space of group work mediation for the target language acquisition and other humanistic benefits. Accordingly, the current study strongly argues that if both teacher and student harmoniously keep right on the shared track, minimizing the noted problem of L1 overuse (Parrott, 1993), the expected fruits of the two parties’ effort would be enormous and rewarding.

Further suggestions for consideration, especially at Document phase done in classroom (the teacher documents the feedback, [John, 2017, p.7]) are that teachers should exactly document students’ presentation/reports of group work results by not just listening but jot down main points/key-words from their presentations or even better write them clearly on the board so that all class can easily view; then read loudly and slowly for the entire class to pay attention, checking for confirmations within the same group and across-groups or calling for further opinions by purposely inviting weaker students or those who seem to speak little in the group. Then if time is permitted, the entire class should come up with a shared list of solutions/agreements/ideas in discussion. Thus, virtually all are engaged, and each has opportunity to use English and develop cognitively in an English speaking environment meaningfully, ensuring “the voice of every group member is heard” (Merchant, 2011, p.296), and creating “a collaborative environment is nurtured by a teacher who considers everyone to be a resource, which allows risks to be taken and mistakes to be made, and who doesn't always have the right answer” (Gilles & VanDover, 1988, p.31). Behind that, during such a course of social interactions, in some way, students will better sense the significance of group, class, community, and individual contributions in the process of getting things done in human life mutually via the dual principle of independence and interdependence.

Conclusion
The current study attempted to probe how third/fourth-year English majors perceive of group work and how they use English in group activities at Dong Thap University. The obtained findings are very gratifying because the target students generally got positive perceptions of its benefits and further ones if they spoke English rather than Vietnamese in current group work practices both inside and outside the classroom. They also recognized what they should do to increase English communication in group activities. The findings from the current study provide further information about the role of group work in the EFL classroom of the current Vietnamese context. Accordingly, it strongly advocates English speaking in group activities performed by English majors as such to maximize its language learning advantages and other humanistic merits for English majors. This does not end there but calls for further studies on larger scales and more empirically in the field throughout the country of Vietnam as well as beyond to (1) test those initial suggestions given in the current study or to (2) investigate in which cases English use in group work will genuinely help and when students will likely decline to the L1 resource.

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References


English Majors’ Perceptions of Group Work

Do & Le


English Majors’ Perceptions of Group Work and English Use in Group Activities at Dong Thap University

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Abstract
Pair/group work is now widely applied in virtually all types of classroom, and it is one of the prominent features of the learner-centered approach and the communicative method in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. This study aimed to investigate three core questions (1) What do English majors at Dong Thap University perceive of group work? (2) How much do they use English in group work engagement? (3) What do they think about the given suggestions for English speaking deployment in group work? The data were collected via a questionnaire from 150 third/fourth-year English majors, Dong Thap University, Vietnam, and interviews with ten target students who had answered the questionnaire and agreed to partake in the interview. The obtained results show that most students highly appreciated the significant role of group activities and English use in group work. They also confirmed that Vietnamese speaking is still dominant in practice, and mostly agreed on several given suggestions to maximize generic benefits and other language learning merits produced by group work. Accordingly, the current study strongly advocates English use as much as possible in group activities performed by English majors.

Keywords: English majors’ perceptions, English use, group work

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Book Review

The Linguistic Landscape of the Mediterranean French and Italian Coastal Cities

Authors: Robert J. Blackwood and Stefania Tufi
Title of the Book: The Linguistic Landscape of the Mediterranean French and Italian Coastal Cities
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Reviewer: Mohammad Abdullah Al Matarneh

The manuscript entitled ‘The Linguistic Landscape of the Mediterranean: French and Italian Coastal Cities’ authored by Robert J. Blackwood and Stefania Tufi (2015) has covered the linguistic landscape of a significant geographical space, the LL of French and Italian Mediterranean cities, characterized by ‘conflicting but fluid discourses of tradition and modernity, centrality and peripherality, inclusion and exclusion, and linguistic fixity and non-normativity’ (p. 2), claiming that commercial signs were used in the Roman times oftener in images rather than in
written formats due to the high levels of illiteracy among merchants. This book presents the languages prevalent in these linguistic landscapes (e.g. Italian, French, Latin, and English), but local varieties were uncommon in the 19th century. The book offers historical and sociolinguistic backgrounds to the survey cities, which significantly contributes to the contextualisation of the data presented and the discussion of important sociolinguistic issues.

In the introductory part, the authors present the following: ‘The city as space, place, and symbol’, ‘origins of public signage’, LL studies and our contribution, Naming languages Terms used in the course of this book, methodology, and organization of the book. This helps to contextualise the linguistic landscapes in both France and Italy and consequently provides theoretical frameworks for the following chapters.

The first chapter entitled ‘Sketching the Contexts: Italy and France’ presents a synopsis of language change and language management in Italy and France in an attempt to define the reasons as well as agencies behind moulding public spaces in French and Italian cities in the Mediterranean, highlighting the organisational frameworks, characterising each city, that date back to the middle ages. This is clearly evident in northern and central Italy characterised by polycentric structures vis a vis French cities characterised by ‘primacy organization’ (p.18), i.e. governed by the capital city of France, Paris (Salone, 2005). ‘Italian polycentrism is arguably most evident in language matters’. Various dialects, often characterised by a low prestigious status in consequence of extralinguistic factors, but showing high levels of vitality in urban areas, that originated from Latin coexist with Italian, which explains why Italy is conceived as a linguistically diverse country. It seems that language policy in Italy tolerates multilingual written practices in the visual domain, as displayed in the incorporation of intercultural education into educational practices in Italy even though some local administrations have recently tended to remove the writings of immigrant languages from public spaces (p. 20-280).

On the other hand, France is characterised by ‘linguistic centrum’ (p.28), a consequence of ‘centuries of the cumulative concentration of institutions, individuals, and power in the capital city’ (p.29). Therefore, France is a typical example of states whose language policy is controlled and governed by one central government, i.e. the government intervenes in guiding and managing language use in educational and public spaces, which is recently, particularly after the second half of the 20th century, reflected in the disappearance of many languages in the linguistic landscape of French cities. The French language is largely visible in public spaces by virtue of its legal protection, whilst migrant languages (e.g. Arabic and Berber), despite that fact that there are a large number of migrant groups such as Arabs and Berbers, are chiefly marginalised for having no official status (p. 38).

The second chapter examines the linguistic landscapes of the Ligurian Sea. The chapter reveals that cultural structures in French and Italian cities near the borders demonstrate ‘a denationalized process of meaning-making through language in the LL’, employing the LL as a tool to examine if there exists ‘the cross-border language use in the public space’ and if meanings displayed by the type of linguistic diversity are ‘mirrored on both sides of the frontier’ (p. 43). After providing a socio-historical background on the city of Nice, LL surveys were carried out to record the languages present according to percentages: French (the most dominant), Dutch, English, German, Italian, Latin, Nissart, Russian, and Spanish. As far as the LL of Monaco is
concerned, it is characterised by multilingualism, despite Monegasque, the regional language, is sometimes seen in the visual written domain. After providing sociohistorical and linguistic backgrounds on Genoa, the LL surveys conducted reveal that Genoese is only visible on signs displaying place names and local products for reasons related to tourism.

The third chapter entitled ‘Peripherality in the Border Areas: Trieste and Northern Catalonia’ concentrates on the linguistic landscapes of the Gulfs of Trieste (to the east) and of Lion (to the west) with a concentration on two languages in the LL of Italian (Slovenian and Triestino) and French cities (Catalan and Castilian Spanish). Triestino is closely associated with ‘internal peripherality’ representing a sense of ‘localized culture’ and asserting ‘alterity with respect to Slovenian’. Having examined the material culture very carefully and thoroughly, it may reflect the changing language ideologies in border areas, pointing to patterns in commodification and meaning-making; this is clearly evident in the employment of multilingual writing to carry out a sense of double identity, significantly not through Castilian Spanish but authentically through the Catalan language.

The fourth chapter entitled ‘Insularity in the Linguistic Landscapes of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica’, as the title suggests, presents ‘centres of power and modalities of regionalism’ implemented in these three areas encapsulating ‘elements of tension and contradictions deriving from different models’ (p. 147). With reference to the signs featuring it, Sardinian is found to be an index of ethnic identity, whilst insularity, but not peripherality, explains why Corsican is seen in the visual written domain.

The fifth chapter ‘Social Representations of Marseilles and Naples’ Linguistic Landscapes’ presents an overview of social representation theory (i.e. models and applications) and provides representations of Marseilles and Naples with a discussion of the data gleaned from the survey locations. Having recorded signs in 20 survey locations, Provençal and Occitan are not visible in the linguistic landscape in Marseilles, but two mini-case-studies show the presence of Occitan, as exemplified by the sign on the Occitan Cultural Centre vis a vs the wide use of the French language outside the association. Arabic is sometimes visible in the linguistic landscape; Neapolitan in the LL is also visible as well as migrant languages.

The sixth chapter entitled ‘Cosmopolitan Linguistic Landscapes of the Mediterranean’, which first traces back the origin of ‘cosmopolitanism’ (p.175), examines the visibility of English in the LL of the Mediterranean cities from a cosmopolitan perspective. The findings suggest that English loanwords have recently infiltrated into the new mass media resources and English is currently increasingly used and ‘indiscriminate’ (p. 182). In addition, the Italian population appears to be no longer worried about the growing use of English words and expressions in Italian social settings, including the linguistic landscape; it is mainly intended for symbolising cosmopolitan identities with the attainment of various functions, forming part of ‘a communicational landscape where it is employed as a semiotic modality and as a mainstream resource’. On the other hand, the use of English words and expressions in French is one of the popular issues in the present Anglophone world (p. 185). Although the visibility of the English language is conceived as minimal, it is commoner than other foreign languages in the French LL (p. 196).
Finally, Blackwood and Tufi end up with ‘Conclusions: The Transformative Power of Emplaced Language’, symbolically and metaphorically characterizing urban spaces in a way that the chapter covers up the main components of the study. In national linguistic landscapes, it is no longer a surprise to find the French and Italian languages dominate the survey cities respectively. Comparatively, the linguistic landscapes of Italian cities have displayed a wider range of languages than the French ones do; this is because of the strict rules applied by the French authorities as opposed to the more tolerant language policies guiding the Italian authorities. In Italy, for example, the linguistic rights of national minorities are recognised, which is reflected in the visibility of their languages in the linguistic landscape. For instance, this is evident in the written dominant use of Slovenian in the province of Trieste. What is more, dialects such as Genoese and Neapolitan are merely thought of as a marker of local culture (p. 209). By contrast, the linguistic data gleaned from the French Mediterranean survey locations indicate the strong marginalisation of migrant groups. As far as the visibility and presence of English in the survey areas are concerned, English is more visible in the Italian than French Mediterranean cities.

This book provides the student researchers, linguistic landscapers, and sociolinguists with important knowledge both in theory and practice on a wide range of sociolinguistic issues (e.g. language policies in Italy and France, linguistic centrisms, multilingualism, migrant speech communities, and English and cosmopolitanism). Like other manuscripts that comprehensively cover up several cities in the same country (e.g. Alomoush, 2015), it gives a full account of a variety of French and Italian coastal cities with a discussion of a wide range of migrant languages on the one hand and English and Cosmopolitanism on the other hand, in addition to the French and Italian languages. The semiotics of the cover page (I mean here the non-capitalisation of ‘the linguistic landscape of the Mediterranean, French and Italian coastal cities, Robert j. blackwood and stefania tufi) may suggest that Blackwood and Tufi aim to attract the attention of the reader. However, this may be a hint at the disparities between the linguistic data collected from the survey cities, particularly in France, visually indicating the ‘extreme erasure’ of migrant groups, and the vitality of migrant languages in urban Mediterranean spaces.

To conclude, this manuscript is a valuable addition to the already existing literature on theoretical and empirical linguistic landscape studies through the provision of a range of models or frameworks (e.g. ‘superdiversity’ and ‘polylinguaging’) to analyses and discuss the quantitative results provided in the relevant chapters. What is more, it seems that both Blackwood and Tufi are fully aware of the disparities between the invisibility of particular languages (e.g. minority languages, as in the case of Arabic in French coastal cities) and the vitality of the speakers before conducting the project.

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**References**
Author: Naoko Taguchi and Carsten Roever
The title of the book: Second Language Pragmatics
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Reviewer: Dr. Fahad Alzahrani

The field of second language pragmatics is a growing area that has attracted many scholars’ attention. Since its emergence, there have been many changes and developments which highlight its importance in the acquisition, learning and teaching second language (L2). Historically, there have been at least two research publications outlining issues in L2 pragmatic development (i.e., Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996) and two reviews evaluating the growth of the field; the most recent one is the seminal work by Kasper and Rose (2002) which summarizes the developments occurred within the earlier phase of the field of L2 pragmatics. Still, it has been a decade since Kasper and Rose’s (2002) review of the developments occurred within the earlier phase of the field of L2 pragmatics. There are major changes and advancement in the body of literature of ILP which prompted the two leading scholars in this field, Taguchi and Roever, to contribute to the field with this new work. Thus, Second language pragmatics is a three-decade’s worth of substantive findings from the research literature. It provides a renewed and up-to-date comprehensive overview of the current state of the field of second language pragmatics research, specifically in relation to second language learning, instruction and assessment.
Taguchi and Roever’s (2017) work makes a significant contribution to the field of L2 pragmatics as it enriches the literature by reviewing the current situation of L2 pragmatic research from acquisitional and sociolinguistic perspectives. It covers theoretical frameworks and historical backgrounds of pragmatics learning and presents methodological and empirical developments in L2 pragmatics research.

This insightful book consists of ten chapters, and the discussion through chapters 2 to 9 revolves around seven major topics within pragmatics: 1) theories of pragmatics learning; 2) research methods; 3) longitudinal research and developmental trajectories in pragmatics; 4) individual variation and characteristics in pragmatic learning and development; 5) pragmatic instruction and assessment; 6) contexts of pragmatics learning and development; and 7) L2 pragmatics in the era of globalization.

Chapter one, which is the introductory chapter, concisely introduces the field of pragmatics which is the fundamental source discipline for L2 pragmatics. This chapter reviews three essential sub-fields of pragmatic research that are of particular relevance to the book: cross-cultural pragmatics, intercultural pragmatics, and interlanguage pragmatics that led the discussion to a more detailed presentation of the agendas and development of interlanguage pragmatics. This chapter concludes with explaining the rationale of writing the book and describing how it is structured.

Chapter two, entitled ‘Disciplinary domain and history’, explains how the field of L2 pragmatics, as a discipline, is situated within academic disciplines such as pragmatics, interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis. It discusses how the history of L2 pragmatics research is traced from its beginning in research based on speech acts to the current thriving status of discursive pragmatics, highlighting models in communicative competence. It also addresses the theoretical framework of the construct of pragmatic competence.

Chapter three, ‘Theoretical models of pragmatics learning and development’, discusses seven different theories within Second Language Acquisition (SLA) related to the development of pragmatic competence. This includes the noticing hypothesis, the two-dimensional model, skill acquisition theories and sociocultural theory. Featuring important studies in each assumption along with similarities and differences across the seven models, the discussion in this chapter evolves around the central question: What mechanism drive pragmatic development and move learners from their current stage to a higher stage of pragmatic competence?

Chapter four, ‘Research Methods in L2 Pragmatics’, critically reviews the major approaches to data collection and analysis in second language pragmatics research. It discusses types of data elicitation methods which include receptive judgment data, receptive non-interactive production data and interactive production data. This chapter also reviews instruments used widely in L2 pragmatics, for example, discourse completion tasks, role plays, elicited conversations and natural data. The chapter outlines data analysis procedures which include speech act coding and conversational analysis. The main purpose of this chapter, however, is to draw conclusions that can be validly drawn from data under these approaches.
Chapter five explores the commonality of patterns of pragmatic development. Relying on findings from longitudinal studies available and on cross-sectional ones, this chapter outlines some broad developmental pathways along a continuum with two poles: a low-ability learners and advanced pragmatic ability ones. The authors discuss developmental trajectories in the learning of L2 pragmatics in areas that are well-explored such as speech acts as well as areas that are under-researched such as routine formulae and implicature.

Chapters six and seven discuss the relationship between learning and learner characteristics (internal and external factors) such as motivation, aptitude, and identity. Chapter 6 is a research-based argument on the impact of individual differences on learning while chapter 7 is about the impact of the learning context. Chapter 7 is a synthesis of the existing pragmatic competence and development literature in four distinct learning contexts: study abroad contexts, the formal classroom, technology-enhanced learning contexts, and the immigration contexts. This chapter mainly addressed the question: what contextual features that can promote the learning of pragmatics in each context?

Chapter eight, entitled Teaching and assessing L2 pragmatics, provides an overview of several approaches that can accelerate learners’ pragmatic development through instruction such as, awareness-raising deductive and inductive approaches to pragmatic.

Taking a wider perspective, Chapter nine, is a survey of background literature in three areas – English as a lingua franca (ELF), intercultural competence and heritage language learners which represent the current globalization trends in applied linguistics.

Finally, Chapter ten is a summary of the topics and research covered in the whole book. References and a glossary index of authors cited and key terminologies are presented in several pages afterwards.

In conclusion, the book is a very well-structured and user-friendly book with a ‘summary and directions for future research’ section at the end of every chapter, except chapter 1. The topics covered are sequenced in a well-connectivity manner. This well-researched book makes a major contribution to the field by bringing recent research and developments in L2 pragmatics research. Beside evaluating the current state of the field, this book details new topics and research agendas and challenges that emerged as the field enters its fourth decade. This makes this work a significant source of knowledge to drive the field into the next decade.

With that being said, the book is informative and serves as a reference book for researchers, teachers, teacher trainers, L2 learners and graduate students who already possess some background in the of L2 pragmatics. Nevertheless, it can also be considered as a valuable book for introductory courses of pragmatics or second language pragmatics for both undergraduate and graduate students. Overall, Taguchi and Roever’s work deserves the attention of anyone who wishes to build on their current knowledge and further explore options of pragmatics research, assessment, and teaching.

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References