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Saudi University Students’ Perceptions towards Virtual Education During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Language Learning via Blackboard

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Abstract
Following the spread of COVID-19, many parts of the world have fully shifted to virtual education. Issues regarding students’ readiness for this mode of education have been the main concerns in countries where students are not used to virtual classes. This article presents a case study that investigated the perceptions of Saudi university students towards learning via Blackboard, during the unusual mode of delivering education caused by Covid-19. The aim was to identify the merits and challenges of online learning in order to understand the students’ learning experiences during the pandemic period and suggest practical solutions. The participants were 25 university students majoring in the English language at the bachelor of arts level. The instructor (the author) taught them classes on morphology. Based on an analysis of the students’ learning logs, the students preferred the asynchronous environment to the synchronous one due to its flexibility. However, unlike research findings identified in relevant studies on virtual education for language learning, the present study reveals that virtual education is not always appealing for students. This study is one of the few studies that compare the synchronous and asynchronous aspects of BB in the Arabian contexts. It is hoped that this study will help university authorities to set out more practical educational plans in the case of emergencies. Also, this study will inform the practices of university instructors and designers of professional development courses in the near future.

Keywords: blackboard, language learning, perceptions, Saudi university students, virtual education

Introduction

The early focus of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was on using the computer as a learning tool, and this was due to the limited access to the internet in the 1980s and 1990s. Later, the availability of the internet facilitated the construction of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) that have been developed to facilitate interaction and collaboration (Schwienhorst, 2002). VLEs have been incorporated into many higher education institutions. Regarding the field of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), there has been a clear preference for combining Virtual Language Learning Environments (VLLEs) and flipped learning approaches over traditional in-class learning. VLLEs appear in various forms, such as platforms, games and social networks (Mroz, 2014). This preference for utilising VLLEs is due to a number of reasons. First, many EFL studies have revealed the positive impact that VLLEs bring to language learners in terms of learning development despite the existing challenges (e.g., training, cost and security issues) (Mroz, 2014). What facilitates the development of the learners’ language skills is the fact that VLLEs provide a space for collaborative learning (Mroz, 2014). Collaborative learning is a “social process of knowledge building” (Miyake & Kirschner, 2014, p. 420). This process requires that learners work together when solving problems or completing tasks. Additionally, many linguists believe that VLLEs can create a learning environment that resembles the culture of the target language, and consequently, this can further facilitate language learning (Mroz, 2014). Also, the incorporation of VLEs, which entails the use of technology, meets “the needs of digital learners” (Gamble, 2018, p. 23). VLLEs is not obstacle-free. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of Saudi university students towards online learning during the COVID-19 quarantine period. This work presents one of so many stories around the world regarding education in the time of COVID-19. There are some expectations across the world that COVID-19 will persist for months and will continue to affect the next academic semester. Many universities around the world have made their decisions to continue with online lectures for the coming academic year. It is hoped that this study will allow educational authorities and instructors to get a sense of how learners experience online learning in order to improve the delivery of online courses and advance teaching innovation in their contexts. Also, learners’ experiences with VLLEs can be an effective source for informing the design and content of professional development courses for language instructors, more particularly when teaching in a time of unease. The focus on using Blackboard (hereafter BB) in this study has emerged from the fact that it is a common teaching and learning platform at many Saudi universities and at many international universities. Accordingly, this study answers the following question:

What are the students’ perceptions towards learning via BB during quarantine?

This main question is divided into the following sub-questions:

a) What are the benefits of BB learning as perceived by learners?

b) What are the problems with BB learning as perceived by learners?

Literature Review

VLLEs: Merits and Barriers

There are two delivery modes of online courses: Asynchronous and synchronous. An asynchronous mode of learning refers to the delivery of learning resources and materials via Learning Management System platforms (LMS), such as BB or Moodle. “Asynchronous online communication does not require the real-time participation of instructor and students, which can
be supported through tools such as e-mails, discussion boards, blogs, wikis, or video/audio recordings” (Huang & Hsiao, 2012, p.15). This mode allows students to study at their own pace (Reese, 2014). Synchronous mode involves the real-time delivery of course contents. Synchronous software allow “students and instructors to communicate orally, exchange messages through typing, upload PowerPoint presentations, transmit video, [or] surf websites together” (Mc Brien, Jones & Cheng, 2009, p. 2). It has been claimed that “Synchronous e-learning, commonly supported by media such as videoconferencing and chat, has the potential to support e-learners in the development of learning communities.” (Hrastinski, 2008, p.52). It offers whiteboard, video and audio streaming and sharing files (Cornelius, 2014; Rudd & Rudd, 2014). The non-verbal communication signals accompanying the synchronous conferencing sessions make learners feel more connected and engaged with their peers and instructors (Rudd & Rudd, 2014). This helps to overcome the students’ feeling of isolation occurs in asynchronous environments (Tunceren, Kaur, Mullins & Slimp, 2015). However, technical problems, such as the internet speed, might stand as a barrier to students’ engagement with synchronous platforms (Rudd & Rudd, 2014). Although it might seem that asynchronous tools are less communicative than the synchronous tools, some studies claim that asynchronous tools can improve learners’ cognitive skills (e.g., Ogbonna, Ibezim & Obi, 2019).

In the field of higher education, there are several multidisciplinary studies that have examined the merits and challenges of VLEs platforms and modes of learning in different contexts, and various (sometimes contradictory) results have been obtained; ultimately, this keeps the debate on limiting or expanding VLEs in higher education very much alive. For instance, many studies have investigated the merits and challenges of using BB, which is the focus of this study. Some studies found that university students value the communicative aspect of BB that leads to active and equal participation opportunities in asynchronous environments (e.g., Huang & Hsiao, 2012). In contrary, other studies found that students believed that the asynchronous mode of BB does not provide them with a space for active learning because of the lack of direct communication with peers and instructors and the time needed for participation, so the ignorance of answering others’ question was obvious. These students also believed that BB sessions should be used as a complementary tool to in-class teaching (e.g., Vonderwell, 2003; Wilson & Whitlock, 1998). Some studies revealed that the synchronous mode is valued as an interactional tool by learners (e.g., Chen, Dobinson & Kent, 2020; Guo, 2013), but not by staff (e.g., Heirdsfield, Walker, Tambyah & Beutel, 2011).

Regarding the field of ELF, some studies have found that using asynchronous discussion forums for EFL learning increases learners’ anxiety (e.g., Bailey, Lee & Vorst, 2018). In contrast, other studies have reported that learners feel more confident when learning via these online forums. For example, Thompson and Ku (2005) found that most Chinese students expressed more confidence when sharing opinions in asynchronous online forums than in face-to-face discussions. Similarly, Zhao and McDougall (2008) claimed that asynchronous online communication provides those students who may have linguistic anxieties with more time for understanding and composing in the communication process. The reason for this variation in the research findings on VLEs is that the teaching and learning of languages is localised and context-based (Shaw, 2009). Kumaravadivelu (2003, p. 33) argues that pedagogical strategies should be “location-specific, classroom oriented and innovative strategies”. In accordance with Kumaravadivelu’s (2003)
proposition of a post-method pedagogy, it is not logical to assume that a pedagogy that works for language learners in one context will work for other language learners in other contexts. This makes the generalisation of research findings regarding VLLEs difficult.

In the Saudi Arabian context, universities generally tend to use BB for providing blended learning courses. However, studies conducted in the field of EFL learning for examining and comparing both synchronous and asynchronous aspects of BB are limited in number. This indicates that the use of BB for learning EFL at Saudi universities requires more investigations. One study that does examine BB learning is the work of Fageeh and Mekheimer (2013) who found that students have positive attitudes towards asynchronous discussion forums; however, they feel more comfortable in conventional face-to-face communication than in asynchronous discussions. Another study by Pusuluri, Mahasneh & Alsayer (2017) focused on the use of BB by EFL learners at Al Jouf University, which is located in Saudi Arabia. Their study revealed that learners appreciate the fact that BB widens the scope of their learning experience. However, many learners were neutral about their preference for BB learning over face-to-face learning. Also, many learners were neutral about BB being considered as an interesting learning environment. Pusuluri et al. (2017) associated this neutrality with the learners’ insufficient awareness of the benefits of BB. Another study by Ali (2017) has highlighted the positive attitudes of EFL learners towards using BB and related their attitudes to their high motivation levels. A recent study by Al-Mubireek (2019) compared students’ use of two different platforms, including BB and Oxford IQ. His study found that students generally revealed positive attitudes towards learning via online platforms. However, the students in Al-Mubireek’s study were only required to participate in online learning for two hours per week. A study by Anas (2020) at Bisha University confirms that Saudi students value blended learning and appreciate the interactivity of online tools, such as discussion forums and collaborative activities.

It should be noted that comparing synchronous and asynchronous aspects of BB in the Saudi context were beyond the scope of the previous studies. Also, all of these studies used online learning as a complementary learning mode to in-class learning (i.e., blended learning). In such circumstances, students spent a few hours a week engaging in online learning in order to vary their learning resources and experiences. Thus, this variation that characterises blended courses may have led to the students’ more positive views towards online learning.

The case of blended learning differs from the recent case of shifting all education online due to the spread of COVID-19 across the globe. The world was simply not ready for these unusual circumstances. As a result, students and instructors have found themselves without any options or alternatives to online learning. Like what happened in many parts of the world, the quarantine in Saudi Arabia was announced suddenly in early March without allowing for any time to make preparations, but the Saudi Ministry of Education was very careful to keep all schools and universities on track with their educational plans. This was obvious in their regular instructions on online teaching and assessment. Nevertheless, significant challenges have accompanied this educational shift. Many courses were not designed for online learning, and many students were not used to online lecturing and testing. Consequently, concerns were raised by educationalists regarding these sudden changes (Alkhazim, 2020). This was not the case in Saudi Arabia alone. Educators in many other countries that have shifted exclusively to online education have raised
concerns about the validity and effectiveness of this type of education (e.g., Ross, 2020). Thus, understanding the distinctive learning experiences of language learners during this exceptional time could be an important step towards facilitating online learning, teaching and assessment particularly in the case of catastrophes.

**Theoretical Framework**

Drawing a full repertoire of learners’ experiences with online learning means that learners’ evaluations of their own learning must be considered, and these evaluations should not be limited to their perspectives on the particular design features of the platforms. In order to evaluate the learning that occurs in VLLEs, the meaning of learning needs to be transparent. The interpretation of learning in this study is informed by Sfard’s (1998) learning metaphors. Sfard identifies two metaphors of learning: the acquisition metaphor and the participation metaphor. The acquisition metaphor construes learning as a social process for expanding linguistic knowledge. This notion of learning relies on the Vygotskian theory of social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). The second view of learning is based on Lavar and Wenger’s (1991) interpretation of learning as participation and engagement in a collaborative process. Sfard (1998) insisted on focusing on these two metaphors in order to obtain a full understanding of what learning is. Ultimately, acquisition and participation together can lead to learning transfer. Transfer involves the application of the acquired knowledge and skills in real-life situations (Haskell, 2001). Billing (2007) identifies self-monitoring and collaboration as the required conditions for facilitating learning transfer. In line with these views, this study adapts Sfard’s (1998) two metaphors of learning in order to understand students’ perceptions towards learning via BB. The next section discusses the methodology used in this study.

**Methodology**

**Design**

Since the purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of university students towards VLLEs during an exceptional time (i.e., the COVID-19 quarantine period), the case study design matched this purpose. Case studies can clarify the complexities found with respect to themes in the field of applied linguistics (Duff, 2008), but they are not meant for the generalisation of findings; case studies in applied linguistics are meant for examining societal, educational and linguistic issues that affect language while taking context into consideration (Duff, 2008). Educational policies and teaching practices are usually shaped by the findings of case studies (Duff, 2008). What was expected from the findings of this case study was identifying the merits and challenges of VLLEs in order to help educational authorities and instructors in higher education to rethink VLLE policies and practices to save education in a time of an emergency.

**Context of this Study**

This study took place at Taif University (TU), located in the western part of Saudi Arabia. Upon the announcement of the quarantine early March 2020, TU made every effort to provide both instructors and students with support and facilities to make their online journey fruitful. The university announced the availability of data SIM cards and laptops for students who might need them. Also, there was a WhatsApp service provided by TU to answer urgent technical issues faced by teaching staff and students. Tutorial videos were posted for teaching staff on how to use BB effectively (including information on preparing BB lectures, administering exams and using
different assessment tools). These tutorials were published and made public over social media. Similarly, via TU official Twitter account and emails, students received some videos and instructions on how to use BB for uploading assignments, attending online lectures and taking exams. Around this time, the Saudi Ministry of Education sent a letter to all universities stressing the need for varying the use of assessment tools. The next section provides more details on the participants and courses taught to them.

**Background of the Course and Participants**

There were 25 female bachelor of arts (BA) students in the designated English Morphology course. The instructor (the author) taught this group of students in a previous semester, and the majority of them were considered to be highly motivated and enthusiastic. The English Morphology course required students to master three core types of learning outcomes: knowledge (understanding main morphological concepts of English language), thinking skills (demonstrating higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation) and competency skills (working on collaborative tasks and using technology effectively for learning English morphology). The students received a BB readiness survey at the beginning of their online experience early in March of 2020. The survey was adapted from Online Readiness Assessment by Vicki Williams and The Pennsylvania State University, and it is designed for assessing students’ readiness for studying online. The reason for using this questionnaire in this study was because the instructor was not sure about her students’ readiness for moving online. The survey is available at this link: https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7QCNUPsyH9f012B?s=246aa3a5c4b64bb386543eb834f8e75

Table 1. gives the background information of the students’ readiness level for studying online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey items</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>I am pretty good at using the computer.</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable surfing the Internet.</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable with things like doing searches, setting bookmarks, and downloading files.</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable with things like installing software and changing the</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
configuration settings on my computer.

Note 1. Adapted from Williams and Pennsylvania State University

According to Table one, the students’ computer skills varied. For instance, more than half of the students either disagreed or agreed to some extent that they were comfortable with their search and downloading skills, compared to 44% who expressed that they felt comfortable with these skills. Table two reveals the perceived availability of online learning support and facilities.

Table 2. Responses to BB readiness survey (availability of online support and facilities)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey item</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>I know someone who can help me if I have computer problems.</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have access to a printer.</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am connected to the Internet with a fairly fast, reliable connection such as a DSL or cable modem.</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have access to a computer with virus protection software on it.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have headphones or speakers and a microphone to use if a class has a videoconference.</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My browser will play several common multimedia (video and audio) formats.</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1. Adapted from Williams and Pennsylvania State University

According to Table two, 96% students knew someone who could help them with technical problems. This might suggest that they did not have any critical unresolved issues during their online studies. On the other hand, 48% of these students did not have headphones, which could have adversely affected their study. This will be reviewed further in the results.

Instruments and Data Analysis

As seen in the introduction, most studies on learners’ attitudes towards VLLEs have employed questionnaires, and these have sometimes been combined with interviews. This study approached
learners’ attitudes as reflected in their learning logs, which were designed to evaluate their learning journey. Logs can provide students with more space for reflecting on their learning (Morphy, 2008). Students were given guided questions to facilitate writing in their logs (See the Appendix section). Common themes were then identified and highlighted by the researcher. Fifty percent of the learning logs and identified themes were checked for reliability by another researcher, and the level of agreement was almost similar (90% agreement). Their reflections in the logs were validated by their weekly attendance of online lectures and participation rates in the online forums. Pseudonyms were used to hide the participants’ identities.

Research Procedures
Online classes began on March 8, 2020 and lasted for seven weeks. After understanding students’ readiness for online learning as reported in the questionnaire, the instructor had to reconsider the implemented teaching practices to overcome the technical challenges identified, reduce stress levels and maintain students’ high levels of motivation. Here are some of the teaching practices that were reported to be helpful for students’ learning:

- The instructor considered the students’ mental health and attempted to create a stress-free learning environment. In order to reduce the stress levels among my students, the instructor assured them that they would continue learning in the same effective and collaborative ways that they had already practiced in the class. The instructor was available for them via BB sessions and email to address their concerns.
- Another important mission was creating an interactive learning environment. Thus, it was important to remind students of the course learning outcomes that we had discussed earlier in the semester and to relate them to higher-order thinking skills (i.e., analysis, synthesis and evaluation). The students were able to see that thinking skills could be easily applied virtually, as will be seen later in the Results section.
- The instructor utilised BB for creating and uploading helpful learning materials, such as research articles that contrasted the morphological aspects of different languages and tutorials uploaded on YouTube. During the classes, the instructor used BB tools such as sharing and enlarging slides and documents, allowing students to speak and write during class and asking questions to make sure that they were following what was happening in the class.
- Realising that the students had not had an earlier experience with online lecturing in conjunction with their reported fears about taking online exams, the instructor had to rethink the assessment tools. The new assessment plan included forums, online synchronous discussions, learning logs, quizzes, extra-curricular activities, midterm exams and final exams. In order to familiarise the students with online exams and reduce their stress levels, the instructor gave them mock exams before their midterm and final exams.

Results and Discussion
Generally speaking, this study has revealed that students prefer learning via asynchronous tools to synchronous tools, a finding that differs from other studies on VLEs (e.g., Chen et al., 2020; Guo, 2013). When comparing BB learning with traditional in-class learning, the students preferred in-class learning, which is in line with the findings by Fageeh and Mekheimer (2013). Also, this study has shown that students’ high levels of motivation do not necessarily imply that they have positive
attitudes towards VLLEs. The instructor taught this same group of students in a previous academic semester, and the majority of them were perceived to be highly motivated; however, they revealed a strong preference for in-class learning over online learning for reasons that will be discussed below. Interestingly, this finding is different from Ali’s (2017) on the correlation between high motivation levels and positive attitudes towards VLLEs. However, it could be said that the learners’ high motivation levels towards learning have led to their realisation of the importance of completing their learning experience successfully even though they may prefer traditional in-class learning to the use of VLLEs. The following sub-sections discuss the strengths and weaknesses of VLLEs as identified by these students in their learning logs. It should be noted here that the students’ mother tongue is Arabic, and the logs were written in English. This explains why some quotations might include a few structural errors. Following the analyses and discussions of the learning logs, data from the students’ participation in the BB forums will be considered to validate the study findings.

**Barriers to Online Learning**

*Lack of Required Information Technology (IT) Skills and Facilities*

As reported by the learners in the BB readiness survey, there were some barriers to online learning. First, 48% of the learners did not have headphones during the first weeks of using BB, and this affected their communication with their instructor and peers, more particularly in the synchronous sessions. The only way for these students to communicate was through writing in the chat box instead of oral participation. Facing technical problems has been a common issue (Rudd & Rudd, 2014). Furthermore, in order to help those students who reported in the BB readiness survey that they were not confident with downloading files (28%) or had limited IT skills (28%), the instructor sent all of the students all of the required reading materials as PDF files; the instructor then explained to them how to download and save these files and use some PDF features such as editing and adding notes. In order to avoid technical problems, the instructor directed the students to the WhatsApp number for the TU Technical Division, who was in charge of resolving the students’ online issues. Therefore, the job of an instructor was not limited to online teaching. It should be noted that there were some issues out of the hands of authorities, such as the slow speeds of the internet, and this was more of a global issue. However, the instructor recorded the classes so the students could access them whenever the internet started working properly.

Regarding the issue of internet speed and the lack of headphones, one student said, “My experience with virtual classes mainly depends on internet connection, but overall it is good...I hate to type my answer because I am kind of slow when it comes to using a keyboard.”

In a similar vein, Lina wrote, “Many students face problems with the internet in answering exams or attending lectures, but for submitting assignments it is much easier. What I like about BB is that the sessions are recorded and we go back to them whenever we need.”

**Distractions at Home**

In their learning logs, some students reported that studying at home was not working well for them. This was due to distractions at home. For example, Manal wrote “I think BB does not help us to achieve learning outcomes because sometimes I have problem with the internet connection, or I
have some work to do at my home”. Hind wrote: “I prefer traditional classes. Home is distractive. My experience with online classes mainly depends on internet speed, but overall it is good.”

Another student explained why home is not a convenient place for studying online, stating, “my little sisters are always noisy, so I keep the mic off all the time and use the chat box to participate.”

**Lack of Physical Interaction**
All these students were not used to taking lectures online. The use of BB at TU for online lecturing was limited to a few courses for evaluation purposes. The majority of the students reported that they preferred in-class learning to BB learning since the latter lacks physical interaction. In-class physical interaction is highly valued by students as appeared in other studies (e.g., Fageeh & Mekheimer, 2013; Vonderwell, 2003).

“I prefer face to face communication it is more interesting and comfortable for me”
(Ameera/ learning log)

“Finally, I am not really satisfied with learning via blackboard. I think learning in traditional classes is easier and better for my learning and understanding. Overall, I still having wonderful time learning and studying morphology.” (Reema/ learning log)

“I prefer traditional classes to the online ones. going to uni makes me more productive and I took studying seriously which is something missing in the online classes.” (Lina/ learning log) “Finally, learning via Blackboard or online classes for me wasn't a good choice. Because in traditional classes sitting on a chair next to a classmate listening and interacting with our teacher is a way much better than being alone holding my phone and distracted between the book or taking notes, not to mention the slow internet connection or mic problems.”
(Joory/ learning logs)

**Not an Appropriate Venue for Taking Exams**
BB was found to be especially stressful for a number of students during exam periods.

“I always become anxious during online exams and can't focus on the questions because of the short time given.” (Sana/ learning log).

This finding confirms the results reported by Bailey et al. (2018), who found that anxiety levels increase in online learning environments.

**Merits of Online Learning**
**A Preferred Learning Mode for Shy Learners**
Despite the challenges that the students reported, some advantages of learning online were also identified by the students. For instance, online learning provided an opportunity for shy students to more easily express their opinions. This was very obvious in the discussion forums. After discussing some topics, the instructor set up a forum for students to share their views and related
evidence in order to facilitate engagement in active learning. Interestingly, it was found that the forums were helpful for shy learners who used to hesitate when participating in class. Heba, a shy learner, wrote “I think learning in an actual class is better but via technology we could ask questions comfortably and we can go back to the recorded classes whenever we want, so there is a lot of advantages and disadvantages in both ways”

Laila, who was another shy student, said the following when comparing traditional classes with virtual classes: “Each one of them has its own advantages and disadvantages, yet virtual classes are the best for me because I feel more comfortable while asking questions and participating.” These findings are in line with those reported by Thompson and Ku (2005) and Zhao and McDougall (2008) who claim that anxiety is actually reduced in asynchronous online discussions.

Building an Interactive Learning Environment

Some students appreciated working on collaborative tasks on BB:

“I realized the importance of Morphology when I tried to understand the word itself, and how it was built by analysing the affixes of the word. I feel more engaged when I make discussions with my classmates. It really helped me to understand each point and to reinforce my understanding. Also clarifying some points to my classmates helped a lot.” (Joory/learning logs)

Achieving Learning Outcomes (to Some Extent)

Some students thought that despite the challenges of online learning, it had still helped them to reach the course learning outcomes.

“I honestly didn’t like it at all due to the problems I have faced such as internet connection problems, but overall I can't say it didn’t help me in achieving the course outcomes, of course it did.” (Renad)

In their reflections, some students were very specific about how this course, which was partly conducted over BB, improved their learning. They talked about the transfer of some critical thinking skills (e.g., analysis and evaluation) to other courses, including translation courses.

“I found word formation is the most helpful topic for understanding the relationship between morphology and other courses. It helped me a lot in translation because I came across some new words that I didn’t know their meaning, but I could guess the meaning from their word formation. However, the most challenging point was when we divided words from other languages into morphemes and wrote the morphological rules that were used. It was difficult at the beginning because I didn't even know the meaning of these words, but we did a lot of exercises until the process became easy for me. For thinking skills, I think I kind of master ‘noticing’ and ‘application’ skills. For example, in identifying the processes in words of other languages, I used to notice the changes and the processes used and also applying the same processes to other words, even if they were not
English words.” (Hajar/ learning log) Salwa agrees with Hajar on how this course helped her in her translation course, stating,

“Mostly all the information we took in this course are related to the other courses. For example, learning about affixes helped to know the meaning of words that I didn't meet before. This strategy is important in translation courses, since we're meeting new terms every class.” Reham mentioned additional evidence of transfer:

“This course is full of useful information that I use in all the courses and in my language acquisition in general. For example, the study of the word formation processes helped me in the Language Acquisition course specially in understanding the stages that children go through when acquiring the language. It helped me understand which of the morphological morphemes children develop first. Since the Language Acquisition course is all about the structure of language and how it's acquired, this morphology course eased things for me. I think all the information I learned in this course will absolutely benefit me in the future because I'm already analyzing any word my eye falls on so I think will always carry these information and keep developing them since I now like morphology I'll keep progressing.”

This transfer of skills was a result of the intensive collaborative online tasks that the students were engaged in. This suggests that collaborative learning, although not occurring in class, can lead to effective learning transfer (Billing, 2007; Haskell, 2001). Also, it shows that despite the disadvantages of online learning, learning can occur with the facilitation of instructors who vary the learning resources and assessment tools. The transfer of knowledge and skills to other courses indicates that the students have achieved the two learning outcomes of increased knowledge and improved skills mentioned earlier in the Methodology. Further evidence in support of this is the fact that students demonstrated the abilities to evaluate their learning experiences and explain how the identified merits and barriers of BB had affected their learning.

In order to further validate that the course outcomes were achieved, this study considered the number of students’ posts in the BB forums. There were four forums in total, and Tables 3 and 4 show the extracted engagement indicators.

Table 3. Students’ total participation in BB forums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of posts</th>
<th>Total number of participants</th>
<th>Total number of forums</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>260</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Samples of students’ engagement indicators in BB forums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BB forums</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Total number of posts</th>
<th>The number of initiated posts</th>
<th>The number of replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forum 2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Forum two, almost all of the students participated in the discussion. There were 24 initiated posts which referred to newly posted information, extended discussions on a related topic and questions asked. The 24 initiated posts received 78 replies. The number of participants in Forum four was lower than the others (19 students), which means that six students did not take part in this forum. However, this did not affect the students’ active engagement in the discussions. There were 17 initiated posts, which is a relatively high number when compared to the number of participants. The 17 initiated posts received 67 replies. The students’ participation in the forums indicates that the majority of the students have achieved the competency skills, a learning outcome which required students to collaborate with others successfully and use technology effectively.

The analyses of the students’ learning logs where they identified some evidence of learning transfer and participation rates in the BB forums revealed how learning can be interpreted and assessed in accordance with Sfard’s (1998) definition of learning as a process of acquisition and participation. What seems to facilitate transfer of learning is participation because it allows learners to practise what they had learned. It could be said that transfer is the ultimate outcome of acquisition and participation. Therefore, Sfard’s (1998) two metaphors (i.e., the acquisition metaphor and the participation metaphor) allow language educators and instructors to understand what language learning refers to and how it can be assessed.

To sum up, this study highlights the benefits and challenges that VLLEs bring for students. This study has shown that students prefer learning via asynchronous tools to learning via synchronous tools, a finding that confirms Fageeh and Mekheimer’s (2013) study and contradicts other studies on VLEs (e.g., Chen et al., 2020; Guo, 2013). Due to challenges experienced by students in this study, such as the lack of physical interaction and having technical problems, it is concluded that online learning cannot fully replace traditional in-class teaching, a point confirmed in other studies (e.g., Fageeh & Mekheimer, 2013; Vonderwell, 2003). By understanding students’ experiences with BB learning, institutions can produce a back-up plan for replacing traditional teaching with VLEs in a time of an emergency. Institutions are now required to increase the number of online teaching development courses provided for their instructors, so instructors should always be on standby in case education is shifted online for any reason, as in the case of the COVID-19 quarantine period. Instructors should open a discussion channel with their students in order to become aware of their needs and understand barriers to online learning. Such open discussions will lead to constructive innovation in teaching practices. Also, as part of their commitment to society, local organisations should contribute to the advancement of education by providing educational institutions and their students with technical support (e.g., laptops, iPads or headphones) to reduce the stress of learning in a time of unease. Finally, students should be aware of their responsibility as learners who must spare no efforts when engaging in VLLEs in order to achieve their learning outcomes. The following figure, proposed by the author, identifies all of the parties involved in the success of university students’ learning in VLEs.
Figure 1. Advancing VLLEs in a time of unease

Figure one shows that successful virtual learning experience requires the active collaboration of all involved parties: local organizations that are known for their contribution to the community service activities and who can support learners with their educational needs, the educational institutions who are responsible for providing students with all necessary needs of IT services and knowledge resources, the students who are aware of their needs and who can lead their learning journeys and the instructors who can facilitate learning and can guide their students towards effective learning.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study represents a thin slice of the world’s concerns associated with the educational shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Issues regarding students’ readiness for this mode of education have been of concern in many countries. The case study reported in this article investigated the perceptions of Saudi university students towards learning via BB. The students’ learning logs that evaluated their own learning experiences with asynchronous and synchronous tools formed the main source for the study data. The study revealed that the students were aware of the benefits and challenges associated with VLLEs, and that they favoured traditional in-class learning to VLLEs. When comparing asynchronous and synchronous environments, students preferred the asynchronous environment due to its flexibility. Unlike some existing studies, this study explains that motivated students can become more anxious students in VLLEs, and that many students prefer physical interaction. The fact that some of the findings reported in this study were not in line with findings of studies conducted in similar contexts highlights the need for carrying out further investigations of university students’ perceptions and experiences with VLLEs. Such investigations will inform the plans of institutions when education shifts fully online in critical situations. Also, these investigations will contribute to the development of teaching practices and the design of professional development courses aimed at higher education instructors faced with unusual circumstances.
Acknowledgements
The author would like to thank all the participants for their endless cooperation during the conduction of this study.

Declaration of conflicting interests
The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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**Appendix: Guiding questions for writing the learning logs**

- At what moment have I realized the importance of studying morphology?
- At what moments did I feel most engaged? (You need to mention examples of activities/discussions or assignments you did in the synchronous and asynchronous environments).
- Which information did I find most helpful in understanding the relationship between morphology and other courses that I’m studying now or will study in the future?
- Which information or experience did I find most confusing or challenging? Why?
- What thinking skills did I practice and master in this course? What should I need to do in the future to develop these skills?
- Finally, do you think that learning via BlackBoard has helped you much in achieving the course outcomes. If you choose yes or no, you need to support your answers with reasons and examples.
Moodle or Social Networks: What Alternative Refuge is Appropriate to Algerian EFL Students to Learn during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract
Social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, YouTube, and Instagram have become the refuge of teachers and students during the last years. However, there are many educational platforms set by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education like Moodle and which bring the same services to the learners but in an academic setting. These platforms, mainly Facebook, has gained celebrity in the last years and are still achieving the same position during the Covid-19 pandemic even though many applications come to life, and virtual learning has become the only choice. The current research work under scrutiny aims to provide an in-depth look at the situation of EFL teaching and learning in the Algerian context during the Covid-19 pandemic by taking the department of English Language and Literature at Saida University as a case in point. It also endeavors to shed light on the learning process and which tools educators have used to promote virtual learning. As such, the main questions that set the study are how do Algerian universities face Covid-19 pandemic? Are Algerian EFL students motivated towards academic platforms like Moodle? Do EFL learners benefit from the new applications like Google Classroom and Zoom in promoting E-learning? Where about social networks like Facebook? Are these social platforms still gaining fame in the learning process during the pandemic? To answer these problematic questions, the researcher conducted a study with EFL first-year Master students and eight teachers of the English language at Saida University, Algeria. The researcher collected data through a questionnaire and an interview. The findings revealed that the most used tool for educational purposes was Facebook due to the students’ motivation. The second tool was the Moodle platform. The analysis also demonstrated that students prefer face-to-face interaction in the classroom and handouts more than virtual learning. The results also showed that students are motivated to employ both SNSs like Facebook and YouTube and educational platforms as Moodle as complementary teaching materials.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, EFL students, e-learning, Google Classroom, Moodle, motivation, social networks, Zoom

Cite as: GHOUNANE, N. (2020). Moodle or Social Networks: What Alternative Refuge is Appropriate to Algerian EFL Students to Learn during Covid-19 Pandemic. Arab World English Journal, 11 (3) 21-41. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.2
Introduction

Technology has turned the whole world into a small town where people can exchange information and do business in an easy, fast, and cheap way. The use of technology has become an essential ingredient in economic, political, social, and education makes no exception. Indeed, technology has turned into the only wheel that fasters learning by providing many platforms and applications to ease the learning process and teaching purposes. Among the most widely used social platforms that most learners favor is Facebook. According to Tosun (2018), Facebook has become the first used social network worldwide. He added that YouTube is the second social platform and the first choice for learners to exchange information. In contrast, Whatsapp ranks in the third position. The first reason is that these platforms attract a high number of users worldwide in comparison to educational platforms like Moodle. The second reason is linked, according to Tosu, (2018), to the setting in which the teacher or the student uses the social network, i.e., formal or informal. He further claimed that the formal setting is limited to announcements and general information about the universities and institutions like the case of Oxford and Cambridge that the statistics make them as the first institutions that employ social networks for these purposes. On the other hand, the formal settings for other types of social networks, which have an academic setting like Moodle, Backboard, and Sakai, are still struggling to gain celebrity of Facebook or YouTube. However, these platforms have also provided the same features to promote learning by creating an account and registering.

Algeria has made many educational reforms in the last few decades to improve the levels of learning and teaching through training teachers and integrating students to e-learning. Both teachers and learners show positive attitudes toward the inclusion of technology in the teaching and learning process. However, these attitudes differ widely among learners. Most of them still favor social networks, mainly YouTube and Facebook, to learn in formal settings. In contrast, others find academic platforms more workable since they take an official and a formal setting.

The Ministry of Higher Education has recently trained, mainly novice teachers on how to work with platforms like Moodle and Blackboard. On the other hand, old teachers have developed a technophobia toward the implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in general and the use of these platforms in particular. Most of the teachers still prefer the traditional method of teaching and refuse any contact with students either in the formal setting (Moodle) or in the informal setting (Facebook). This technophobia, which Azarfam and Jabbari (2012) called it, presents many obstacles that discourage teachers to benefit from its use in the classroom. Among the reasons that increase techno-anxiety is the lack of materials; therefore, teachers are accustomed to teaching their lectures and giving the students the handouts. They struggle to cope with the new changes that oblige them to learn how to use technology in the classroom and keep stuck to the traditional classroom environment.

Algerian universities make tremendous efforts to promote e-learning both in formal and informal settings. They employ social networks like Facebook to announce for students exams, tests, and other issues. In contrast, introducing lectures or seminars remains few both on
Facebook and YouTube. The main reason is that most teachers think that social networks are not secure.

The process of teaching and learning has changed, and perhaps the ministry will give more importance to the use of academic platforms in teaching and learning after the Covid-19 pandemic. This does not mean that all Algerian teachers still prefer to use traditional classroom-based instruction. A great number shows interest in using educational and social platforms like Moodle and Edmodo, although the latter is still new among teachers. Edmodo, as educational social networking, has received significant interest among teachers worldwide and is regarded as the “Facebook for education” (Enriquez, 2014, p. 1, as quoted in Shinji, 2016, p. 39). To this end, the present research work tries to provide a spindle eye on the e-learning situation in the Algerian higher education by taking the EFL context as a case study. It also aims to shed light on the teaching and learning situation through ICT during the Covid-19 pandemic. In other words, the current paper attempts to provide an ankle-eye on teachers’ and students’ familiarity with virtual learning, educational networking platforms like Moodle, or they share more attitudes toward social networks like Facebook and Youtube. In this regard, the study sets around the following research questions:

- What is the status of the Algerian Higher Education during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- Are Algerian teachers and learners familiar with virtual learning and the use of educational networks like Moodle?
- Do Algerian students and teachers, mainly in the EFL context benefit from the use of applications like Google meet and Zoom, or are they still sharing positive attitudes towards informal social networks primarily the Facebook?

The use of formal and informal social networking sites, in classroom-based instruction, is still not being investigated, mainly educational social networks like Moodle. Besides, the use of these sites for educational purposes still needs more scholarships. According to Gorg (2014), “little is known about how online social networks such as Facebook can develop a sense of community in language classrooms or how they can impact the development of didactic practices in a language classroom” (p. 148).

Some scholars disagree to study languages through the use of informal settings like Facebook. However, learners are eager to learn the language in an informal context more than the formal one. Social networks like Facebook, Youtube, and WhatsApp allow students in an international setting to meet and discuss different topics. The student will learn through computer or mobile mediated communication not only the standard form of the language but also its varieties and accent.

Another important reason for the necessity of integrating social networks is the learners’ positive attitudes toward the net and technology as integral parts of their daily life and communication (Salaway & Caruso, 2007; Shier, 2005, as cited in Gorg, 2014, p. 148)

The interest of the present paper is in two folds: it aims to show that both educational and social networks are useful in the teaching and learning process; however, many problems surround the teaching and learning process in an informal setting like Facebook as “loss of
privacy, bullying, harming contacts and more” (Livingston & Brake, 2010, as cited in Espinosa, 2015, p. 2206). Besides, it tends to explore the current situation of EFL learning and teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Literature Review**

**Social Networks and Education**

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are platforms, which people employ to sharing information either for business, economic, and political purposes. Those people can share their activities and experiences through creating an account and joining a particular group. Hence, SNS starts to direct the way people, think, behave, and communicate. Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211) defined SNS as:

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (qtd in Alnujaidi, 2017, p. 34)

Many scholars make a difference between social networks, social media, and social networking sites. According to Carr and Hayes (2015), SNS tools are a part of social media tools, while Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211) shed light on the main difference between social network sites and social networking sites (as cited in Alnujaidi, 2017). They write that “Networking emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers; while on many SNS, participants are not necessarily networking or looking to meet people; instead, they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network” (qtd in Alnujaidi, 2017, p. 35).

Researchers conducted studies on the most widely used SNS tools by social media users. Most statistics show that Facebook is still gaining popularity among people in all domains. Figure one gives new statistics on the most widely used SNS tools:

![Figure 1. Most widely used social networks worldwide (Statista, 2020)](image-url)
SNS provides a platform for an infinite number of users who can share the same interests and hastens communication and exchanges ideas. These platforms offer a set of applications with the same goal i.e., gathering a significant number of users, mainly from the young generation who uses and masters SNS more than the old one (Gorg, 2014).

Studies proved that learners prefer to use technology in learning, mainly YouTube and Facebook. Visual aids attract the young generation’s attention more than printed books. They prefer ready-made information rather than doing research. In his part, Gorg (2014) argued that students also enjoy using these networks in a formal setting i.e., they are attracted to “face-to-face contact with their instructors and used Web 2.0 tools for communication” (p. 1). On the other hand, teachers’ attitudes affect the use of SNS. This means that the teachers’ ability and motivation to employ SNS is essential to motivate the learners to give these platforms an educational background rather than wasting time in watching and sharing videos. In his part, Petosky (2014, p. 1) maintained that “teachers have to find out where the students are, and work from there. Well, the students are on Facebook” (qtd in Espinosa, 2015, p. 2207). Robleyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, and Witty (2010, p. 138) claimed that the teachers should share positive attitudes toward SNS and their use by the learners. In this vein, they highlighted that:

Unless this tendency changes and faculty perceive Facebook and its sister technologies, both current and those to come, as additional opportunities for educational communication and mentoring, SNSs may become yet another technology that has great potential for improving the higher education experience but failed to be adopted enough to have any real impact. (qtd in Gorg, 2014, p. 443)

Similarly, Dudeney and Hockly (2007) observed that the young generation no longer favors traditional classroom-based instruction. Teachers are obliged to cope with the blessings of the new technologies and use free materials and a wide range of activities that they can share through SNS. In the same vein, Schmidt (2002) highlighted that teachers can benefit from combining both traditional and online teaching and learning tools. They added that the teachers should plan, control, and direct the process all the time.

Social Networks and Education

Most studies agree that technology and social media have become an integral part of the younger generation's daily lives. Universities and institutions can benefit from this aspect and attract the students’ attitudes toward the use of SNS in learning. Gorg (2014) shared the same view when she posited that digital natives, as she named them, prefer SNS, which becomes an integral ingredient in their “daily life and have an influence on a students’ learning motivation” (p. 153). Gorg (2014) further suggested that it is preferable to understand the students’ overuse of SNS. She added that SNSs like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and Instagram can promote communication between instructors, teachers, and students.

Most universities and institutions use SNS tools, mainly Facebook in both administrative and academic purposes. However, studies on the appropriate strategies and the directed learning goals are still few, although SNSs offer many opportunities. In their part, Harrison and Thomas (2009) believed that researchers should study the possibilities for integrating SNS tools in the
learning process, mainly in learning foreign languages (Management Association, Information Resources, 2016). They claimed that researchers conducted little research on Computer-Mediated Social Networks (CMSN) and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) in the classroom (Management Association, Information Resources, 2016). They also posited that in learning English as a Foreign Language, the learning process is not limited to the classroom but it can be conducted virtually where technology can play a vital role in the process. They added that the students’ motivation can be an essential factor in the process since “social networks are used by millions of users, most of whom are university students and adolescents, they have the potential to serve as lifelong learning channel for teachers and students” (cited in Management Association, Information Resources, 2016, p. 1464).

Today learners no longer favor the traditional classroom instruction or delivering lectures through handouts. Besides, the delivery of lectures in word or pdf formats has received little attention from students whether they are published in universities’ webpages or through social media tools like Facebook. Today learners are more motivated towards visual aids in learning like delivering lectures via YouTube, recoding audio/visual lectures, and posting them on Facebook. As such, there is a need to study the possible relation between pedagogy, SNS, and social interaction as key motivating factors in building a technology-based classroom. According to the Management Association, Information Resources (2016), “pedagogies in SNS need to engage learners in the social processes of knowledge formation. This is achieved by encouraging personal choice, collaboration, participation, communication and creativity” (p. 1466).

Many studies endorsed the usefulness of SNS in Foreign Language Learning. According to Maloney (2007), learners and educators can use SNS in formal settings by connecting learners who can form groups. Similar studies were conducted by Lewis and Currie (2009). They focused their study on the students’ engagement and motivation (Management Association, Information Resources, 2016).

Facebook for Educational Purposes

Facebook is regarded as the first widely used tool or form of SNS. The application was designed for educational purposes. However, it becomes a means of social interaction between speakers at an international level. With growing interests in e-learning and the integration of SNS in the classroom context, researchers directed their attention toward exploring the use of SNS in education, mainly the teaching and learning of languages. Some studies conducted recently, like those of Schroeder and Greenbowe (2009), confirmed the previous view. They highlighted that EFL students showed positive attitudes toward the use of Facebook in learning the English language (Deng & Tavares, 2013). Besides, Facebook provides a platform where the students can meet “indirectly” through “creating a learning community—a vital component of student education” (Baker, 1999, p. 5).

In their part, Palloff and Pratt (2007) believed that Facebook provides a community for communication; thus, students can use it to create a learning community for educational purposes (Deng & Tavares, 2013). Wise et al. (2011) observed that students spend a great deal of time using Facebook for social purposes; henceforth, teachers or educators can direct them to employ
it in learning (Deng & Tavares, 2013). As such, teachers and instructors can benefit from the students’ attitudes and engage them in learning through Facebook. In his part, Espinosa (2015) posited that “if teachers use Facebook effectively, many of the practices and experiences that occur in this social network can contribute to enhancing learning” (p. 2207). Scholars like Godwin-Jones (2008), Garrison and Kanuka (2004), and Wenger (1998) maintained that Facebook provides a social space where people can meet and communicate from different cultures, languages, and ethnicities. Therefore, it can increase the students’ motivation and raise their cross-cultural awareness and understanding (Espinosa, 2015). Although language learning occurs in an informal setting, Facebook is still helpful since learners can share and develop their readings, listening, and writing through sharing texts and videos. Scholars like Kerwin (2012) highlighted that the use of SNS like Facebook promotes the students’ creativity and develops their critical thinking skills. He further maintained that through posting texts, videos, and images, learners are using their acquired knowledge in the language. Hence, SNS can help learners to use both synchronous and asynchronous learning strategies. These strategies can foster motivation and engagement in the learning process.

In the Algerian context, teachers think that the use of SNS, mainly Facebook in learning is not useful and effective in language learning since learning a foreign language, needs face-to-face interaction. They forget that SNS has become “second nature to our students” (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012, p. 93), and they can also benefit from it. Perhaps, the first reason is that teachers do not want to meet students in an informal setting. Hence, institutions and even educators restrict the use of Facebook to announce or post lectures.

YouTube for Educational Purposes

Technology has changed and impacted the learning and teaching processes in general. It turns the learning from teacher-centered to learner-centered since the student has access to the net and can have an overview of the lectures before the teacher conducts the lecture. YouTube is another social media tool that this study takes into account to test the students’ motivation toward the most used SNS tool. Researchers conducted few studies on the use of YouTube. According to Preece (2014), YouTube is an essential platform that gives the chance for all users to watch videos.

Most of the conducted studies concentrated on the effectiveness of YouTube on the students’ engagement in the classroom. Other studies tested the students’ motivation for the use of YouTube to provide supplementary materials. Among the studies, there is a study conducted by Kelsen (2009) in Taiwan. Roodt and Peier (2013) also explored the use of YouTube in the EFL context.

Even though videos were used for decades to stimulate students for learning, some scholars see that the use of YouTube in teaching is still new and needs more research, mainly on the appropriate strategies. In his part, Caladine (2008) highlighted that:

In the 1960s and 1970s, teachers in schools and universities, as well as trainers in commercials, industrials and government organizations, had opportunities to include technological teaching aids such as overhead projectors, filmstrips, movies, radios and
television broadcasts in the learning they designed. In the 1960s large computers could be found at many universities but it was not until the advent of the personal computers in the 1980s that computers made an impact on teaching and learning a majority of subject areas. (p. 16)

Hence, educators turn their attention to the use of YouTube because videos prove their effectiveness in language teaching and learning. Scholars like Britisch (2009), Warschaucer and Grimes (2007) claim that YouTube has become an essential source of motivation and educational materials. Posting videos on YouTube can help teachers to explain supplemental points, provide definitions and additional materials and even activities. In their part, Jones and Cuthrell (2011) observe that teachers can benefit from YouTube to test the students’ language accuracy and understanding of lectures (Brook, 2011). Comac (2008) highlighted the importance of YouTube. He maintained that teachers can benefit from the use of blogs in oral expression sessions or assignments (Alwehaibi, 2015). Therefore they can evaluate the students’ performance. Some studies agreed that YouTube helps EFL students to study spoken English in both formal and informal settings by exposing the learners to the language and the phonological level (Ghasemi, 2011; Derewianka, 2008 in Alwehaibi, 2015).

When it comes to reading and writing, few scholars investigated how to use YouTube to enhance these skills. Rennie (2012) and Nejati (2010) posited that YouTube has proved its effectiveness in interaction, discussions, and writing tasks (Alwehaibi, 2015). Through this study, the researcher also attempted to explore the efficacy of YouTube as a tool among EFL Master Students at Saida University during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Moodle as an Online Management Learning System**

Technology has facilitated language learning by introducing platforms for educational purposes. These platforms are also known as Online Management Learning Systems (OMLS) or Course Management Systems (CMS). These systems allow students to connect in groups or individually. These platforms help the learners to get access to lectures through handouts or videos. These platforms can help teachers to publish activities and tests for their students and assess them. Some of these platforms are commercial like Blackboard, and others are free and provide open-access for both the teacher and his group like Moodle.

Suvorov (2010) posited that Moodle proves its usefulness in the EFL context through a set of tools that connect the teachers and students both synchronous and asynchronous. Naddabi (2007) reported through a study conducted in Oman that Moodle has four advantages, mainly enhancing interaction between students and teachers, promoting students’ independence, helping them in their research and finally changing the learning environment from the traditional one to e-learning where all the activities and their assessments can be done virtually.

Unlike SNS, the use of platforms like Moodle provides a safe system for both the teachers and students to communicate and share research. According to Jeong (2017), “Moodle combines all instructional strategies and tools in one space” (pp. 4846-4847). He added that Moodle gives a free space where teachers and learners can have access to the platform. Hence,
“Moodle can be effective in promoting learner autonomy as well as in supporting collaboration and learner-centred learning environment” (Jeon, 2017, p. 4847).

Through the Moodle platform, teachers can supply the students with supplementary information like assignments, activities, books, and videos. Scholars like Su (2006) saw that Moodle can be effective for language learning (Suppasetseree & Dennis, 2010). As SNS, Moodle gives the chance for teachers and students to interact and exchange learning through which the teacher can direct and check “the deadline and timeframes for assignments-quizzes, forums, chats, etc” (Cole, 2005, as cited in Suppasetseree & Dennis, 2010, p. 33).

Moodle does not only boost the learners’ autonomy, it could give the student the ability to control learning. Students can select activities and groups they prefer to join. The platform also gives time for students to learn. It supports the learner-centered approach in learning. Krasnova and Ananjev (2015) maintained that Moodle can engage the learner through “highly motivating activities that positively affect students’ performance and promote their progress because they can work not only with course materials but also access any web resource” (Bouguebs, 2019, p. 1).

When it comes to the means of delivering information, Moodle permits the exchange of lectures for students who are enrolled in the group through synchronous and asynchronous communication. It promotes a timetable through which the instructor can follow the learning process and the learners’ tasks. In their part, Deng and Tavares (2013) posited that Moodle remains a platform where the students have to meet to download lectures and get feedback from teachers, unlike SNS, which provides an atmosphere where they can interact and share knowledge through inserting comments.

**Google Classroom and Zoom: Other Alternatives for Virtual Learning**

Many companies competed to create applications and software both for Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). These applications and software serve as a refuge for many institutions and universities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this study, the researcher will shed light on the most used software.

Google Classroom gains acceptance in the academic community as an application that can teach self-learning, encourage both the students and the teachers to stay connected. Researchers like Halverson, Spring, Huyett, Henrie, and Graham (2017) highlighted that Google Classroom (GC) is better than other platforms since it promotes face-to-face interaction. According to Albashtqwi, and Al Batnaineh (2020), “online learning platforms such as Google Classroom provide flexibility in scheduling, eliminate travel expenses, and can reach out to anyone who has access to it”(p. 79).

Most of the studies, which were conducted on the use of GC, tried to test the students’ and teachers’ attitudes. Few works examined the use of the application to develop the students’ linguistic skills. Other studies focused on its effectiveness in the EFL context. For example, Kasula (2016) observed that teachers could benefit more than the students from using the application. He claimed that GC permits teachers “to display class objectives, activities, and
assignments in an orderly, focused, a productive and transparent manner for students, teachers, and administrators” (p. 11).

Some studies highlighted the efficacy of Zoom as an application in the EFL context. Studies like those of McCloskey, Thrush, Wilson-Patton and Kleskova (2012) maintained that Zoom can be useful in the EFL classroom through designing activities that suit the students’ needs for virtual learning. Other studies stressed the importance of the application as a part of synchronous learning to develop the students’ thinking skills, and problem-solving. In light of this idea, Chen and Lee (2011) believed that:

During the zoom session, students may ask questions to help them structure their sentences or do their assignments before posting them; they may be exposed to listening input to increase their schemata that develops their error correction system which is directly linked to conscious learning of a language. At the same time, students receive the essential feedback on their work from their teacher and classmates which can decrease the anxiety levels felt when sharing with others. (as cited in Ayoub, 2019, pp. 131-132)

Researchers conducted a few studies on the use of Zoom sessions to develop linguistic skills. Liang (2006) found that the use of Zoom can develop the learners’ writing skills through text chats. Liang also posited that the Zoom session can increase the students’ motivation towards e-learning and influence their face-to-face interaction. Although there are studies on the use of Zoom in the EFL context, the topic still needs investigation. Indeed, most of the studies focused on the classroom environment and students’ attitudes.

**Research Methodology and Design**

The researcher selected eight teachers for the interview and 90 (two groups) students for the questionnaire from the department of English Language and literature at Saida University, Algeria. The researcher selected novice teachers. Those teachers were trained on how to use ICT and educational platforms like Moodle in teaching in comparison to old teachers. The students were two Master groups belonging to two different specialities, mainly Applied Linguistics, Literature, and Civilization. These students studied English for four years. They were enrolled in an undergraduate program for three years and two years in a Master degree.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher designed a questionnaire for 90 students and published on their Facebook groups. The researcher also surveyed the use of YouTube among the students during the academic year 2019-2020. She observed that her students were motivated to follow teachers from other universities to study modules like research methodology and academic writing; therefore, she decided to record lectures on videos, and create her Youtube channel. She posted lectures on research methodology and academic writing. The researcher recorded and posted the lectures during the second semester. The following table gives an idea on the lectures, and the number of viewers:
Table 1. The number of EFL students visiting research methodology and academic writing lectures on YouTube

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lectures</th>
<th>Viewers’ numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to select sources to write the literature review</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steps for writing the literature review</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the review of the related literature</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA In-text Citation (Academic Writing, Third Lecture)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA In-text Citation (Academic Writing, Second Lecture)</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the literature review, types of arguments</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating sources to write the literature review</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one shows that the number of viewers exceeds 90 students since the researcher posted the lectures on the faculty Facebook for the first time. After that, the administration published the lectures on the faculty website and later on they posted them on the Moodle platform since the Ministry of Higher Education insisted on publishing lectures on formal platforms.

The questionnaire and the interview also contained questions about the Moodle platform and the students’ motivation. The researcher also used a content analysis of the Moodle platform. This analysis is supported by a questionnaire and interview as it has already been mentioned.

The researcher divided the questionnaire into three sections. The first one was devoted to questions concerning the use of SNS, mainly Facebook, and YouTube. The second section focused on testing the students’ motivation toward the use of the Moodle platform, the number of access, and its purpose. The third section was about the learners’ knowledge of the use of Google meet and Zoom.

The researcher also conducted an online interview with eight teachers. These teachers were teaching modules like ESP, TEFL, British/American literature, British and American civilization, research methodology, and written expression. The researcher selected teachers who are familiar with the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the classroom. The questions of the interview focused on the teachers’ motivation toward the use of SNS in posting lectures and contacting students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The questions also addressed their knowledge on the use of the Moodle platform, Google Classroom, and Zoom.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Students’ Questionnaire

During the period between March and May 2020, Saida University as, many Algerian Universities, asked all teachers to upload lectures on their profiles in Moodle. The instructors preferred using a formal educational setting to contact students rather than SNSs, mainly Facebook. The main objective is to provide lectures and tests for learners through a system that can give the student time to upload lectures. They can also do their assignments, and contact their teachers virtually. It develops the student’ self-autonomy to find solutions to end the academic year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Figures below show the Moodle Platform in Saida University:
Moodle or Social Networks: What Alternative Refuge is Appropriate

Figure 2. Moodle as an online management system at Saida University

Figure 3. Lectures posted on Moodle platform with by the researcher during the pandemic

Figure two shows the lectures posted by the researcher and the number of students who accessed the platform. The researcher asked the students about their knowledge in using such platforms and whether they accessed the platform or not. Table two provides an idea about the students’ access to the Moodle platform and the nature of the activity:

Table 2. Students’ access to Moodle and the type of activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Students’ responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures downloaded</td>
<td>This option helps the students to access the platform according to the level and download the lectures posted on the platform</td>
<td>47.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>It allows teachers to download tests and evaluate students</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>It allows both teachers and students to meet and contact each other through chats and forums.</td>
<td>8.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessments</td>
<td>It allows teachers to prepare a quiz and collect students’ feedback.</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other tools</td>
<td>It allows teachers to download other teaching materials and activities</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Students’ number: 90</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two demonstrates that 47.78% of the students accessed the Moodle platform to download lectures of the second semester after the teachers uploaded all handouts. They claimed that it is
due to the Covid-19 pandemic; they were directed by the administration to download the lectures since they do not master the platform. They added that they are still new users of such systems. They used to download lectures from Facebook. The results also show that a few numbers accessed the platform to do their assignments (4.44%). They justified their answers claiming that teachers have not yet uploaded the tests, while 34.4% maintained that teachers uploaded activities and extra materials related to the lectures.

The researcher asked students on the most favored SNS tool that they used to contact teachers. Table three presents an in-depth look at the most widely used SNS platform for learning and communication in the group and with teachers.

Table 3. The most used SNS among Master students during Covid-19 pandemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNSs</th>
<th>Most used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>54.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>28.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>2.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viber</td>
<td>1.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweeter</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email (yahoo/gmail)</td>
<td>13.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings from table three reveal that Facebook is the most favored SNS tool used in the group either to announce administrative or pedagogical activities. They created a group Facebook where they can share books, handouts, and communicate. They also informed that teachers did not favor joining Facebook to upload lectures and assignments since they regard it as an informal setting for learning. They added that they are afraid to receive insults from some impolite students. 28.88% of the learners highlighted that they prefer YouTube channels for learning English and benefited from the lectures posted by some teachers from the department during the Covid-19 pandemic. 13.35% of the participants highlighted that they received lectures, mainly handouts, through their emails and posted them on Facebook.

The researcher designed the third question to test the students’ knowledge on the new applications like Google classroom and Zoom. The following table provides an idea:

Table 4. Students’ background knowledge on the application used in flipped classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational applications</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>23.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Classroom</td>
<td>77.77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table four shows that students’ knowledge of the applications used in e-learning ranges between 23.23% for Zoom application and 77.77% for Google Classroom. Some students claimed that they experienced some video conferences with some teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of these video conferences were through Google Classroom. They added that they should train them to use these applications.
The fourth question was about the most preferred means for e-learning. The question presents an overview of the students’ attitudes toward e-learning tools during March and May 2020.

**Table 5. Most favored e-learning tool among Master students during Covid-19 pandemic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E-learning tools</th>
<th>Students’ responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>61.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moodle</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Classroom/ Zoom</td>
<td>5.56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings from table five demonstrate that most students favor Facebook as an educational tool since it provides easy access to the group through which they can share videos, lectures, and even assignments. They added that some teachers also prefer Facebook to post lectures, tests, and even administrative announcements. However, they did not join the groups they sent emails for students who are responsible for the groups. They justified their answer, claiming that on Facebook, all the members are present and can express their feelings through comments or features of like/dislike, i.e., you get the answer quickly, unlike other platforms. They affirmed that on Facebook, the members develop a sense of friendship. In contrast, in Moodle, they are regarded as classmates who are enrolled by a particular system. Facebook can be a space where members, who do not belong to the group, can join it. About 22.22% of the students prefer YouTube channels, mainly to reinforce their knowledge, get in touch with native speakers and acquire more information on given issues related to the lectures. They added that Facebook and YouTube are intertwined, i.e., they search for visual aids on different modules, and post them on Facebook to share knowledge with all the group members. For them, Moodle is a platform where they can download lectures and get teachers’ feedback i.e., they wait from teachers and cannot give or share something through this system, while Facebook promotes a space where they are free to speak spontaneously. Few students prefer Moodle because the platform can give opportunities to share lectures, communicate with teachers, create groups, and get their instructors’ feedback in a formal setting which is safe and organized, while the remaining students are interested in the flipped classroom and changing the learning environment to become learner-centered through experiencing new applications like Google Classroom and Zoom.

The fifth question focuses on the students’ motivation toward the nature of lecture i.e., whether the students prefer handouts, videos, or the interactive technique in learning the lectures. Table six gives an idea of the type of lectures delivered by their teachers.

**Table 6. Students’ motivation towards the types of lectures delivered**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of lectures delivered</th>
<th>Students’ responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handouts</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive method</td>
<td>13.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction and handouts</td>
<td>66.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table six reveals that 66.66% of learners prefer classroom interaction and handouts. Other answers range between 13.35% and 13.33%. Some students prefer the interactive method justifying their answers that teachers can provide them with important points and they can do the research at home and develop lectures. In contrast, other students maintained that the use of handouts is useful, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic since it is impossible to attend in class. A few numbers (6.66%) prefer videos mainly on YouTube channels created by teachers to cover the absence of the interactive method.

**Teachers’ Interview**

The researcher conducted an online interview with eight teachers teaching English at Saida University. The questions aimed to give an overview of the teachers’ solutions and the leading technology tools that they used to keep in touch with students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Question One:** How do you contact your students and deliver your lectures during Covid-19 pandemic?

The eight teachers answered that the university insisted on uploading lectures on the faculties’ websites and the Moodle platform. They argued that through these solutions, all students could access the website and the Moodle platform to download the lectures and their activities. They added that they also contacted the students through emails to publish lectures on Facebook.

**Question Two:** Do you think that students will change their motivation toward using SNS and start employing educational platforms like Moodle?

Six teachers out of eight revealed that SNSs, mainly Facebook has become an integral part of the students’ daily lives, and it is impossible to replace it with another tool or system. They added that teachers could benefit from the choices and opportunities that Facebook can provide and the students’ attitudes and use them for educational purposes. They also highlighted that our learners in the department need training to use the platform Moodle correctly. They maintained that although the students will master the use of the platform or application like Google Classroom and Zoom, they will continue using Facebook to share knowledge and discuss their social issues with their peers. On the other hand, two teachers out of eight maintained that teachers can direct their students’ motivation and attitudes toward the use of new e-learning tools like Moodle, Google Classroom or Zoom.

**Question Three:** Why do not you use SNS directly and publish your lectures and assignments for the students?

Six teachers out of eight revealed that they did not prefer to contact students in an informal setting. They justified their answers claiming that most students use pseudo names and could insult teachers or loose privacy. This point is supported by Livingston and Brake (2010) when they stated that SNS can raise “the likelihood of new risks to the self, such as the loss of privacy, bullying, harming contacts and more” (p. 75). They maintained that teachers could benefit from the advantages of SNS through planning to manage risk-taking. They concluded that there are no platforms that can create a suitable learning environment like SNS, mainly
Facebook. Another reason is that students used informal English or a mixture of French and Arabic. They do not want to join the students’ group on Facebook. Two teachers out of eight observed that Facebook was an essential tool to contact students during the pandemic for administrative and pedagogical purposes. They added that they join the students’ group and find it easy to publish for them. They claimed that most of them respond to the administrative instructions.

Question Four: Do you think that Moodle is beneficial and encourage e-learning in the department after the Covid-19 pandemic?

Eight teachers informed that they learned how to use the Moodle platform during their training. They added that the university needs to train all students so that they can use the platform. They also affirmed that training students and teachers is not enough to work with the system. They need to plan lectures and activities that suit the platform and e-learning. They also maintained that they can use Moodle to provide additional activities and lectures in addition to classroom instruction. In the Covid-19 pandemic, Moodle serves as a refuge for both teachers and administration to upload lectures for students during the pandemic. They can benefit from the platform to encourage virtual learning.

Question Five: Do you use learning applications like Google Classroom or Zoom in learning during the Covid-19 pandemic? What is your view on these applications?

All the interviewees agreed that technology has pushed the wheel of learning through software and applications that support virtual learning. Three out of eight teachers said that they used Google Classroom, primarily in the module of speaking. They said that it is useful for all teachers, mainly in the assessment. They also confirmed that it is helpful for teachers during the pandemic, but it cannot replace the classroom environment. They claimed that they can use the applications as supplementary tools for learning. They added that these applications can help the teacher to give feedback and score in the assignments. Other teachers claimed that most teachers and learners have no idea about the use of these applications and are stuck to the old classroom technique. Besides, teachers and learners have to understand how these applications work and their effectiveness.

Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

The Covid-19 pandemic has triggered all the educational rules, mainly for those who do not favor the integration of technology in the classroom or at least its use to interact with students. Some teachers, mainly old ones have developed technophobia and do not favour technology use through emails. Those teachers need to cope with advancements that the field of teaching and learning imposes.

Through the analysis of both the students’ questionnaire and the teachers’ interview, the findings showed that all the participants preferred a formal setting in learning i.e., the use of academic platforms like Moodle to post lectures, activities, and follow the students’ assessments. They also agreed to use an informal setting in EFL context like Facebook to post administrative announcements or to inform the students to join the Moodle platform i.e., they should employ it as a space to upload learning materials. At the same time, SNS mainly Facebook is meant to
strength the students’ social and educational relation and foster communication and interaction. This result goes hand in hand with the findings of some scholars like Deng and Tavares (2013). The findings also revealed that SNS, mainly Facebook, YouTube, and Moodle platforms save the learning process and keep interaction between the instructors, teachers, and students during the Covid-19 pandemic. These results may answer the first research question, “how Algerian universities face Covid-19 pandemic”. Indeed, most universities used technology by continuing the learning process both for pedagogical and administrative purposes.

The analysis also demonstrated that students were motivated to use the Moodle platform to download lectures and assignments. Students also prefer to contact teachers and conduct their assignment through this platform, although they are not trained. This result is similar to Suvorov’s (2010) study which claimed that Moodle is also beneficial for EFL learners since it changes the learning environment, and the students developed a background knowledge on e-learning and its importance in the learning process. This result may answer the second research question, “Are Algerian EFL students motivated towards academic platforms like Moodle?”

Although the results revealed that most learners welcomed the idea of using the Moodle platform in learning English, but they are still SNS practitioners since they are accustomed to sharing their knowledge, feelings, and social lives through these platforms, mainly Facebook. This result may answer the third research question, “Where about social networks like Facebook? Are these social platforms still gaining fame in the learning process during the pandemic? Facebook is still gaining popularity and celebrity among its users, mainly the young generation who thought that it promotes creativity. This idea is similar to Kerwin’s (2012) view. Indeed, students used Facebook for both educational and social purposes, i.e., in formal and informal settings.

The results also demonstrated that students prefer classroom interaction and handouts more than videos on YouTube or just handouts. They claimed that YouTube sessions are helpful after the lectures and handouts provide a roadmap for students in their research and revision. The results also revealed that teachers and students have a short experience in using Google Classroom and Zoom. They maintained that they are motivated to use these new applications in the learning process and benefited from Google Classroom. They also highlighted that it raises their motivation through the choices they found in the applications. This result may answer the fourth question, “Do EFL learners benefit from the new applications like Google meet and Zoom in promoting E-learning?” These answers get in harmony with Liang (2006) who observed that applications like Zoom promote face-to-face interaction.

Conclusion

This study aimed to scrutinize the teaching/learning process of English in Algeria during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher took the department of English Language and Literature at Saida University as a case study. It also attempted to shed light on the students’ motivation and opinions toward the use of SNS and educational platforms like Moodle in learning during the pandemic. It attempted to give an in-depth look at e-learning in the Algerian context. The current study was limited to a small sample of EFL learners in Saida University. Still,
researchers could take it as a roadmap to conduct more research, mainly on the use of formal educational platforms, and new applications like Zoom and Google Classroom.

Technology becomes an essential ingredient in the teaching process. Teachers have to cope with the advancement of technology and language teaching. Indeed, it becomes a duty for teachers to do that because the teaching and learning processes are affected by the students’ attitudes and motivation. Hence, students are the most influential factor in the learning process. Besides, teachers and students can employ Facebook and Moodle as complementary tools. Students can use Facebook to foster peer communication, interaction, and share information. They can also employ Moodle to get teachers’ feedback. In the EFL context in Saida, Facebook proves its efficacy as the first tool for learning and administrative announcements. Hence, if teachers need to inform their students, they have to search for them on Facebook and then they can use educational platforms.

The Covid-19 pandemic sheds light on many educational systems that limit the learning and teaching process to the closed walls of the classroom. Institutions, universities, and teachers have to cope with their students’ motivation and attitudes. They have also to benefit from the blesses of technology that has encouraged both synchronous and asynchronous learning. It can also make the learning and teaching atmosphere more enjoyable where both teachers and learners can meet virtually, and share knowledge from their homes. Indeed, the current situation has pushed many institutions to reconsider their educational systems.

Most of the results showed that students benefited from educational platforms like Moodle and are more motivated to use in the learning process. They also showed positive attitudes toward the use of SNS in informal settings, mainly Facebook and YouTube. The results also revealed that the learners are also eager to include new applications to the classroom environment like Zoom and Google Classroom. The analysis also demonstrated that the classroom environment and the use of handouts are essential in the learning process. They can employ SNS, Moodle, and Google Classroom/Zoom to complete the learning process, motivate students to learn, and strengthen the teacher-learner relation.

The use of educational platforms or SNS and even new applications like Google Classroom is not enough i.e., the teaching and learning process is not complete without the teacher’s role as an active participant and students’ motivation. The core of these tools is to develop the student’s self-learning and promote creativity.

Algeria is trying to promote e-learning through creating educational platforms, and training teachers to cope with advances in teaching and technology. It also provides materials to enhance the learning process. However, all the initiatives remain uncomplete without the teachers’ and learners’ motivation and attitudes toward changing the learning and teaching rigid in the classroom. The obstacles that faced teachers, administration, and students during the pandemic have critically unveiled the status of teaching/learning that needs to be under the lens. The Covid-19 pandemic gives a chance for instructors and researchers to test the usefulness of what technology has provided. Although teachers developed negative attitudes toward SNS like Facebook and its use, they realized that it is the first favoured tool among learners since it
provides peer-to-peer feedback and the sense of a social community. On the other side of the corner, Moodle, as an official educational platform, provides a safe environment where the information was prepared and uploaded by their teachers, i.e., it offers teacher-to-student feedback. Therefore, recognizing the tremendous benefits, technology becomes a necessity for teachers and institutions.

**Recommendations**

The current study presents a set of recommendations that can help in integrating e-learning in the EFL context:

- Universities should focus on training teachers and learners to use ICT in the classroom through seminars and workshops to promote professionalism, mainly on the use of new platforms like Moodle and applications like Google Classroom or Zoom.
- Teachers should develop positive attitudes toward the use of SNS in learning, mainly Facebook. They should encourage students to use it for educational and social purposes. They should make a balance in using Facebook.
- Universities should create more language laboratories and integrate the use of new applications like Google Classroom and Zoom seminars, workshops, conferences, and study days by inviting teachers from other universities.
- Teachers should use technology to teach all modules in the EFL context in general.
- Teachers should include SNS platforms like YouTube as a supplementary tool to change the students’ motivation toward the use of handouts in learning.
- Institutions should raise the students’ awareness to employ SNS for teaching and learning purposes.

**About the Author**

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An ESL Online Classroom Experience in Oman during Covid-19

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Abstract
This paper aimed to investigate the online learning experience of a group of ESL students at a higher learning institution in Oman during the Covid-19. The paper studied the interaction between the students’ preferred online learning style and the technologies the students experienced on the e-learning platform (Moodle) for the particular ESL course. The rationale for investigating the relationship between the students’ learning styles and the technologies the students experienced is to evaluate if the learning style and the technologies complement each other. It is also aimed to provide an evaluation of an ESL e-learning course by considering the different technologies that can be incorporated into the e-learning classroom to meet the different learning styles. Data was gathered from 32 undergraduate students by utilizing Kolb’s Learning Styles Inventory. The study included analysis of Moodle utilizing Warburton’s Technologies in Use (2007) to develop an understanding of the technologies the students experienced online. The results of the study revealed that the majority of the students’ preferred learning style is reflected in the technologies they experienced in the online classroom. As the relationship of the technology in use and the students learning style preference in the classroom complements each other, the study revealed that the emphasis of the particular skill-based pedagogy ESL classroom is on receptive skills (listening and reading). The lack of the students’ productive skills (speaking and writing) is a cause for concern to the ESL course instructors, policymakers, and the wider community.
Keywords: ESL, Kolb Learning Styles Inventory, Oman, online classroom, Warburton’s Technology in Use

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.3
Introduction

The spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 has led to profound changes in the education sector (Murphy, 2020). On March 24th, UNESCO announced that the pandemic affected 1.37 billion students and 60.2 million teachers in 138 countries (UNESCO, 2020). As part of the pandemic precautions of minimizing transmission of the virus, Oman Supreme Committee on COVID 19 announced the suspension for classes for schools and educational institutions for a month starting March 15th, 2020 (“Oman suspends schools, universities from Sunday”, 2020). Responding to the instructions of the Supreme Committee, the majority of higher learning institutions in Oman rapidly transitioned from the face-to-face classroom to online learning systems. Protocols for online learning were developed ad-hoc to ensure learning continuity while supporting teachers and students in coping with home learning. The crisis calls for countries worldwide to move towards digital and distance learning, which has brought about new challenges such as cost, the credibility of materials, and adherence to rules of the management and use of student personal data (Murphy, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). In addition to these emerging challenges, there is also an urgent need to accurately assess the quality of the online course delivery (Thiele, 2003) on positive learning outcomes (Maddux, Ewing-Taylor & Johnson, 2002). Richmond and Cummings (2005) suggested that consideration of the relevance of student learning styles on the course instructional design and delivery helps to ensure the quality of the online course.

Objectives of the Study

The paper aimed to investigate the online learning experience of a group of ESL students at a higher learning institution in Oman during the Covid-19. Paramount to achieving the aim is an understanding of the students’ preferred online learning styles, and the technologies the students experienced in their online classroom. The specific objectives of the study are described below:

a) To categorize the students’ preferred online learning styles utilizing Kolb (1984) Learning Styles Inventory,

b) To interpret the technologies on the e-learning platform (Moodle) utilizing Warburton’s (2007) Technology in Use,

c) To evaluate if the technologies the students experience on Moodle complements the students’ preferred online learning styles

The rationale for investigating the relationship between the students’ learning styles and the technologies the students experienced is to evaluate if the learning style and the technologies the students experienced complement each other. It is also aimed to provide an evaluation of an ESL e-learning course by considering the different technologies that can be incorporated into the e-learning platform to meet the different learning styles. This investigation is significant and timely as it reports the online learning experience of a group of ESL students by highlighting the complementary and contrasting relationship between the students’ learning styles and the technologies they experienced in their ESL e-learning course during the Covid-19.

Literature Review

This section of the paper begins with a review of the relationship among Kolb’s (1984) model of learning styles, the learning environments, and application to online courses, followed by Warburton’s (2007) Technologies in Use Framework. Because this study is situated in the
context of Oman during the pandemic, issues pertaining to English teaching and learning and, e-learning in Oman are considered too.

**Kolb’s Learning Styles and Learning Environments**

Previous studies found the relevance of learning styles to self-reported enjoyment in students enrolled in face-to-face courses as well as online courses (Cakiroglu, 2014; Chen, 2015; Simpson & Du, 2004). Eishani, Saa’d and Nami (2014) concluded that learning is enhanced when the specific learning style matches the style of teaching. This finding is also reflected in online courses where students who participated in online courses that matched with their preferred learning styles achieved better results than those who did not (Graf, Viola, Leo & Kinshuk, 2007).

According to Richmond and Cummings (2005), online courses have the most impact when it is based on instructional design decisions that may include “structure of course delivery, teacher-student communication, appropriate assignments and activities that are conducive to online learning, and effective use of online resources … which accommodate student learning styles” (p.51). One of the ways to accomplish effective delivery of an online course on learner outcomes is to have a learning style framework incorporated into the teaching and learning such as Kolb’s (1984) Learning Styles Inventory.

While Kolb (1984) did not draw the relationships among learning styles, learning modes, and learning environments, the study by Richmond and Cummings (2005) investigated these relationships and applied Kolb’s theory of Experiential Learning to assess the quality and effectiveness of online courses. Kolb’s (1984) four learning styles are a) Accommodating, b) Assimilating, c) Converging, and, d) Diverging. Each of these learning styles and its characteristics is described in turns.

1. **Accommodating Learning Style.** The accommodating learning style relies on other people for information, in doing things and getting involved in new experiences (Kolb, 1984), make intuitive decisions, and are adaptable to changing circumstances (Richmond & Cummings, 2005). They accomplish tasks by following directions (Kolb, 1984) and clear explanations before starting working on the task (Kozlova, 2018).

2. **Assimilating Learning Style.** The strength of the students who prefer assimilation is the ability to reason inductively with ideas and abstract concepts than through social interactions (Richmond & Cummings, 2005). They are able to create theoretical models (Kolb, 1984). Practical opportunities are valued less and they prefer working on their own (Kozlova, 2018).

3. **Converging Learning Style.** The convergent learning style prefers practical ideas (Richmond & Cummings, 2005). Their motivation for learning is on accomplishing tasks and finding solutions (Kozlova, 2018) than the emotional experiences. The students with this preferred learning style do not need to communicate with peers to complete the tasks (Kozlova, 2018).

4. **Diverging Learning Style.** Students who prefer the diverging learning style are imaginative (Kolb, 1984). They prefer observing, such as their peers, before doing the task (Kozlova, 2018). Their strength of learning modes are concrete experiences and
reflective observation (Richmond & Cummings, 2005), and they prefer to work in groups but receive individual feedback (Kozlova, 2018).

To accommodate all the four types of learning styles onto the classroom instructional design and delivery, Richmond and Cummings (2005) proposed the following framework.

Table 1. *Learning styles, learning environments and application to online course*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Style</th>
<th>Learning Environment</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Content Delivery</th>
<th>Instructor Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>Interactive tutorials that require autonomy</td>
<td>A blend of synchronous and asynchronous chat and discussions with peers and instructor. These students do not enjoy lectures.</td>
<td>Coach/helper; role model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td></td>
<td>Structured group projects and homework that applies to theories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilating</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Multiple Choice Quizzes, tests, and case study analysis</td>
<td>Lectures that focus on theories, broad concepts, interpretation. Prefers discussion without real-time interaction.</td>
<td>Top-down, didactic; expert opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual</td>
<td></td>
<td>Online reading journal and lecture summaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converging</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Multiple Choice Quizzes, tests, and case study analysis</td>
<td>These students can adapt to lectures that focus on theories and broad concepts and discussions with peers without real-time interaction.</td>
<td>The instructor is seen as a guide and role model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td></td>
<td>Structured group projects and homework that applies to theories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverging</td>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>Interactive tutorials that require autonomy</td>
<td>These students enjoy a blend of synchronous and asynchronous chat and discussions with peers and instructors, as well as lectures that focus on interpretations.</td>
<td>The instructor is a coach but also one who does not emphasize critical evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual</td>
<td></td>
<td>Online reading journal and lecture summaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1. Adapted from Richmond and Cummings (2005, p. 47 & p.52)
Warburton’s (2007) Technologies in Use Framework

When designing online course activities and delivery, the relationship between technology, pedagogy, and students in the e-learning contexts to the learning outcomes is difficult to unpack for a course instructor. Having a framework, such as Warburton’s (2007) Interpreting Technologies in Use help course instructors to draw that relationship. It is important to note that the term technologies in use refer to the technologies, tools, and learning activities that the students experienced on Moodle for the particular ESL course.

Figure one illustrates Warburton’s (2007) framework which identifies the dimensions of the technology of learning activities, the pedagogy, and the role of the students in an online course.

![Figure 1. Warburton’s interpreting technologies in use (2007, para. 2)](image)

The three main dimensions illustrated in Figure one are:

1. *Isolated/individual – social*: learning activities experienced within the spectrum of isolated/individual to social.
2. *Active-passive*: the range of learning activities that require active participation or engagement from the students to aspects of learning that require less participation from the students.
3. *Formal-Informal*: the range of learning activities that vary in the degree of formality.

The advantage of having these dimensions is that it helps course instructors to map the ways of using technologies or tools to assess learners’ needs and ultimately, to achieve the learning outcomes. It also facilitates the decision-making on course design and delivery to meet the pedagogical strategy. Open University (2020) concluded that frameworks that foreground the relationship between technology and pedagogy such as Warburton’s Interpreting Technologies in Use framework provide a useful tool for course designers and instructors to design and deliver effective learning activities.

**English Teaching and Learning in Oman**

The linguistic landscape of Oman is composed of the multi-ethnic and multilingual identities of its population (Al-Issa, 2020). The status of English in Oman is widely recognized as second in importance to the Arabic language (Al-Issa, 2005) and not in the true context of ESL (English-as-Second Language) as defined in applied linguistics. Previous investigations found that a proportion of the population uses English as their second language, while some learners may experience contact with the English language only in the classroom (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). An internet survey of the research in English language teaching in Oman shows that ESL and EFL (English-as-Foreign-Language) are used interchangeably. The operational term that is used to define an online English proficiency classroom in this paper is ESL.

Prior to the 1970s, “education was predominantly imputed by the Islamic establishment where religion, Arabic language, and arithmetic were taught in mosques and private homes” (Nasser, 2019, p.1), with little documented information on the use of the English language in the country. When the late Sultan Qaboos came to power in the 1970s, English is recognized as the only official foreign language (Al-Issa, 2005), and it is used in the government, business, education, legislation, media and as a tool to serve the development of the nation (Al-Issa, 2005). The ability to communicate in English is perceived as high in the social hierarchy (Al-Issa, 2005). In 1998/1999, the Ministry of Education of Oman introduced the Basic Education System (BES), an education reform to overcome the English language deficit among the students (Al-Issa, 2005, Naseer, 2019).

A recent report by the Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index revealed that Oman ranked 92nd in the 100 countries participated (English First English Proficiency Index, 2019) while the IELTS test statistics report in 2018 indicated that the overall IELTS scores for Oman are 5.22 (IELTS, n.d.). The World Bank development report in 2013 indicated that the school graduates in Oman did not perform to the expected standards, both nationally and internationally. Previous investigations on the students’ proficiency in English in Oman reported that the examination-oriented schooling system, standardized assessment instruments, and practices that dominated the educational framework in Oman are among the factors that limit students’ learning (Al-Ani, 2017). The traditional methods of education, such as memorization of notes (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012) and limiting learning resources to textbooks only, are inadequate in meeting the requirement of tertiary education and the demands of the workplace (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). To address the current situation, Oman National Strategy for Education 2040 was established with the aim to prepare the students with the growing challenges of using English to be effective global citizens in the 21st century, and in the development of the Sultanate (The Education Council, 2018).

His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik’s Royal Speech reiterates the importance of education in preparing students with skills for the future development of the Sultanate:

On top of our national priorities is the education sector, with all its types and levels. It will receive full attention, and it will be provided with a supportive environment that motivates
research and innovation. We will also provide it with all means of empowerment since it is the base upon which our children will be able to participate in meeting the requirements of the coming phase of development. (HM The Sultan Delivers Royal Speech, 2020, para. 9)

**E-learning in Oman**

Moodle is an open-source learning system (Al-Ani, 2013), and it is used widely in the higher learning institutions in Oman. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority of the higher learning institutions in Oman used Moodle to support learning in face-to-face classrooms. The government of Oman perceives e-learning positively and considers Information and Communications Technology (ICT) an important aspect of improving the quality of education (Oxford Business Group, n.d.). According to Al-Musawi and Akinyemi (2002), e-learning helps students in Oman to access learning resources instead of “making people travel to education … [in a] population [that] is spread thinly over a wide geographic area” (p.2). The majority of the higher education institutions in Oman have already incorporated blended learning and virtual classrooms to complement the existing face-to-face classrooms (Oxford Business Group, n.d.). In addition to that, the majority of the students in the higher education institutions in Oman are experienced in using electronic databases and e-learning platforms, as well as engaging with their peers online. Kothaneth (2020) adds that online learning “is not a new concept” (para.6) for the higher education institutions in Oman, and that “e-learning can help students ease Covid-19 risk” (para.1).

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced schools and universities to shut down, and inevitably disrupts the traditional forms of face-to-face learning. The present situation gives rise to online learning. While the advocates of online education view the pandemic as an opportunity for students to experience learning with a variety of applications and online tools, the abrupt move towards digital and distance learning received drawbacks and criticisms. Lau, Yang and Dasgupta’s (2020) report on “Will the coronavirus make online education go viral?” includes a comment from an Australian vice-chancellor that states, “face-to-face interaction will never be matched in quality by other modes of communication” – even if current “fads temporarily appear to be tilting the balance towards non-human interaction” (para.4). Wazzan (2020) summarized and addressed the present challenges as follows,

Students are distracted, teachers are not sufficiently trained and our technology infrastructure is far from fully ready to cooperate. I am concerned that some governments and providers are under pressure to move too fast to ensure uninterrupted learning, with little medium-term planning or ramp-up time. (para. 2)

This study demonstrates the dynamic interplay of the two frameworks, Kolb’s Learning Styles Inventory and Warburton’s Technologies in Use in reporting the quality of online learning experience of a group of students in an ESL classroom in Oman during Covid-19. The methodology of the study is explained in the following section.
online classroom, and to seek an understanding of the technologies the students experienced in the online classroom complements their preferred online learning styles.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The research population consisted of the students at a higher learning institution in Oman enrolled in an English proficiency classroom. The methods of gathering data for this research involved two phases. The first phase was administering an online questionnaire of the Kolb Learning Style Inventory (revision 1985) to the respondents of the study (n = 32). The findings of the first phase of the study were analyzed using IBM SPSS V26 software. The data gathered from the online questionnaire generated information and scores for the students’ preferred learning mode which were then tabulated. The tabulated scores were then further categorized into their learning style domains: accommodating, assimilating, converging, and diverging.

The second phase of the study was an evaluation of the technologies the students experienced on Moodle for the particular ESL course. This involved a close examination of the course content and activities on the e-learning platform (Moodle). The broad domains of the analysis of the course content and activities on Moodle were derived from Warburton’s (2007) Technologies in Use framework namely isolated/social, active/passive, and formal/informal. A “micro-level” (Hood, 2009, p.79) coding system was applied to tag units of data to organize and reorganize them to allow interpretation of the material.

**Sample of Study**

The study took place at a higher education institution in the Sultanate of Oman among 32 undergraduate students enrolled in an ESL course at the end of the Spring 2020/21 term. The factors that can affect the learning styles are categorized into the respondents’ age groups and their disciplines. While all of the respondents enrolled in an ESL (skill-based course) at the particular higher education institution, their discipline/field of study varied (e.g. Engineering, Business, Social Sciences, Law). The other factors such as gender and nationality were excluded as the majority of the students enrolled in the ESL course were female and Omani.

**Summary of Findings**

The learning styles across all of the respondents of the study reveals a strong preference towards Converging (53.1%), while the least preferred learning style is Diverging (6.3%). Table two summarizes the frequency count of the respondents’ learning styles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning style</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Accommodating</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilating</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converging</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverging</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The cross-tabulation analysis illustrated in Table 3 presents information that the largest population of the respondents are between 21 to 23 years old, and that for the particular age group, the preferred learning style is Converging (14 respondents).

Table 3. Learning style and age cross-tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Style</th>
<th>20 and below</th>
<th>21-23</th>
<th>24-26</th>
<th>27-29</th>
<th>30 and above</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data gathered from the respondents’ discipline (e.g. Business, Engineering, Social Sciences) are used to find out if there is an association with their learning style. The Chi-Square test is applied with the following hypotheses:

Null Hypothesis (H₀):
There is no association between the respondents’ discipline and their learning style.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁):
There is an association between the respondents’ discipline and their learning style.

The finding from the Chi-Square test reveals that the p-value is .021 (≤ 0.05) which indicates that there is an association between the respondents’ discipline and their learning style, thus rejecting the null hypothesis. The r-value is at 0.780 which further indicates a strong correlation between the respondents’ discipline to their learning style. According to Clark (2018), when a value of r is greater than 0.7, it is considered a strong correlation.

The mapping of the technologies in use on Moodle for the ESL course involved 13 tags marked as (x) in Figure two. These tags range from the social repository (YouTube), Virtual Learning Environment (Big Blue Button), Productivity Tools (Ms. Office, Ms. Ppt.), Personal Learning Environment (e.g. search engines, recorded video lectures), Shared Applications, Website to Discussions and Chats. These tags are identified and mapped using Warburton’s (2007) Technologies in Use framework. Out of the 13 tags, six tags are placed in the spectrum of isolated (individual task) and the role of the students is a passive recipient. Three tags are placed in the spectrum of isolated but the role of the students is the active recipient. As an active recipient, the students are required to respond and participate in the learning activity.
Figure 2. Mapping of the technologies in use for the ESL online course

The findings from the mapping of the technologies for the particular ESL online course appear to complement the majority of the students' preferred learning style: Converging (53.1%) of the respondents. In total, nine out of the 13 tags are placed and categorized as isolated in the mapping of the technologies in use, while six out of the 13 tags are placed in the spectrum of the isolated task, and passive recipient. Figure 3 presents the findings of the relationship between the technologies the students experienced in the ESL online course and the majority of the students’ preferred online learning styles.

Figure 3. Evaluation of the technologies in use for the ESL course and students’ preferred online learning styles
Discussion

The majority of the respondents of the study were female between the age of 21-23-year-old. The findings revealed the majority of the students' preferred learning style was Converging (51.3%). The majority of the students enrolled in the particular ESL course were from the Business field of study. The study found a strong correlation between the students’ field of study and their preferred learning style. This finding is consistent with Jones, Reichard, and Mokhtar’s (2003) study of community college students in the U.S. that there are significant differences in students’ learning styles preferences across disciplines.

According to Richmond and Cummings (2005), the activities that best suit the Converging Learning Style are Multiple Choice quizzes, tests, Case Study analysis, structured group projects. Richmond and Cummings (2005) describe one of the characteristics of the students who prefer the Converging learning style is that they prefer practical learning activities. Their motivation for learning is on accomplishing tasks and finding one right solution (Kozlova, 2018), rather than the emotional experiences of learning. To these students, the course instructor is seen as a guide and role model of the course.

Although the findings of the study offered a positive complementary relationship between the technologies in use and the students’ preferred learning style, it also revealed the focus of the particular classroom is on the receptive skills (listening and reading) with nine out of 13 technologies in use. The students’ experience with productive skills (speaking and writing) is minimal. In a skill-based pedagogy, the aim is to get students to reach automaticity through extensive practice, which, as the findings suggest, the students did not experience sufficient output for productive skills, nor do they prefer participating in the learning activities that aim to get them skilled at speaking and writing in English. Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova (2014) observed, “unfortunately, higher education students [in Oman] continue to graduate with very weak oral and written communication skills, thus making them unfit for employment in many types of jobs” (p.1). This is a cause for concern to the teachers, policymakers and the wider community as the National Strategy for Education 2040 aims to produce competent graduates that align with the needs of the labor market.

In contrast to the findings of the study, the IELTS test statistics report in 2018 indicated that the overall IELTS score for Oman is at 5.22. Out of the four skills: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking, the highest score is Speaking skill at 5.22. The lowest score is Reading skill at 4.93 (IELTS, n.d). This warrants for future research that includes a larger sample of the study, the various field of study/ disciplines, and age groups that look into Omani students’ preferred online learning styles. The information gathered would help inform ESL course instructors to include different technologies in the classroom to meet the learning styles of different students.

Conclusion

The paper investigated the online learning experience of a group of ESL students at a higher learning institution in Oman. Specifically, the paper studied the students’ online learning styles. This is followed by an evaluation of the technologies the students experienced in their ESL online classroom. The findings suggest that the technologies the students experienced in their ESL online
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classroom complements the majority of the students’ preferred online learning style. The findings also revealed that there is a strong correlation between the students’ field of study with their learning style preference. The majority of the students who participated in the research prefers Converging learning style, and that the technologies the students experienced were isolated/individual tasks instead of group work. The role the students played in the online classroom was passive recipients and the pedagogy was delivered formally.

Although the study focused on a small sample of female Omani undergraduate students, it has important implications for research and pedagogical practice for ESL online classrooms in Oman. First, the data from the study represented what the students perceived as their preferred learning style. An avenue for future research is to document the students’ actual learning style in an ESL skill-based pedagogy classroom. Second, one of the ways to encourage life-long learning, an important aspect of Oman Vision 2040, is to enable students to take control of their learning strategies which is influenced by having awareness of the different learning styles. Thus, higher education institutions in Oman could incorporate in their agenda to increase awareness of the students’ learning styles as a means to motivate the students’ own learning. One of the ways to accomplish this is by including learning styles inventories on the website. For example, the majority of the higher education institutions in the U.S include different learning style inventories on their websites to encourage students to discover their own learning styles. This aids students in making decisions and selecting courses that would best fit their learning style. Finally, as course instructors for ESL classrooms, it is essential that we accommodate the different learning styles of the students through various technologies and teaching strategies. Having information about the students’ learning styles will help us design and deliver the online course effectively. This, in turn, helps us to achieve the learning objectives as well as contributing towards positive online classroom experience.

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The Impact of Virtual Classes on Second Language Interaction in the Saudi EFL Context:
A Case Study of Saudi Undergraduate Students

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Madinah, Saudi Arabia

Abstract
This study was performed to investigate the impact of the virtual classroom on second/foreign language (L2) interaction. A total of 90 Saudi female undergraduate students participated in this study. All participants were enrolled in an English language course in the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) at a Saudi English Language Centre (ELC), with the English language being taught as a core module in this course. The English language proficiency level of the participants was equal to beginner or low intermediate, which was determined to be the A2 language level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). A quantitative research method, a questionnaire was developed with 19 statements to test the hypotheses of this study, which sought to determine whether virtual classes had an effective impact on language interaction and L2 learning, and whether participants had a positive attitude towards interaction and learning via virtual classes. The study revealed that there was a good degree of communication and interaction among Saudi students specifically in virtual classes. Also, participants showed a positive attitude towards using online classes for L2 learning. Thus, implementing virtual classes for language learning and teaching is highly recommend not only in this particular Saudi learning environment, but also across other EFL contexts. The study aspired to answer the following research questions: 1. How effective are virtual classes for promoting interaction through the English language in the preparatory year in Saudi Arabia? 2. To what extent can Saudi students use virtual classes for learning English?

Keywords: Interaction, Saudi Context, Second language, Virtual classes

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.4
Introduction

Interaction plays a crucial role in facilitating language learning input. The success of the learning process relies on some way or another on extent to which a comprehensive interactive system for second/foreign language (L2) learners is provided. Learners and teachers need to strike a balance between (a) exchanging thoughts and ideas, and (b) ensure that there is an effective communicative learning process (Sari, 2018). In order to enhance interaction through language input, the learning process should embrace verbal and non-verbal communication to achieve the learning output in an L2 language class. Thus, implementing the right patterns of interaction is considered fundamental in an L2 language class to accomplish the intended learning objectives. However, due to the current global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, the education system throughout the world has been forced into a kind of closure, and instruction has been converted from face-to-face learning in real classrooms to e-learning classes to ensure some measure of educational continuity. The development of e-learning has expanded to a great extent to include a variety of online learning approaches such as virtual classes, video conferencing and blended learning. Although virtual classes have different tools that are designed to offer effective content, reinforcement, interaction and real-time feedback to learners through online sessions, it is often difficult to compare their effectiveness to that of traditional classes, especially with respect to language learning as the latter needs a comprehensible input, direct interaction and constructive feedback to enhance the learning process.

Saudi Arabia has been among those countries whose education systems have been affected by the pandemic; all the education initiations in all stages (schools, colleges, universities, ...etc) with no exception, have been closed and transitioned to remote learning to ensure learning continuity through the rest of the academic year. Accordingly, all English language classes for Saudi undergraduate students have been delivered online through virtual classes to catch-up with the English language syllabus and stay on course with the pacing plan for the preparatory year. Also, it was mandatory to prepare all students to enrol in the preparatory year final online exam, which includes English language modules. Thus, one of the challenges faced through teaching the English language to Saudi students through virtual classes has been ensuring that there is some level of interaction. Therefore, this study focused in the effectiveness of virtual classes on learners’ interaction.

The potential value of e-learning and distance learning has been studied extensively. Nevas (2010), for instance, examined his students’ performance and involvement in blended learning such as combining face to face classes and online learning. The findings revealed that there was a good degree of communication in different activities among students in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. In addition, Sanders (2012) conducted a study of the use of e-learning such as online learning management system tools to enhancing students’ communication using the target language (English in this study). The findings here showed that the use of different e-learning tools (on line learning) outside the classroom promoted students’ engagement in the learning process. Likewise, Hariri and Bahanshal (2015) investigated L2 interaction through e-learning and blended learning in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia, finding that there was a positive correlation between students’ English proficiency and the implementation of e-learning in addition to face-to-face classes.

Thus, the area of investigation in this study was whether or not virtual classes are effective in assisting students’ L2 interaction based on an online-only format without any face-to-face classes, and whether virtual classes could facilitate students’ interaction and language learning. To answer these questions, a quantitative research method was employed, and data were collected through questionnaires to determine students’ own views on e-learning and their capabilities to interact in the L2 via virtual classes. Overall, positive responses were observed with respect to students’ levels of interaction through virtual classes and their English language learning and performance. It is expected that this study could contribute to our
understanding of the impact of virtual classes on L2 interaction, not only in Saudi Arabia but in EFL classes in other contexts as well.

**Statement of Research Problem**

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many teachers and students were faced with a sudden and complete switch to virtual classes from teaching regular classes and meeting students face-to-face. More specifically, some challenges arose while teaching students in the ELC, at a Saudi University, especially those in the preparatory year. This difficulty might have been a result of the limited ability of those students to interact effectively with their teachers and classmates in English classes. Virtual classes were mandatory to use via university blackboard and Microsoft teams. 16 hours of English virtual classes were delivered per a week. Students were provided with language material and learning recourses online and they were offered technical support as well. Thus, this study attempted to examine the effectiveness of virtual classes in L2 interaction. Also, it sought to find out to what extent Saudi students are capable of using virtual classes for learning EFL in the Saudi context. The researchers aimed to involve Saudi students in this study to test whether virtual classes have a positive or negative impact on L2 learning, and to investigate whether there are any limitations with respect to the L2 learning process when teaching students online.

**Literature Review**

*Second Language Learning in Virtual Classrooms*

English is a *lingua franca*; it is used by people all over the world to communicate and has become essential for business, international trade, diplomacy, tourism, education, science, medicine, and entertainment (Hamouda, 2020; Rao, 2019). Because of its global importance, EFL is an essential subject in countries all over the world. Finding effective ways to teach EFL remains one of the most important modern educational challenges (Hamouda, 2020).

One particular challenge in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is creating environments in which learners can interact in English. Interaction in the L2 is highly valued because, in addition to understanding language utterances, research shows that regular interactions in the L2 result in greatly improved language learning outcomes (Mackey & Goo, 2007; Plonsky & Glass, 2011). However, in some language classes, learners rarely interact with each other. A lack of practice, specifically when there are limited opportunities to interact in English, is perhaps one reason why many researchers have found that EFL learners’ speaking abilities are often quite low compared to their listening, reading, and writing skills (Al-Jabry, Salahuddin, & Al-Shazly, 2014; Hamouda, 2020; Hussein 2016). Hussein (2016) and others (Al-Jabry et al., 2014) have suggested that the limited opportunities for learners to practice speaking may be one of the explanations for learners’ relatively low speaking abilities.

Virtual EFL classrooms and online learning (also known as e-learning) offer a potential solution to these and other challenges. Virtual classrooms can enable learners’ interactions with teachers as well as between the learners themselves. Indeed, much of the recent research in the EFL domain has attended to the possible benefits of virtual learning environments for English learners (Bianchi, Yyelland, Yang & McHarg, 2019; Hamouda, 2020; Hussein, 2016; McBrien, Cheng, & Jones., 2009). Nevertheless, along with the potential utility of e-learning environments, it is also important to carefully consider whether online learning environments can be as effective as traditional classrooms (Hamouda, 2020).

This review examines the research with respect to the utility of virtual classrooms for learning EFL. It first provides a review of the reported value of virtual classes and distance learning in general, and then demonstrates how they have been useful for teaching EFL in particular. The review then examines the extent to which it has been determined that virtual classes can facilitate interaction between L2 speakers in an EFL classroom.
Distance Learning and Virtual Classes
The potential value of computers and digital technology for education has been examined over the past few decades as technology (and, more specifically, its application to educational environments) has dramatically proliferated (Khoshshima & Sayadi, 2016). Technology and computers are now commonly used as teaching aids in classrooms as well as for the distribution of information, class resources, and extra class materials outside of class. The widespread use of a number of other digital technologies has also emerged in addition to developments in the internet to aid in learning, including videoconferencing, TV broadcasting, satellite broadcasting, and videotaping (Khoshshima and Sayadi, 2016). Since the 2000s, we have also seen the emergence of more online learning and virtual classrooms (Balcicanli, 2012; Dalgarno, 2002).

A virtual classroom is a type of “electronic classroom that can be expandable in time, space, and content” (Beatty, 2013, p. 156). They are synchronous, meaning that they are “live,” and students engage in them at the same time (Çakýroglu, 2014). Hussein (2016) emphasised that virtual classrooms have many of the same characteristics as physical classrooms but without the same limitations. They allow interaction between students and teachers through several media, including oral communication, texts, video conversation, audio chat and PowerPoint presentations (Yadav, 2016). Depending on the particular virtual classroom platform used, students and teachers may also share content via whiteboards, break-out virtual rooms, shared web browsing, feedback and even the sharing of applications; different online tools (Cakiroglu, 2014; Hamouda, 2020). Virtual classrooms have the advantage that they can be accessed in different places and at different times. As students are increasingly considered to be digital natives and prefer to interact and socialise online, virtual classrooms may be an especially effective way to engage them in education (Hamouda, 2020).

Since their emergence, educational researchers have taken very seriously the question of whether virtual classrooms can be as effective as physical classrooms in terms of facilitating productive learning environments and educational outcomes of students. Notably, researchers have found somewhat conflicting results. For example, Ng (2007) collected qualitative data from interviews with both students and tutors on the use of a virtual classroom (Interwise) for tutoring at the Open University of Hong Kong. Students and tutors were overall very positive about the platform and believed it was an effective learning environment. However, the informants reported several technical difficulties, and they also revealed that student-to-student interaction was minimal on the platform (Ng, 2007). Rather than seeing the virtual classroom as a replacement for tutorials, both the students and the tutors saw it as a useful complement to face-to-face tutorials (Ng, 2007).

McBrien et al. carried out another qualitative study on the use of Elluminate Live! for teaching undergraduate and graduate college classes to students in an American college (McBrien, et al., 2009). The classes were held in the departments of special education and psychology. Students tended to perceive the online classes as facilitating student engagement; they perceived greater student engagement through online classes than in face-to-face classes as well as increased learner autonomy. However, some students also thought that the chat could become a little overwhelming, and that they missed the non-verbal communication that came from in-person interactions. They also noted that difficulties with the technology, like signing on and microphone issues, were real barriers to participation (McBrien, et al., 2009).

In a review of the impact of online colleges on student success, Bettinger, Fox, Loeb, & Taylor (2017) found that fully online courses tended to have lower levels of student success and lower grades. They also found that the students taking online courses made less progress in college than students who attended in-person classes, and they were also less likely to remain in university (Bettinger et al., 2017). Together, the research seems to suggest that virtual classrooms have some promise as an effective teaching tool, but there could also be some real drawbacks, especially when an entire class is delivered online for EFL subjects.
Virtual Classes in EFL Learning

While virtual classrooms have become widely implemented in many educational domains, they have become particularly popular for teaching English. John Knagg of the British Council suggests that there are 1.5 billion English learners around the world, with many of those engaging in some form of online learning (as cited in Beare, 2019). He also notes that there is generally a lack of qualified English teachers. This is consistent with the experience of many global English-teaching institutions insofar as it can be difficult to find qualified language teachers who are also native speakers. This is part of the reason why virtual classes are so appealing to language learners: virtual classrooms break down geographic barriers and provide access to native speaking teachers. In other words, they open up opportunities to connect with native speakers around the world (Hamouda, 2020). Since they enable a variety of activities, virtual classrooms also make it easy for learners to practice each of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Alhawiti, 2017). Many see great promise in computer-assisted language learning (CALL) to improve the effectiveness of EFL programmes (Belcher, 1999). Nevertheless, while virtual classrooms are widely used to teach English, the question remains as to whether or not they are effective. Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, many studies have found that virtual classes can be successfully used to teach EFL.

In one study, researchers in a Saudi Arabian university assessed the effectiveness of virtual classes for teaching English speaking skills against traditional face-to-face classes (Hamouda, 2020). EFL learners were split into two groups: 35 in an experimental group that was taught English speaking using a virtual classroom, and 35 in a control group that was taught with the traditional face-to-face method. The researchers found that students in the virtual classes scored significantly better on a speaking test than those in the traditional classroom (Hamouda, 2020). In fact, the students in the virtual classroom scored better on each aspect of speaking tested: pronunciation, comprehension, grammar, fluency and vocabulary. This study also found that students generally liked the virtual classes, could use them easily, and found them to be effective (Hamouda, 2020).

This study corroborates the findings reported by several other researchers. For example, Satar and Ozdener (2008) reported that secondary students found both text chat and voice chat to have improved their English proficiency. Similarly, Al-Qahtani (2019) and Mathew, Sreehari & Al-Rubaat (2019) proved that most of the EFL teachers and students in their samples agreed that virtual classrooms can be effective for improving the communication skills of students. Alhawiti (2017) further found that students in an experimental group who studied EFL in virtual classes obtained higher scores on English evaluations than a control group who studied only in traditional, in-person classes. Video chatting may be especially valuable for EFL learning environments; it has been found to increase L2 production and also foster more sophisticated output (Chun, 1994, Kern, 1995, Kern et al., 2004). In general, students seem to perceive virtual classrooms for EFL learning positively and report good experiences using the platforms (Herrera, 2017).

Researchers have identified several reasons for why virtual classes may be more effective than traditional face-to-face classrooms (Al-Qahtani, 2019; Alhawiti, 2017; Hamouda, 2020; Mathew et al., 2019; Satar & Ozdener, 2008). They attribute the success of online classes in part to them being interesting, easy to access and featuring direct feedback for the EFL learners (Hamouda, 2020). Some researchers also note that there are extensive opportunities for the students to interact and communicate among themselves as well as with the professor (Hamouda, 2020). This may provide more practice opportunities than are typically available in a face-to-face learning environment. Also, some suggest that the context may also lessen the anxiety and stress that students feel about speaking in a classroom environment, which also may contribute to the improvement in speaking skills (Satar & Ozdener, 2008). Others argue that online environments enable and facilitate a greater variety of forms of discourse and interaction between students than physical classrooms can afford (Kern, 1995).
However, despite the many positive results of individual studies, some reviews suggest that there is some reason to be cautious about immediately endorsing virtual classrooms as superior to traditional, in-person forms of instruction. One systematic review and meta-analysis of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) for English as a second language (ESL) instruction in elementary and high school environments found only slight and inconclusive evidence of a beneficial effect of CALL (Macaro, Handley, & Walter, 2012). Here it is suggested that the effects of CALL may depend on the attitudes and behaviours of individual learners. However, this study was limited to the case of teaching ESL in elementary and high school settings. A similar systematic review on the use of internet-based technology to teach second languages on a broader scale found that these technologies can be effective, but again, their success may depend on the context (Kern, 1995). Thus, the characteristics of the students and the learning environment (grade school versus university) seem to be important factors in determining the effectiveness of CALL in language learning.

L2 Learner Interaction through Virtual Classes

Part of what makes an effective language class is the engagement of the language learners with the language. Language teachers seek to create opportunities for learners to interact with each other or with native speakers since interaction has been found to be an especially effective way to acquire language (Bowles, Adams, & Toth, 2014; Mackey & Goo, 2007). Interaction between learners in a classroom is an important aspect of an effective educational environment. The opportunity for learners to interact with their peers enables effective English learning in the same way as interactions with native speakers can (Adams, 2007; Adams, Nuevo, & Egi, 2011). Their interactions provide each other with comprehensible input, and they can work together to negotiate meaning and modify output (Toth, 2008). This process has been shown to contribute to effective language learning and is an essential part of an EFL classroom. Ideally, virtual EFL classrooms will enable this sort of L2 interaction, but whether virtual classrooms actually do this remains questionable.

Some research suggests that virtual classes do provide an environment for such interaction. In an experiment with elementary students in Taiwan, Lan (2015) found that a virtual environment could enhance students’ English performance and did provide an environment that facilitated rich interaction among students. Bianchi et al. (2019) explained that EFL learners could even engage in dramaturgical interactions in virtual classrooms, and that this was a safe way for male and female students to interact with each other in places where interaction between the sexes is otherwise discouraged. Indeed, these researchers found that not only did students interact with each other and their instructors in meaningful ways, but the extent to which they could interact was actually enabled by the virtual classrooms. For example, shy students who might not have participated to the same extent in a physical classroom were found to participate much more frequently in the virtual classroom (Bianchi et al., 2019).

There have also been some studies looking at how virtual classrooms can improve EFL learner interaction in Saudi Arabia. Hamouda (2020) found that in a group of Saudi Arabian students, those assigned to a virtual classroom experienced improved interaction between learners, and this ultimately led to greater improvements in speaking test scores in comparison with those in a group that learned in a traditional in-class teaching. These results were similar to those of Alhawiti (2017) who found that an experimental group of college students that took an EFL class in a virtual classroom experienced better English results by the end of the semester than a control group that had only experienced in-person classes. In another study, Al-Qahtani (2019) found that both teachers and students tended to share positive perceptions of the effectiveness of virtual classrooms for teaching EFL, although both groups noted some challenges, like the need for extra training and technical issues. Both groups suggested that it may not be best to rely solely on virtual classrooms alone; instead, it may be better to blend virtual instruction with in-
person classes. Together, these studies suggest that virtual classrooms could be effective to teach EFL in Saudi Arabia.

Some challenges with interaction in virtual classrooms have been noted (Al-Kathiri, 2015). Some have acknowledged that one of the challenges of virtual classrooms is the opportunity for technical difficulties (Al-Kathiri, 2015; Bianchi et al., 2019; Ng, 2007; Olbertz-Siitonen, 2015). For example, in virtual learning environments that rely on video, it is common for students to experience delays or “lagging,” which can reduce the effectiveness of the interaction (Rusk & Pörn, 2019). Research on delay in video-mediated learning environments does suggest that while these types of delays are ubiquitous, learners can typically manage to maintain meaning and develop some L2 learning strategies to manage the difficulty they may face. It may also be expected that with improvements in technology and internet speed, these types of technical delays will become less and less of an important limitation. Still, technical difficulties may reduce some interaction or participation at least for some individuals.

Also, students have noted some difficulty using educational technologies, even while acknowledging that personal digital device use in education is common and increasing (Herrera, 2017). Similarly, they noted that not all educational institutions had computer laboratories or internet connections available that could support the widespread use of such technologies (Herrera, 2017). Researchers therefore suggest that any use of virtual classrooms should be accompanied by rigorous testing of the platform as well as adequate instruction for students about how to use it (Bianchi et al., 2018).

Research Questions

The study aspired to answer the following research questions:

1. How effective are virtual classes for promoting interaction through the English language in the preparatory year in Saudi Arabia?
2. To what extent can Saudi students use virtual classes for learning English?

Methodology

A quantitative research method was adopted in order to collect data and answer the research questions. According to Creswell, (2014) quantitative research is “an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables” (p. 4). Furthermore, a common data collection method in quantitative research is a “questionnaire.” For this study, a questionnaire was designed by the researchers and distributed to students by their instructors. A questionnaire is considered to be “the most common data collection instrument in applied linguistics” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 95). A questionnaire measures three different types of data about participants: factual, behavioural and attitudinal (Dörnyei, 2007). For the aim of this study, attitudinal statements were employed, which “are used to find out what people think, covering attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests and values” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 102). In addition, the statements were closed-ended which requires participants to choose one of the given answers and not add or produce any comments (Dörnyei, 2007).

The questionnaire consisted of 19 closed-ended statements. Consequently, the authors used a 4-points Likert scale for each response, which indicated to what extent participants agreed or disagreed with the statements by choosing one of the given responses ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree (Dörnyei, 2007). The questionnaire included statements related to the effectiveness of interaction and virtual classes on learners’ learning.

The statements were divided into four different sections. The first section covered the data on the effectiveness of virtual classes with respect to interaction using English in the preparatory year in Saudi Arabia. The second section included the Saudi students (participants) attitudes towards the use of virtual
classes in learning English (positive statements). The third section illustrated the participants’ attitudes towards speaking English in virtual classes (negative statements), and finally, learners’ opinions towards interaction in regular classes (neutral statements). Furthermore, the statements were given in both English and Arabic. Translation of the questionnaire statements was crucial to ensure that the students understood the statements and to avoid any confusion that may occur.

**Participants**

The sample of this study was selected after the complete switch to virtual classes due to the Pandemic. The sample were chosen based on their English proficiency level. The level of the participants was A2 based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The language level of all participants was beginner to low intermediate, and they were studying the English language in their preparatory year. They had been assigned to the A2 level based on their results on the placement test which was held at the beginning of the academic year by the English Language Centre (ELC). The selection of participants was based on “non-probability sampling” (Dörnyei, 2007, p.98). The researchers followed “convivence or opportunity sample” in carrying out this research as all participants in the researchers’ institution (Dörnyei, 2007, p.99). Furthermore, the data were collected from three different classes with the same level of language proficiency and the questionnaires sent to the selected students online via google forms after taking their permission to participate in this study. Thus, 90 female undergraduate students participated, and all of them were in the PYP studying English via virtual classes.

**Instruments**

As quantitative research includes numerical data (Dörnyei, 2007), the analysis of the questionnaire data was carried out by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software. The key reason for choosing SPSS was because, as Dörnyei (2007) has stated, SPSS is the most common software in educational and applied linguistics research. SPSS was used to determine the frequencies, percentages, and mean scores of the responses. In this research, the frequencies and percentages of the participants responses were calculated by using transform/compute variables. In addition, the statements were closed-ended which requires participants to choose one of the given answers and not add or produce any comments (Dörnyei, 2007). The weighted means and the standard deviations (SD) for all responses related to the first and second research questions were calculated by using descriptive statistics.

**Procedures**

The procedures for conducting this research were divided into three main stages. The first stage involved writing the questionnaire statements based on the objectives and the research questions. The second stage involved the distribution of the questionnaire to the target participants to collect the data. The final stage involved analysing the data in terms of numbers by using SPSS software and then discussing the findings in order to answer the research questions and draw the final conclusions.

**Analysis of the Questionnaire**

As indicated above, the researchers used a quantitative method to collect and analyse the data, and then to answer the research questions. The research questions were established to test the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1*: Virtual classes had a positive impact on language interaction and learning.

*Hypothesis 2*: Participants held a positive attitude towards interaction and learning in virtual classes.

**Data Analysis**

In this study, the frequencies and percentages of the participants responses were calculated by using transform/compute variables and the results from the SPSS. Results of the data collected are shown in...
Tables one, two, three, four and five. In addition, the weighted means and SDs for all responses related to the first research question were calculated by using descriptive statistics. In order to answer the research questions, the analysis of the data was divided into five tables according to the results found.

As the questionnaire was examined and based on Likert scale scores to extract the means and the deviation, it is worth mentioning how the answers of the students were analysed through a 4-point Likert scale.

Table 1. Illustration of the 4-Point Likert Scal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert-scale</th>
<th>interval</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.00 - 1.74</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.75 – 2.49</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.50 – 3.24</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.25 – 4.00</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Effectiveness of Virtual Classes on Interaction Using L2 in the ELC

Table two illustrates the statistics for the effectiveness of virtual classes on interaction using the English language for this group of students.

Table two above shows the descriptive statistics for the effectiveness of virtual classes on interaction. We found that the highest average score was associated with the third statement (“The English language instructor can respond efficiently when I interact”) with a mean response of 3.60 and an SD of .596, followed by the seventh and eighth statements (“I enjoy interacting using the English language in virtual classes” and “I believe effective interaction is possible throughout virtual classes”) with a mean response of 3.43 and an SD of .654. The next highest average score was for the fourth statement (“I feel confident when I interact using the English language”) with a mean response of 3.40 and an SD of .650, followed by the second statement (“Virtual classes...
provide balance between students’ talk time (STT) and teacher talk time (TTT”) with a mean response of 3.37 and an SD of .694. The fourth lowest average score was associated with the first statement (“The English language instructor can interact effectively with the students”) with a mean response of 3.36 and an SD of .529, followed by the third lowest for the fifth statement (“I think interaction is successful through virtual classes”) with a mean response of 3.30 and an SD of .771. The second lowest average score was associated with the sixth statement (“I can interact effectively with other students in virtual classes”) with a mean response of 3.90 and an SD of .777, followed by the lowest average score for the ninth statement (“virtual classes may help to overcome some learning obstacles such as fear when I interact in the English language”) with a mean response of 3.44 and an SD of .657. The third highest average score was in response to the fourth statement (“Virtual classes can motivate me to interact in the English language” with a mean response of 3.47 and an SD of .655. The third highest average score was associated with the sixth statement (“I can interact effectively with other students in virtual classes”) with a mean response of 3.6 and an SD of .655, followed by the lowest average score for the ninth statement (“virtual classes may help to overcome some learning obstacles such as fear when I interact in the English language”) with a mean response of 2.82 and an SD of 1.001. Consequently, the weighted mean for the responses related to the first research question was 3.34 and the SD was .470.

To sum up, the average of the responses assessing the effectiveness of virtual classes for interaction using the L2 was 3.34, which could be considered as “strong agreement” since 3.34 lies in the interval between the two responses (3.25–4.00) according to the 4-point Likert scale illustrated in table 2.

Table three illustrates Saudi students’ attitudes towards the use of virtual classes in learning English.

Table 3. The Descriptive Statistics of Using Virtual Classes in Learning English by Saudi Students in the ELC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I can participate in virtual classes as I participate in regular classes.</td>
<td>N 50</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.657</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can easily share my ideas in the Virtual classes</td>
<td>N 42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.771</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interaction via virtual classes can improve My language skills.</td>
<td>N 43</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>.694</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Virtual classes may help to overcome some learning obstacles such as fear when I interact in English language.</td>
<td>N 51</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>.735</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Virtual classes can motivate me to interact in English language.</td>
<td>N 48</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.655</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. deviation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.566</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table three above demonstrates the descriptive statistics for Saudi students (participants) attitudes towards the use of virtual classes for learning English. The highest average score was reported for the first statement (“I can participate in virtual classes as I participate in regular classes”) with a mean response of 3.47 and an SD of .657, followed by the fifth statement (“Virtual classes can motivate me to interact in the English language”) with a mean response of 3.44 and an SD of .655. The third highest average score was in response to the fourth statement (“Virtual classes may help to overcome some learning obstacles such as fear when I interact in the English language”) with a mean response of 3.43 and an SD of .735, followed by the third statement (“Interaction via virtual classes can improve my language skills”) with a mean of 3.37 and an SD
of .694. The lowest average score was associated with the second statement (“I can easily share my ideas in the virtual classes”) with a mean response of 3.30 and an SD of .771. Consequently, the weighted mean for the responses related to the second research question was 3.40, and the SD was .566.

To sum up, the average response of the Saudi students’ (participants’) attitudes towards the use of virtual classes for learning English was 3.40, which can be considered as “strong agreement,” since 3.40 lies in the interval between 3.25–4.00 according to the 4-point Likert scale shown in Table three above.

To ensure the validity of the analysis, some statements that were negative in reference to the effectiveness of virtual classes for L2 learning were analysed individually to avoid any inaccuracy in the results in the data analysis. These statements are illustrated in Table four below.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Negative Statements of Participants’ Attitudes towards L2 Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I don’t like to speak in English language virtual classes.</td>
<td>N 5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>.966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 5.6%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I lose interest in learning and interacting via virtual classes.</td>
<td>N 6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 6.7%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I find many learning obstacles when I interact in English in virtual classes.</td>
<td>N 9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>.966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 10%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. deviation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.688</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table four above shows the descriptive statistics for the negative statement’s indicative of participants’ attitudes towards L2 interaction in the virtual classes, including concerns over losing interest in learning, interacting via virtual classes, and whether or not learners encountered any learning obstacles when they interacted in English virtual classes. It is clear that the highest average scores were associated with the first and third statements (“I don’t like to speak in English language virtual classes” and “I find many learning obstacles when I interact in English in virtual classes”) with mean responses of 2.01 and SDs of .657 and .966, respectively, followed by the second statement (“I lose interest in learning and interacting via virtual classes”) with a mean response of 1.82 and an SD of .894. Consequently, the weighted mean for the responses related to the negative statements was 1.94, and the SD was .688.

To sum up, the average of the responses related to the negative statements was 1.94, which can be considered as “disagreement” since 1.94 lies in the interval between 1.75–2.49 according to the 4-point Likert scale shown in Table four above.

Also, some statements in the questionnaire were asked to test the neutrality of some of the students’ responses. Therefore, these two statements were analysed individually to ensure the reliability of the results. These statements are illustrated in Table five as follows:
The Impact of Virtual Classes on Second Language Interaction

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Neutral Statements of participants’ attitudes towards L2 interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I interact more with my teacher in regular classes.</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% = 32.2%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Face to face interaction is important in English language classes.</td>
<td>N = 22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% = 24.4%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table five above shows the descriptive statistics for the two statements related to learners’ opinions towards interaction in regular classes. It can be seen that the mean score for the first statement (“I interact more with my teacher in regular classes”) was 2.76, and the SD was 1.042. The mean score for the second statement (“Face-to-face interaction is important in English language classes”) was 2.59, and the SD was 1.037, which can be considered as “agreement” since 2.76 and 2.59 lie in the interval between 2.50–3.24 according to 4-point Likert scale shown in Table 5 below.

Discussion

As the aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness of virtual classes in terms of promoting interaction, the findings showed that virtual classes were effective for learners’ interaction in English classes in the preparatory year. This was evident from learners’ responses to the questionnaire, as the average response was “strongly agree” (See Table two), which indicates that the learners held a positive attitude towards interaction in the virtual classes. Also, as stated in some previous studies, virtual classrooms can enable learner interaction with teachers as well as between the learners themselves, which is evident from the learners’ responses insofar as they agreed with the ideas that the English language instructor could interact effectively with the students, and that virtual classes provided a balance between student talk time and teacher talk time. The findings also align with those of Hamouda (2020) as he argued that as students are increasingly considered to be digital natives and prefer to interact and socialise online, virtual classrooms may be an especially effective way to engage them in education. As most of the participants feel confident and reported that they enjoyed interacting through English in virtual classes, it can be said that learners’ positive attitudes towards interacting in virtual classes could largely be as a result of their ability to interact and socialise online. This finding supports evidence from previous research conducted by Ng, (2007) in which it was reported that participants in his study believed that the virtual classroom was an effective learning environment and helped them in their L2 learning. In line with these findings, the majority of the students believed that there was no difference between interaction in the virtual and regular classes, which indicates that interaction in virtual classes may be as effective as it can be in regular classes.

Additionally, with respect to the second research question, the responses showed that Saudi students held a positive attitude towards using virtual classes for learning English as most of the participants agreed that they could participate in virtual classes as they had in regular classes. Furthermore, learners reported that they could also share ideas, and they believed that virtual classes could improve their language skills. A study by Hamouda (2020) revealed the same result and found that students generally liked the virtual classes. Learners in Hamouda’s study could use
them easily, and found them to be effective. One interesting finding is that students believed that virtual classes helped them to overcome some learning obstacles, such as fear when they interact in English, while also motivating them to interact with others in English. It can be argued that the virtual classes helped learners, especially shy learners, to interact and overcome their fears of interacting in face-to-face classes. This finding is consistent with that of Bianchi et al., 2019 who emphasised that shy students who might not have participated to the same extent in a physical classroom were found to participate much more in the virtual classroom. Thus, the findings of this research corroborate and support some of the findings of previous studies conducted by Hamouda (2020), Al-Oahtani (2019), Mathew et al. (2019), Alhawiti (2017) and Satar and Ozdener (2008) in terms of demonstrating and testing the effectiveness of virtual classes on learning EFL. To conclude, responses indicating the extent to which Saudi L2 learners can interact and learn throughout virtual classes emphasised participants’ positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of learning in English virtual classes. These findings are in agreement with those of Herrera (2017) who noted that students seem to perceive virtual classrooms for EFL learning positively and report good experiences using the platforms.

However, regarding the negative statements and participant opinions about speaking English in virtual classes; losing interest in learning and interacting via virtual classes; and whether or not learners encounter any learning obstacles when they interact in English virtual classes, it is clear that the majority of responses were in disagreement with these statements, which proves that learners like to speak in virtual classes; they are interested in learning and interacting via virtual classes; and they do not encounter any learning obstacles when they use English to interact in virtual classes. A possible explanation for this might be that students today are digital natives and may prefer to interact and socialise online (Hamouda, 2020).

Concerning the neutral statements related to L2 interaction in regular classes and face-to-face interaction, some of the participants agreed that they interacted more with their teachers in regular classes, but the other half disagreed. With regards to face-to-face interaction and whether it is crucial in English language classes, more than half of the participants disagreed, which means that face-to-face interaction is not as important, and they can still interact effectively in virtual classes. However, a large number (albeit less than half) agreed that face-to-face interaction is important in English classes. This result may be explained by the fact that students see virtual classrooms as a useful complement to face-to-face classroom, but not as a replacement (Ng, 2007).

The findings prove the research hypotheses and suggest that virtual classes have a positive impact on L2 interaction and learning; furthermore, participants generally held a positive attitude towards interaction and learning in virtual classes. However, due to the large number of students who study at the ELC, preparatory year at a Saudi university, which are more than one thousand students, the selected sample was less than 10% of the total number of students which may resulted in different results if this study was implemented on larger number of students. Also, the sample was only for low to intermediate level of Saudi students, which is the focus of this study as low level students may face more obstacles while communicating and interacting remotely during L2 classes. Thus, the study could have different results if conducted among high level students.
Conclusion and Study Implication

This study suggests that virtual classrooms have great potential in the EFL classroom. According to the findings, virtual classes could have a positive impact on learners’ experiences in L2 learning. They also encourage learners’ interaction with the instructors and promote learner-to-learner interaction and collaboration. The findings of the present study indicate that virtual classrooms and learning environments are proved to be effective and actually led to better learning outcomes than traditional classrooms.

Nevertheless, other research has found that virtual classrooms may not always be effective, and there are some challenges to online learning that instructors should consider. The findings of this study prove that L2 interaction throughout virtual classes is no less effective than that of traditional classes. More specifically, it was found that Saudi learners in the preparatory year enjoyed their online experiences, and they found that virtual classes could provide sufficient opportunities for interaction with their teachers and the learning of new language skills. Moreover, virtual classes have encouraged shy learners to overcome their anxiety and participate more in online classes as illustrated in the questionnaire responses.

However, in the EFL classroom, the loss of some non-verbal communication through online learning environments could be a real limitation. Also, the technology itself can sometimes have problems, such as lagging, student difficulty using the platform, or microphone and video issues. Even as students are continuing to be defined as “digital natives,” it may be important to understand the technological limitations that are built into virtual classrooms. The effectiveness of virtual classes for teaching EFL is likely to be dependent on a number of factors, including the virtual classroom platforms used, the way that the class is structured, whether it intentionally fosters interaction between students, and so on. As a result of this study, research should continue to elucidate the factors that contribute to virtual classrooms being an effective tool in L2 learning. Moreover, more studies are needed to examine the effectiveness of virtual classes in different contexts.

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doi: 10.1016/j.linged.2019.02.003
Entailing Professional Training and Thesis Development. An Innovation Experience at Universidad SEK Chile

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Abstract
Teaching professional practice and thesis development are usually two independent and unrelated processes. However, some concerns arose at Universidad SEK (USEK) Chile Department of English. Students declared to be overloaded and that working on their theses did not contribute to solving real in-class problems. Professors considered that training was not achieving all the expected results and that theses quality of some students were below expectations. To address these concerns, the English department decided to create a direct and strong bond between these two vital processes through Action Research (AR). Studying this innovation process appears to be relevant as it may lead to a better understanding of its impact and the complexities involved. Consequently, the author aims to value the results of this innovation after five years of its implementation. How do involved agents such as students, professors, supervisors, and mentors ponder this experience? Qualitative information gathered through interviews evidenced some contentment regarding thesis and training improvement, a decrease in the students’ overload perception, renewed motivation, and a positive thesis-training connection. Despite this promising perception, there are still some pending challenges, such as enhancing the spreading of the innovation and the quality of the feedback provided to school mentors.

Keywords: Action Research, professional training, thesis development, Universidad SEK

Cite as: Buling, T. B. (2020). Entailing professional training and thesis development. An innovation experience at Universidad SEK Chile. Arab World English Journal, 11 (3). 73-91. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.5
Introduction

The English teaching programme at USEK University Chile ran from March 2009 until December 2019. According to data obtained from the academic registry, 311 students enrolled in this programme, and 61 of them completed it successfully. Ten professors were in charge of imparting it, six under a full-time contract, and four under a part-time modality. They performed roles as field professors, training supervisors and thesis advisers.

The English teaching professional programme consisted of ten semesters. Students had to follow the 150-credit curricular structure illustrated in Figure one.
Until 2014, teaching professional practice and dissertation development were two independent and unrelated processes conducted during the final year (9th and 10th semester). At that stage, the staff of professors belonging to the USEK Chile Department of English realised that their students were reporting feeling overloaded and that working on their theses did not solve the problems they had to overcome during their training classes. Furthermore, professors considered that training was not achieving the expected results and that the quality of the theses was meeting the expected standards well. The final stages of a professional teaching programme may be very stressful for students as they have to cope with their teacher training demands and their thesis development obligation. In this regard, Bedewy and Gabriel (2015), Prabu (2015), and Young (2017) pointed out the failure to obtain and maintain a sound personal balance might lead to develop emotional problems and stress.

After several analysis meetings, the Department of English decided to create a direct and robust entailment between the thesis development process and the professional teaching practice. The main objectives were to strengthen the linking and articulation among subjects, to promote the pedagogical reflection in trainee students within their practice centres, and to turn both processes into a more meaningful experience for students. They also intended to have a positive impact on the students’ overload perception, motivation, and personal satisfaction. Additionally, the Department of English expected to regulate graduation timing through this innovation.

The staff decided that Action Research (AR) was an excellent method to achieve these goals, authors like McNiff and Whitehead (2011), Kunlasomboon, Wongwanicha, and Suwanmonkhaa (2015), and Wood (2017) stated that AR allows to research while studying, training or working. This made the process more meaningful as students would research their training centres, identifying issues they would need to deal with, designing and implementing an in-class solution, and documenting and reporting them to fulfil their thesis requirements simultaneously. Thus students could stay focus, optimise timing, and have a more meaningful experience.

There were several implications the English department had to face. Firstly, they had to involve the Faculty authorities and to conduct the necessary curricular adjustments. The professors also decided to apply an Action Research (AR) approach to the dissertation development process. This implied adding the role of thesis co-advisers to all the class supervisors and generating coordination instances for the involved agents.

After the planning process, this innovation was established in 2015. The promoters dimmed necessary to incorporate a follow-up system. Students were accompanied by a tutor appointed by the university. They also were guided and supported by experienced teachers at their training centres, who acted as mentors. The class observation was enhanced by providing students timely feedback following personal meeting agenda. The school mentors presented regular written reports and informed about any irregularity. Thirty-seven students underwent this innovation.

Due to all the implication this innovation plan conveyed, it becomes relevant to ponder and appreciate the impact it might have had in achieving the expected goals. How do professors,
supervisors, mentors, and students value the entailment innovation? What are the main advantages and? What difficulties and challenges still remain?

This article aims to shed light on the perception of involved agents (professors, supervisors, mentors, and students) about the effects of this innovation, their degrees of contempt, the main advantages and difficulties, as well as, pending challenges.

**Literature Review**

In this section, the author reviews some contributions to the fields of teaching training, thesis development, and AR to provide the current study the necessary bibliographical support.

*Teaching Professional Training*

Teacher training is usually associated with professional development, but in the case of pre-graduate students, one may consider it the first step. Universities should develop training programmes that attend their future teacher graduates' formation needs. Boudersa (2016) identified five types of professional development that may guide such a plan: in-house, offered at school; organisational-wide, in multiple sites; institution-based, developing a common theme for a long time; professional inquiry group, groups of teachers learning something of common interest, and coaching, coaches supporting teachers at school in different ways.

Boudersa (2016) determined “an urgent need for a system of education which encourages and promotes active engagement and reflective teaching and learning” (p. 6). Though Bourdesa (2016) set this need in the Algerian reality, one may correctly assume it is a global challenge for teachers and educators. How to get students involved and teach critical thinking are two crucial demands teachers have to face nowadays. Professional training should help future and novice teachers to develop these skills, and experienced teachers to upgrade them.

Another essential notion Bourdesa (2016) developed was that professional training and professional development focus “on the aspects of change and growth in knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, and practices of teachers” (p. 4). The author transcended the cognitive domain by including attitudinal and practical contents, as well. Consequently, teaching professional training became a holistic process.

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) also addressed the topic of professional development by defining it as structured professional learning that results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes. We conceptualize professional learning as a product of both externally provided and job-embedded activities that increase teachers’ knowledge and help them change their instructional practice in ways that support student learning. Thus, formal PD represents a subset of the range of experiences that may result in professional learning. (p. 2)

As in Bourdesa (2016), professional development referred not only to knowledge but also to practice. Additionally, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) also associated it with students’ learning results, thus broadening its implications. The authors presented a series of seven characteristics an efficient professional development programme should have: content focused, learning,
collaboration, models and modelling, expert support, feedback, and reflection, and sustained duration. The authors reported that successful programmes could develop several of these elements at the same time. Regarding students' achievements, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) stated that focusing on the content teachers teach has proved efficient. This was undoubtedly an excellent way to integrate training with subject content and the teachers’ daily practice.

The authors (2017) strongly suggested developing learning communities as this might generate positive collaboration outcomes beyond school. In their words, “Teacher learning in a community can be a source of efficacy and confidence in the process of adopting new practices” (p. 18). Concluding, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) established some difficulties institutions and teachers had to overcome when designing and implementing training and development programmes. These were inadequate resources, lack of shared vision on quality teaching, lack of time for planning and performing, conflicting requirements, and lack of adequate foundational knowledge.

**Thesis Development Process**

Many difficulties may arise when students have to face their thesis development process. For example, writing the thesis statements, devising the research questions and objectives, collecting data, and managing time. These obstacles may cause students to feel stressed out or overloaded with work; mainly, if they have to perform other tasks simultaneously. Russell-Pinsona and Harrish (2019) reported that stress might have different unwanted responses in students, such as cognitive difficulties, behavioural issues, physical symptoms, social signs, and emotional problems. According to the authors, stress was complex to handle as “Stress exists on a continuum. At one end of this continuum is the experience of meeting common stressors of daily life, during which time stress can wax and wane” (p. 64). However, certain levels of well-processed stress could be beneficial as they might activate motivation.

Russell-Pinsona and Harrish (2019) classified the following sources of stress in their research: perfectionism, competing priorities, reduced time and project management, writing anxiety, challenges with the supervisors, poor cognitive habits, and individual stressors. They also presented some sound recommendations for students writing their dissertations. Concerning stress signs, one should look after physical needs, practice mindfulness, self-compassion, and get family and friends' support. The authors also proposed creating a community of dissertation writers that could provide suitable support during the different stages of the dissertation writing process.

One can also find problems associated with stress while writing a dissertation or thesis in the context of distance education. Silinda and Brubacher (2016) attempted to measure stress during the referred process, and the amount of stress expressed from specific stressors. They identified twenty-four stressors being twenty-two of them statistically significant. These stressors were classified into five related and interacting categories: relationship stressors, time management/workload, health problems, financial and transport problems, and academic stressors. The authors reported that “Time management/workload and academic stressors had the strongest relationships with overall stress and the relationships were both positive” (p. 6). The qualitative analysis seemed to indicate that lack of obligations balance, a general absence of support, lack of feedback leading to loss of motivation, and uncertainty regarding what was expected of the
students were relevant sources of stress. To face these difficulties, Silinda and Brubacher (2016) suggested offering seminars and counselling in time management, strategies to support students with family responsibilities, interaction among peers, and social networking at different stages of the thesis writing process.

Matin and Khan (2017) also informed about problems students face when working on their thesis. In their case, they did not only refer to personal issues but also to contextual and administrative difficulties as well. After collecting data from supervisors and postgraduate students, the authors reported that most supervisors consider that students did not have adequate knowledge of the research works. Only a few students (20%) shared this opinion. Around one-third of the supervisors and students expressed their concerns regarding time constraints to complete their thesis work. Though informants did not mostly complain about time constraints and thesis work overload, Martin and Khan (2017) opined that these were issues to consider.

Time management and stress management were very important. Failure to keep pace with work overload, anxiety, isolation, frustration was the problem during the thesis works. Though few students and supervisors knowledge of the students. There might be misconceptions of had complained regarding time constraint and work overloads of the students but the factors need to be addressed to solve these difficulties for an overall improvement of thesis works of postgraduate students of various disciplines. (p. 25)

Funding is another issue that seemed to affect both supervisors and students which they suggested to solve through institutional support. A regular supervisor-student discussion was another difficulty the authors identified and whose importance students seemed reluctant to accept. The guidance provided by the institution was another controversial matter as most students considered it inadequate. This opinion was not shared by most of the supervisors. For Matin and Khan (2019), a gap in expectations might explain this discrepancy. Limited resources and infrastructure was another area of difficulty on which most of the informants seemed to agree.

**Action Research**

AR has been used as a useful tool for conducting research, trying to identify difficulties in situ, and implementing actions that may help to overcome them. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) postulated that AR centres on research in motion, democratic collaboration, developing scientific knowledge based on the implemented actions, and problem-solving through a sequence of events. For the authors, the main idea was that AR uses a scientific approach to study the resolution of significant social or organisational issues together with those who experience these issues directly.

“Action research works through a cyclical four-step process of consciously and deliberately: planning, taking action, evaluating the action, leading to further planning, and so on” (p. 4).

Coghlan and Brannick (2005) presented an AR cycle that might help to research someone's organisation. There was a pre-step related to context and purpose, aiming to understand the meaning of the project. The four main steps of the referred cycle dealt with diagnosing, planning, taking action, and evaluating results. In the first step, the researcher established the main to intervene. During the second step, the researcher designed a series of work considering both the first steps and the context. Along the third step, the researcher would implement the determined
interventions. Finally, the researcher analysed the outcomes and results trying to determine whether the diagnosis was correct, the actions correctly applied, and if a new cycle of diagnosis, planning, and action was needed. Thus AR becomes a permanent cycle.

Education has not been an exception to this kind of research. Tomal (2010) determined three leading types of research quantitative, qualitative, and action research. He associated the first one with a scientific approach, the second type with a naturalistic approach, and AR with a process of finding problems and implementing solutions. He defined the researcher’s role as follows. “An action researcher utilizes an appropriate intervention to collect and analyze data and to implement actions to address educational issues” (p. 11). Tomal (2010) considered that AR offered some advantages compared to the other two approaches as it did not need complex statistical analysis or long narrative explanations.

Regarding the different stages of AR, Tomal (2010) presented a six-stages sequence, which shared several elements with Coghlan’s and Brannick’s (2005) AR cycle. The first stage was the problem statement which included an initial diagnosis. The second was data collection, where the teacher researched the identified problems. The third stage consisted of analysis and feedback. Here the teacher dealt with the leading probable causes. Action planning came next; at this step, the teacher designed different possible solutions. The fifth stage included taking action and a contingency plan. The final stage was evaluation and follow up, which should also consider permanent improvement processes. All these stages constituted a sound guide to conduct research and solve problems within the classroom.

Following a similar line, Macniff and Whitehead (2010) considered that AR dealt with practice improvement and practice knowledge creation. Though action and research went together, the authors suggested analysing them separately. Consequently, they understood ‘action’ as an activity and ‘research’ as ways one might use to observe what was being done and how new knowledge was created after that.

Action research, therefore, combines the ideas of taking purposeful action with educational intent, and testing the validity of any claims we make about the process. It becomes the grounds for other social and professional practice; professional development is understood as grounded in the capacity to offer explanations for our work. (pp. 18-19)

Just as the previously revised authors, Macniff and Whitehead (2010) also proposed a series of steps to conduct AR. Project planning, project design, doing the project, knowledge claims and validation, and knowledge dissemination. Each of these steps had several associated actions. Project planning included collaborative work in institutional contexts. Project design comprised action planning and action checklist fulfilment. Project execution implied following the operation, finding data, processes documentation, data collection and management, data analysis, and evidence generation. Knowledge validation dealt with legitimising processes and reports. Finally, knowledge dissemination was associated with publishing and thus spreading the research. The first four steps or processes presented many similarities regarding the stages the other authors present. The last two represented a new contribution, as they were related to obtaining validation for the research from the scientific community.
The Study

The following objectives and research questions guided the current research.

Objectives
The present study aims to shed light on how professors, supervisors, mentors, and students value this innovation. Additionally, it intends to determine and comprehend the main advantages, difficulties, and remaining challenges.

Research questions
1. How do professors, supervisors, mentors, and students value the entailment innovation?
2. What are the main advantages?
3. What are the main difficulties and remaining challenges?

Methodology
The author followed a qualitative paradigmatic research approach. Firstly, he designed a semi-structured interview guide that was proof-tested. After analysing the feedback provided by the voluntary participants, the author applied some adjustments to the instruments. The interviews were conducted privately, independently, and recorded. Then they were transcribed and codified based on pre-determined thematic axis and code categories. During the analysis process, the author searched for common elements, differences, and eventual patterns following a code-by-code analysis method. Finally, he presented the results, discussed them, and drew some conclusions and recommendations.

Data Collection
The participants represented all the involved agents. Five professors and former professors were interviewed, eight students, and four school mentors. This sample represents 50% of the Department of English staff, 20% of the students who experienced this innovation, and 50% of the teachers who acted as mentors at the English teaching training centres.

The instrument used was a set of semi-structured interviews.

Results Presentation and Analysis
For processing the collected information, the author designed a three-thematic axis category system, being these axes directly related to the research objectives. The first thematic axis deals with the valuation of the entailment innovation; the second refers to assessment involved agents make of the thesis development process after the innovation, while the third axis takes into consideration the evaluation professors and mentors make about teaching training after the innovation. Figure two illustrates this system.
The author studied the codes by involved agents and thematic axis in search of common ground and differences. Figure three registers the codes that were applied to professors, mentors, and students, to professors and mentors, to professors and students, and professors only.

![Figure 2. Category system](image)

![Figure 3. Codes by involved agent](image)

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and codified using AQUAD 7.0 qualitative-quantitative text analysis software. Before initiating the code analysis, the author determined the frequency of use of each code. Figure four depicts this situation.

![Figure 4. Code frequency](image)
As one may realise, code ATT corresponding to attitudes related to the innovation was used twenty-seven times, followed by code DIF, which accounts for the main difficulties and pending challenges of the reported innovation with twenty-two references. The third-place corresponds to Action Research (ARE) with twenty-one allusions. Code MAD and FUP associated with main advantages and follow-up activities, respectively registered seventeen mentions. There is another draw between codes ETT (English teaching training) and TIM (timing), as they were used seventeen times each. Code THI related to thesis administrative implications obtained seven mentions.

**Results Discussion and Interpretation**

In this section, the author will describe, explain, and interpret the findings following a code-by-code methodology.

**Code Analysis**

The author conducted the data analysis by involved agents following both the thematic axis and the alphabetical order of the codes.

**First thematic axis: valuation of the current thesis development and professional teaching training entailment innovation**

**Code ATT: attitudes associated with the innovation**

*The Professors’ perspective*

In the professors’ opinion, students who undergo this innovation seem to be more motivated and less stressed than those who conducted thesis development and teaching training as separate processes before the referred innovation was established. In Professor’s one perception, “trainee students seem to be more motivated. AR helps them to reflect on what is going on in the classroom and to design and implement alternative solutions”. Professor two also reports a positive disposition in students when facing these two last stages of the English teaching programme. Professors three and four inform that being the demands almost the same as before the innovation was implemented; students' motivation tends to increase because they feel that advancing in their teaching training also means advancing in their thesis. Finally, Professor five considers that it is not easy to assess students’ attitudinal aspects, but "one would tend to think they are less stressed because the number of overload complaints has decreased significantly." Additionally, she perceives an improvement in collaborative attitude among professors.

*The School mentors’ perception*

Mentors at school share this positive perception. Mentor one states that trainee students seem happier, in good spirits and willing to collaborate in other educational tasks. He says “before the innovation, it was not easy to get them to fulfil other duties than those strictly established either by the school or the university.” Mentor two seems to be more neutral regarding her valuation of the trainees’ attitudes since she considers that it complex to keep track of all they do and how they do it. Mentor three believes that the trainee students’ attitudes are positive and “they are willing to stay longer at school than the trainees before the innovation who rushed back to their homes or the university as soon as possible.” Mentor four informs about finding it more comfortable to motivate trainee students of the innovation cohort.
The Students’ perception

The perception of the students about their attitudes is also positive. As they did not experience the previous process, it only accounts for the current situation. Student one recognizes her desire to make the most out of her English professional teaching training. Hence, she tries to participate in every activity the school, as a teaching training centre, offers. Students two, five, and seven have a very similar point of view. They all consider that their training process is the closest teaching experience to real-life at a school, so they have to gain autonomy taking advantage of their mentors' and supervisors' guidance and expertise. Students three and four inform feeling a bit scared at the beginning of their training process and that they have to persevere in developing the necessary class management skills. Student 6 reports being optimistic about her process and feeling confident that her training will not only help her to become a good English teacher but also to develop a meaningful thesis. Student eight seems to be more skeptical, pragmatic, and somewhat less motivated. “I do not know how much this entailment will help me, but this is the way things are.”

Code DIF: Difficulties regarding the innovation

As happens with almost any innovation process, there are some difficulties involved agents have to face.

The Professors’ perception

For Professor one, it is necessary to collect the employers' opinions regarding the skills and competencies of USEK graduate students and to use that information to conduct further research to meet the school system demands. According to Professor two, some agenda adjustments are necessary to facilitate collaborative work among the members of the English department. Professor three considers that the studied innovation was not well-known by the rest of the educational community and the other Faculty departments. In his words, “this may be an important innovation conveying many implications, so it needs to be communicated and informed.” Professor four expressed his concern about the use of some resources. “We need better bondage with the library resources. Many good resources are sub utilised.” I feel we have not obtained enough support from the library staff, mainly because of their lack of knowledge about this innovation.” This last sentence supports the previous concern for better communication of the referred innovation. Professor five goes a step further by suggesting that other faculties should also conduct their analysis processes concerning professional training and thesis development. She also agrees on the need to improve the communication of objectives and results. For her, the department should also systematise a long-term follow-up process and formalise some internal cooperation instances.

The School mentors’ perception

School mentors do not seem to have too many issues regarding the implementation of the innovation. The main problem is the lack of feedback about the written report they issue at the end of each term. Mentor two even wondered if someone read them. Mentor's three statement exemplifies the general opinion well: “Ideally one should receive some feedback after each report one sends, if that is not possible, at least once a semester. Otherwise, it is discouraging, and one does not get to know if the reports contribute to the trainee students’ formation process.” If such is the case, this represents an issue in need of improvement.
The Students’ perception

All interviewed students have something to say regarding pending challenges or situations that could be improved or corrected. For Student one, the whole process is too structured compared to what happens in the classroom. In her words, “being training a rigid process sometimes lacks the flexibility to respond efficiently and rapidly to emerging problems and situations.” This lack of flexibility Student one perceives can be related to an allegedly excessive attachment to the class planning.

Student two considers that the development of the linguistic skills during the training process should also be associated with the context and not only to the international standards. This observation is certainly valid; mainly, because all trainee students perform their teaching in vulnerable environments. This situation is directly related to the service-learning approach USEK has.

Students three and four, who report having some class management issues, consider that class control should be developed more explicitly. “I do not feel well-prepared in terms of class management. One knows that this moment will come, but when facing a class, it is not always easy to get them to work.” (Student three) Student four sustains that “class control techniques should be part of the curriculum. Sometimes I feel that I am developing them in an error-testing system which is not good.” Doubtlessly, class management is a great challenge, even for experienced teachers. This area will certainly require further consideration. Student five informs having had more than one supervisor during her training period. “I would prefer to maintain the same supervisor all year long.” A sensible observation, having different supervisors makes it challenging to determine the trainee student's performance development. Student five is the only informant reporting such a situation; hence, one may tend to think this is an isolated particular case.

Student six suggests intensifying the school mentor’s and supervisor’s support at the initial stages of the training process. “After the first term, class observation became more frequent. I would have preferred to receive more feedback and guidance during the first month.” Probably, this student would have felt more secure if more frequently accompanied at the beginning of his training process. Nevertheless, some may argue that it is better to supervise trainee students once they are more familiar with their class and in a better domain of the situation. This is a situation to reflect about, and that should consider the communication and coordination between the school mentor and the university supervisor.

Students seven and eight both claim for the opportunity to interact with more experienced teachers. In student’s seven words “though teachers with long professional trajectories surround us, we do not get the chance to interact with them. Either they are too busy or do not want to get involved with us.” Student eight adds, “my interaction with experienced teachers is only as observant. I only share ideas and receive feedback from my appointed mentor and some students from time to time.” The other informant students do not report on this particular topic.

Code FUP: perception about the actions implemented to accompany the innovation

The Professors’ perception

All professors seem to agree the main changes regarding trainee students’ accompaniment consisted of having an adviser and a co-adviser for the thesis development process. As seen when
the author introduced the context, the professors who acted as professional training supervisors became co advisers. The primary purpose of this was facilitating guidance for the entailment innovation. Additionally, Professor one reports an improvement in the possibilities to support trainee students regularly. ‘Having two advisers increases the opportunity to provide feedback to our students.” Professor three informs that despite the difficulties of coordinating meetings and collaborative actions, students feel well-supported.

**The Students’ perception**

Trainee students declare to be satisfied with the number of meetings they had with both advisers and supervisors. Besides, they all seem to consider that the number of supervision visits they had was enough. Student four states that “having two advisers boosts the learning experience” as she could learn from two different and experienced professors.

**Code MAD: the main advantage of the innovation:**

**The Professors’ perception**

This code reports all the involved agents' opinions about the main power of the studied innovation. Other strong points will appear associated with the other topics considered for the current research.

Professor one firmly associates the advantage with assessment, “when evaluating separately quality of either the thesis or the practice decreases. Consequently, a thesis that is the product of Action Research at an in-site teaching training process should achieve higher standards.” For Professor two, the main advantage is that work is not duplicated, so this should reduce the students’ overload perception. Professor three considers that the main advantage or positive aspect was a time reduction in the thesis development process. Professor four regards the accompaniment trainee students have received as the main benefit. At the same time, Professor five bases his opinion favourable opinion on numbers that would account for higher professional teaching training and theses grades.

**The Mentors’ perception**

Though school mentors are not directly involved in the design and implementation of the current innovation, the author considered their opinion too as a complementary source of information.

Mentor one identifies a better teaching training and theory connection as the main advantage of the innovation. “Trainee students seem to have more solid theoretical support to apply in their English classes.” Mentor two seems to concur as, in his opinion, “trainee students appear to be better equipped to reflect on what is going on in their classes.” For Mentor three, the main advantage is that after the innovation, professional English teaching training appears to be a more meaningful experience. Finally, Mentor four reports that this innovation has allowed the trainee students a higher understanding of the teaching profession.

**The Students’ perception**
For Student one, the main advantage of the innovation was the opportunity it offers to conduct training and the research at the same centre. Student two considers that researching the same place where you train allows a better knowledge of that reality. Student 3 believes the described entailment provides the chance to intervene in your class with theoretical support. Student four reports that researching while training helps her to keep the focus as 'work is not doubled.' Student five stories that this new system facilitates more profound knowledge of her students at school. For Student six, the main advantage is related to data collection. He states, “we can gather all the information we need within having to appeal to other sources.” Student seven acknowledges higher consciousness of the training and thesis implication when working on them as interrelated processes. Finally, student eight has a similar perception as she informs a meaningful theory-practice entailment.

**Code TIM: How the innovation impacted the timing**

**The Professors’ perception**

All five professors seem to agree that they need more time for coordinating activities and for collaborative work. This situation is due to the joint work that the professors in charge of guiding the theses have to do with the professors who act as English teaching training supervisors. The following quote taken from Professor's one interview helps to illustrate this point. “Now, we need to design new coordination actions under the Action Research approach to ensure the entailment between the students' teacher training and their thesis projects.”

**The School mentors’ perception**

The teachers who act as mentors at the training centres also have their concerns regarding timing. Though they value this innovation positively, they consider that the allocated time is not enough. School mentor two explains, “… before our main concern was to guide and counsel the trainee in terms of class planning, group management, instructional strategies, and assessment systems, now we also have to oversee that their actions align well with their thesis projects.” There seems to be a sound consensus regarding needing more time to conduct research as well themselves.

**The Students’ perception**

Students do not seem to perceive any difficulties regarding timing. They are not fully aware of all the administrative and logistics implications of this innovation.

**Second thematic axis: thesis development process after the innovation**

**Code ARE: Action Research**

**The Professors’ perception**

Professors tend to value the introduction of AR positively. Professor one considers that AR helps trainee students to design actions according to their needs with theoretical support. Professor two highlights the positive impact of this entailment innovation. “Dissertation and teaching training became complementary and more meaningful experiences.” Professor three values the time reduction in the dissertation development process. He states, “it seems that basing their theses on their current professional training though AR has helped the students to focus and to save time by..."
conducting in-site research.” For Professor four, one can prove the positive impact of AR in the students’ theses higher grading scores. Professor five reports a decrease in the students’ overload perception based on a time reduction in the thesis development process and the subsequent decline of students’ complaints.

The School mentors’ perception

School mentors seem to share this positive perception about the contribution of AR in the trainee students’ professional formation process though their reasons may sometimes differ from the professors’ opinions. Mentor one informs that AR has helped trainee students to reflect on what is going on in the classroom and to design and implement alternative solutions. Mentor two considers that “professional training based on AR appears to be more meaningful as it strengthens the theory-practice connection.” For Mentor three, trainee students acquire a better understanding of the teaching profession through AR. Finally, Mentor four reports that AR provides useful tools for students to understand the administrative tasks fulfilment implications fully.

The Students’ perception

Student one believes that AR made the thesis development process a meaningful experience. She adds, “though I was a bit nervous at the beginning, once I learnt what AR is about, I was able to apply it and understand its usefulness.” Student two also values AR positively. She considers that it allowed her to work in an integrated manner, which led to better thesis quality. Student three shares her opinion. For her, AR was an efficient tool that helped her to integrate the different aspects of her thesis planning and execution of her thesis. Student four believes that AR has enabled her to understand the thesis demands and implications and to relate them to her teaching training experience. “Whenever I learn something new from my research, I try to apply it in my classes immediately so that my students can also benefit from my learning.” Student five reports that AR has been efficient for her since, through this approach, she has been able to develop her research based on personalised teaching strategies to meet their students’ needs. Student’s six report is entirely aligned with the previous one as she thinks that AR has helped her design her thesis project on attending the different learning styles her students have. Student seven informs that AR has been favourable as it facilitates to identify current difficulties, to design possible solutions, and to fulfil her thesis demands. She exemplifies this situation, “after two weeks I realised that some students were very reluctant to take part in activities that demanded oral production, so I had to enquire about their backgrounds and made then talk through puppets. This situation became part of my thesis study object.” Finally, Student 8 opines that AR seems to be an efficient research process but that she still does not feel absolutely the command.

Code THI: thesis administrative implications

The author only applied this code to the professors' answers in their role of thesis advisers, as school mentors are not involved in the thesis development process, and students do not have control over the administrative implications.

The Professors’ perception

The main implications referred by the informants are related to difficulties in generating formal coordination meetings. Professor one establishes that one of the main impact is to coordinate work with the professors who act as supervisors and that, after the innovation, also...
perform roles as co-advisers. Professor two also seems to share this opinion. She acknowledges a sound degree of mutual collaboration but a lack of formal meeting instances. Professor’s three perception is in the same line since he also reports having difficulties coordinating meetings. He informs, “as co-advisers also go to schools to supervise our students at their teaching centres, it is not always easy to match our schedules for team-work purposes.” Professor four concurs and suggests that the head of the English department should allocate some time to formalize these meetings. Professor five informs that coordination with full-time professors is not a big issue but that it becomes more complicated when having to meet part-time professors.

**Third thematic axis: English teaching professional training after the innovation**

**Code ETT: How the innovation influenced English teaching training**

The author only considered professors and mentors in this code analysis on the apparent ground that informant students did not experience teaching training before the innovation.

**The Professors’ perception**

The professors who act as supervisors inform about several positive implications. Coincidently, all supervisors have a positive impression of the classes they observed compared to those supervised before the department implemented this innovation. However, the reasons they provide are varied. In synthesis, Professor one reports an evident class planning improvement sustained in clearer learning objectives. Professor two perceives that trainee students have been able to customize English learning activities for a specific context. In her words, "customized teaching strategies are always essential; especially, when teaching in vulnerable contexts." Professor three informs an improvement not only in learning objectives quality but also in their alignment with teaching and assessment. For Professor four teacher training – thesis development entailment has also favoured the students' in-class performance as they have acquired better theoretical support. Professor five also considers that this entailment has been positive as "trainee students have gained better theoretical support and deeper knowledge of the school students' background." In his opinion, this may be due mainly to better and more suitable diagnostic processes.

**The School mentors’ perception**

For the school mentors who have fulfilled this task before and after the studied innovation, results are also positive. Mentor one considers that trainee students improved the command of the stages of a lesson and that teaching timing became more precise. Mentor two perceives a broader management of teaching strategies, he states, "trainee students seem to be able to use diversified tools to capture and maintain the students' attention." Besides, he reports multiple ways to activate the students' previous knowledge. Mentor's three perceptions refer to trainee students’ being able to provide more precise and clear instructions, as well as better content domain. Finally, Mentor four values that trainee students achieve higher levels of involvement and participation of school students due to the use of varied resources for linguistic skills development.

**Conclusion**

The innovation studied marked a turning point regarding the students’ professional practice and theses development, as well as the role of professors, supervisors, and school mentors during
these processes. Considering all the implications involved, it seemed relevant to gain knowledge about the impact of the innovation considering the involved agents’ perspectives. What their main advantages and difficulties were, and what remaining challenges there may still exist.

There seems to be enough evidence to suggest an overall positive impact of the innovation. In terms of attitudinal aspects, motivation appears to increase, while the work overload perception decreases. Some other attitudinal facets that seem to have been favoured by the innovation are disposition, willingness to participate, and collaborate. This fact is undoubtedly positive and may help prevent what Russell-Pinsona and Harrish (2019) reported as stress-driven unwanted reactions.

Regarding the main advantage, though expressed differently, there seems to be some common ground regarding facilitating assessment, time reduction by avoiding doubling the work and conducting in-site research, better theory-practice connection, and reaching a more meaningful experience. Training supervisors who also became thesis co-adviser appears to be well-regarded. Students felt accompanied, and professors had the opportunity to provide diversified and more constant support. This result seems to be well-aligned with one of Silinda’s and Brubacher's (2016) suggestions that granted counselling significant importance during the dissertation development process. Despite the general positive evaluation, the timing appears to be a complex issue. There is a consensus regarding the lack of time for coordination meetings, collaborative work, and for conducting research.

The decision to use AR as the primary means for this entailment innovation appears to be right. AR seems to help students customise research to their needs, bridge the gap between teaching training and thesis development, and reduce thesis completion time. This use of AR serves some of the purposes introduced by Coghlan and Brannick (2005), and Macniff and Whitehead (2010), who stated that this approach helped to developed contextualised knowledge, identify problems, and implement class-based solutions. However, some aspects of this AR innovation that seem beneficial for the students, have conveyed some extra demands for the professors, especially in terms of time and coordination instances.

In terms of the trainee students’ classes after the innovation, both supervisors and school mentors report positive aspects. Better class planning, diversified teaching strategies, instruction-assessment alignment, theoretical support, and deeper involvement appear to account for this positive perception. This possibility was already anticipated by Bourdesa (2016) when he declared that professional training should not only convey developing knowledge, but also beliefs, attitudes, and practices.

Difficulties are also part of almost any innovation process. In the case of the professors, most of the issues they report relate to administrative implications. Collecting the employers' opinions about graduate students, agenda adjustments, disseminating the innovation among the university community, proper use of resources, and involving other faculties are some of their main concerns. For the mentors, the lack of timely feedback about their reports is their principal constraint. As one may expect, students relate most of their difficulties to what happens within the classroom. For some of them, the process is too structured and excessively attached to class
planning. Others would favour the context over international standards. Class management is another concern, as well as receiving more substantial support in the early stages of their training process. The possibility to interact with more experienced teachers is another of their demands.

Despite these difficulties, specific actions can be studied and taken to help overcome them. Administrative implications such as coordination meetings, time for conducting research, and efficient access to resources should become formal instances and be allowed a budgetary item. USEK has a communication department that could assist the English Department, through the means they have, newsletter, webpage, and networking to disseminate and share the studied innovation. The helpful feedback school mentors expect can be assured through protocols and datelines. Mentors and supervisors should give students a certain degree of flexibility to deal with the context demands of their training centres. Finally, supervisors and trainee students could agree on observation visits to receive this support when they consider they need it the most. Interaction with more experienced teachers is an issue the USEK Department of English would need to arrange with each school depending on their real possibilities.

Limitations

As the presented innovation was developed and implemented by the same staff of professors who report about it, there may be a bias towards positive perception. To minimise this possibility, the author also included the points of view of students and mentors who did not design this innovation. Besides, the author conducted the interviews in Spanish, the informants' native language, hence some nuances may have got lost in translation.

Considering that the USEK English teaching programme closed in 2019, there are limited possibilities to conduct further research. However, many of the topics this paper discussed may shed some light on the design of eventual future programmes.

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References


Developing an Evaluation Checklist for English Majors’ Textbooks in China: Focus on Intercultural Communicative Competence

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Abstract
With the rising interest in the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in language teaching, evaluating the ICC attributes in EFL textbooks is becoming a great concern. This study aimed to find out the evaluation criteria for the ICC attributes in EFL textbooks generated from the literature and from EFL experts, and then construct an evaluation checklist for assessing the ICC attributes of the English majors’ textbook in China. The findings revealed that thirty-six items were identified from the literature and another thirty-six new items were generated from the interview with nine experts in the fields of ICC research and textbook selection. These items were constructed into a draft checklist and checklist was validated by another nine EFL teachers and native-speaker teachers. Consequently, a try-out checklist with two dimensions, eight themes and sixty-one items was developed. Given the vital role of ICC in English teaching, it is essential to understand the ICC attributes in EFL textbooks, which is a relatively new construct. The proposed checklist was a critical step towards a better evaluation of ICC attributes in English majors’ textbooks and would be a helpful tool for teachers in textbook evaluation. Future research is required to refine the try-out checklist.

Keywords: EFL textbooks in China, English majors, evaluation checklist, ICC

Introduction

English, as the most widely used language in the world, has been established as a compulsory course at every level from primary schools to universities in China. The request of English talents in society and the increase of the general interest in learning English language result in a considerable increase of the number of English major undergraduates, who are supposed to engage in translation, teaching, management, research and related work in the areas of foreign affairs, education, economy and trade, cultural exchange, science and technology, military and other fields (Ministry of Education, 2001). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the number of undergraduate students in English major has been reached 800,000 since 2013.

In China, the English textbooks play a vital role as they could save teachers’ time to enhance the teaching effect and help teachers access to a varied choice of professionally produced resources (Nunan, 2001). Moreover, they are the basis of organizing classroom teaching activities and the main resource for students to improve their English proficiency and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as well as a positive view on life and the world (Jiang, 2010). Due to the lack of authentic language contexts, the textbook exerts much influence as an important source of culture and intercultural communication input for the English major undergraduates (Zhou, 1996).

With the increase of intercultural communication, to improve the students’ ICC has been included in the objectives of EFL teaching in many countries and regions. For example, the CEFR (2001) gives considerable importance to the promotion of ICC apart from a focus on the four language skills. In China, the English Teaching Syllabus for English Major Program in Higher Education (2001) highlights ICC cultivation for English major students. In addition, the National Standards for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate English Majors (2018) has stated that ICC is one of the principal abilities for English major students.

The advocacy of ICC development in English teaching in China has given rise to a large amount of publications of textbooks for English majors. However, the growing number of publications does not guarantee the success of ICC development. In fact, the increasing number of published textbooks gives the teachers more confusion and difficulty in choosing the most appropriate textbooks (Li, 2017). In China, the textbooks for English major students are dominantly published by Chinese publishers, and the teachers’ most recent practices are to select textbooks from a list of recommendations suggested by the Chinese publishers. The textbooks selected in this impressionistic method might be found inappropriate for ICC development, such as for the insufficiency of intercultural contents, editors’ bias on particular cultures, or lack of intercultural activities, but the teachers have to select and try other textbooks next year. This would not only waste money and time but also impede students’ ICC development.

In addition, driven by economic profits, publishers publish many textbooks to increase the chance of being selected (Huang, 2007). Thus, it is difficult for teachers to select an appropriate textbook with the impressionistic method since textbook selection needs to take various factors into consideration. Therefore, using a practical textbook instrument such as an evaluation checklist will undoubtedly allow teachers to choose one of the most suitable textbooks from the existing choices to facilitate students’ ICC development. What is more, the checklist will also reflect some
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weaknesses of the selected textbook so that teachers can further create additional teaching materials as well as learning activities and apply the most potential teaching methodologies.

There has been a great deal of research on the evaluation and selection of EFL/ESL textbooks. Some studies have focused on general evaluation principles and have developed ESL textbook evaluation checklists (McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Cunningworth, 1995, 2002; Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, & Nimehchisalem, 2011), and some have constructed evaluation checklists for language skills (AbdelWahab, 2013). Additional researchers have studied the ratio of different cultures or cultural themes in language textbooks (Yu, 2017), and the nature of cultural contents (Zhang, 2007). However, few of these studies have taken ICC components into consideration. What is more, most previous evaluation studies for EFL/ESL textbooks were situated in the contexts of Europe and America (Cunningworth, 1995; Byram, 1997; Skopinskaja, 2003), so these checklists would not prove effective since the context in China is different from that in Europe and America, such as the different cultures, student needs, and organization of teaching.

As there have not been any criteria for textbooks selection or evaluation focusing ICC attributes of textbooks in China, a framework of evaluation criteria is necessary, which can be applied to uncover the weaknesses and strengths of current English majors’ textbooks to facilitate students’ ICC development. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to develop a textbook evaluation checklist for English majors’ textbooks in terms of ICC development localized in China. Within this perspective, three research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What are the evaluation criteria for the ICC attributes of EFL textbooks obtained from the literature?
2. What are the evaluation criteria for the ICC attributes of EFL textbooks from the perspective of EFL experts?
3. What is the validity of the proposed checklist for ICC attributes of EFL textbooks?

Literature review

Intercultural communicative competence in English language teaching

Language and culture are interdependent, so culture is an inevitable and important in English language teaching (ELT). As an international language, since English relates to not just one culture; therefore, the restriction of the English language to any particular culture may be problematic. Therefore, instead of paying attention to the varieties of culture that are related to English, teaching the ability to deal with a range of cultures might seem to be more feasible and important; the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations is defined by many scholars (Byram, 1995; Sercu, 1995; Fantini, 2000; Kim & Hubbard, 2007) as the “intercultural communicative competence” (ICC).

As ICC has become an important teaching goal, many studies have been conducted to develop a model to incorporate ICC in language education programs. In a review of the models introduced so far, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) classified them into five types: (1) Compositional models; (2) Co-orientational models; (3) Developmental models; (4) Adaptational models; and (5) Causal process models. Although studied the ICC from different perspectives,
Byram’s (1997) model of ICC “is one of the most influential and widely cited models that guide language teachers to integrate interculturality in the classroom” (Galante, 2015, p. 33).

Since ICC has been regarded as an important aspect of English teaching in China, much research has been carried out on ICC studies. Some scholars tried to put forward pedagogical methods for the teaching of culture in English language teaching (Huang, 2002; Luo, 2005; Mao, 2001; Tang, 2003). Many investigated the approaches and effects of improving students’ ICC (e.g., Ge & Wang, 2016; Jin, 2015). To assess students’ ICC, a few scholars proposed the ICC model for Chinese college students (e.g., Gao, 2014; Zhang & Yao, 2020).

**Intercultural communicative competence in EFL/ESL textbooks**

As ICC teaching is regarded as being an important component of English language teaching, the intercultural elements in EFL textbooks are a big concern for EFL teachers and researchers. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) distinguished three types of coursebooks: coursebooks based on “source culture”, “target culture” and “international target cultures”. Source culture textbooks are the teaching material that is based on the students’ own culture. Although source culture textbooks might aid the students in developing their own cultural identity, they might neglect the students’ natural curiosity in foreign cultures and might foster the belief that all cultures work more or less the same way as their own. On the other hand, target culture textbooks, which are seen as “the obvious place to exploit authentic texts” (Gilmore, 2007, p. 105), might lead to students’ misconception that British and American culture is superior to any other culture. International target cultures textbooks are teaching materials that reflect a great variety of cultures located in English-speaking countries or other countries where English is not spoken as a first or second language, but as an international language. The use of this kind of material may develop the students’ intercultural competence, as they are confronted with a great number of unfamiliar behavioral patterns or examples of cross-cultural miscommunication in diverse ELF contexts. However, as McKay (2002) pointed out, the cultural information might be at the same time trivial, puzzling or inaccessible to the students and the teachers. Countries adopted types of textbooks according to their language education policy.

Recently, there has been a growing body of research on the extent to which cultural content has been included in ELT textbooks. Nguyen (2011), for instance, stated that ELT textbooks fail to pay due attention to the development of intercultural competence in L2 learners, suggesting that ELT textbooks are impotent to represent pragmatic and meta-pragmatic content. Other scholars (e.g., Rashidi & Meihami, 2016; Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2018) studied EFL textbooks at intermediate or tertial level, and found unbalance of cultural themes or inner circle or outer circle culture existed, which suggested an improvement on cultural content in EFL textbooks. Interestingly, Rahim and Daghigh (2019) employed Byram’s ICC framework to capture intercultural content and measured the spectrum of cultures (source, target and other cultures) in EFL textbooks in Malaysia. The results showed that the intercultural content and the cultural spectrum in the local textbook are found to be wider and more in keeping with ICC objectives than the imported book. Therefore, “replacing a local textbook with an imported coursebook may not necessarily be in the best interest of the country’s English language agenda” (p.1).
In China, the English major textbooks are mostly based on “target culture”, containing inner-circle-country cultural content, which is believed to help “the learners have the opportunity to perceive real language settings, learn authentic expressions, get in touch with real cultural elements and the thinking patterns of different cultures, which is conducive to enhancing students’ cultural understanding and intercultural communication skills” (Li, 2017, p.81).

Besides cultural contents, tasks and activities hold a central place in EFL teaching in providing input and facilitating communicative interaction. Sercu (2002) stated that just as the cultural content of foreign-language courses deserves more scrutiny than it has received till now, the culture learning tasks and practice activities, which are at the heart of any learning process, also deserve closer examination if we want to enhance the potential of language courses for promoting the acquisition of ICC.

To investigate to what extent the learning tasks in English textbooks promote the development of ICC through tasks, Knudsen (2016) identified comprehension tasks, reflection tasks, discussion tasks and role-playing tasks, and each type of task was discussed in relation to Byram’s (1997) model of ICC which comprises Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and Cultural Awareness. The results displayed that various types of tasks carry different potential in developing pupils’ ICC, and that this potential is affected by tasks being either efferent or esthetic, as well as being open or closed. Mosand (2019) investigated learning tasks in secondary textbooks and found that most of the learning tasks under investigation are identified as promoting ICC, but there existed an unbalanced distribution of learning tasks addressing different elements. Moreover, the analyzed learning tasks particularly emphasized the “knowledge” aspect in Byram’s model, which implies a large proportion of the learning tasks do not require the use of reason, reflection or interpretation, as the answers are usually provided in the associated texts.

Checklist method in textbook selection

There are three basic methods that can be used to evaluate the different textbooks that are selected or will be purchased from a simple perspective. These evaluation methods include the impressionistic, the in-depth and the checklist (Tomlinson, 2013). The impressionistic method is concerned to obtain a general impression of the material and involves glancing at the publisher’s blurb and content pages of each textbook, and then skimming throughout the book looking at various features of it (Karamoozian, 2008). It relies on evaluators’ intuitional decision about the usefulness of the textbook. Therefore, although it is cost-effective and takes a relatively short time, its main shortcoming is its high subjectivity which puts the reliability of its outcome at risk (Azarnoosh, Zeraatpishe, Faravani, & Kargozari, 2018).

In-depth techniques go beneath the publisher’s and author’s claims. It considers the kind of language description, underlying assumptions about learning or values on which the materials are based or whether the materials seem likely to live up to the claims for them (McGrath, 2002). However, the in-depth method has disadvantages in its inaccurate representativeness of samples, partiality, and time and expertise requirement (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Cunningsworth, 1995).
The checklist is considered as one of the easy-to-use, time-effective, less training required and reliable instrument for textbook evaluation (Wilson, 2013). It provides a set of evaluation criteria based on which the valuator examines the most crucial features of a book; therefore, its outcome is commonly more explicit, sophisticated and comprehensive than that of the impressionistic method (Azarnoosh et al., 2018). In addition, according to McGrath (2002), compared to the two other alternatives, impressionistic evaluation and in-depth evaluation, the checklist is systematic, cost-effective, convenient, and explicit. Therefore, the checklist method is advocated by most experts (e.g., Tomlinson, 2013) and is used widely in EFL textbook evaluation fields.

Depending on the data its items elicit, a checklist can be either qualitative, quantitative or both (Azarnoosh et al., 2018). Qualitative checklists have open-ended items (e.g., Richards, 2001), and they may result in an in-depth examination; while quantitative checklists get the evaluators to assign a numerical number signifying the quality of “poor” to “excellent” for the textbooks being examined (e.g., Skierso, 1991), and they may turn out to be more convenient. It is also possible to have a checklist that represents a combination of qualitative and quantitative items (Sheldon, 1998). For the reasons of convenience and time-saving for teachers, this study aimed to develop a quantitative checklist.

Tomlinson’s (2013) proposed some principles for materials evaluation. However, these principles have not been developed into checklist categories or items. Furthermore, the developing process itself is not illustrated in a conceptual categories, model or any other graphic representation that can simplify its initial different design stages and how it can be used when finished. Wilson (2013) suggested some guidelines for developing checklists from different sources and proposed that the terminology, the phrase items and the formatting should be consistent. However, these guidelines will help experienced checklist designers, but they will remain vague concepts to the inexperienced practitioners.

How to develop a viable checklist without having to go through the ELT complexities and dilemmas is difficult for the ordinary practitioners. In their attempt to deal with materials evaluation, Byrd and Schuemann (2014) tried to develop criteria for “textbook evaluation and selection”, trying to specify the “conceptual underpinnings” of their scheme.

Instead of providing guidelines or suggestions on developing an evaluation checklist, many scholars developed their own checklists (e.g., Miekley, 2005; Jahangard, 2007; AbdelWahab, 2013). Mukundan et al. (2011), unsatisfied with the previous textbook evaluation checklists being qualitative, too short or too long, or vague criteria, designed a textbook evaluation checklist by reviewing literature and conducting group interview with six experts.), based on current trends in ELT, curriculum design and materials development, developed an ELT textbook evaluative checklist. Recently, some scholars (e.g., Zokaeieh, Karimi, Nouri, & Hakimzadeh, 2019; Şahin,2020) have developed checklists for evaluating global EFL textbooks. However, all the above-mentioned checklists did not address or emphasize ICC elements in evaluating EFL textbooks. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a need to develop evaluation checklist for books which include ICC as one of the most important teaching goals.
Methodology

Research design

To decide what criteria are important to the textbooks for English majors in terms of ICC, the researchers conducted a review of the related literature at first. The related literature included past studies on English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching, EFL/ESL textbook evaluation and intercultural contents evaluation in textbooks. By reviewing the literature, a few criteria that textbooks for English majors should possess were summed up. Based on the summed-up criteria, an item pool was set up; that is, a set of items were selected from the previous textbook evaluation checklists.

Secondly, a semi-structured interview was conducted with a group of experts to collect their opinions on the criteria for evaluating EFL textbooks in English major program. Through categorizing and coding the interview conversations, some evaluation criteria for textbooks in terms of ICC were obtained from the interview with the experts. These criteria served as supplementary to the item pool from the literature. By adding the criteria from the semi-structured interview into the item pool, a draft checklist was developed.

Thirdly, in order to check the validity of the draft checklist, experienced teachers were invited to read the checklist and scale the importance of each item in the checklist. Then, the teachers were interviewed for their judgment on validity of the checklist. Taking the experienced teachers’ scores on the face and content validity and their comments for their scaling into consideration, a try-out checklist came into presence.

Participants

Two groups of participants were invited to take part in the study. The first group was nine field experts who were invited to give their opinions on the criteria for evaluating English majors’ textbooks. They were all EFL teachers and required to have (1) the experience of teaching English major students for more than ten years; (2) an associate professor or above in professional ranks or a doctorate in the fields related to ELT or TEFL; (3) the knowledge of ICC; (4) the expertise of evaluating textbooks. Having the training experience in ICC or having published research articles on ICC is considered as having the knowledge of ICC; and having published research on textbook evaluation or having (co-)compiled EFL textbooks in recent five years, or having assumed the position of the head of textbook selection is regarded as having the expertise of textbook selection. A total of nine experts in one of the researchers’ university were purposively selected as the field expert participants in this study. Table 1 presents the background information about these experts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Experience for teaching English major</th>
<th>Professional rank or degree</th>
<th>Evidence for Knowledge of ICC</th>
<th>Evidence for Expertise of Textbook Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Assoc. Prof.</td>
<td>Received training on ICC</td>
<td>Head of book selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Assoc. Prof.</td>
<td>Publication of articles on ICC</td>
<td>Compiler of EFL textbooks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second group involved nine teachers with textbook selection experience, who were invited to judge the validity of the draft checklist. The participants in this group was required to be teachers with following criterion: (1) teaching English major students during this research; (2) having teaching English majors for more than five years; 3) having a master’ degree or above in the fields related to ELT or TEFL. Besides the EFL teachers, the researchers also decided to invite few experienced native-speaking experts because it would be able to control a potential effect of literacy on reading comprehension when examining the face and content validity (Salavati, Waninge, Rameckers, Van Der Steen et al., 2017).

The reason for the number of participants in this group is based on the literature maintaining that in a face and content validity judgment a typical panel size would usually range from six to fifteen participants (Phillips, 2000; Labuschagne & Steyn, 2010) because the number of participants has to be manageable (Kashoob, 2018; Hwang & Salvendy, 2007). Table 2 presents the background information about the nine teachers.

Table 2. Background Information about the Experienced Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mother language</th>
<th>Experience of teaching English major</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Experience of textbook selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>&gt;10 years</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>&gt;10 years</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 demonstrates that all the participants have the experience of teaching English major for over five years. Among them, six were Ph.D. holders, one was an Ed.D. holder and two were MA holders. All of them have the textbook selection experience. Therefore, their agreement on the checklist might represent the face and content validity for the try-out checklist.
Research Process and Results

According to the research design, the research process included three stages: reviewing the literature, interviewing the experts, and validating the checklist.

Reviewing the Literature

Identifying the Literature. The purpose of literature review is to determine the textbook quality factors that have been reported most important in the literature. In this study, a review of the literature has been done in the following areas: (1) checklist development, (2) EFL/ESL textbook evaluation checklist development, and (3) ICC evaluation checklist development.

Three databases were searched – ERIC, Google Scholar, and ProQuest. Table 3 shows search terms that were used to identify studies and the number of studies yielded with each term in the databases searched.

Table 3. Search Terms and Results for Systematic Literature Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Term</th>
<th>ERIC</th>
<th>Google Scholar</th>
<th>ProQuest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Checklist development” in title</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“EFL/ESL textbook” evaluation checklist</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC textbook “evaluation checklist”</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“English textbook evaluation checklist”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“evaluation checklist” AND ICC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The abstracts of the identified studies were reviewed to identify their relevance and scope regarding textbook evaluation checklist development. The number of studies that focused specifically on developing students’ ICC was quite limited. Moreover, many studies developed evaluation checklists for English textbooks used in primary or secondary schools. Thus, studies that included EFL/ESL textbook evaluation checklist development and studies that included intercultural contents evaluation in EFL/ESL textbooks were included regardless of textbooks’ proficiency level, whether they are for primary or university students.

Twenty studies published since 1980 were identified as the basis for developing a checklist for this research. The list of reviewed studies for item development in this research are presented in Appendix A.

From Appendix A, it can be seen that the checklist studies for textbooks evaluation were undergone in Europe, America, Japan, Vietnam, Oman, but rarely any study was conducted in China.

Establishing the conceptual framework. By carefully reading and analyzing these studies, the researchers identified eight themes: physical attributes, objectives, learning contents, language skills, cultural topics, cultural information, tasks, teaching aids. These themes related to three facets of textbooks – general features, the linguistic features and the intercultural features. Therefore, the researchers categorized the eight themes into three dimensions: “General Attributes”, “Learning and Teaching Content”, and “ICC Attributes”. These three dimensions and the eight themes constituted the evaluation framework in this study and were used to guide the process of item drafting and EFL textbook checklist development.
To be able to classify ideas hierarchically and navigate easily among the emerging criteria, terms are used as “dimension” in macro level, “theme” in meso level and “item” in micro level throughout the article.

**Developing the item pool.** Based on the three dimensions and the eight themes, the researchers carefully read and selected out 32 items from the previous studies. Due to the redundancy, being double-barreled or irrelevant to ICC development, four items were rewritten into eight items. Therefore, an item pool of 36 items was established. Then, the items were further divided into eight themes and two dimensions. The numbers of items for each theme and dimension are presented in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Attributes</td>
<td>Physical attributes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching aids</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Contents</td>
<td>Learning contents</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC Attributes</td>
<td>Cultural topics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural information</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 4, it can be noted that the item pool consists of 3 dimensions, 8 themes and 36 items. Then, the item pool needs to be supplemented by the expert interview.

**Expert interview**

Since few checklists in the literature were constructed by gaining Chinese experts’ views, it is quite necessary to interview Chinese experts to elicit their opinions on evaluation the ICC attributes in EFL textbooks because these experts have first-hand information about the principles of textbook design in terms of ICC in China, and they also have experience of teaching for English major program, having been the “controllers” of textbook selection and using.

The researcher contacted the nine experts via face-to-face communication. They were asked eight open-ended questions (See Appendix B) in Chinese because Chinese is one of the researcher’s and the experts’ mother language, and using mother language would help the researcher obtain more information from the experts.

Upon their agreement, the interview conversations were audio-recorded for further analysis. The experts’ opinions which overlapped with or were similar to those in previous studies will not be kept, while the ones different from previous studies will be written into new items. The results of the interview were presented from the three dimensions in the following sections.
Findings for “General Attributes”. The dimension “General Attributes” in the draft checklist includes three themes. From the interview, no new themes were identified. However, ten new items were found from the interview conversations, which is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. New Items in “General Attributes” from the Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>New Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical consideration</td>
<td>1. The textbook is published by prestigious publishers in China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The publisher provides good service to teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The editorial board consists of experts from different areas in English language teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The editorial board consists of experts from the ICC field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The textbook is all in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>6. The textbook sets ICC development as one of its teaching objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Aids</td>
<td>7. The teacher’s book provides teachers with the background of the texts, the keys to exercises, supplementary teaching materials and suggested activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. The teacher’s book provides teachers with ICC information on the topics in the textbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. The textbook includes an ever-updating platform providing teaching materials for teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. The textbook includes an ever-updating platform providing self-learning materials for students to keep up-to-date.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning the “General Attributes” in textbook evaluation, the experts shared many similarities with the literature. For example, in the theme of “practical consideration”, both the “content table” and “cost” were mentioned by six experts.

However, there emerged new items in all three themes. In the theme of “practical consideration”, five items were inferred from the interview, which are rarely mentioned in the previous studies. For instance, the first new item concerns the publisher’s “prestige”, which is hardly seen in the previous checklists. In China, there are quite a lot of publishers who publish textbooks for university students. However, the quality of textbooks published by different publishers varies greatly. E3, who favored the Higher Education Press, explained:

For me, the first [information] I will look at is the publisher. The quality of textbooks produced by a good publisher is sure to be guaranteed. Firstly, these publishers attach great importance to their reputation, so they will conduct a rigorous review of the textbooks. Secondly, the textbooks published by these publishers are generally written by top experts in the English-teaching circle. These experts have profound ELT theories and teaching experience.

For E3, the publisher is one crucial criterion for textbook evaluation because the publishers are strict with the textbook construction and the authors of textbooks would be more prestigious, which will guarantee the quality of textbooks than those publishers with less prestige.
Findings for “Teaching and Learning Contents”. From the interview, the experts either expressed the same criteria with the previous studies such as the organization, skills or interest, or did not talk about the contents for their selection. Two experts added that the textbook’s language is a principle they used to judge the textbook. One expert (E3) emphasized the accuracy of both English and Chinese language in the textbooks. Because of the EFL contexts and examination-oriented culture in China, textbooks are considered not only to constitute of a source of information, but also represent authority and accuracy of language. The other expert (E7) proposed that the language in textbooks needs to be natural from her experience. She thought that the language in the textbooks needs to be taken from real communication, not edited or compiled by the textbook editors. Table 6 presents the new findings for the dimension of “Teaching and Learning Attributes” from the interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>New Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning contents</td>
<td>1. The language of the textbook (including Chinese) is accurate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The language is authentic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Skills</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 6 displays, there were only two new items emerging under the theme of “Learning contents”, that is, the language of the textbook should be accurate because textbooks are set as language models for the students, and the language should be authentic because unauthentic English might lead to the students’ output of Chinese English.

Findings for “ICC Attributes”. Because the experts’ experiences of teaching English majors and training on ICC development, they had much to say on what should be included in the textbooks to reach the goal of developing ICC. Table 7 illustrates the new items for textbook evaluation in terms of “ICC Attributes” from the interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>New Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural topics</td>
<td>1. The cultural topics are familiar to the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The cultural topics are relevant to the students’ real life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The cultural topics bring good emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The cultural topics are moral-guiding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The cultural topics are explicitly presented in each unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural information</td>
<td>6. The same cultural topic is presented from different cultural perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. There are more little “c” culture than big “C” culture in the textbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. The textbook includes both the culture of English-speaking countries and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>non-English speaking countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. The textbook includes much Chinese culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. The cultural information is presented with appropriate images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Non-verbal communication contents are included in the textbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td>12. The activities are authentic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. The activities foster independent learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. The exercises include assessments that help students or teachers to be aware of students’ intercultural communication competence development.
15. The exercises are flexible for teachers to choose from.
16. The exercises include those that require students to understand and explain cultural knowledge.
17. The exercises include those that require students to relate the learning cultural topics to Chinese cultural events or topics.
18. The exercises include those that require students to relate the learning cultural topics to other cultural event or topics.
19. The exercises include those that require students to compare and contrast different cultures.
20. The exercises include those that require students to solve cultural problems from target culture perspective.
21. The exercises include those that require students to recognize, analyze and question cultural stereotypes.
22. The exercises include those that require students to participate in real or simulated intercultural communications and practices.
23. The exercises include those that require students to express their opinions or ideas on cultural topics or differences.
24. The exercises include those that require students to observe and collect cultural information.

During the interview, the expert participants were free to share their views on the important evaluative criteria to be taken into account in evaluating textbooks in terms of general attributes, teaching and learning contents, and ICC attributes. All the opinions not found in the previous studies were identified and written into new items, and then categorized into corresponding themes. These new items were combined with the 36 items in the item pool. In this way, a draft checklist with a total of 72 items, eight themes, and three dimensions came into existence.

**Validating the checklist**

*Examining validity of the draft checklist.* After establishing a checklist, the next step for developing measure scales is to determine whether these items possess content and face validity (Churchill, 1979). In this study, face validity refers to whether the developed checklist appears to assess what it is supposed to assess. That is, whether it looks valid to potential users or not. The content validity refers to the extent to which the checklist items cover appropriate content. In this case, content validity emphasized the appropriateness of the checklist to assessing English textbooks for Chinese undergraduates and to the population of teachers of English who are the potential users of the checklist. Since face and content validity are subjective, the most common practice is to ask a few samples of the experts in the field (Carter & Wheeler, 2019).

The nine experienced teachers (including two native-speaker teachers) were given a copy of the draft checklist and requested to give a score on a 5-point Likert scale considering the importance of each item of the checklist. Based on the experienced teachers’ review, the researchers calculated the mean, median, and mode for each item. Mean, median, and mode are the three most common “averages” in statistics. The results revealed that the means of 89% of the items (N=64) are above 3.5, the median of 90% of the items (N=65) are above 3.5, and the modes
for 96% of the items (N=69) are above 3. It can be concluded that most of the items were valid in face and content.

After the experienced teachers completed giving judgments on each item and returned the checklist to the researcher, they were interviewed about their opinions regarding their judgment of the checklist validity (see Appendix C). Their views on the face and content validity of the checklist and their recommendations were utilized to make the checklist’s language, format or layout more accurate, effective and practical.

Regarding the whole checklist, all the teachers indicated the checklist appeared to be all right and the items were face and content valid. They also gave some suggestions on the language and grammar. For example, T7 (native speaker) claimed some phrases to be difficult in understanding, such as “appropriately” in item 1, “lexicon” in item 26, “integrity” in item 31. She thought “appropriately” leads to an operational difficulty when teachers make decisions with the checklist.

Revising the draft checklist. The information gathered from both the Liker scale and the semi-structured interview about the face and content validity was used in revising the draft checklist into a try-out checklist. The following rules were used in considering the scaling scores and the comments from the nine experienced teachers: (1) An item was dropped if its mean or median of face and content validity rating was below 3.5 or a mode of face and content validity rating was less than 3, (2) An item was dropped or modified if more than one respondent indicated a problem or concern, (3) An item was dropped or modified if one respondent indicated a problem and his/her concern could be supported by the literature.

Based on these rules, the draft checklist was revised through three main amendments: deleting, merging, and modification.

(1) Deleting: seven items were deleted because their mean or median of face and content validity were under 3.5, or the mode was under 3. The seven items include:
1. The title and subtitle of the textbooks are written appropriately.
2. The textbook is cost-effective.
3. The teachers’ book provides teachers with the background of the texts, the keys to exercises, supplementary teaching materials and suggested activities.
4. Teachers’ book can help the teachers understand the objectives and methodology of the textbook.
5. There is a good balance between different tasks.
6. The cultural topics are familiar to the students.
7. The cultural topics are morality-guiding.

In addition, six items were deleted because more than two experienced teachers believed they were irrelevant to the ICC, or were repeated in other themes, or might confuse the evaluators. They are:
1. The contents of the textbook are challenging.
2. The cultural topics are familiar to the students.
3. The activities are familiar to the teachers and students.
4. The exercises include those that require students to compare different cultures.

(2) merging: The dimensions “General Attributes” and “Teaching and Learning Contents” were suggested to be merged into “Overall Quality” or something because the later could cover more attributes and make the “ICC Attributes” outstanding.

(3) modifying: two themes were suggested to be modified for ease of use or clarity. The theme of “practical consideration” could be replaced by “practicality”. The theme of “tasks” could be replaced by “exercises and activities”.

In addition, two items were suggested to be modified because the two items were double-barreled, so they should be clear in its questions. The two items were dropped with those parts with less significance. They are:

1. The contents of the textbooks should be interesting and challenging.
2. The exercises include those that require students to participate in real or simulated intercultural communications.

After the revision, a rating scale of 1-5 (where 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Adequate, 2 = Weak, and 1 = Very Poor) was attached to each item of the revised checklist, and a column for the total score was added at the end of the checklist. In this manner, a try-out checklist with two dimensions, eight themes and 61 items (see Appendix D) was constructed.

Discussion

This study intended to find out criteria which are regarded important in the evaluation of English textbooks for English major undergraduates in China, and a try-out checklist with 2 dimensions, 8 themes and 61 items were constructed. The hierarchical structure of the checklist in the present study is in line with most previous studies (e.g., Yu, 1997; Hatem, 1988; AbdelWahab, 2013; Mukundan et al., 2011) with clear structures.

The results showed consensuses among previous studies in some major issues regarding EFL textbooks. These issues are such as physical attributes, teaching aids, language skills or cultural topics. However, compared with previous studies (e.g., Mukundan et al., 2011; AbdelWahab, 2013), in addition to the dimension of overall quality previously defined, this study also identified some different issues related to EFL textbook evaluation such as moral guidance, emphasis on Chinese culture, and exercises relating learning culture to Chinese culture, which were hardly mentioned in the western evaluation checklist (e.g., Cunningsworth, 1995; Rahimpour, 2011; Rahimy, 2007). This reveals that Chinese experts highly expected textbooks to define intercultural communicative competence and to make explicit the goal of helping students to attain it, and checklists with a focus on ICC attributes would help teachers to be aware of ICC attributes in EFL textbook evaluation.

In this study, the checklist was developed by reviewing the relevant literature, interviewing a group of field experts, and validated by a group of teachers. The methods used in constructing the checklist are in line with some other studies (e.g., Al-Mekhlafy, 1988; Yu, 1997; Zokaeieh et al., 2019) and provide practical implications to checklist development in EFL contexts.
To be able to develop a suitable checklist, it was necessary to know about the existing evaluation checklists and their theoretical background. Though the existing checklists might not be entirely useful, knowing about their different formats, about their different ways of clustering and grouping questions and the statements under different categories, and the ways of deciding upon the importance of criteria was very productive to develop a checklist. For example, the hierarchical structure of dimensions, themes and items conformed to those in the previous checklists (AbdelWaha, 2013; Miekley, 2005; Mukundan et al., 2011; Liu, 2016), which was considered as appropriate and “clear in structure” by the teachers in the validation process.

However, since most of the existing checklists were developed in western contexts, it deserves interviewing the field experts to localize the developed checklist. The English textbooks were used in an EFL context, so the textbook evaluation checklists have to take the EFL background into consideration, i.e., the Chinese culture, Chinese classroom in universities. For example, morality-guiding or facilitating good morality development was considered an important feature of English textbooks by many Chinese teachers. This issue was rarely mentioned in previous studies conducted in western or other Asian countries. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview with field experts for extra information was in alignment with previous studies (Zokaeieh et al., 2019; Mukundan et al., 2011; Kashoob, 2018). The reasons to use the method of interview with experts might because the interview can identify important areas that were not included in previous research (Zokaeieh et al., 2019).

In the validation process, the results showed that the developed checklist is content and face valid. That is, the checklist presents crucial criteria to ensure the quality of ICC attributes in English majors’ textbooks. Therefore, the proposed checklist could be used by university teachers who plan to select textbooks for developing students’ ICC since ICC was one of the teaching goals for English teaching in China. We encourage English teachers to pay attention to the ICC Attributes values of the checklist. Low ratings for ICC Attributes may indicate that a textbook does not include sufficient information about the cultural contents, cultural information, or cultural activities or exercises. However, since ICC is an abstract concept and the teachers may have different understanding of the concept, it is highly recommended that more than one evaluator works together to ascertain that they understand the checklist categories and items before beginning the process. In addition, their evaluation results must be shared and discussed before a final decision is made.

Conclusion

ICC has become an essential and important teaching goal for English major undergraduates, while few studies provided effective instruments for teachers to evaluate the ICC attributes in textbooks in China. The aim of this paper was to develop an EFL textbook evaluation checklist focusing on ICC. With this purpose, a textbook evaluation checklist with 61 items were proposed to evaluate English majors’ textbooks focusing on ICC development. The checklist, which covers two dimensions including “overall quality” and “ICC attributes”, was proved valid in this study.

As a significant teaching and learning goal, ICC is relatively abstract for many teachers. The important aspects of ICC revealed in this study can be believed to be a guide for teachers to
identify the strengths and weaknesses of textbooks, and to improve their awareness of ICC development in teaching. What is more, this study has adopted both literature review and expert interviews in EFL context to solicit information on textbook evaluation criteria. The combination of such methods has not been frequently used in the checklist development research and it can obtain much insights for item development.

However, the proposed checklist is limited to the specific context of a university and the development of the evaluation checklist was only based on the experts and teachers’ opinions, not taking into students’ opinions and needs into consideration. In addition, although has been judged by the experienced teachers, the try-out checklist was not put into practical evaluation of textbooks, which was not the purpose of the present study. Therefore, future research could provide more information by expanding the number of university samples and taking students’ opinions into consideration. It is also very necessary to investigate the usefulness of the checklist, as well as users’ perceptions. Furthermore, research in the future will reflect how the selected English textbooks can support the English majors’ ICC development. In addition, potential textbook or material developers at local educational institutions can develop localized EFL textbooks that can be well suited for China’s English education context using the checklist as a conceptual structure.

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References


### Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studies Included in Item Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authors (Year)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Risager (1991)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Byram et al. (2002)</td>
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<td>Sercu (1998)</td>
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<td>Al-Mekhlafy (1988)</td>
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<td>Ansary &amp; Babaii (2002)</td>
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<td>Skopinskaia (2003)</td>
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<td>Kilickaya (2004)</td>
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<td>Reimann (2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, &amp; Nimehchisalem (2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AbdelWahab (2013)</td>
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</table>
Developing an Evaluation Checklist for English Majors’ Textbooks

Lei & Soontornwipast

Appendix B
Guided Questions for the Interview with Field Experts

A. Questions about ICC
1. What is ICC in your opinion?
2. What do you think about incorporating ICC into English major program? Why?
3. What cultural topics or themes should be included in textbooks aiming at developing students’ ICC?
4. What learning tasks/activities should be designed in textbooks aiming at developing students’ ICC?
5. What other factors should be included in the textbooks to promote students’ ICC?

B. Questions about textbooks evaluation
6. How useful are textbooks in developing students’ ICC?
7. What criteria should be used to evaluate textbooks in terms of ICC?
8. I am designing a textbook checklist for teachers of English to select EFL textbooks on ICC development, what suggestions would you like to give it to me?

Appendix C
Guided Questions for Interview with Experienced Teachers

1. What do you think of this checklist in terms of format, the number of factors, and organization?
2. Do you think that the checklist has content validity? Or do its items appear to be valid in measuring what they are supposed to measure?
3. What factors, general statements, or specific criteria you may suggest to be deleted?
4. What other factors, general statements, or criteria you may suggest to be added?
5. What other factors, general statements, or criteria you may suggest to be modified?
6. Do you think the score assigned by this checklist to a textbook will be in line with your personal judgment of the textbook?
7. What other comments do you have?

Appendix D
A Final Version of Textbook Evaluation Checklist for English Majors’ Textbooks Focusing on ICC Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Subdimension</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Quality</td>
<td>Practicality</td>
<td>1. The table of contents facilitates orientation.</td>
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<td>2. The textbook is up-to-date.</td>
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<td>3. The textbook is published by prestigious publishers in China.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. The editorial board consists of experts from different areas in English language teaching and learning.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. The editorial board consists of experts from the ICC field.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. The textbook is in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>7. The coursebook corresponds closely with the aims of the teaching program.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. The textbook is compatible with the needs of the learners.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. The objective of the textbook is laid out explicitly.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. The textbook sets ICC development as one of its teaching objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching aids</td>
<td>11. The teacher’s book provides teachers with ICC information on the topics in the textbook.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. The teacher’s book is supported efficiently by audio and video materials.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. The textbook includes an ever-updating platform providing teaching materials for teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. The textbook includes an ever-updating platform providing self-learning materials for students to keep up-to-date.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>15. The contents are authentic.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. The contents are well organized.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. The contents are up-to-date.</td>
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<td>18. The grammar is contextualized.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19. The lexicon is contextualized.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20. The contents of the textbook are interesting.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21. The language of the textbook (including Chinese) is accurate.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22. The language is authentic.</td>
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<td>Language skills</td>
<td>23. The skills are presented integratively.</td>
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<td>24. The skills presented in the textbook are appropriate to the course.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC Attributes</td>
<td>25. The topics are culturally appropriate for the students.</td>
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<td>Cultural topics</td>
<td>26. There is sufficient variety in the cultural topics.</td>
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<td>27. The topics allow students to think critically.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>28. The textbook can help students identify different cultural norms or values implicit in the language.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>29. The textbook contains language components that train students’ ability to express their positions against different cultural norms and values.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>30. The topics are interesting and motivating.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>31. The cultural topics are relevant to the students’ real life.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>32. The cultural topics are explicitly presented in each unit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural information</td>
<td>33. The materials are not culturally biased.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>34. The same cultural topic is presented from different cultural perspectives.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>35. The textbook relates content to learners’ culture and environment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>36. There are more little “c” culture such as people’s behaviors and beliefs in ordinary life than big “C” culture such as literature, art, institutions, and architecture, in the textbook.</td>
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<td>37. The textbook includes both the culture of English-speaking countries and the non-English-speaking countries.</td>
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<td>38. The textbook includes much Chinese culture.</td>
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<td>39. The materials can develop tolerance, empathy and curiosity to otherness.</td>
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<td>40. The content contains real-life issues.</td>
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<td>41. The cultural information is integrated in the course.</td>
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<td>42. The cultural information is presented with appropriate images.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>43. Non-verbal communication contents are included in the textbook.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities and exercises</td>
<td>44. The activities are meaningful.</td>
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<td>45. There are a variety of activities.</td>
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<td>46. There are varied activities at different levels of task difficulty.</td>
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<td>47. The activities are familiar to the teachers and students.</td>
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<td>48. The activities are authentic.</td>
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<td>49. The activities foster cooperation.</td>
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<td>50. The activities foster independent learning.</td>
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<td>51. The exercises include assessments that help students or teachers to be aware of students’ intercultural communication competence development.</td>
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<td>52. The exercises are flexible for teachers to choose from.</td>
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<td>53. The exercises include those that require students to recognize, analyze and question cultural stereotypes.</td>
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<td>54. The exercises include those that require students to relate the learning cultural topics to Chinese cultural events or topics.</td>
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<td>55. The exercises include those that require students to relate the learning cultural topics to other cultural event or topics.</td>
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<td>56. The exercises include those that require students compare different cultures.</td>
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<td>57. The exercises include those that require students to solve cultural problems from target culture perspective.</td>
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<td>58. The exercises include those that require students to express their opinions or ideas on cultural topics or differences.</td>
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<td>59. The exercises include those that require students to participate in real intercultural communications.</td>
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<td>60. The exercises include those that require students to observe and collect cultural information.</td>
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Lessons from Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* for Today's Foreign Language Teacher

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School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences & Health
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Abstract

The *Muqaddimah*, a massive 14th century text by Arab historian Ibn Khaldun, while primarily a history, in the later chapters deals with linguistics and pedagogy. Multiple publications on what his work contributes to the field of education exist. But surprisingly, only two papers have appeared specific to teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL): one decades old, the other primarily arguing an early case for communicative language teaching (CLT) is presented. Ibn Khaldun lived in a kind of global world, an Islamic one: cosmopolitan, and having its own international language. Analogies with today’s globalism and English are obvious. This article therefore reviews the total *Muqaddimah*, comparing its content to dominant ideas and figures in contemporary English language teaching (ELT), and showing it is still relevant to ELT. Congruences include Ibn Khaldun’s constructivist-like conception of identity and realization of second language learner (L2) identity’s role and formation process. Also, what would today be called Whorfianism, leading to concluding a language should be taught together with its discourses—but English is no longer viewed as just Anglo-American or native-speaker—Ibn Khaldun’s case is saved by reimaging English as global and cosmopolitan, which TESOL exactly has. It will also be shown that not CLT, but rather study abroad or immersion education is being portrayed. The importance of affect, a case made for both learner and teacher autonomy, together with other issues, all current in TESOL today, make Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddimah* a rediscovered source of inspiration for the milieu of modern ELT.

Keywords: communicative language teaching, Ibn Khaldun, immersion, *Muqaddimah*, TESOL

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.7
Introduction

Ibn Khaldun is probably most well-known as having been called the father of sociology and as a historian. He is less well known for his views on education and linguistics, and specifically his ideas about language education, which make up much of the latter part of the *Muqaddimah*.

While a number of articles have been published on how the *Muqaddimah* might apply to educational pedagogy (Halstead, 2004; Dajani, 2015; Maniam, 2016; Takayama et al., 2016; Demir, 2017; Khanday, 2018; Rahmani, Abdussalam, & Nuryani, 2020), this is not so for application to TESOL. Only two prior authors have published on Ibn Khaldun’s ideas on language teaching. John (1989) criticizes Ibn Kaldun’s view of L1 interference, lauds his ideas on use of literature for language learning, and agrees with the apparent promotion of communicative language teaching (CLT) together with skepticism about grammar teaching. Osman (2003) too portrays Ibn Khaldun as an early advocate of CLT.

The purpose of this article is to update and look more broadly than the two previous researchers in ELT have at how Ibn Khaldun congrues with the TESOL of today—as he lived in a cosmopolitan and Islamic form of a global world himself, complete with its own lingua franca, it is hard not to see an analogy with globalism today and English. The method by which this will be done is comparing ideas from the total *Muqaddimah* with dominant positions and figures in contemporary TESOL. In doing so, it will also be argued, or clarified, contra John (1989) and particularly Osman (2003), that Ibn Khaldun did not have CLT in mind, but something more like what we would call studying abroad, homestay, or immersion learning in his writing in the *Muqaddimah*.

Ibn Khaldun is a paradoxical figure. On the one hand, he had incredibly modern knowledge and cosmopolitan political views, for instance, he knew the circumference of the Earth about as accurately as it is known today and had lived and worked across the Islamic world. But at the same time, he believed in religious dogmatism, and wrote at length about numerology and sorcery.

The book is divided into a first part which is a geography; Ibn Khaldun was aware of lands all the way from Britain to Korea, though not of what lay in the southern hemisphere about which he speculates. The second part is a history of Islamic civilization, and explicates his theory of history, which is cyclical, somewhat similar to that in Spengler (1923/1926). The third part covers Ibn Khaldun’s linguistics, philosophy of education, and ideas on language teaching. What makes Ibn Khaldun’s ideas about language education so pertinent to us today is his having lived in a kind of precursor to our global world, an Islamic global world: extending from Central and South-East Asia to West Africa and into Western Europe. That international and cosmopolitan world had a common language: Arabic, of which Ibn Khaldun was a language teacher, materials developer, and pedagogical theorist.

The only translator to put the *Muqaddimah* into English was Rosenthal, whose initial set of volumes appeared in 1958; all republications and abridgements appearing until today are based on his work. The chapter and section numbering of that first and only translation have been retained by nearly every publisher, even the recent and abridged First Princeton Classics edition (1377/2015). The *Muqaddimah* is a classic work, all citations throughout this article therefore
preserve those chapter and section numberings [in square brackets], hopefully making quotes easy to locate, as opposed to if only page numbers of a particular edition were given.

The *Muqaddimah* and TESOL Today

Cultural Competency

Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity have become monolithic issues in TESOL in recent years (Byram, 2013). Given the extraordinary importance this has taken on, before going any further, some of the attitudes Ibn Khaldun expresses ought to be addressed. None of the previous publications on the *Muqaddimah* in education or TESOL have confronted this, perhaps not wanting to detract from his progressive ideas, but in the interest of transparency, they must be mentioned.

Ibn Khaldun’s (1377/1958) comments on Black Africans would be considered grossly racist by today’s standards [I.3rd]: He says that they go naked and have a disposition similar to “dumb animals”, he also makes accusations of cannibalism (p. 123). He goes on [I.4th], characterizing Black people as “stupid” and easily overtaken by musical rhythm (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 127). He even legitimizes enslaving Blacks [II.23], saying that the peoples of the Black nations tend towards being submissive, and since they do not have much in common with humans, but are more like animals, their being made slaves is justified (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 197).

Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) also makes blatantly anti-Semitic comments [VI.39]: he writes that Jews have acquired a bad reputation far and wide, and across many periods of time, what they are specifically know for is said to be “insincerity and trickery” (p. 730).

Ibn Khaldun’s (1377/1958) conception of Islam is not what all Muslim’s today believe. He makes the comment that [III.31], members of the Muslim community have a duty to wage religious war for the purpose of converting everyone to the religion, by force if necessary (p. 303). That might even be called Islamophobic by some.

His views on homosexuality were not tolerant either, rather different from where ELT is today (“Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Trans (LGBT)”, 2018). He saw it as a social disease of corrupt and decadent cultures, that can eventually lead to the end of humanity. He argues that city life [IV.18], to its detriment, is characterized by luxury and the pursuit of pleasure: and one of those pleasures is engaging in diverse forms of sexual expression, “such as ... homosexuality” (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 470).

By way of contextualization, it might be worth noting that these sorts of extraordinarily bigoted remarks are not limited to just those quoted above, but are also made about White people [I.3rd], and perhaps significantly—about Arabs too, of whom Ibn Khaldun considers himself one: writing that Arabs are the most savage of anyone [II.2], comparing the Arab people to wild, predatory animals (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 162). That all said: he did not believe that savagery or civility were innate characteristics of peoples, i.e., that some people are inherently superior or inferior to others, instead he thought that [II.1], the differences among us are the consequence of the many different environments and ways in which we live (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 161).
Second Language Acquisition

This matter of Ibn Khaldun speaking pejoratively of Blacks, Jews, and homosexuals can actually serve as a lead-in to understanding his ideas about second language acquisition (SLA) and identity. On the one hand he had a tabula rasa idea of human nature [II.4], no one is born good or evil, our interactions with the world leave their mark on us: “Muhammad said: “Every infant is born in the natural state. It is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian”” (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 165). However, no one persists in this blank slate condition. Identity forms as habits accrue in social situations. To reiterate, for Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958), it is not because of innate character that anyone is who they are, instead [II.5], “man is a child of the customs and the things he has become used to. He is not the product of his natural disposition and temperament” (p. 167). This conception bears some resemblance to contemporary social constructivist thinking about identity (Hall, 1996), which has widely been taken onboard by TESOL (Block, 2009, 2010).

Ibn Khaldun’s conception of language learning follows from this importance he puts on habit. He sees language as a craft, or a habit. It is a physical craft, like carpentry—only with language, we learn with our tongue. Both speaking and writing too are conceived of as crafts in the Muqaddimah. To paraphrase, Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) describes crafts as [V.15]: habits of bodily actions which are developed and perfected through practice (p. 505).

His idea of language acquisition is set within the same terminology [VI.45], “language is a technical habit... Languages are habits similar to crafts” (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 752). So, in SLA, since language is a habit, and a physical one, not something abstract, according to Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958), that is how second languages have got to be learned [V.15], habits are not acquired through taking in information, but being crafts, language learning needs to be taught by teachers with that fact in mind (p. 505).

Ibn Khaldun’s theory of SLA supports his views on language learner motivation. A comparison can be drawn with the concept of social and language capital in Bourdieu (1991), it is Norton (2013) who is most associated with transferring these theories across into ELT. Second language learners, Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) states, desire to associate themselves with the power and prestige of the conqueror [II.22], this includes fashion, lifestyle, and culture (p. 196). It extends also to the language, accent, and discourses of the language.

Education is Political

Ibn Khaldun purposefully brings issues of power into his ideas of language learning because for him: education is political. His teachings are representative of the view that “the educational system of any society should be formulated according to its ideology” (Maniam, 2016, p. 117). For Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958), the whole purpose of the teacher’s efforts are to enable the learner to be able to submit himself to the religiopolitical order taught in the Quran [VI.38], which is the foundation for all habits the learner will eventually acquire (p. 727). But he adds an amusing caveat, or warning, that teachers are [VI.41], “of all people, those least familiar with the ways of politics.... Accustomed to dealing with matters of the mind ... they do not know anything else” (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 733).
Contrastive Rhetoric

But to be able to appreciate the Quran, bare understanding of the classical Arabic words is not enough [VI.10], the Quran is the product of revelations that include both the language of the Arabs of the time, but also of “their rhetorical methods” (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 565). A learner needs to know the words, but also the rhetorical style of the culture; this was first promoted in TESOL by Kaplan (1966) as “contrastive rhetoric”. While interest in contrastive rhetoric has waxed and waned since his initial publication, the topic is still active in thinking about ELT (Walker, 2010; Hernandez & Genuino, 2017). Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) applies the notion to language teaching [VI.44], just knowing the words and their definitions and a familiarity with collocations is insufficient, learning authentic use is needed too (p. 745).

The implication for TESOL is that a language cannot be disconnected from its texts and its discourses. Hence, Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) thinks well of what he calls the Spanish approach where language was taught together with Arab culture and texts [VI.36]: “Instruction in poetry, composition, and Arabic philology gave them, from their early years on, a habit providing ... better acquaintance with the Arabic language” (p. 728). This view is today called Whorfianism, language and culture together form an interconnected entity. In the Muqaddimah this is taken a bit further, so language, culture, spiritual tradition, ethnicity, and the environment are all interconnected.

Native-speakerism

Native-speakerism has taken a lot of criticism today from people like Holliday (2006) who coined the term, or earlier from Kachru (1985) who has promoted “Englishes”: Indian English, Singaporean English, and so on. Ibn Khaldun would on the surface appear not to be sympathetic to their view. He goes so far as to say that maybe if someone even does not pronounce their prayers in the dialect of the ancient Bedouins, (a debate that still exists in the Ummah today), those prayers are invalid [VI.46]: “Failure to pronounce the q in the first surah (as it is pronounced by present-day Bedouins) invalidates one's prayer” (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 756).

The difficulty of learning a foreign language Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) explains in terms of his theory of crafts and language as a habit [V.21], “the person who has gained the habit of a particular craft is rarely able afterwards to master another” (p. 512). He sums up his entire position and its implications for language teaching with an analogy [VI.50]: He asks the reader to imagine a child who grows up with Arab Bedouins, quite automatically this child learns the language together with all the correct vowel endings, yet the child knows nothing of the rules of grammar. Everything he learned through habit. But what about those who did not have this sort of upbringing? For them to learn the language accurately, they will need exposure and practice, but also to become acquainted with the habits of interacting, poems, and discourses of the language’s speakers—just studying the grammar won’t result in the kind of fluency the child raised by Arab Bedouins has (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 765).

So, on two different levels, Ibn Khaldun promotes a purist view of the teaching of the Arabic language. On one level, learners desire to associate themselves with the power and prestige of the international language, they ought not be taught a corrupted form, and furthermore, on a second level, because language is nested in culture, spiritual tradition, ethnicity, and environment, it can’t
really be disconnected from those things, (the same argument appears elsewhere in the *Muqaddimah* too [VI.45]).

Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) writes [VI.50]: “They say that “the Arabs speak (correct Arabic) by nature’”’ (p. 764). This is identical to how Chomsky (1965) had come to see linguistic correctness too. But native-speakerism has fallen out of favor in TESOL. Ibn Khaldun might be saved, and his writing kept relevant to contemporary ELT, by seeing English today and its speakers and discourses, not as Anglo-American, but as the cosmopolitan global community.

**Grammar Teaching and Materials**

Therefore, given his seeing of language as a practical craft, and connected with its discourses, it follows that Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) was critical of those who teach relying over heavily on grammar instruction [VI.49]: Knowledge of the rules is a knowledge of how to use them, but it is not the actual use of them” (p. 761). Purely linguistic knowledge which lacks discourse knowledge leaves language competence deficient. He goes on, making the point even more strongly [VI.49], explaining that we may encounter people with a superb ability to express themselves, even in poetry, but totally lacking any idea of “the rules of Arabic philology”, therefore, the teaching of grammar can be completely given up (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 761). This was of course the view promoted by Krashen (1982) in TESOL.

Ibn Khaldun was not only a teacher of language but he also wrote textbooks, so he advises this same principle be applied in the design of teaching materials. He praises the materials developer Sibawayh [VI.49] for incorporating the development of linguistic habit, as well as authentic texts, and even poetry, not just the study of “grammatical rules” (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 761). So, Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) argues, those who haven’t grown up with Arabs, can best learn the language through becoming closely familiar with their texts, discourses, and linguistic habits [VI.49]: this is achieved through “close personal contact” and exposure to the habits of expression, turns of speech, and linguistic manner of the target language’s speakers (p. 762).

This it seems is beyond, different from, and much stronger than CLT, as John (1989) or especially Osman (2003) had seen in the *Muqaddimah*. Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) opines [VI.40]: “Education is greatly improved by traveling in quest of knowledge and meeting the ... teachers.... Human beings obtain their knowledge and character qualities and all their opinions and virtues either through study, instruction, and lectures, or through imitation of a teacher and personal contact with him...” (p. 732). While similar to CLT as classically described (Canale & Swain, 1980), Ibn Khaldun, it is here argued, is suggesting instead something more like what we know today as immersion schooling, studying abroad, English camps, homestay, and the like: interacting closely with speakers of the language and getting to know their texts and discourse firsthand.

**Second Language Identity**

Ibn Khaldun’s view of identity has already been introduced. His perspective can probably most easily be understood in terms of what is today called Traditionalism, for example in the sense of Guénon (1942/2004). In the *Muqaddimah*, identity is presented as being composed of the five elements, already mentioned: firstly, language. Secondly culture: the meaning, way of life, and the discourses and texts of a people. Thirdly is ethnicity, Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) writes [II.9], only
among the Arabs of the desert have lineages remained pure and unmixed (p. 173). A fourth aspect is spiritual tradition, i.e., identity as a religious group [II.26]. The fifth part is the environment or land [III.7], the people who establish a dynasty are necessarily living on and in possession of the lands, up to its borders (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 216).

These common elements composing identity create “group feeling”, which is a strong sense of group belonging and cohesion: this is a key concept in the sociology of the 
Muqaddimah. Ibn Khaldun does not hold a materialist conception of history. Group feeling really has nothing to do with anything external like a technological advantage, and not even a cultural one. It is an internal feeling [II.22], it would be a mistake to think that “the superiority of the victor” has something to do with culture or way of living, the strength of a peoples comes from “group feeling” (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 196); said very clear and direct [II.11], “superiority results from group feeling” (p. 176). The 
Muqaddimah goes on to explain that those rich in group feeling establish their power through leveraging violence to enforce their superiority [III.23], something that will “express the wrathfulness and animality (of human nature)” (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 256). These attitudes may be surprising to people of modern temperament, but they help to appreciate how Ibn Khaldun views identity, and second language (L2) identity formation.

Although we may originally be born into one or another group, Ibn Khaldun grants it is possible for someone to take on a new identity. This happens, he explains, as does language acquisition itself: through development of close connection with that other group [II.10], someone becomes so familiar with it, they become identified with a group other than the one into which they were born (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 175). Given the general rejection in contemporary TESOL that English is something Anglo-American (Holliday, 2006), to preserve the relevance of L2 identity theory in the 
Muqaddimah, it could be that cosmopolitan global identity is the group which today’s English learner connects with (Ryan, 2009).

Motivation and Affect: Autonomy

Despite that Ibn Khaldun is conservative-minded and traditionalist, he does not advocate any kind of strictness in learning. A learner’s emotional life is presented as importantly influencing education in the 
Muqaddimah, just as it was feeling that Ibn Khaldun saw as founding identity and also specifically L2 identity. There are some parallel’s with Krashen’s (1982) affective filter hypothesis: negative emotions in the classroom interfering with language learning. If a teacher is over-strict with a student, or if learning is not carefully paced and scaffolded, the learner cannot be happy about learning the language, instead, he will associate that bad experience with his learning. This fact is also represented as one of the three self guides in Dörnyei’s (2005) L2 self model. As Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) describes ill-conceived lesson planning [VI.36], it actually confuses the learner and exposes him to lessons he is not yet prepare for, thus making a negative impression of language learning, and therefore not something the learner would like to be engaged in (p. 721).

Closely connected to this, when a learner does not have autonomy over his studies, that is emotionally demoralizing. This is not different from contemporary thinking in TESOL (Mynard & Ludwig, 2014). Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) highly valued learner centeredness wherein students were free, and not in what amounts to being in the position of having been conquered [VI.39]: If
learners feel oppressed they will have no interest in learning, this is noted to be true of anyone whose life has fallen under the control of some other authority (p. 730).

But Ibn Khaldun does not stop there; it is not only the learner who needs autonomy, but the teacher too. Ibn Khaldun himself was educated outside of institutions and he and his teachers had freedom about how they studied, the materials, and organization of the course. To fully appreciate these points about learner centeredness and teacher autonomy it helps to understand the *Muqaddimah’s* notion of cycles of history. A free and wild people initiate the cycle by conquering a docile, soft, decadent, and demoralized sedentary urban population. These conquerors reinvigorate the civilization. But before long, the once free-spirited conquerors become corrupted by urban life, and they too lose purpose and vigor, and the civilization declines—until some other wild and free people appear to conquer the urban centers, again, and the cycle continues. Hence, Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958) has a negative view of city-life, imperialism, and the authoritarian and stultifying institutions found therein [II.6], “governmental and educational laws destroy fortitude, because their restraining influence is something that comes from outside” (p. 169). So, something like Kumaravadivelu (1994) has it, the best learning can happen when teachers are at their freedom in organizing and implementing their lessons too.

**Other Issues in TESOL**

Given his respect for autonomy in learning, it is not surprising that Ibn Khaldun also promotes creativity. His ideas on this point are maybe not too different from TESOL figures like Maley and Peachey (2015). Learners are encouraged to let their creativity flow and follow their passion [VI.36]: Teachers ought sometimes to put aside all the “technical procedures” and let the native powers of the mind go wherever the learners’ desires take them (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 723).

Many of the other issues in TESOL the *Muqaddimah* touches on have been published by John (1989) but are worth briefly reviewing here. Vocabulary based curriculum is spoken favorably of by Ibn Khaldun (1377/1958), he suggests using what today is called a learner’s dictionary [VI.44]. He was also aware of the power etymology can have to multiply learners’ vocabulary [VI.44]. Attention is given as well to issues of phonology [VI.44], “the sequence of the positions (in throat and mouth) in which the various sounds are produced” (Ibn Khaldun, 1377/1958, p. 744). And consistent with Ibn Khaldun’s (1377/1958) general view of language being inseparable from discourse and context, he stressed studying metaphor and idiom [VI.44], “entitled Asas al-balaghah ... Az-Zamakhshari explains in it all the words used metaphorically by the Arabs.... It is a highly useful work” (p.745).

**Conclusion**

While it might be difficult for some modern readers to at all connect with things like Ibn Khaldun’s illiberal politics, intolerance, superstition, and religious dogmatism and chauvinism, nonetheless, the Islamic world of his day represents a sort of early form of globalism, complete with an international language. Therefore, the ideas on language learning presented in the *Muqaddimah* deserve our attention as we too live in a cosmopolitan global world with a common international language: English. Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun’s writings are broadly consistent with contemporary thinking in TESOL on a host of key topics. These include: a social constructivist-like view that identity is acquired, not innate, appreciating the value of linguistic capital, seeing that education is politically charged, discussing what would today be called Whorfianism, and
advocating therefore that language learning be enmeshed with the discourses of the target language, which today would be global cosmopolitan English, not specifically the English of Anglo-American native-speakers. He also recognized the role of what is called L2 identity in TESOL today, theorizing about its formation. He noted the importance of affect in language learning, and valued both learner and teacher autonomy, as well as numerous other issues current in TESOL today. Among those is CLT, and while previous authors have portrayed Ibn Khaldun as promoting it, it has been shown here that what he wrote on is closer to what we would today call immersion education or study abroad. So, while having been written in the 14th century, the Muqaddimah remains amazingly relevant to contemporary TESOL.

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References


Returning to Graduation Project: Attitudes and Perceived Challenges of Students and Staff at a Libyan EFL Department

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Abstract
In 1997, the Department of English (Faculty of Languages, University of Tripoli) canceled Graduation Project (GP) as a graduation requirement primarily due to growing student plagiarism. Two decades on, the Department decided it is time for Returning to Graduation Project (RGP). In preparation for this, a Research Methods (RM) module was delivered to students, and an intense ‘research design and methodology’ course was taken by the staff. In this exploratory mixed-methods case-study research, the main question focuses on attitudes and perceived challenges facing students and staff concerning RGP. The aim is to tackle negative attitudes and perceived obstacles in anticipation of a successful RGP, which spells out the significance of the research. Data were collected through a questionnaire (n=52) and a focus group discussion with seventh-semester students (10); semi-structured interviews with staff (13). A small majority of students (54%) supported RGP; the remaining 46% raised two kinds of concerns: realistic challenges of lacking resources, inadequate RM skills, and supervisor issues; unrealistic challenges involved time constraints, fear of presenting, and problems of determining research topics. Staff members were receptive to RGP but raised numerous concerns. Whereas experienced members expressed cynicism due to low students competencies and lacking resources, others saw RGP as an opportunity for students to gain practical research experience ahead of postgraduate study. Several challenges were perceived, chief among them are students lack of research skills, inexperienced supervisors, inadequate resources, and an ever-lasting concern with plagiarism. New staff reported the need for tuition in ‘data analysis and interpretation’, and ‘supervision practice’. Peculiarities characteristic of the case milieu emerged.

Keywords: Challenges to research, EFL students and staff at a Libyan department, graduation project, research methods, research supervision

Cite as: Elmabruk, R., & Bishti, R. (2020). Returning to Graduation Project: Attitudes and Perceived Challenges of Students and Staff at a Libyan EFL Department. Arab World English Journal, 11 (2) 127-148. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.8
Introduction

In the final semester/year of university study, undergraduate students are obliged to undertake a research project to demonstrate writing skills and independence as researchers (MacKeogh, 2006). As a result, students acquire useful research skills such as identifying researchable topics, problem-solving, critical thinking, analytical and statistical skills (MacKeogh, 2006). However, undertaking a Graduation Project (GP) is undoubtedly one of the most challenging tasks for students before graduation. This is particularly true for non-native EFL students who often struggle not only with research skills but also with Academic Writing (AW). As Abu-Rass (2015) points out, Arab students writing continues to lack supporting details and reasoning, as well as the misuse of cohesive words. Problems in Research Writing (RW) are much more prominent. Qasem and Zaied (2019) revealed that, in addition to lacking interest in doing research, Saudi students faced difficulties in determining research topics, lacked good knowledge of methodology, and were incapable of locating useful references.

The present study carried out on Libyan EFL undergraduates seeks to identify attitudes and perceived challenges by both staff and students as Returnees to Graduation Project (RGP); ‘R’ in RGP stands for either ‘returning’ or ‘returnees’ depending on syntax. The autumn 2018 seventh-semester cohort totalling 127 students (122 females; 5 males) along with Department staff at the time (51) comprised the research sample, for these students and staff members were faced with the prospect of RGP for the first time in over two decades following a period of suspension since 1997.

According to interviewed staff-members who witnessed the cancellation (four males), two reasons were given. First, the considerably high number of students compared with available supervisors; the second more decisive reason was serious plagiarism and the consistent replication of previous GPs; effectively amounting to fraud or cheating.

During the withdrawal of GP as a graduation requirement, students were not instructed in RM or RW, nor did staff receive any research training. In preparation for RGP, two provisional measures were taken. A staff development course on ‘research methodology’ covering research design, sampling, methodology issues, data analysis, and research ethics was organised. A Research Methods (RM) module was taught to students. Planning for RGP under such uncertainties entails having a sound awareness of prevailing attitudes and perceived challenges by students and staff so that precautionary measures could be taken beforehand e.g., addressing negative attitudes and what action is needed to tackle those challenges.

In view of the above research statement, the case-study seeks to provide answers to three questions as follows:

What are the students' attitudes and the perceived challenges concerning RGP?

What are the attitudes and perceived challenges by staff members concerning RGP?

What can precautionary measures be taken by the Department to prepare students and staff to address negative attitudes and perceived challenges (in one and two above) before RGP?

A conceptual framework

Significance of Graduation Project

A research project for undergraduate students assesses the extent to which they have comprehended their field of study; it helps students to broaden their horizons in learning as they
read deeply about their chosen topic. Moreover, doing a graduation project provides students with useful hands-on experience in data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and in writing up their work. Todd, Bannister, and Clegg (2004) summarise the features of undergraduate research; they include the choice of topic, independent learning, proposal preparation, data collection, data analysis, research ethics, and writing up findings. Hussey and Hussey (1997) emphasize that an undergraduate research project is valuable for students’ future career as it develops problem-solving skills, and trains students to be active learners, independent researchers capable of applying academic knowledge into their chosen field.

**Students problems**

Although RW is primarily associated with AW, particular problems usually occur in the writing process. One of the main issues encountered by Libyan students is the inability to paraphrase correctly and tend to plagiarize, often without proper citation (Alsied & Ibrahim, 2017). Taskeen, Shehzadi, Khan, and Saleem (2014) understandably attribute students’ plagiarism to supervisor inexperience to detecting plagiarised work and, as a result, students get away with it. Another explanation by Taskeen et al. (2014) is that students are untrained in RW and/or insufficiently exposed to research output, which gives them little confidence in their ability to undertake research. Other obstacles reported by Alshehry (2014) are time limitations, lack of library resources, appropriate journal references, difficulties in choosing suitable topics, and poor Internet access.

**Supervisor problems**

One of the main issues in GP is the quality of supervision. According to Alsied and Ibrahim (2017), supervisors can be one of the biggest problems Libyan students encounter during RW. When students start GP, they usually hesitate in choosing a supervisor; during the project, they may decide to change supervisors for different reasons. In other cases, supervisors are uncooperative particularly when students are not active enough, lack motivation or if the topic does not interest the supervisor.

A study by Simuforosa, Veronica, and Rosemary (2015) revealed that problems are not restricted to students’ research skills or proficiency levels; supervisors’ inadequate research skills and experience, uncooperativeness, and negative comments on students work are also influential factors. The researchers report that supervisors impact student output and the supervision process as a whole. Students reported fluctuation in supervisors’ feedback; they sometimes pressurize students to change the topic instead of modifying it, which can be devastating for students. Such supervisor behaviour could be attributed to inadequate research skills, or insufficient knowledge on a chosen topic.

The lack of regular contact with supervisors is another hindrance; some supervisors are said to behave irresponsibly by not following students step by step because of other responsibilities (Alsied & Ibrahim), 2017; (Chabaya, Chiome & Chabaya), 2009. Consequently, students end up doing most of the work unaided, which will, more often than not, result in inferior research projects (Alsied & Ibrahim, 2017).

**Supervisor relationship**

The relationship between student and supervisor is crucial for the supervision process and its final output. Simuforosa, Veronica, and Rosemary (2015) report that students gave negative
comments about supervisor relationships; some reported authoritarian treatment by their supervisor; further, students found difficulties arranging meetings with supervisors due to commitments. Such conduct inevitably results in a poor student-supervisor relationship and is likely to delay or hinder project completion.

Mahammoda (2016) noted that the quality of supervision played a vital role in students’ work; when supervisors show neither punctuality nor adherence, students often resort to plagiarism to compensate for such inadequacy, which harms both students and supervisor. On the other hand, Simuforosa et al. (2015) report supervisor dissatisfaction with students’ performance as they lacked commitment and progression, which resulted in poor projects. Students’ indifference was also a contributing factor to the success or failure of research projects. Students emphasized that regular contact with supervisors is supportive and reassuring. Detailed supervisor feedback on writing, especially grammar, was appreciated by students; however, instead of relying on supervisors, some students considered reading around their problem broadens their horizons and helps them understand more about their topic (Kuo & Chiu, 2009).

Previous studies

Only three relevant studies were found in the literature regarding problems or obstacles in conducting GP/RW with reference to the narrow Libyan context: Alsied and Ibrahim (2017), Elmabruk (2019) and Elmojahed (2010). Four other studies in the broader context are reported.

Alsied and Ibrahim (2017) explored RW difficulties by Libyan EFL undergraduate students at Sebha University. The aim was to determine the lecturer perceptions of students writing. The researchers conducted a questionnaire with 42 students and interviewed four teachers. The results revealed several barriers in RW, including choice of topic, formulating research problems, collecting and analyzing data, writing literature reviews, methodology, results, and discussion sections. Furthermore, the teachers’ perception of students’ work was negative. This was attributed to the students’ poor background in RW, shortage of facilities e.g., Internet access and library resources and, most importantly, students’ unwillingness to work hard and achieve success. Such problems resulted in projects below required standards.

Elmabruk (2019) explored the impact of utilizing cooperative group learning (CGL) with a complementary approach in teaching RM at the Faculty of Education Tripoli (Libya). Students were instructed in concepts of methodology and gradually applied them into a research proposal (RP) ready for transformation into GP upon supervisor approval, thus saving time and effort the following semester. Three instruments were used: classroom observation of CGL activities, analyses of RPs and the problems therein, and focus group discussions with students regarding their learning experiences, and the difficulties faced. The results revealed considerable challenges pertinent to CGL dynamics. Difficulties in RP spanned a wide range of issues, including weakness in research writing, accuracy, determining a researchable focus, formulating research problems, generating research questions, coherent literature review, and selecting appropriate data collection tools. Serious concerns involved plagiarism and fraudulent activity by reproducing previous GPs.

Elmojahed (2010) investigated the hypothesis that research projects by Libyan university students rarely fulfil the required standards of empirical research. He analyzed samples of completed research projects from different EFL Departments, held semi-structured interviews with teachers, and conducted a student questionnaire. The results reveal students negligence of proper
citation and referencing, which constitute an act of plagiarism. The results also show that students do not adhere to primary stages of empirical research, or proofread their finished work.

Bandele and Adebule (2013) examined the attitudes of students towards carrying out research projects in Ekiti State University, India. Three hundred and sixty students from the faculty of education, arts, and social sciences participated in a questionnaire. The findings showed that most students had adverse attitudes towards research projects regardless of gender and the type of faculty; they felt they had to do it because it was compulsory. Anxiety, fear, and boredom were the most common negative responses among students who agreed that concepts of research were hard to understand. Inappropriate research environments and time limitations caused negative attitudes.

Mahammoda (2016) conducted a study at the University of Bahir Dar in Ethiopia to determine difficulties facing undergraduate students with their teachers during supervision. Four factors influenced the quality of research: educational, psychological, social/personal, and institutional. Academic factors include students’ poor analytical skills, critical thinking, language skills, and unwillingness to complete the research. A lack of motivation and confidence also had an impact on students’ psychological state. Regarding social and personal factors, students could not organize time effectively; they had little contact with supervisors; unwillingness to cooperate by participants to implement research instruments. Concerning institutional factors, a shortage of updated textbooks and library resources greatly influenced research quality.

Dwihandini, Marhaeni, and Suarnajaya (2013) researched factors influencing students’ research projects at Mahasaraswati University, Indonesia. Three factors appeared to have a remarkable impact: psychological, socio-cultural, and linguistic factors. Results revealed difficulties in linking sentences resulting in disunity and incoherence; challenges in choosing appropriate vocabulary and structure were encountered. The researchers noted that the abovementioned factors are associated with socio-cultural components. The linguistic factors involved challenges in accomplishing good RW with minimal grammar errors. Psychological factors included students’ incompetence, indecisiveness in selecting a project title, and lack of confidence regarding knowledge and experience in writing a thesis.

Kuo and Chiu (2009) studied the factors influencing the performance of Taiwanese undergraduates in writing research projects. The researchers focused on students’ experiences, perceptions, and challenges in writing research. The purpose was also to discover students’ strategies in dealing with challenges and the kind of support needed during the writing process. The results regarding perception were both positive and negative. Students described research work as tricky and challenging since they had poor backgrounds and lacked critical thinking skills. While some students considered writing a project ‘exhausting’, ‘tiring’, and ‘time-consuming’, others described it as interesting, thoughtful, and useful.

**Synthesis; entity-related classification**

In light of the above review of the relevant literature, certain deductions are made. Undoubtedly, GP is of highly significant importance to students’ academic and professional growth, and no one can argue otherwise. However, the accomplishment of GP is often associated with quite a few challenges. Some studies have associated these challenges with relevant factors such as academic/linguistic, institutional, psychological, social, or personal. However, other
studies have attributed these hindrances to the entities concerned i.e., students, supervisors, or institutions. Therefore, a classification of challenges according to an entity-related approach clarifies who or what entity can be held responsible for remedial change or corrective action. The following is a list of problems drawn from the reviewed literature organized under what has been termed ‘entity-related classification’:

1. Student-related issues (willingness, attitude, anxiety, time management, research skills, AW, RW, RM, critical thinking, linguistic competence, referencing, choosing supervisors, supervisor relationship, problem-solving, proofreading);

Supervisor-related issues (research experience, constructive feedback, availability, cooperativeness, regular contact, punctuality, authoritarianism);

Institution-related issues (library resources, Internet access, updated textbooks).

However, it is not uncommon to encounter challenges that can be attributed to more than one entity. Research writing, for example, is institution-related and student-related since an institution has to teach it but, at the same time, the students, too, are responsible for comprehending underlying concepts and implementing them in practice.

The present case-study explores attitudes and perceived challenges to RGP following two decades of abandonment. To clarify who has responsibility to combat those obstacles, the study has adopted the entity-related approach, so the onus is squarely placed on, or combination of, student, supervisor, or institution (Faculty or Department).

Methodology

In exploring the attitudes and perceived challenges by students and staff ahead of RGP, the researchers pursued a mixed-method design in which a combination of quantitative and qualitative data was collected. The data-collection instruments were:

**Students questionnaire:** The questionnaire comprised a mixture of multiple-choice and open-ended questions (Appendix), which sought students attitudes and perceptions regarding RGP and the obstacles anticipated. The survey was administered online through SurveyGizmo to seventh-semester students (127), who comprised the research sample. 52 (study sample) returned the questionnaires, yielding a moderate return rate of 41%.

**Focus group discussion:** Ten socially active students (nine females and one male) out of the study sample were invited to volunteer in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Due to the higher proportion of females enrolled at the Department, such gender ratio was not unusual. The central theme for discussion was students’ attitudes to and perceptions of RGP.

**Staff semi-structured interviews:** 13 members of staff agreed to participate in the semi-structured interviews. With their consent, the meetings were audio-recorded and later transcribed. At the time of interviewing, 51 staff members were officially available, but some were dispatched to other faculties while others were unreachable due to conflicting timetables. To widen the scope of interview data, three categories of staff were purposefully targeted: 1) experienced members who had witnessed the 1997 cessation (four males); 2) experienced members who did not observe the termination, but with previous experience (four males and two females); 3) Inexperienced members without prior supervision experience (five females).
Results and discussion

Questionnaire

The questionnaire sought to determine students’ attitudes regarding RGP and the perceived challenges that could confront them. Concerns with the RM module as a preparatory measure and the kind of support facilities required are also included. Responses to the open-ended questions have been incorporated in the discussion.

Attitudes to RGP

As Figure one demonstrates, 10% of the students strongly agree to RGP; 44% agree; 21% completely disagree; 25% disagree. In short, overall attitudes are reasonably positive since a student majority, though small at 54%, welcomed RGP compared to 46%. Following two decades of discontinuation, this result is an encouraging sign for RGP.

![Figure 1. Students attitudes to RGP](image)

Those students who supported RGP were very excited. According to the students, the GP experience will not only equip them with independent research, but will also inspire them with a sense of achievement; the opportunity to add their 'personal touch’ marking the conclusion of an academic.

Priority skills

The students expressed the need to develop specific priority skills in preparation for GP. The students perceived such skill shortages (Table one) as shortcomings or challenges they needed to overcome before RGP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cum. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research methods</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing and citation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organization</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research writing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Skills</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>07.3</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>03.3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research methods

Over one fifth (26.6%) of the students thought research methods were the highest priority for them to develop. This was somewhat unexpected since they had recently covered RM as preparation for RGP. Justification for such concern was that they had not fully grasped how to apply concepts of RM, or how to select appropriate methods to match particular research purposes.

Referencing and citation

16.9% of the students considered themselves weak in referencing and citation skills. Again, this can be attributed to inadequate preparation in the RM module. It also implies that tutors in other modules do not stress the importance of referencing in assignments, if at all a requirement.

Planning and organization

16.9% of the students were concerned with planning and organization skills, which is mostly about time management. They explained that they would be preoccupied with other modules and that GP would put them under extra pressure.

Critical thinking

15.3% of the students thought they required assistance with critical thinking. The need to enhance this skill was not unexpected, for Libyan students in typically traditional teacher-centred conditions are not usually encouraged to criticize or question what they are taught. They rightly considered criticality as relevant in reviewing the literature of their research.

Research writing

13.7% believed they had a weakness in RW, which would cause difficulties for them in writing up their project. As the students explained, this is because the writing courses they had taken have not prepared them well enough for RW.

IT Skills

7.3% of the students felt a weakness in IT skills e.g., the effective use of search engines and using Microsoft Office programs. What they needed most was to identify useful references quickly. For novice researchers, massive search results, as is the case, can be fairly overwhelming.

Grammar

Only 3.3% thought they needed to improve their grammar to write up error-free projects. In reality, it is believed that a more significant percentage of students struggle with grammar. A plausible rationale for such a low proportion is that students are not fully conscious of their grammar errors and thus assume their writing is acceptable.

Effectiveness of Research Methodology

To prepare the students for GP, they had to take RM. As part of the assessment, students had to write a short paper, or a mini-project, as the RM tutor called it. Table 2 shows students’ responses regarding the effectiveness of RM in preparation for RGP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cum. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very useful and informative</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful but did not cover everything</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful but not interesting</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not useful and no new knowledge gained</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. How useful was Research Methodology?
As Table two shows, a small proportion of the students (13.5%) felt RM was beneficial. This low percentage is not an encouraging sign and appears to explain why students thought they needed to improve skills in research methods (Table one).

Almost a third (28.8%) of the students thought RM was useful but did not cover everything they needed to know in preparation for RGP. Another 27% considered the module uninteresting though useful.

At the other extreme, 15.4% of the students found the module ‘not very useful’ and did not provide them with new knowledge. Some students added that they struggled to understand RM.

A further 9.6% found the module unuseful and challenging to understand. 5.7% had other thoughts but did not offer any justification. It appears (through discussions with students) that those respondents had personal issues with the RM tutor and did not wish to give further details.

Problems with Research Methodology
A range of problems was raised by the case-students concerning the RM module:

Internet access
Some students had no private access to the Internet, while others found it challenging to search for specific sources related to their topic.

Limited topics
Other students complained that the lecturer had restricted topic choice for the mini-project. One student echoed that the lecturer was not very flexible with topics and, as a result, most students were uncomfortable throughout the course.

Data collection
Even those who found good topics encountered problems with methodology. One respondent said she did not know whether qualitative or quantitative data was appropriate, as she did not see the difference between the two.

Dual-task
Task duality was another issue to worry about for the students. They felt that the task of understanding important methodological concepts at the same time as doing a mini-project, in which they have to apply such concepts, was problematic.

Course material
The students remarked the course material was weak and carelessly planned; it lacked details on project structure and how to write coherently. Further, they were not shown samples of completed projects as model examples to emulate.

Lecturer personality
Several students disliked the lecturer personality and complained they felt quite confused because she continuously changed her mind. For example, she would ask students to do a specific task, and then, in the next lecture, would change her mind and ask for a different task. Another
student complained that the lecturer had conflicting opinions in that she may like some work today, but dislikes the same work next day.

Support facilities required
The support facilities the students required in preparation for RGP are shown in Figure two:

![Figure two. Support facilities required by students](image)

Equipped library
The majority of students (73%) believed that an equipped library with updated resources was the most essential requirement in doing GPs, which is not surprising since neither Faculty nor Department has an updated library of English textbooks for students or staff. University Campus B, in which the Faculty is located, has a general library with a dated collection of English textbooks.

Study areas
A good majority of students (64%) thought that dedicated study spaces are vital, especially when working in groups. At present, students walk around looking for vacant lecture rooms to work in or have to put up with crowded spaces. There should be special quite areas dedicated for us to work in, one student remarked.

IT resources
A considerable proportion of students indicated that equipment and IT resources (60% and 58% respectively) should be available. The students stressed the need for projectors to prepare presentations, as lecture rooms are not fitted with these and that, at present, the Department has only one projector reserved for staff.

Statistics help
40% of the students stressed that help with statistical data analysis was needed. They commented that they were familiar with Excel, but not with SPSS, which reveals that students were not instructed in data analysis or SPSS during RM.

overall, several skill shortages were perceived by the students as challenges to RGP though at varying degrees of priority; the highest being research methods (26.6%) followed by referencing and citation (16.9%), planning and organization or time management (also 16.9%), critical
thinking (15.3%), RW (13.7%), and IT skills (7.3%). Such perceived weaknesses are, in fact, subdivisions of research skills, the treatment of which is typically addressed through a well-structured RM module. The issue of grammar difficulties, which was raised by relatively fewer students (3.3%), can be dealt with by reviewing the grammar curriculum and delivery.

The RM course was supposed to prepare students for GP. However, as the tutor admitted (to the students), the course was ready at short notice. As a result, 25% of the students were dissatisfied and thought it was not useful. Those who considered it useful saw it as either uninteresting or insufficient. Not only that, but the students also had difficulties in understanding and applying RM concepts, choosing topics for the required mini-projects, collecting data, and accessing the Internet, all of which were perceived challenges to undertaking GP since the mini-project serves an identical outcome.

To resolve those difficulties and perceived challenges faced during RM, the students expressed the need for several support facilities. These entailed a properly equipped library (73%), study space (64%), assistive equipment (60%), IT resources (58%), and help with statistics (40%).

**Focus Group Discussion**

Students in the FGD deliberated various issues pertaining to RGP. The objective was to gain insight into their attitudes, perceptions, and concerns regarding GP. Their state of preparedness and the degree to which the RM course was helpful was also discussed. Extractions from FGD (italicized) are reported verbatim. The following themes emerged:

**Theme 1: Students attitude**

**Supporting RGP**

Eight out of ten FGD students supported RGP and welcomed the idea after a long period of cessation. They noted that every student would have something special to contribute to celebrate the end of an undergraduate journey, for each GP constitutes a unique achievement and renders a student’s scholastic plight fruitful.

FGD students looked forward to RGP and to gain new experiences in project writing. They asserted that writing a project is a useful, beneficial and an important experience; they considered it a chance to apply our academic abilities and knowledge and gain new skills. One student underlined the significance of GP: real graduation should include a graduation project. Other FGD students echoed this perception: the absence of GP in our Department underestimates students’ achievements and their specialization; RGP was hence welcomed as an opportunity to prove them wrong and leave the university with a great achievement.

One passionate student added:

*I agree on the idea of reintroducing graduation project because it provides the opportunity to present actual achievements by the students and promote the learning skills within them. I personally view it as an overall outcome from the entire academic experience. Graduation projects could also help students discover their exact tendency and passion within this field and may possibly guide their future career.*
RGP concerns
The students opposed to RGP had causes for concern. One dreaded the idea of having to present her project as she felt shy to speak publicly: I will highly agree with the decision if it was based on writing a research only and not involve oral presentation.

Another added that she was not ready because we still do not have sufficient knowledge to enable us to write an academic project. They explained that although we studied research methodology, the knowledge we got was not enough.

One student complained about ineffective preparation for RW at the Department. In four levels of Composition and two Creative Writing modules, teachers almost repeated the same material, an observation which was shared by other FGD students:

We took Composition 1-2-3-4; we took Creative Writing 1-2. None of them at all mentioned anything about how to write a formal academic research or the methods used of writing it. These classes got wasted on repeating the same topics...fiction; imagine this, imagine that, but we don’t have any experience or clue on all the methods and details of research writing. We can’t just dive in writing something that big, with so little time spent practising on it.

Themes 2: Attitudes towards RM
In studying RM, the students said they expected to learn how to write a project not to do one, be it a mini-project, at the same time as understanding RM. For them, that was disappointing and more confusing.

Regarding the RM syllabus, most students said it was inappropriate and lacked explanatory detail; it listed concepts of RW without explaining how to apply them to GP. Participants reported that the lecturer said that she was asked to teach RM on terse notice and, accordingly, time was insufficient to prepare the course thoroughly.

Students criticized the tutor’s constant change of opinion, which also surfaced in the questionnaire (Q6). A student reported difficulty understanding what the tutor wanted; for she asks students to do a certain task then changes her mind.

Another confrontational issue was topic-selection for the mini-project; the tutor wanted students’ to choose social rather than language-related topics. For example, the tutor asked students write about why Libyans with university degrees refuse manual jobs. The students thought such topic was unusual as they are not studying English for social science; instead, they should be researching issues in linguistics or applied linguistics in preparation for GP.

Given the hastily prepared RM module and the ensuing discontent, students expressed worries about completing GP in time (one semester); particularly with the lack of Department support facilities and library resources.

Theme 3: Concerns about supervision
Another perceived challenge was supervisors’ unfamiliarity with chosen topics and/or methodology issues, in which case the supervisor would be unsupportive. Hence, students stressed having supervisors whose areas of specialism are as close as possible to their chosen topics. Students also emphasized that a good supervisor should be accommodating, flexible, and allows students to express their views instead of imposing his/her own.
To sum up, two kinds of challenges emerged from the students FGD; those of acceptable and realistic nature, and those that seem unrealistic, at least in the eyes of the researchers, by sceptic students. Realistically-perceived challenges were library support services, IT resources, tuition in data analyses, and work areas. Perceived fears of unrealistic nature included having to make oral presentations, the pressure of time, and determining research foci, all of which appear unconvincing and could quickly be resolved through a conscientious change in attitude.

Staff interviews
The staff semi-structured interviews involved their attitudes to and perceptions of RGP, the barriers expected, and whether staff were prepared to undertake GP supervision. With prior consent, data were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

Attitudes to RGP
All staff members interviewed (13) apart from one welcomed RGP. They pointed out that doing research will help the students, especially those who aim to pursue postgraduate studies, and will motivate them to search and read about their chosen topic:

Students have been studying at the university for eight semesters, so this is the time when they should write projects, reflect on what they have been learning during their university studies and focus their knowledge on a particular area of research.

Another staff member confirmed that it’s a very good decision to reintroduce it (GP). And it gives students a lot of training which they might need in later stages in their lives. So they will not be surprised when they get into MA. And, actually, they should do research. We want them to change their ways of just rote learning.

Competency levels
Although the interviewed staff members (13) supported RGP at a ratio of 12:1, they had a few reservations. They stressed that students competency levels should be considered before RGP; Students need preparation in research writing as most are not skilful in simple essay writing.

An experienced staff member was outraged; he argued that doing graduation project is a waste of time and most students are unable to do it. He attributed this to poor language skills. He gave examples of fatal mistakes committed by students in the seventh semester, such as misspelling ‘does’ and not knowing irregular past-tense verbs like ‘understand’. The lecturer strongly suggested a compulsory remedial course before RGP.

Another interviewee argued for a graded approach in preparation for RGP:

My objection is on the way of introducing it (GP). It shouldn’t be at once; I mean teaching or reintroducing project subject should be graded, so for instance in the fourth semester, we should introduce the students to what we mean by project, aims….etc, next stage maybe familiarizing students with the way of writing academic things as if you are reintroducing them into research methods and this takes time. When the students get familiar with all the stuff, we can ask them to write a project.
Lack of resources
Interviewees agreed that a well-equipped library with updated resources is an urgent requirement. A well-equipped library with online access, working space, and computers are basic facilities students need. An interviewee stated that such lack of resources will limit students’ creativity and will affect the quality of their work.

Confidence to supervise
Staff members stressed that preparing supervisors before RGP is critical to ensure they are confident about the task. The Department must train staff members who are expected to supervise projects, especially the newly recruited ones; RGP is good as long as supervisors are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Four new staff members expressed willingness to supervise but needed updating on data collection instruments and analyses. Two of them suggested giving training workshops for inexperienced staff to prepare them for supervision.

Three new staff members were unwilling to supervise projects and confessed they were not confident to take up supervision. One member added that, with a full teaching load, quality supervision is difficult.

One new member of staff was not too confident to begin supervising projects, for she saw the task as challenging. In a redress, she remarked that consulting experienced colleagues would help; a positive attitude towards collaborative development.

Supervisor skills
Most interviewees were anxious about the criteria for qualified supervisors. They noted that some supervisors do not update themselves and will not know if students reproduce previous projects, nor if proposed topics are viable or practical. It is the latter point. Because of that, it was stated that some staff members are not eligible for supervision. The wrong selection of supervisors may eventually lead to unsuccessful projects and failure of students.

GP assessment
An interviewee commented on supervisors’ role in GP assessment. He noted that assessment is a significant concern, especially with the presence of nepotism. Staff stressed that students should not be assessed on written work alone, but also on presenting their projects orally where they demonstrate an understanding of their work and respond to panel questions. An experienced member added that assessment criteria must be set by the Department and that coordination among supervisors is very important, by following agreed assessment procedures.

Plagiarism
Interviewed staff members shared concerns with the endless problem of plagiarism. An interviewee warned that, through the Internet, students nowadays have easy access to all kinds of information. Thus, supervisors must be alert and check students work more carefully. Students can easily copy and paste material from the Internet without being detected due to absence of plagiarism detection software. Another staff member commented that for GPs to be successful, supervisors must take their work seriously. It was observed that as students plagiarize from the Internet, some supervisors just pass them instead of advising them to paraphrase.
Staff observed that students could still reproduce previously submitted projects as they did in the past. Moreover, supervisors would not necessarily notice such fraudulent activity due to the absence of a database for GPs. Two staff members were saddened to note that students actually buy completed projects through private services.

On the whole, staff members met RGP with praise but not without scepticism. Although student numbers have decreased compared with the nineties (due to stricter enrolment conditions), it is still considered relatively high given the number of experienced staff available for supervision. On a positive note, however, doing GP is expected to provide undergraduates with opportunities to gain practical research skills to enhance their future careers.

On the other hand, serious concerns were raised regarding potentially recurring issues since the termination of GP in 1997. Amongst these concerns are students low competency levels, scarcity of resources, plagiarism, and whether the problem of replicating research work could ever be eliminated. The issues of supervision skills, the capability to supervise, particularly by inexperienced staff members, and standardized project-assessment criteria need to be addressed before RGP.

Summary and conclusion

With reference to findings concerning attitudes and perceived challenges, a summary is presented in Tables three and four consecutively. Researchers’ interpretations are added as appropriate.

Table 3. Summary of attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students (52)</th>
<th>Staff (13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the whole, the students’ attitudes towards RGP, resulting from the questionnaire, were not conclusive, but reasonably positive. Following two decades of cancellation in GP, even such a small majority (54%) is encouraging. The size of negative attitudes (46%) was probably a product of students’ uncertainties in accomplishing GP successfully, particularly under the low-resourced conditions the students are well aware of.

On the other hand, attitudes by the members of staff were distinctively optimistic. Twelve out of thirteen members interviewed encouraged RGP. Still, they expressed serious concern regarding some issues e.g., students language proficiency, lack of resources, supervision skills, absence of assessment criteria, in addition to the endless problem of plagiarism.

As for perceived challenges to RGP, Table four provides a summary of responses by students and staff with respect to skills shortages or unavailable support. Entities (students, supervisors, Faculty, or Department) that are considered responsible for addressing those challenges are stated alongside. Responsibility may, nonetheless, be shared by two entities e.g., SS/D (students and Department) where both share accountability for taking action. For brevity, one example from the literature is included to indicate alignment of perceived challenges with the reviewed literature in each case.
Table 4. Summary of perceived challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/ item</th>
<th>Sub-skill/ item</th>
<th>Perceived by</th>
<th>Entity responsible</th>
<th>Alignment with literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research skills</td>
<td>Topic selection</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>SS/S</td>
<td>Taskeen et al. (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning/ time management</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Alshehry (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alsied and Ibrahim (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>SS/S</td>
<td>SS/D</td>
<td>Elmabruk (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Referencing and citation</td>
<td>SS/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qasem and Zaied (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mahammoda (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research writing</td>
<td>SS/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alsied and Ibrahim (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S/SS</td>
<td>Elmojahed (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT skills</td>
<td>Internet search</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>SS/D</td>
<td>Qasem and Zaied (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistics and related software e.g., SPSS</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>F/D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language skills</td>
<td>Grammar/ linguistic competence</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>SS/D</td>
<td>Mahammoda (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision skills</td>
<td>Familiarity with topic</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Simuforosa et al. (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of methodology</td>
<td>SS/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>SS/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taskeen et al. (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kuo and Chiu (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mahammoda (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Detecting plagiarism</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>SS/D</td>
<td>Taskeen et al. (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty support</td>
<td>Library services and resources</td>
<td>SS/S</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Alsied and Ibrahim (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IT resources, e.g. Internet</td>
<td>SS/S</td>
<td>F/D</td>
<td>Alshehry (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment, e.g. projectors</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>F/D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study areas</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>F/D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department support</td>
<td>Supervision skills</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>D/S</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment criteria</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>D/S</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: D= Department; F= Faculty; N/A= Not Available; S= Supervisor; SS= Students

As observed, most of the perceived challenges are aligned with the literature. However, some (flagged N/A; Not Available) have not apparently been reported (as far as the researchers are aware). Therefore, it can be concluded that such unaligned perceived challenges are peculiarities to the Libyan ill-prepared and under-resourced context. These peculiarities have been
reproduced in Tables five and six to reflect who the perceivers are (students or supervisors, respectively):

Table 5. Peculiarities in students perceived challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Skill/ item</th>
<th>Entity responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Statistics and related software e.g., SPSS</td>
<td>F/D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Equipment e.g., projectors</td>
<td>F/D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Study areas</td>
<td>F/D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: D= Department; F= Faculty; SS= Students

1. **Using statistics software e.g., SPSS (Entity F/D):** At any other university that takes research seriously, educating students in the use of statistical software is seen as a must; hence, such skill is unlikely to emerge as a challenge for pre-final semester students, for they typically learn statistics and how to use statistical packages at much earlier stages of undergraduate study.

2. **Equipment, e.g. projectors (Entity F/D):** The same line of reasoning also applies to the provision of tools and equipment. It is uncommon for schools let alone higher education institutions to be without projectors. These are considered one of the simplest pieces of equipment that should be made available for teaching staff.

3. **Study areas (Entity F/D):** These too, are a Libyan peculiarity. Anyone who has studied at or visited a foreign university, or school, knows that workspaces are basic entitlements for students, something that would never be perceived as an obstacle to research/group work.

Table 6. Peculiarities in supervisors perceived challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Entity responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Supervisor skills</td>
<td>D/S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assessment criteria</td>
<td>D/S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Knowledge of methodology</td>
<td>D/S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: D= Department; S= Supervisor

1. **Supervision skills (Entity D/S):** Lecturers in higher education are expected to acquire and develop supervision skills throughout their academic careers. Moreover, staff are often trained in research supervision through workshops and/or shadowing of expert supervisors. In the present case-study, this peculiarity is nevertheless justified by having a relatively large number of untrained staff consequential to two decades of withdrawal of GP.

2. **Assessment criteria (Entity D/S):** This predicament is also a peculiarity of this case-study owing to the period of GP termination. Typically, GP assessment criteria are a recognised standard across faculty or department.

3. **Knowledge of methodology (Entity D/S):** Admittedly, there had been no research supervision training for staff at the Department since the cessation of GP in 1997. At more developed universities, teaching staff are expected, as MA or Ph.D. holders, to possess a reasonable working knowledge of research methodology.
Participants recommendations

Proposed recommendations made by students and staff to combat perceived challenges in anticipation of RGP are drawn from the students’ responses to the questionnaire and FGD interview, as well as the staff interviews.

By students

1. The writing curriculum should be reviewed to effectively prepare students for RW. Constructive feedback by teachers is imperative throughout the writing modules.

2. RW is crucial and should receive particular attention in structure and delivery. Model examples of writing at different stages of GP should be available for students to study and emulate if necessary.

3. Attention to writing accuracy must be given priority throughout all writing modules.

4. RM should be delivered by experienced and confident instructors. It must be restructured such that theoretical concepts are simplified without imposing a mini-project on students at the same time.

5. IT skills, including Internet search skills and statistics software e.g., SPSS, should be introduced at earlier stages of university study.

Library resources with a full range of updated textbooks and online access, IT facilities such as computers and the Internet should be available to students and staff.

Basic essential equipment such as projectors, if not installed at every lecture room, should be available and accessible to teachers and students.

Students should have dedicated study areas where they can work individually or in groups.

Students have the right to be guided by experienced supervisors who are committed, flexible, and able to provide constructive feedback throughout the stages of GP.

By staff

1. Standard criteria for GP assessment must be prepared and mutually agreed upon by all supervisors.

2. Library facilities should include online access to appropriate journals.

3. Updating in research design and methodology/ data analysis and interpretation is required.

4. Staff, especially new members, should go through structured training workshops to enhance supervision skills before RGP. Topic selection and viability must be addressed early on.

5. Access to and training in plagiarism detection software should be a prime concern.

Researchers recommendations

1. The idea of asking students to do a mini-project is credible, but would be more productive if integrated into RW instead of RM, where students work on a topic of their choice as a research proposal that can later be developed into GP. Accordingly, students should take AW, followed by RM, then RW integrated with a research proposal (see Elmabruk, 2019) and finally, GP.

2. Institutional online subscription to relevant journals is a must for both students and staff.
3. Staff development workshops on research supervision skills should be arranged and delivered by expert supervisors. Staff members who are new to supervision may act as co-supervisors, where they shadow an expert first supervisor, until sufficient experience is gained to proceed independently.

4. A database for GP is indispensable to combat the reproduction of previous GPs. Staff should have access to such database and be trained in using plagiarism detection software.

A final word
A final word in the government’s ear is in order. For how long will the peculiarities of the ill-equipped and poorly-resourced conditions within the Department, or higher education contexts for that matter, persist? Over two decades have elapsed since the termination of GP (which the first author of this paper witnessed in 1997) and very little has changed.

If we were to ask an emergent research question ‘what has changed since 1997 that warrants RGP?’ Our answer would simply be “not much”; the conspicuous peculiarities of the Libyan context still linger on. The only promising thing that has changed somewhat is attitude; the prevailing strong attitudes of staff, and those by the motivated students who aspire to make a lasting impression at the end of a unique academic journey.

Limitations of the study
Certain circumstances may have limited aspects of data collection in some way. For example, due to a clash of timetables, it was not possible to interview all the staff members at the Department. Although 51 lecturers were officially teaching, 13 of them were giving general English at other faculties of the university; three had administrative duties, and two were on leave. The students’ response to the questionnaire was not as high as expected. Out of 127 students, only 52 responded, which gave a moderate return rate of 41%. To overcome such a limitation, it is recommended that students’ questionnaires are administered face-to-face, rather than online or by e-mail, to guarantee a higher rate of return.

Suggestions for further research
The researchers suggest further studies on:

1. The nature of problems encountered by students in RW and the extent to which it can be developed through collaboration between students and/or between students and supervisors using appropriate online platforms.

How inexperienced members of staff are engaged as co-supervisors in research supervision and how they can their supervision skills be scaffolded through shadowing of expert supervisors.

A close observational study of the dynamics of the supervisory process and the kind of obstacles encountered by students and staff. In fact, the researchers are planning to carry out such research as soon as the first implementation of GP since 1997 takes place at the Faculty of Languages.

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**Appendix**

**Students questionnaire**

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with reintroducing graduation projects?

□ Strongly Agree □ Agree □ Disagree □ Strongly Disagree

Q2. Please state a major reason for your answer:

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

... ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q3. What skills do you think you need to develop before starting your project? (You may choose more than one option)?

□ Research writing □ Research methods □ Grammar □ Critical thinking □ IT skills □ Planning and organization □ Other (please specify) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q4. Please give a reason for your answer(s):

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q5. To what extent was Research Methods useful in preparing you for the research project?

□ Very useful; covered everything I wanted to know regarding research projects □ Useful but didn’t cover everything regarding research projects □ Useful but not interesting because the content was ineffective □ Not useful and I didn’t gain new knowledge regarding projects □ Not very useful and I had difficulties understanding the topics
Q6. What problems have you encountered while studying Research Methodology?
........................................................................................................................................

Q7. Do you think the Research Methodology module should be improved next semester?
□ Yes □ No  If ‘yes’ please say what improvement you would like to see.
........................................................................................................................................

Q8. What kind of problems did you think you are likely to face in your project next semester? Please give at least one major problem or concern.
........................................................................................................................................

Q9. What kind of support/facilities would you think the Department to provide for students?
□ Technical support
□ Statistical services
□ Equipment (projectors, recorders for data collection, etc.)
□ Library with a range of up-dated resources
□ Study space
□ IT resources (printing, accessing computers, Internet, etc.)
□ Other (please specify)........................................................................................................
Investigation of Vocabulary Learning Strategies to Identify Word Meanings for Saudi EFL Students in Reading Context

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College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al Kharj, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

This study attempted to answer the following research questions related to the various vocabulary discovery strategies which are used by Saudi undergraduate learners to find unknown word meanings, the most and the least vocabulary discovery strategies the learners used to discover unknown word meanings, the relationship between the type of Vocabulary Learning Strategies used and the scores the learners accomplished on the vocabulary test, and effectiveness of the learner control and the teacher control strategy in enhancing learners’ ability to discover meanings of unknown words. Answering these questions of the study are expected to help language instructors determine the most feasible vocabulary learning strategies to help their students improve their vocabulary and so their language competences. Through purposive sampling, a group of 50 male students participated in this descriptive and analytic type of study. A questionnaire and a vocabulary test were used to collect data. The findings of the study revealed that in understanding a reading text, EFL Saudi students tend to figure out the meanings of unknown words, mainly by guessing word-meanings through different sub-strategies. The least used was the social interaction strategy. It was also found that students’ scores on the vocabulary test significantly correlated (positively and negatively) with the type of strategy they used. This study concluded that it is vital for teachers and textbook writers to design more activities to train students on the use of effective vocabulary learning strategies, mainly guessing through socially linked contextual clues.

Keywords: English vocabulary learning, Saudi EFL learners, vocabulary learning strategies, language learning, language acquisition

Introduction

When learners acquire the knowledge of the lexicon of a language, they attain language proficiency (Schmitt, 2008) since vocabulary learning is not only acquiring word meanings and their connotations, their derivatives, and collocations, but also gaining communicative competence along with grammar and skills (Fan, 2003; Griffiths, 2003; Nyikos and Fan, 2007; Nation 1990). There was no dearth of pioneering studies in vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) in 1980s (Dempster, 1987; Ahmed, 1989; Jenkins, Matlock & Slocum, 1984). However, in 1990s and 2000s VLS grew multi-dimensionally to gain new insights (Lin, 2014; Godwin-Jones, 2018b; Nyikos & Fan, 2007; Gu, 2010; Moir & Nation 2002; Elgort, Candry, Boutorwick, Eyckmans, & Brysbaert, 2016). These studies laid foundations of several classifications of VLSs, e.g., individual words in L2 juxtaposed with their equivalent L1 words or learning vocabulary through multiword units conveying different meanings and so on. A recent study on portmanteaus (Ali & Ilyas, 2020) as specific word items revealed a paradigm shift in making use of portmanteaus as discourse markers.

Elgort et al. (2017) consider vocabulary learning, first as recognition of a word at the receptive level; then, using the word at the productive level in different contexts through its derivatives. Interestingly, Nyikos and Fan (2007) observed three important aspects of vocabulary acquisition, irrespective of categories, or learning strategies adopted by learners. According to them, vocabulary learning depends upon (1) the time required to store words in memory beyond rote learning, the stronger mnemonic power that a learner possesses, the greater is his/her vocabulary learning; (2) awareness of the linguistic features of words, and (3) the context of the target vocabulary.

Though several VLSs so far have been studied and implemented in different contexts, no attempt has been made to identify specific strategies to learn meanings of unknown words as it is examined in the current study which concentrates on the determination level. To process this determination level effectively, Saudi learners of EFL should possess the knowledge and skill needed to discover meanings of unknown words as they occur in different contexts. A need is therefore felt to first examine the existing list of strategies the students implement, (Ahmed, 1989; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Schmitt, 1997; Nation, 2001) and to identify whether any of these strategies fits the requirements of learning such unfamiliar words in Saudi EFL situation.

To examine the VLSs, it is important to understand their relationships with various taxonomies. For example, Schmitt’s (1997) taxonomy which is an adaptation from Oxford’s (1990) taxonomy of LLS, is widely recommended, focusses more on the use of memory strategies or mnemonics to help learners store and retrieve any new vocabulary. Schmitt (1997) however differentiated his taxonomy by establishing a distinction between vocabulary discovery strategies (VDSs) and vocabulary consolidation strategies. According to Schmitt (1997), VDSs first deal with the discovery of the meaning of a new word, and they are reflected in two ways: determination strategies and social strategies. Determination strategies help learners guess the meaning of words by associating them with their previous knowledge; infer their meanings from "cognates", analyze their context with the help of other resources such as dictionaries, corpora, etc. Social strategies depend on interaction in the social context where learners may learn by communication and by asking their teacher, friends, peers, or native speakers about the meaning of a word.
On the other hand, Schmitt (1997) argues that the consolidation strategies deal with the storage of new words for later retrieval after the learners had mastered their meaning. These strategies are often categorized as social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive sub-strategies. Social strategies, depend upon the social and personal situation of learners; memory strategies relate the learner with any memory of a word that a learner can remember; cognitive strategies enable the learner to manipulate words of a target language; and metacognitive strategies imply multiple activities like planning the learning of new words, making decisions about their learning processes and later assessing one’s performance.

Making use of morphological devices like decoding and forming vocabulary is one of the sub-strategies that a language user may use to recognize a word and determine its meaning. Carlisle, McBride-Chang, Nagy, and Nunes (2010) considers morphological awareness as “the ability to reflect on, analyze and manipulate the morphemic elements in words (p. 466)” Soifer (2005) argues that the awareness of morphological principles is shown as a strong indicator of reading comprehension, and the weakness in the decoding skills is considered as an inhibitor to comprehend a text. The greatest challenge of decoding is the segmentation of words into affixes (prefixes and suffixes) and roots or base words with their origins. A few students may understand meanings of words by their spelling; however, this is more challenging since parts of words (affixes) can have separate meanings, or a morph (affix) can transform the entire word meaning. Table one illustrates a few examples showing how letter patterns and morphemes affect the meaning of words and word-class based on Schmitt (2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root word (Part of speech)</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Affix</th>
<th>Word form (Part of speech)</th>
<th>New meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect (v.)</td>
<td>To influence something</td>
<td>-ion</td>
<td>Affection (n.)</td>
<td>Gentle feeling of love or liking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect (n.)</td>
<td>Influence of Impact</td>
<td>-ive</td>
<td>Effective (adj.)</td>
<td>Has an effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard (adj)</td>
<td>Firm / tough</td>
<td>-ship</td>
<td>Hardship (n.)</td>
<td>Lack / suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bard (n.)</td>
<td>Lyricist</td>
<td>em-</td>
<td>Embark (v.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible (adj)</td>
<td>Probable</td>
<td>im-</td>
<td>Impossible (adj)</td>
<td>Unbearable / incredible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest (n)</td>
<td>Concern / curiosity</td>
<td>-ing</td>
<td>Interesting (adj)</td>
<td>Stimulating / remarkable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-ed</td>
<td>Interested (adj)</td>
<td>Concerned / attentive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This leads to understand that the manipulation of affixes (prefixes, roots, and suffixes) not only can impact the part of speech of a word but also its meaning in the context. It is now important to see whether such morphological manipulations using decoding strategies can prove to be an effective vocabulary learning strategy and can help students discover the meaning of unknown words, (Carreker, 2005; Wilson, 2005). More importantly, it is necessary to find out whether students can be taught such vocabulary learning strategies of segmenting or manipulating words according to their affixes and roots to recognize an unfamiliar word.

Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) in EFL/ESL context depend upon learners’ knowledge of vocabulary. The ability to learn a foreign language is also determined by the level
and progress a learner has made in acquiring vocabulary. Here a few questions arise, such as: how should a learner prove his or her legitimate knowledge of vocabulary in the EFL context when it is important to first acquire the meaning of specific, unknown vocabulary items? How should a teacher know (after testing) which words or items of vocabulary learners have problems with? What strategies should teachers adopt to prioritize teaching of these unfamiliar words? Can there be any distinctions made in teaching strategies in order to determine the levels of learning the meaning of these words by learners?

To answer these questions, the study first assessed the vocabulary discovery strategies suggested in Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy. This helped the researcher to understand first, what learners practiced while reading a text containing unknown words; second, what strategies were used repetitively to learn the meaning of difficult words, as learners in EFL contexts, in general, tend to be slow learners. There were several other relevant issues like the type of learner control strategies, their decision making abilities in learning the meaning of words, the time required to complete this process, and how to go forward and backward, to change learning strategies in case of failing to discover the meaning of unknown or unfamiliar words (Azmy, 2000).

**Discovering Meaning of Words**

It is generally accepted that the higher the use of a word, the greater is the chance to acquire it. The ability to discover or familiarize with meanings of words determines the size of the vocabulary a learner possesses. Pedagogically, if learners depend upon teachers or parents, for learning vocabulary, it could affect their ability or autonomy to think and learn for themselves. But as they grow older, and they interact socially and contextually, they gain more autonomy and depend more upon themselves. A distinction here is often made that learners though learn formally from teachers or course planners, their focus is mostly on the words which they are able to relate to their context or learn autonomously (Williams, 1985). This phenomenon, of course, makes the teacher a little redundant for improving vocabulary, but the problem is faced in learning new words.

Several tests are available to determine the size of vocabulary a learner possesses and to ascertain the level of the knowledge of word meaning. For example, the X-Lex test enables a teacher to check the knowledge of 5000 most frequent words among learners of a target language on a comparative platform (Milton, 2009). Figure one illustrates how the X-Lex test provides normative figures of test-takers and their scale of knowledge in 5000 word bands in English as a foreign language.

*Figure 1. Profile of EFL learner’s knowledge of words (Adapted from Milton, 2006a, p. 32)*
Figure one depicts that EFL learners tend to know more vocabulary in the first 1000 words level, which gradually decreases in every band of 1000 words. Statistically, this proves that there exists a relationship between the words that a learner comes across and the size of vocabulary s/he possesses.

Laufer (1989) recommends knowledge of at least 95% of the vocabulary of a text to comprehend the meaning of words; Hu and Nation (2000) and Nation (2006) on the other hand argue that 98 to 99 percent of words should be known. These studies suggest that learners should possess a knowledge of around 6000-7000 words to read spoken discourse; 8000-9000 words to comprehend authentic texts; however, the number might increase in technical and academic texts, often up to 20,000 words (Nation & Webb, 2011).

In the context of the current study, it may be pointed out that the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE), requires students of a high school to possess a vocabulary size of around 3000 words, but their performance is disappointingly very low (Al-Hazemi 1993). Such a low performance in schools has serious consequences for these learners when they reach a university. The low vocabulary size of Saudi learners at the university level hinders their progress and places a high burden on them, in all aspects of learning and not restricted to only reading and comprehending of the texts (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009).

**Research Significance**

To resolve vocabulary deficiency issues, various taxonomies (Dörnyei & Scott 1997; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 1997) have attempted to investigate and suggest remedial patterns to improve vocabulary learning. One common element in all these taxonomies is recognizing the disruption in vocabulary patterns, which is due to the consequence of lexical inadequacy and learners not aligning words to their context so as to discover their meaning. Hence this study was based on the premise that vocabulary proficiency depends much upon learners' understanding of the contexts in which specific vocabulary items, difficult and unfamiliar to them, are used. The researcher has thus argued in this study that in EFL classrooms, pedagogical strategies must be designed to suit how learners react to the contexts of each difficult or unfamiliar word and derive their meaning. Teachers must try to identify the problems and challenges that learners face and try to determine the factors responsible for such challenges. This will greatly help the teachers to determine the most feasible vocabulary learning strategies to help learners improve their vocabulary within their contexts.

**Research Objectives**

The principal objectives of the present study were to:

1. Identify the use of different VLSs at the discovery level among Saudi undergraduate English major students of English as a foreign language.
2. Find the most and least frequently VLSs used by Saudi undergraduate English major students.
3. Find the effective VLSs that help students determine or identify word meanings.
4. Identify the various types of self-selected or improvised learning strategies adopted by learners.
Therefore, the emphasis in this study was also to investigate how learners determined or discovered the most appropriate strategy, and with what design and method; and whether such strategies were learner controlled or teacher controlled.

Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the various VDSs which are used by Saudi undergraduate EFL learners to find unknown word meanings?
2. What are the VDSs that are used the most and the least by Saudi undergraduate EFL learners to discover unknown word meanings?
3. Is there a relationship between the type of VDSs which Saudi undergraduate EFL learners implement to discover unknown word meanings used in a reading text and the number of correct meanings they accomplish?
4. Which is more effective for learners to discover the meanings of unknown words, the learner control or the teacher control strategy?

Literature Review

There is no dearth of studies on the subject of VLS (Schmitt, 1997; Tseng & Schmitt, 2008), and most of which have inferred that L2 learners of higher proficiency tend to use VLSs more often than weaker students (Barcroft, 2009; Fan, 2003; Gu, 2002; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Winke & Abbuhl, 2007). Some of these studies also indicate that students with higher proficiency of L2 use VLSs that require more cognitive effort (Borer, 2007; Catalán, 2003). Schmitt (1997), for instance, describes VLSs as “(...) the processes by which a learner obtains, stores vocabulary items when encountering a word for the first time and retrieves, remembers and uses vocabulary items when communicating” (p. 203). For instance, using a dictionary, guessing a new word meaning from the context, and the use of morphological information, such as affixes and parts of speech are considered as the most frequently used strategies for learning the meaning of new words. Foreign or second language learners often use certain strategies to remember and realize words such as connecting words to their synonyms, antonyms, collocations, and grouping words together into categories.

In his pertinent taxonomy, Schmitt (1997) classifies VLSs as determination, discovery, social, or consolidation strategies. Determination strategies are for example the techniques when learners use morphological information such as affixes and word formation processes to determine the meaning of words. They may also use their knowledge of the language, contextual clues, or reference materials to figure out the meanings of new words. Secondly, strategies for gaining initial information about a new word are called discovery strategies. Thirdly, if they ask someone to help, such as a classmate, family member or teacher, this is known as social strategies. Finally, when learners are introduced to a situation where a new word is required, they have to make some effort to remember and use their lexical knowledge; this is called consolidation strategies.

Schmitt (1997) based his theories of VLS on different age groups of L2 learners such as junior high school learners, high school learners, university learners and adult learners. He found that less experienced L2 learners relied more on mechanical learning strategies such as oral and
written repetition, word lists, and flashcards as compared to learners with higher L2 proficiency. But the higher L2 proficiency learners, prefer to use more complex metacognitive strategies such as the use of dictionaries, guessing from context, imaging word meanings, asking teachers for paraphrases or synonyms, word part analysis, and connecting words with personal experiences. Schmitt’s argument was supported by Nyikos and Fan (2007), and Anderson (2005) who too observed that such L2 learners succeed in vocabulary learning who select more complex and task-compatible strategies for learning new L2 words. In this regard, a very good example was cited by Nopriato and Purnawarman (2019) who studied the level of implementation of VLSs of Indonesian L2 learners and concluded that Indonesian learners showed moderate use of VLS with more emphasis on the determination category of VLSs. Memiş (2018), in a recent study, also reached a similar conclusion who reported that strategies used by L2 learners varied according to their language level.

Studies have advocated categorizing L2 learners based on the adoption of specific cognitive learning strategies (Ahmed, 1989; Lawson & Hogben, 1996). The rationale behind this suggestion is that L2 learners of higher proficiency or who are more successful academically, have greater access to a wider variety of cognitive learning strategies (Ahmed, 1989), while learners who are less successful or academically weak have access to fewer strategies and hence use them inadequately. This argument is consistent with writers (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003; Borer, 2007; Ellis, 1995; Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997) who favor cognitive psychology and emphasize upon giving more cognitive effort to learning vocabulary.

This is consistent with Liu and Nation (1984) who also observed a similar phenomenon in advanced L2 learners and those of higher proficiency (as cited in McCarthy, 1988), whose guessing percentage of unknown words ranged between 85% to 100%. However, Ahmed (1989), and Gu, and Johnson (1996) in two different studies found the guessing strategies to be higher among the L2 learners of higher proficiency. Guessing in L2 learners refers to a strategy most popularly used VLSs (Schmitt, 1997) in order to derive meanings of unfamiliar words from context while reading texts (Dubin, 1993). Context according to Nation and Coady (1988) has two types: textual, which encompasses morphological, semantic, and syntactic contexts of the text, and the second is the general or social context. This may also refer to the background knowledge or the social context of readers.

Prior studies on VDSs reveal exclusively concentration on guessing from context (Nation & Coady, 1988; Bialystok, 1999; Ahmed, 1989; Haynes, 1993; Schmitt, 1997). Nation and Coady (1988), for instance, define specific context as “other words and sentences that surround a word and which often “throws light on” its meaning (p. 122). Carter and McCarthy (1988) also call context as within the text classified as morphological, syntactic, and discourse. All these studies have found guessing strategies differing significantly and varying according to the learners' grade or level. Besides, it was also felt that making use of background knowledge (schema) enhances learners' ability to conduct cognitive strategies through reasoning, and analysis of word and sentence structure, and so improves their abilities to acquire new words (Oxford, 2003). In the Saudi Context, Al-Harbi, and Ibrahim (2018) conducted a study to identify the VLSs that Saudi first-year English major students use to learn English words. They implemented a questionnaire to collect the data from the participants’ perceptions. Their results indicated that the participants...
preferred to use less demanding compared to deeper demanding cognitive strategies. Responses of
the participants showed that when trying to learn a new word, they depend more on repeating that
word, then they tend to guess meanings through context and interacting with English native
speakers. While the social strategy is used most, ‘memory’ is used the least by the students in their
survey.

Further, studies have also revealed that guessing as context strategy is more often used by
L2 learners of higher proficiency and that there exists a higher correlation between guessing and
vocabulary knowledge (Zhang, 2009). O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Mananaraes, Kupper, &
Russo, (1985), too, discovered contextualization used more by advanced learners as compared to
beginners. A reason often cited for this is that beginners lack the level of proficiency that is
draw attention to this limitation of 'guessing from the context'. According to them, guessing is
accepted as significant for vocabulary-building among advanced learners, as it requires prior
training in basic vocabulary processing, word recognition, metacognition, and subject matter,
which is lacking among the beginners.

Closely associated with guessing is mnemonics as a popular memory strategy among the
VDSs. Pioneered by works of Cohen and Aphek (1981) and later revisited by Cohen (1990),
mnemonics can be categorized in several types such as (i) associating the target words to sounds
in L1 or L2 familiar to learners (ii) breaking the word into parts (morphemes) and helping the
learner to recognize the meaning of the familiar parts; (iii) helping the learner to derive meaning
from the word's structure and trying to relate the word with another word; (iv) building semantic
relationship and grouping words of the same topic together; (v) helping learners in visualizing a
word or its letters with its context (vi) associating the word to its situation where it appeared; (vii)
helping learners to create mental imagery of the word; (viii) linking word(s) with physical
sensation, feeling or emotion, and (ix) linking the word to a keyword in the L1 whose
pronunciation may be similar to the target word.

Conceptual Framework

This research study aimed at extending Schmitt’s (1007) taxonomy to identify suitable
VLSs for EFL learners. In order to understand the meaning of new words, Schmitt (1997) had
classified vocabulary discovery strategies into two types: Social Strategies and Determination
Strategies. The focus of the study was to evaluate the VLSs in the social as well as determination
context as postulated in Schmitt’s taxonomy. The objective was also to understand what learners
practice while reading a text containing unknown words. In this process, the researcher also dealt
with both learner control and teacher control strategies and their contribution to learning meanings
of new words.

The learner control strategy included decision making during the time allotted for learning
to accelerate learning through strategies such as decoding or guessing or seeking help (in a social
context) from teachers, friends, peers, and family in case of failing to get the correct answer. This
is similar to the views of Tamjid and Moghadam (2012) and Khoshnoud and Karbalaei (2015) who
associated learner control strategies with learner autonomy, tracking and sequencing of learning,
and observing learners’ enrichment of their vocabulary by guessing meanings of unfamiliar words from the context.

The teacher control strategy, on the other hand, was seen in this study as a teacher centered practice that included factors such as pre-determined teaching models, personalized teaching methodology, and assessment based learning. These factors would help teachers determine whether learners have appropriate knowledge of the unknown words. The objective of using both learner control and teacher control strategies was to determine the choice of appropriate control methods in teaching and consolidating meanings of unfamiliar words. Figure two illustrates this conceptual model adopted in this study.

![Conceptual model based on Schmidt’s theory of VLS](image)

**Figure 2.** Conceptual model based on Schmidt’s theory of VLS

This model is the representation of the premise adopted for this study which suggests that teachers may adopt a linear approach to understand how social and determination strategies could help teachers to investigate whether it is the learner controlled or teacher controlled VLSs that help learners most to acquire the meaning of unfamiliar words in a text. This model was designed as the conceptual framework of this study, to investigate the most appropriate VLS; whether it is the teacher control strategies wherein a language teacher focuses on the teaching of difficult or unfamiliar words through pedagogical methods, or the learner control strategies wherein the learner uses the contexts to acquire the meaning of difficult or unfamiliar words. The study thus focused on finding the appropriateness of learning strategies as well as the design and method (e.g. learner control or teacher control) that could be used to discover the meaning of unknown words.

**Methodology**

**Participants**

This study involved all the 67 male undergraduate English major students of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU) who passed the “Vocabulary” course occurring in their second semester of the academic year 2019. As set in the course syllabus, students passing this course should possess a reasonably good knowledge of vocabulary ranging between 4000 to 5000 words.
Through purposeful sampling, a group of 50 students was identified. However, to control the proficiency level of the participants, and to concentrate more on the average students, above average students (eight) out of the 58 ones who passed the course with a score of 85% and above were excluded from the experiment. And by default, those nine students who got below 60% in the course were also excluded since they were treated as below average achievers.

**Instruments**

A questionnaire adapted from Schmitt’s (1997) and Nation’s (2001) taxonomies of VLSs was administered. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was intended to help the researcher manage the administrative part of data collection and coding. The second part of the questionnaire aimed to collect data about the participants’ implementation of the VLSs as shown in Table one. An eleven-item questionnaire was created. It was adapted to represent the vocabulary learning strategies used by the participants in discovering the meanings of unknown words. These strategies were grouped under four major categories. The first is “Use of word form and contextual clues” and it covered the first three strategies: a) I conduct contextual guessing, b) I pay attention to the structure of the new words, c) I break the word into parts that I can identify, and d) I guess the grammatical class of the word. The second is the “Use of phonics – word sounds”, that included a) I associate the sound of the new word with the sound of a word that is familiar to me, b) I use rhyming to remember new words, and c) I guess the meaning of the new word by its sound. The third category “I ask my classmate” had one item because participants were given the chance to interact or socialize only with their classmates. The fourth category “Use of online dictionaries and translation services”, dealt with the participants’ use of a) electronic dictionaries, b) instant on-screen computer translation programs, and c) the Microsoft Word Thesaurus icon.

All strategies were presented vertically in serial order in the form of participants’ statements and 20 words were sampled from a reading text (Appendix A) and listed horizontally on the top of each column (Table two). The participants were unambiguously asked to tick mark the correct choice of the strategy that they would use to discover the meaning of the word listed. To study the relationship between the strategies implemented and the ability to discover word meanings, the participants were asked to provide the meanings of the unknown words (even in native Arabic language) in the last column of the questionnaire. It is also important to indicate that an extra column entitled (Already known to me) was given in the questionnaire for the participant to tick if any of the targeted words were known to them.

**Table 2. Questionnaire items, showing the choice of Vocabulary discovery strategies of sampled words**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unknown or Unfamiliar Words from 1 to 20</th>
<th>Unknown Word</th>
<th>Synonymous (1)</th>
<th>Freelan – (2)</th>
<th>..... up to</th>
<th>Exceptional (20)</th>
<th>Word Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I already know the word (Please √)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I conduct contextual guessing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I pay attention to the structure of the new words.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I break the word into parts that I can identify.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I guess the grammatical class of the word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I associate the sound of the new words with the sound of a word that is familiar to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I use rhyming to remember new words.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I guess the meaning of the new vocabulary item by its sound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I ask my classmate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I use electronic dictionaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I use instant on-screen computer translation programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I use the Microsoft Word Thesaurus icon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A reading text was adopted from TOEFL Practice Tests (Appendix A) to select unknown words through a rigorous process. Initially, (22) words were claimed unfamiliar because the participants should not have come across those words before as they appeared in terms of the structure or form used in the reading text. Secondly, these words were also not included in the glossary of their Vocabulary textbook. A group of EFL specialists in the Department of English was consulted to validate these words as unknown. However, in any case of having a word in that list be familiar to a participant, he was asked to avoid treating it as a new word, and so to indicate that by ticking the cell (Already known to me) as shown in Table two.

The participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire while working on discovering meanings of the unknown words (with hands-on, but not through their previous experiences with new words). Strategies implemented in discovering meaning were linked immediately with whether meaning discovered was correct or not. This procedure helped the researcher identify the relationship between the strategy used and the meaning achieved, and to investigate the effectiveness of using the strategy in the context of this experiment.
**Procedures**

To make sure that all participants in the study were aware of the discovery strategies used to learn meanings of unknown words, a special training session adopted from O’Malley & Chamot’s (1990) training model was administered to all of them. The model included steps and actions that the teacher implemented for instructing the students. The participants attended a six-hours training course distributed equally between three consequent days. This training was carried out to equip all participants with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills they needed to implement the different discovery strategies. Immediately on the day, the training was over, the experiment was carried out. Participants were distributed to two English Computer labs. Each participant worked on a computer set with the reading text uploaded. A hard copy of the questionnaire presented on two pages was handed over to each participant to tick the cells where appropriate and to write the meanings of the unknown words while going through the reading text and as they will have implemented the discovery strategies to find out the meanings of the words targeted. They were advised that it was possible to implement more than one strategy to find out the meaning of each word, and once reached, they need to write that meaning even in Arabic in the cell box given next to each item. The time for the experiment was also shown in the "instructions" part of the questionnaire (Two and a half hours). Questionnaire sheets were collected back at the end of the time fixed.

**Data Analysis**

A descriptive analysis of the data was conducted to identify the number of the unknown words that the participants got correctly, and the number of times each strategy was implemented. This analysis of the data also aimed to elicit the most-used, least-used, and never-used strategies for determining the meanings of the unknown words as part of the process of vocabulary learning. The Pearson coefficient using the SPSS software was also used to calculate the relation between strategy type and the number of correct unknown word meanings accomplished by the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Discovery</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Meanings discovered correctly through using word form and contextual clues (Strategy 1)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>310.0</td>
<td>6.200</td>
<td>3.3564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Meanings discovered correctly through using phonics - word sounds (Strategy 2)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.6701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Meanings discovered correctly through using social interaction (Strategy 3)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>.6943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Meanings discovered correctly through using online dictionaries and translation services (Strategy 4)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>266.0</td>
<td>5.320</td>
<td>1.2526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Score</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>663.0</td>
<td>13.260</td>
<td>2.9541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (list-wise)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first research question in this paper attempted to find out the various determination strategies that the Saudi students of EFL at PSAU of Saudi Arabia use to identify meanings of unknown words occurring in a reading text. Descriptive data analysis revealed that the participants’ mean score on the vocabulary test was 13.26 out of 20 words (Table three), with the highest and the lowest scores (18) and (8), respectively. This means that by using the different determination strategies, the participants were able to identify the meanings of about 13 words out of the 20 unknown words occurring in the reading text.

Table 4. Frequency of correct discoveries of meanings of unknown words across four categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 1: Word form and contextual clues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning discovered correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of the correct meanings out of total correct meanings achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of correct meanings out of frequency of use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 2: Phonics - word sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning discovered correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of the correct meanings out of total correct meanings achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of correct meanings out of frequency of use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 3: Social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning discovered correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of the correct meanings out of total correct meanings achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of correct meanings out of frequency of use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 4: Online dictionaries and translation services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning discovered correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of the correct meanings out of total correct meanings achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of correct meanings out of frequency of use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To answer the second research question about what VDSs were used the most and the least by Saudi undergraduate EFL learners to discover the meanings of unknown words, a detailed analysis of the participants’ responses was carried out. Table four indicates that the total implementation of strategies was 1000 times distributed between the four categories as follows. Strategy one “use of word form and contextual clues” was used the most. Participants used this first strategy 418 times (percentage 41.8%), and within this implementation, the achievement of correct word meanings was repeated 310 times (310*100/663= 46.8% of the total score). This means that this strategy was not only used more than the other strategies, but it also enabled participants to accomplish 46.8% (higher than the rest of the strategies) of the total correct meanings discovered. Moreover, (310*100/418= 74.2% of the participants’ guessed the word meanings out of the 418 implementations of Strategy one were correct.

The second top implemented strategy was the use of online dictionaries and translation services (Strategy four). This strategy was repeated 368 times (36.8%) with 266 correct discoveries of unknown meanings of words (40.1%). The Participants’ correct guesses were (266*100/368=72.3% out of the 368 implementations of this strategy. The “word sounds and phonics strategy” came in third place. It was used 129 times (12.9%) with 50 correct discoveries.
(7.5%). However, 38.8% of word meanings were guessed correctly out of their 129 implementations. Lastly came the “social interaction strategy” which was used 85 times (8.5%) in which 37 correct discoveries (5.8%) out of the total correct guesses were achieved. However, the percentage of correct guesses (43.5%) out of the implementation times was higher than that of the third strategy.

The third research question aimed to find out whether there was a relationship between the type of VDSs which Saudi undergraduate EFL learners implemented to discover unknown word meanings used in a reading text and the number of correct meanings they accomplished.

To find out whether there was a relationship between the participants’ implementation of the vocabulary determination strategies and their ability to identify the meanings of unknown words, a correlation test was operated. Results of Pearson test (Table five) demonstrated that the “use of word form and contextual clues” highly correlated with the participants’ score on the vocabulary test (0.826). This significant positive correlation suggested that the more participants relied on using word form and contextual clues to identify meanings of unknown words, the higher their scores would be on the vocabulary test. That is, their ability to identify the meanings of unknown words increased when they used word structure and context clues. However, this test revealed that the use of the other three strategies of using word phonics of sound, social interaction, and online dictionaries and translation services significantly correlated, but negatively with the participants’ score on the vocabulary test (-0.593, -0.419, and -0.631, respectively). These negative correlations indicated that the participants’ scores on the vocabulary test tended to decrease when they implemented these last three strategies to detect meanings of unknown words.

Table 5. Pearson test of correlation between vocabulary scores and vocabulary discovery strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Score Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Use of word form and contextual clues</th>
<th>Use of phonics – word sounds</th>
<th>Use of Social strategies</th>
<th>Use of Online dictionaries and translation services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabularity Score</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.826**</td>
<td>-0.593**</td>
<td>-0.419**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

Discussion
The primary goal of this study was to investigate the use of the vocabulary discovery strategies by the undergraduate Saudi EFL students, in addition to their effects on students’ ability to identify meanings of unknown words they encounter in reading texts. One interesting finding which came
to light through the present study was the significant role of analyzing the context where an unknown word occurred in terms of the structure of the word itself, and its grammatical class. These sub-strategies when put together under Strategy One were implemented more than the rest of the VDSs by the participants of the study, and this is consistent with the findings of most of the studies reviewed in the literature part such as Anderson, (2005), Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, (2003), Borer (2007), Ellis (1995), Memiş (2018), Schmitt & McCarthy (1997), Nopriato and Purnawarman (2019), and Nyikos & Fan (2007). This is a clear indication that guessing the meaning of a word from context requires performing higher levels of cognitive processes. The results of this study showed that contextual clues and word structure had a significant positive effect on the participants’ ability to identify the meanings of unknown words. On the other hand, the least implemented strategy realized in this study was the social strategy, and this result is consistent with the findings of some studies such as those of Schmitt (1997), and Blachowicz and Fisher (2004).

The results of this study revealed that the participants relied on using online dictionaries and translation applications in addition to Microsoft Word Thesaurus services as their second option to look up word meanings, regardless of their accuracy to identify word meanings. Although linguists and researchers like Hosenfeld (1977) argued that looking up words in a dictionary should come as the last option in the process of identifying unknown word meanings, it has also been stated that even successful readers do it after failing to identify word meanings through more efficient strategies. Even when using this strategy, foreign language learners need to have the linguistic competencies, and this may refer them back to their prior knowledge related to word affixation system and its part of speech, sentence structure, and the surrounding context to remove meaning ambiguity of the word and to reach the appropriate meaning targeted. This justifies participants’ scores on the vocabulary test carried out in this study. Although the meanings of the unknown words that the participants encountered in the reading text were possible to reach through dictionaries and other online applications, only 72.3% of their guesses were correct after using this strategy (Table four), and so this result agrees with Hosenfeld’s (1977) argument. Deciding on appropriate meanings of words using this strategy is not an easy job for learners unless they deem to make sure of word meanings identified earlier depending on learners’ memory, language competencies, and contextual details. This explains why the contribution of implementing dictionaries and translation tools was less than that of Strategy one.

One could also think of the paradox in the results related to the social strategy. Although numerous research emphasized the role of the social strategy in helping learners determine meanings of unknown words (Alharbi & Ibrahim 2018; Nation 1990, 2001; Nunan 1999; Oxford 1990, 2003; Schmitt 1997), findings of this study revealed that its contribution was the least in terms of implementation (0.085) and discovering meanings of unknown words. It is also important to mention that the only possible interaction for students was the neighboring classmates during the experiment. So, teachers as the most informative source for social interaction were excluded, and this could be the reason for the decrease in the mean scores of the correct guesses related to this strategy.
At this stage, the last research question of the study was analyzed to find out whether the learner control or the teacher control strategy was more effective to discover the meanings of unknown words and to find if the social context plays a role in that process. Based on the findings of the study, the conceptual framework (Figure two) was revisited to find the answer to this question. Figure three illustrates how learner control and teacher control strategies function in a social context. The learners in the social context would try to find out the meanings of unfamiliar words utilizing hints from the context instead of the more common methods such as understanding meanings of words from their structural knowledge of the language, guessing, etc., or other strategies like translation, synonyms, paraphrasing, or morphing a word to discover its meaning. Based on the findings of the study, this framework testified the balanced control of both the learner control and the teacher control strategies (Figure three). The findings were expected to reveal that while the teacher would be successful in tackling some types of unfamiliar words, learners, on the other hand, would be able to discover the meanings of words through various methods including cognitive processes like decoding. Hence, the items of the questionnaire would be focused on such decoding strategies adopted by learners to discover the meanings of unfamiliar words using the cognitive as well as the social strategies. The role of the teacher was also revealed to be important in the application of this conceptual model as the teacher control mechanism determined whether VLSs adopted by students in discovering meaning were appropriate and that they were competent enough to use such strategies effectively.

![Figure 3. Learner control and teacher control strategies in a social context](image)

Additionally, using words in a social context motivates learners and prepares them for group learning out of the class. Since there is a minimal role of the teacher in the social context method, Schmitt (1997) observes that students are in a better position to use and manipulate the language in the class. This is consistent with Tamjid and Moghadam (2012), and Khoshnoud and Karbalaei (2015) findings which also observed that learners enhance their vocabulary by guessing meanings of unfamiliar words from the context; and with Ahmed (1989) who found that making use of any given context is far more facilitating than established methods like translation, paraphrasing or giving the synonym of the word.
An important factor that could have affected the results of this study is related to the training session that the participants had gone through immediately before enrolment in the experiment. Although the students were exposed to different VLSs in different language skills courses, this training on the VDSs must have played an important role in activating their background knowledge about how and when to use the different VDSs, not to forget the exercises and activities used to practice authentic implementation of the strategies targeted. This special kind of intensive training compared to the results achieved leads to consider the role of both the teacher and the learner in improving learners’ efficient implementation of VLSs in general. All through the instructional process, teachers and textbooks should have a kind of control over the choice of the VLSs that learners should implement to acquire new vocabulary items. While the control of the teacher should decrease gradually in response to learners’ improvement, learners' control level should increase until they master this aptitude and become able to implement appropriate VLSs.

Conclusion

The focus of the current study was to evaluate the use of different VLSs as stated in Schmitt's (1977) taxonomy at the discovery level in the process of vocabulary acquisition. The findings of this study revealed the importance of exposing students to an explicit type of training to enhance their proficient use of VLSs that helps them learn unknown words and so to become better readers of English. This can also be achieved by designing exercises where teachers at initial training sessions direct students to implement specific strategies to figure out meanings of unknown words. At later stages, the control moves gradually to the students who should have control over the choice of the appropriate strategies they may implement to reach correct meanings of unknown words occurring in different contexts. It's also important for teachers to bear in mind that learning new words is not at all a simple process and so FL students should be aware that they may use various strategies to learn meanings of unknown words. However, teachers' greatest concern should be directed toward training students to become familiar with and be able to use the different VLSs, because once they become able to use these strategies skilfully, they will have the confidence to use more appropriate strategies to learn new words, and so the control of choosing this or the other strategies will be theirs. However, giving lists of words to students to learn does not result in effective learning.

Acknowledgments:
I take this opportunity to thank Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia alongside its Deanship of Scientific Research, for all technical support it has unstintingly provided towards the fulfillment of the current research project.

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**Appendix A**

**Reading Text**


*The words underlined and numbered were sorted out as unknown / unfamiliar words in this study.*

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ROBERT CAPA
Robert Capa is a name that has for many years been (1) synonymous with war photography. Born in Hungary in 1913 as Friedmann Endre Ernő, Capa was forced to leave his native country after his involvement in anti-government protests. Capa had originally wanted to become a writer, but after his arrival in Berlin had first found work as a photographer. He later left Germany and moved to France due to the rise in Nazism. He tried to find work as (2) a freelance journalist and it was here that he changed his name to Robert Capa, mainly because he thought it would sound more American.

In 1936, after the breakout of the Spanish Civil war, Capa went to Spain and it was here over the next three years that he built his (3) reputation as a war photographer. It was here too in 1936 that he took one of his most famous pictures, The Death of a Loyalist Soldier. One of Capa’s most famous quotes was 'If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough.' And he took his attitude of getting close to the action to an extreme. His photograph, The Death of a Loyalist Soldier is a prime example of this as Capa captures the very moment the soldier falls. However, many have questioned the (4) authenticity of this photograph, claiming that it was (5) staged.

When World War II broke out, Capa was in New York, but he was soon back in Europe covering the war for Life magazine. Some of his most famous work was created on 6th June 1944 when he swam (5) ashore with the first (7) assault on Omaha Beach in the D-Day (8) invasion of Normandy. Capa, armed only with two cameras, took more than one hundred photographs in the first hour of the landing, but a mistake in the darkroom during the drying of the film destroyed all but eight frames. It was the images from these frames however that inspired the visual style of Steven Spielberg's Oscar winning movie ‘Saving Private Ryan’. When Life magazine published the photographs, they claimed that they were slightly out of focus, and Capa later used this as the title of his (9) autobiographical account of the war.

Capa’s private life was no less dramatic. He was friend to many of Hollywood’s directors, actors and actresses. In 1943 he fell in love with the wife of actor John Austin. His affair with her lasted until the end of the war and became the subject of his war (10) memoirs. He was at one time lover to actress Ingrid Bergman. Their relationship finally ended in 1946 when he refused to settle in Hollywood and went off to Turkey.

In 1947 Capa was among a group of (11) photojournalists who founded Magnum Photos. This was a co-operative organisation set up to support photographers and help them to retain ownership of the copyright to their work.

Capa went on to document many other wars. He never attempted to (12) glamorise war though, but to record the horror. He once said, "The desire of any war photographer is to be put out of business."

Capa died as he had lived. After promising not to photograph any more wars, he accepted an assignment to go to Indochina to cover the first Indochina war. On May 25th 1954 Capa was (13) accompanying a French (14) regiment when he left his jeep to take some photographs of the advance and stepped on a land mine. He was taken to a nearby hospital, still (15) clutching his camera, but was (16) pronounced dead on arrival. He left behind him a (17) testament to the (19) horrors of war and a standard for photojournalism that few others have been able to reach.

Capa’s legacy has lived on though and in 1966 his brother Cornell founded the International Fund for Concerned Photography in his honor. There is also a Robert Capa Gold Medal, which is given to the photographer who publishes the best photographic reporting from abroad with evidence of (20) exceptional courage. But perhaps his greatest legacy of all are the haunting images of the human struggles that he captured.
Motivational Strategies among English Language Teachers: An Examination in Higher Education Institutions in the Malaysian Context

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Abstract
Little attention was given to explore and understand motivational strategies among English language (EL) teachers, particularly at higher education institutions (HEIs), despite the on-going interest on this matter. Identifying which strategies are adaptive and maladaptive could help them to promote student motivation in return. This study aims to identify the degree of importance and implementation of motivational strategies among EL teachers and explore to what extent they implement the strategies that they perceived as important. The online questionnaires were distributed to 49 teachers at 11 public universities in Malaysia, and ten of them were interviewed. The findings of this study suggested the implementation of motivational strategies heavily depended on teachers’ perceived motivation in teaching. The highest-rated strategy was Proper Teacher Behavior, and the least preferred was Promote Learner Autonomy, indicating that teacher behavior as an important element in ensuring effective language learning. Next, despite the findings that most students are not ready for learner autonomy, the teachers appeared to have a more positive outlook on the inclusion of learner autonomy, and this contradicts findings of previous studies in the Asian contexts. It also indicates that motivational strategies are neither cultural nor context-specific. However, some strategies are still regarded as very practical, while some are less practical in different learning situations. Future research may include private universities to contribute to the knowledge gap on the lack of information on this topic and eventually enable academics to engage in motivational strategies research across all HEIs in Malaysia.

Keywords: English Language teachers, Malaysian Higher Education, motivational strategies

Introduction

The English language (EL) is accepted as the global language of communication and is widely used through various dimensions like education, technology, sciences, business and trade, entertainment, and even religion. After Malaysia gained its independence in 1957, the EL was accorded as the nation’s second official language. This shows that English has played a significant role in the nation’s quest towards becoming a developed nation; thus, being proficient in the language is undeniably important. However, the English proficiency level of Malaysian students is far from satisfactory as it ranged from weak to intermediate. To improve the teaching of EL in educational institutions, The Ministry of Education is producing the Malaysian Education Blueprint and the English Language Roadmap (2015 – 2025) to enhance the various aspect of the curriculum like pedagogy and assessment from different levels. However, even with the best construction of the curriculum, the teaching and learning of English will still fail if there is no motivation in learning the language.

Motivation plays an essential role in the success of teaching and learning a second language as it is the driving force to maintain these processes. It should be considered in the process of second language learning because it has been used to explain the success or failure of a learner and several studies associated motivation as the key to learning (Watt & Richardson, 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Dörnyei, 2001). In some cases, the students will not be motivated to learn the language if they fail to see the relevance of learning English, but students’ motivation is not the only factor influencing the teaching and learning of the language. For instance, although the students are already driven by the motivation in learning the language, it is the task of the teachers to maintain students’ interest to learn.

As stated earlier, in the case of English as the second official language in Malaysia, it has not been widely used in students’ daily lives outside of the classrooms, and it has also been stated in the English Language Roadmap (2015 – 2025) that, “…many Malaysians spend a lot of time learning English without quite knowing why they are doing it” (p.13) and as such, it is not a surprise that students are not motivated to learn this language. The Roadmap also reported the significance of the teachers’ motivation as one of the influencing factors to successful second language learning. In fact, according to Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011)

…teachers act as key social figures who significantly affect the motivational quality of the learning process in positive or negative ways. Indeed, almost everything a teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on students, which makes teacher behavior a powerful ‘motivational tool. (p.109)

Next, a number of research studies have raised the concern on the possibilities of motivational strategies being context and cultural specific (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Chen, Warden & Chang, 2005; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010) due to the teaching of English as first, second or foreign language. Both studies by Dörnyei & Csizér (1998) and Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) found that some motivational strategies are feasible across contexts and cultures, while Dörnyei noted that the teachers perceive as essential and which strategies have been implemented in their EL classes in various higher education institutions (HEIs) in Malaysia. It also aims to identify any similarity between
the Malaysian context and others, and if there are differences, what would they be and to what extent would they differ. Hence, the three research questions are:

1. Which motivational strategies do the teachers perceive as most and least important?
2. Which motivational strategies do the teachers implement in their classes?
3. How are these similarities and differences reflected in teachers’ motivational perceptions and implementation in Malaysia compared to other teaching contexts?

This study extends the previous research on motivational strategies among language teachers from the specific context of HIEs in Malaysia. More importantly, this study intends to discover whether the motivational strategies are globally or locally bound. Findings from this study can also be used to create awareness among teachers of the different types of motivational strategies, and inform their importance and the possible positive effects on students’ motivation.

**Literature Review**

**Motivational Strategies**

Motivation is regarded as one of the major factors in language learning as reported in many studies that motivation plays an important role in the success of students’ language learning (Guilloteaux, 2013; Sah, 2013; Visser-Wijnveen, Stes & Van Petegem, 2012; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Walker, 2011; Yau, 2010; Bernaus, Wilson & Gardner, 2009). A more recent study conducted by Jones (2019) in Cuba involved 18 students completing the motivation questionnaire also revealed; “strong positive correlations between student motivation and all aspects of the teacher’s motivational practice” (p.15).

Over the years, the scopes of motivation have expanded from the viewpoints of first language learning to second and foreign language learning, and from learner motivation to teacher motivation. Teacher motivation in this study refers to the motivational strategies that they perceive as essential and practice in their EL classes. As mentioned earlier, most research focused on learner motivation, and this has overshadowed teacher motivation, which could be one of the influencing factors to student language learning.

Dörnyei & Csizér (1998) conducted one of the earliest studies conducted on teachers’ perception and motivational strategies in foreign language learning. The study involved 200 Hungarian English as a Foreign language (EFL) teachers from multi-level education institutions, from schools and universities. The teachers were asked to rank 51 motivational strategies according to its importance and usage. The result of this study revealed the top ten most critical motivational plans rated by the teachers, which later used as the main ground for the ‘ten commandments’ in motivating students.

**Table 1: Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Commandment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Set a personal example with your own behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Present the tasks properly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Develop a good relationship with the learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Increase the learner's linguistic self-confidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arab World English Journal  
www.awej.org  
ISSN: 2229-9327
6. Make the language classes interesting.
7. Promote learner autonomy.
8. Personalize the learning process.
9. Increase the learners’ goal-orientedness.
10. Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

*Note 1.* Adapted from Dörnyei & Csizér (1998, p. 215)

This appeared to be a general list, but Dörnyei & Csizér (1998) argued that the motivational strategies might be context-specific and culturally bound to Hungarian students as well as European setting, and therefore might not be valid in different contexts.

The ‘ten commandments’ also indicated that the strategies are compartmentalized, or in other words, they are separated from one another. As motivation shifts from product-oriented to process-oriented, Dörnyei (2001) has constructed the framework of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom that reflects the definition of motivation as a process. Figure 1 shows the four stages of the framework, which are (i) Creating the basic motivational conditions, (ii) Generating student motivation, (iii) Maintaining and protecting motivation, and (iv) Encouraging positive self-evaluation. Each stage consists of several motivational strategies, and it would be interesting to look at the perspectives of teachers in this study in response to this framework within their teaching context.

![Figure 1: The framework of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom](image-url)
Next, to identify the motivational strategies perceived in the Asian setting, Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) replicated the above study in Taiwan. Their main instrument was a questionnaire, which has been revised in accordance with the motivational teaching practice framework (Figure 1). The study involved 387 EFL teachers from multi-level education institutions ranging from schools to universities. The results showed similarity with the Hungarian context in terms of the strategies that rose to the top five ranks. However, there were some differences of views from the Taiwanese teachers. Taiwanese teachers ranked ‘Recognizing students’ efforts’ as second place in terms of importance, while this strategy did not even feature in the top ten rankings by Hungarian teachers. Another difference was that in the Taiwan context, ‘Promoting learner autonomy’ ranked as the least important motivational strategy meanwhile in Hungarian context ‘Familiarize learners with the target language culture’ was listed as the least motivational strategies. This showed that some strategies may be more universal and work across cultural/countries context while “certain strategies are rather culture-specific in their educational relevance and impact” (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007: p.169).

The practicality of Cheng’ & Dörnyei’s (2007) motivational strategies has given rise to many studies adopting similar strategies in their contexts. Sugita & Takeuchi (2008) conducted similar research among EL teachers and their students to explore the practicality of these strategies in Japan and to identify the relationship between teacher motivation and student motivation. The results revealed that only a few strategies correlated with student motivation and among the top Clusters viewed as important were ‘promoting learners’ ‘self-confidence’ and ‘creating a pleasant classroom climate’. Hence these findings did not support Cheng’ & Dörnyei’s (2007) findings even though both studies have been conducted in the Asian context.

In addition, Lee & Lin (2019) researched the motivational strategies based on the 102 strategies adopted from Dörnyei (2001). The study involved 22 Cantonese Chinese-speaking teachers in Hong Kong who taught EFL, and they found out that teachers “generally accorded with the framework, hence supporting the applicability of Dörnyei’s framework to Hong Kong EFL classrooms” (Lee & Lin, 2019: p.465). Nonetheless, the researchers also stressed the importance of other factors that affect the implementation of these strategies in the classrooms for future research.

Apart from that, there was another study on the use of motivational strategies by the EFL teachers in Oman (Al-Mahrooqi, Abrar-ul-Hassan & Asante, 2012). The results were analyzed within three spectrums; the importance and frequency of motivational strategies, and the relationship between those two. Regarding the relationship between the importance and the frequency of motivational strategies applied by the teachers, a positive correlation has been recorded as very strong. Besides that, Al-Mahrooqi, Abrar-ul-Hassan and Asante’s (2012) analysis mentioned the interference of cultural issues has contributed to some of the lowest micro strategies’ rankings. For instance, it appeared that since learner autonomy was ranked low in both aspects, EFL classes in Oman are perceived as less student-centered and the students are more dependent on the teachers compared to the Hungarian context.

Alqahtani (2016) also conducted a study on motivational strategies in Saudi Arabia, which is in the Middle East like Oman, and the respondents were 117 male and female EFL teachers.
findings confirmed that some of the top macro strategies were in line with studies conducted in Hungary by Dörnyei & Csizér (1998), and Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan such as ‘Proper teacher behavior’, ‘Promote learners’ self-confidence’ and ‘Increase learners’ satisfaction’. It also showed that ‘Promote learners’ autonomy’ was among the most preferred macro strategies, and according to Alqahtani (2016), “… [It] shows that EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia favor the use of this macro strategy and think that it is an important motivational technique in the classroom for enhancing learners’ motivation” (p. 668). It appeared that this contradicted Al-Mahrooqi, Abrar-ul-Hassan and Asante’s (2012) findings, although both studies were conducted in the same context, i.e., the Middle East.

Other than the Asian and Middle East contexts, Sucuoglu’s (2017) research on teacher motivation was conducted among 96 EL male and female teachers in some selected secondary schools in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. She reported that in general, teachers responded positively to the four components, including towards learner autonomy, which was not favored among teachers in previously cited studies. However, unlike other reviews, this one did not highlight the influence of culture on teachers’ preference for motivational strategies.

As stated earlier, the cited studies indicate that motivation is a significant factor in facilitating successful language teaching and learning across the world. Nonetheless, it is vital to research further the cultural values mentioned by Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) that there were some similar motivational strategies between the European and Asian teachers and some different ones. Cultural values are parts of the contextual factors that could influence one’s motivation (Ushioda, 2009 in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010).

This cultural barrier issue has not been highlighted in other studies, but it does not mean that it is not significant since culture may influence why and how the teachers implement the motivational strategies in their teaching context. The previously cited studies involved three Asian countries, namely Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong, produced different results. Hence, it can be hypothesized that more research could clarify the issue of whether there are universal motivational teaching strategies, or if they are more culturally attached. Studies in Oman and Saudi Arabia produced contradictory findings though they were in the same context. Therefore, would there be more similarities or differences if another study was carried out in Malaysia, which is another Asian country like Taiwan, Japan and Korea, and if so, what are they?

Methodology
Research Design

This study adopts the quantitative approach in which the data was collected through questionnaires on the participants’ perceptions of the importance as well as the frequency of the implementation of the motivational strategies that they used in their EL classes. There were two methods used, (i) questionnaire was distributed to the participants via their email through a link connected to an online survey using Google Form platform, and (ii) face-to-face questionnaire in which the respondents had ample time to answer it. Next, the researchers asked semi-structured interview questions to explore the participants’ thoughts and personal experiences about motivational strategies.
Research Instrument

The main instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. It was adapted from the study by Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) which consisted 10 Clusters and 48 motivational strategies. In this study, the questionnaire was divided into two constructs. The first construct (Construct I) was on the importance of the motivational strategies, while the second one (Constructs II) was on the frequency of implementing motivational strategies in EL classes. Each construct featured the same 10 Clusters and 48 motivational strategies used in Cheng’ & Dörnyei’s (2007) study. The questionnaire applied four point Likert scale from one to four where the levels for Construct I range from one as ‘Not Important’ to four as ‘Very Important’, and for Construct II, they range from one as ‘Not At All’ to four as ‘Very Often’.

Besides, 10 respondents were interviewed individually based on the Clusters of motivational strategies of the questionnaire that they might (or might not) employ in their English classes. There were 10 Clusters in the questionnaire, but only four were selected for the interview purpose based on the top four in the reliability index. This method could provide in-depth information as to what were the factors that influenced their choices of motivational strategies, and how they implemented them.

Data Collection and Analysis

In selecting the participants for this study, purposive sampling was used since the crucial criteria are that they must be EL teachers who are currently teaching general proficiency English courses that are compulsory in the undergraduate programs in all faculties. However, the selection of participants did not include those who teach specific English courses like Morphology, Syntax, Second Language Acquisition or Discourse Analysis. Based on the recommendations of the Head of the EL department of the respective universities, the online survey was sent to participants. Some of the participants asked for a paper-based questionnaire and volunteered for the interviews. The total number of respondents was 49 ESL teachers from 11 public universities in Malaysia, and their teaching experiences ranged from five to 28 years.

Data gathered from the questionnaire in the first part were used to determine the participants’ perceptions of how important they perceive the 48 motivational strategies, while in the second part of the data was used to find out how frequently the participants practice the 48 motivational strategies in their EL lessons. The data were then calculated for means scores to analyze the importance and frequency of the motivational strategies’ usage. The criteria for the interpretation of the mean values are illustrated in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean value</th>
<th>Level of Importance</th>
<th>Frequency of Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.21-5.00</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.41-4.20</td>
<td>Fairly important</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.61-3.40</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.81-2.60</td>
<td>Slightly important</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00-1.80</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, data of one-to-one interviews were transcribed, categorized according to the two Clusters that achieved the highest and the cluster with the lowest means and analyzed. These data were supplementary to questionnaires as they were used to clarify the participants’ responses in the survey.

Results and discussion

This research aimed to enhance the understanding of the degree of importance and implementation of motivational strategies among the teachers in HEIs by addressing the following questions: (1) Which motivational strategies do the teachers perceive as most and least important; (2) Which motivational strategies do the teachers implement in their classes; and (3) How are these similarities and differences reflected in teachers’ motivational perceptions and implementation in Malaysia compared to other teaching contexts?

Firstly, in general, the teachers in this study responded positively to several strategies in the four stages of the framework of motivation in L2. As previously stated, this framework regards motivation as a process-based orientation in which one component entails another and that it is cyclical. Nonetheless, there is no evidence in this study that pointed to motivation as a process since the respondents appeared to be selective in implementing them even when they regarded these strategies as necessary.

The following tables present scores of means across the questionnaire, and they are arranged based on the research questions.

Research Question 1: Which motivational strategies do the teachers perceive as most and least important?

The findings of this study reported that the four highest-rated Clusters on the importance of motivational strategies are:

(i) Proper teacher behavior (µ=3.6),
(ii) Present tasks properly (µ=3.44),
(iii) Promote learners’ self-confidence (µ=3.43), and
(iv) Recognize students’ effort (µ=3.37).

On the other hand, ‘Promote learner autonomy’ is the least essential strategy in EL classes with the only µ=3.06.

Research Question 2: Which motivational strategies do the teachers implement in their classes?

The findings also stated the four highest-rated Clusters of the implementation of motivational strategies are:

(i) Proper teacher behavior (µ=3.57),
(ii) Present tasks properly (µ=3.36),
(iii) Promote learners’ self-confidence (µ=3.29), and
(iv) Recognize students’ effort (µ=3.26).

The teachers also rated ‘Promote learner autonomy’ is the least essential strategy with the only µ=2.79.
Research question 3: How are these similarities and differences reflected in teachers’ motivational perceptions and implementation in Malaysia compared to other teaching contexts?

Proper Teacher Behavior

This data is consistent with cited research (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Guilloteaux, 2013; Alqahtani, 2016) that most of the teachers ranked ‘Proper teacher behavior’ as the most critical construct. During the interview, the teachers also stated that it is necessary to always be professional, caring and proficient so that the students respect them as the authority in the class and as the role models. Other good examples include showing a positive attitude when entering the class so that the students will not be affected by any negative vibes and being punctual.

Next, most of them reported that they showed their enthusiasm for teaching, such as customizing the lesson plan to accommodate the students, giving authentic materials for language learning, making jokes in classes, and providing a safe learning environment. Such actions helped the students to feel more secure or comfortable. They also believe these acts could help to motivate the students, and when the students performed well in the lessons, this made them feel a sense of achievement as well. One of the respondents also stated that by sharing her learning experiences with the students, she believed that they would also be able to overcome their lack of self-confidence in learning English which, “is obviously not our mother tongue, not our first language” (Respondent 9).

Nevertheless, the teachers also set up the boundary between the students and them. For example, one respondent mentioned that as a lecturer, one needs to be authoritative and, at the same time, has “the passion in teaching them, …in sharing knowledge” (Respondent 9). This opinion was also mentioned by another respondent that one should be friendly to the students. Still, teachers need to remember that they are the authority or else the students might “get too comfortable in conducting the relationship with the teachers” (Respondent 10). This situation could be related to the local culture that indicates the social power distance between the teachers and the learners.

In general, the respondents have a high awareness of the importance of proper conduct in front of the students. However, it also appears that there is a limit in terms of their “friendly” relationship with the students.

Present Tasks Properly

Within this cluster, the teachers should demonstrate what they expect the students to do during the EL classes and explain the significance of the activity. Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) commented that, “…no matter how capable a teacher is, it is unreasonable to anticipate that student motivation will be aroused if the teaching lacks instructional clarity” (p. 162). This action was also considered an essential strategy because it reflected the teachers’ responsibilities as role models to their students. It was quite clear that they take their job seriously since the majority of the teachers in this study agreed with these statements.
Promote Learners’ Self-confidence

Next, the teachers agreed that they gave positive feedback to their students and set up activities that were appropriate with the students’ proficiency levels, while hoping that these could motivate the students. Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) also reported that Taiwanese teachers made efforts to encourage their students to be more confident and this was similar to Jones’ (2019) findings that, “Teacher motivational practice correlates strongly with student motivation in the classrooms observed, suggesting that teacher motivational strategies do matter” (p.31)

In this study, the teachers listed some ways of constructive feedback, such as giving positive verbal or written feedback to the students. They also mentioned that they pointed out the students’ strengths and suggested ways to overcome the weaknesses so that the students would feel better. Also, during the interview, the majority stated that they were more concerned about the students’ communicative abilities rather than having correct grammar but failed to convey the message, and they also believe that correcting the students’ grammar would intimidate the students further.

Recognize Students’ Effort

This cluster ranked the fourth among the 10 Clusters, and it is closely related to the previous cluster, which is ‘Promote learners’ self-confidence’. It appears that the teachers believe that acknowledging students who are hardworking and diligent will increase their confidence. Since they teach the undergraduates, these teachers usually compliment the students verbally rather than rewarding them with gifts like chocolates or other material items. For example, Respondent 1 mentioned that, “…I will definitely praise her…she herself would feel more energize to do better in the future”, and Respondent 9 stated that, “They want to be praised…As simple as that. One of them have even confronted me saying that she has never been praised before”. Concerning this cluster, Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) suggested that Taiwanese teachers also “…placed such a high value on promoting effort attributions in Taiwan, where an ability-driven and achievement-based educational tradition is pervasive” (p. 162).

Promote Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy could be defined as the learner’s control over their learning process, such as the learning objectives, materials, strategies, and assessment (Benson, 2016). This motivational cluster is rated as the least important and least frequently practiced in the EL classes, which could be associated with the conservative Asian cultural tradition that teachers know better. Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) reported the same finding and concluded that “…English teachers in Taiwan are not ready to take off the ‘authoritarian’ mask and let learners govern their own learning process” (p. 164). Moreover, it is interesting to discover that though teachers in Lee’ & Lin’ (2019) study conformed to most of teacher motivational strategies, none of the strategy was related to learner autonomy. Thus, it could be concluded that these respective Taiwan and Hong Kong teachers were not interested in promoting learner autonomy.

During the interview, the participants of this study agreed that learner autonomy is an excellent motivational strategy, but it should only be implemented within specific parameters. A number of them would like the opportunity to discuss with the students on the topic selections and learning activities but not on designing the course syllabus because basically, their students were
not mentally prepared for such responsibility. For example, Respondent 8 said that his students “don’t have that initiative so if I get their input on designing on the curriculum what should they learn, I don’t think they even know what they need to learn”. Furthermore, they strongly expressed that students should not be involved in deciding the assessment or designing the test for several reasons. For instance, Respondent 1 stated that, “Strictly, I won’t because I think that is a teacher’s job. We shouldn’t allow a student to have a right to decide when they need to be assessed or how they need to be assessed”, and Respondent 10 mentioned similar opinion that, “Normally, no. The assessment and everything are all decided by committee preparing the subject beforehand before even the semester starts. So, the students have no choice on that”. These responses showed that, the stance of the teachers was almost similar to the previously cited research, that their students were not ready for learner autonomy.

However, they also stated that the lack of learner autonomy was due to the mainstream education system that is more teacher-centered than learner-centered in most universities in Malaysia. This situation is quite true since the EL syllabus in most Malaysian universities are prescribed in advance by the EL department. Also, the students are not involved in this matter or any decision-making related to learning outcomes and assessment.

Generally, the findings of this study support previous research studies that most teachers perceived the importance of motivational strategies, but the degree of their implementation varies in accordance with their teaching contexts such as the students’ attitudes, learning style preferences, and peer influence. These refer to the feasibility issues in teacher motivation, as reported by Lee & Lin (2019), Guilloteaux (2013), and Cheng & Dörnyei (2007) in their studies. Moreover, the lukewarm reception of some motivational strategies is mostly due to the curriculum constraint and the traditional belief that teachers are knowledge providers, and they know better. It will be a long process to revolutionize this matter. Still, as for now, it is good news that some of the Malaysian EL teachers appeared to have a more positive outlook of the inclusion of learner autonomy in their EL classes in the future. This optimistic view contradicts their fellow EL teachers in the cited studies in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. In other words, this finding indicates that motivational strategies are neither cultural nor context-specific, but some are regarded as very practical while some are less practical in different learning situations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the context of HIEs in Malaysia, it can be concluded that the EL teachers perceived all motivational strategies and ranged them from very important to essential. They agreed that some were always implemented in their EL classes such as ‘Proper Teacher Behavior’, and ‘Present Tasks Properly’ whereas some were occasionally applied such as ‘Increase Learners’ Goal-orientedness’, and ‘Promote Learner Autonomy’. Also, as stated earlier, the findings showed that the strategies are universal. Also, their implementation depends on the EL teachers who decide on the effectiveness of these strategies on their students’ language learning. Nonetheless, there are some limitations to this study, such as the lack of respondents from private education institutions. They could provide more data to this type of research since most of them have more diverse courses and up-to-date facilities as compared to public universities. Besides that, the data for this study was collected only using questionnaire and interview questions, and it would be better to include other methods such as document analysis or observation. Finally, despite various
significant findings on these motivational strategies alone, there are still related elements yet to be
discovered. These include the degree of the teacher behaviors; whether they are spontaneous or
calculated, and how these behaviors promote students’ language learning or vice versa.

Acknowledgment
This study was conducted under the following research grant;
R/SGJP/A04.00/01380A/001/2018/000511 (Universiti Malaysia Kelantan)
The researchers would like to express our appreciation to the university for the financial support
provided.

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Non-Language-Major Students' Autonomy in Learning English in Vietnam

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Abstract
The English language is one of the international languages used for communication and learning worldwide. In Vietnam, English is taught as a second language in schools from elementary to advanced levels. In learning a certain foreign language, the autonomy of learners has become a vital subject for the past 30 years. This research surveys the autonomy of non-language-major students in learning English in Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. The quantitative research method uses descriptive statistics and T-test. A group of 258 students (61 males and 197 females) took part in answering two questionnaires on learners' autonomy in learning English and the roles of lecturers and students in developing learner-autonomy in learning English. The results showed that the students were not familiar with the term learning autonomy. However, students were aware that they played a fundamental role in improving this ability. They also believed that the lecturers determined their English learning process. Thence, we propose solutions for the non-language-majors to improve their autonomy in learning English.

Keywords: Autonomy in learning English, non-language-major, Vietnamese non-language-major-students

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.11
Introduction

The communication between individuals, international companies, and organizations is a need, a trend in the current period. In order to achieve successful communication, languages have been used vitally. In Vietnam, it is an indisputable fact that universities started to open international joint programs at different levels of study, high-quality programs, and bilingual programs with one of the aims of directing students to integrate with national students. As a graduation requirement and learning outcome, Vietnamese students have to acquire the foreign language proficiency, specifically Level 3 of the 6-level Vietnamese Framework of Foreign Languages, equivalent to Level B1 of the Common European Framework (Prime Minister, 2008). The foreign language commonly used by universities as well as international companies, seminars, and conferences is English. Nowadays, English is recommended to be learned and used by agencies, companies, and schools. In Vietnam, English is taught at all levels, from the primary education to higher education. For the undergraduate level, students are encouraged to self-study, with and without the help of professors and lecturers within their chosen majors. They also need to prove their autonomy in their learning and life. Autonomy demonstration in learning English as a foreign language is not an exception. However, not all students are autonomous in studying English. With this information, we aim to research students’ autonomy in learning English in the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education (HCMUE), Vietnam, which focuses on non-language student autonomy. This study uses two focused questions: How autonomous are non-language-major-students in learning English in HCMUE? Moreover, what role do the lecturers and students in HCMUE play in developing non-language-major-students’ autonomy in learning English?

Literature Review

Scholars around the world frequently debate learner autonomy. Since 1970, how teachers can promote learner autonomy and increase learner independence has been studied (Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2011). According to Hedge (2001), learner autonomy was responsible for learners to plan, organize, test, and evaluate their learning activities without depending on teachers. Similarly, Little (1995) believed that autonomous learners were cast in a new perspective, had a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, and decision-making. Moreover, they took independent actions and were expected to assume greater responsibility for and take charge of their learning. Thanasoulas (2000) suggested that autonomous learners had insights into their learning styles and strategies. They took an active approach to learn the task at hand. They were good guessers and were willing to take risks, such as communicating in the target language at all costs. They developed the target language into a separate reference system and were ready to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that did not apply.

Furthermore, they had a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language. Littlewood (1996) stated that an autonomous person is the person to have an independent capacity in making and carrying out the choices which govern his or her actions. This position depends on two main components: ability and willingness. Thus, a person may have the capacity to make independent choices but feel no desire to do so. Conversely, a person may be willing to exercise independent choices but not have the necessary ability to do so. Ability and desire can be divided into two components themselves. Ability depends on possessing both pieces of knowledge about the alternatives from which choices must be made and the necessary skills for carrying out the most appropriate choices. Willingness depends on having both the motivation and the confidence to take
responsibility for the choices required. Therefore, learner autonomy also involved the notion that students must be engaged in active and productive activities in their school, and they are responsible for the selection of approaches, as well as how to conduct and evaluate such activities.

The practical research in the field of social psychology has shown that learner autonomy is a basic need (Deci, 1995; Littlewood, 1999). As in Littlewood (1996), autonomy and motivation are related. When learners take responsibility for their learning, they will be motivated to learn. Students who are motivated would do their best, leading to better results (Little, 2004). All activities in a classroom, as well as the school curriculum, revolved around the students. From this student-centered process, researchers gradually discovered the benefits of learner autonomy. Also, learning is a process in which teachers may only help and guide students in a class period. Hence, learner autonomy is a critical factor that students need.

Especially since the 1980s, autonomy in language learning has been a topic of widespread discussion (Cotterall, 2000; Littlewood, 1999). According to Benson (2007), learner autonomy in language learning is the ability to take responsibility for learning purposes and the language. Language learning processes require the active participation of students in the learning process so that the learning goal is always to develop learner autonomy. Sinclair (2000) also mentioned 13 aspects of the study that could be identified and recognized in teaching languages. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) found that learner autonomy was considered as an investment as a critical factor in the field of language teaching and learning. This capability determined the success of students who learned foreign languages. With Little (1999), the goal of language learning is the ability to use language. Therefore, the process of language learning was the process of learning how to use language to communicate (Cotterall, 1995). Learners were not only involved in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation process but also responsible for learning to use language as a means of primary communication during school (Little, 2004).

Enhancement of non-language-major-students' autonomy in learning English is especially necessary because they receive fewer contact hours with their English professors than language majors do. From the aspect of students, Yildirim (2012) concluded that some of the students might not be ready for transferring responsibility from teachers because they thought that the selection of materials, setting of learning objectives, and course evaluation was the responsibility of teachers. Ming and Alias (2007) found that most students preferred foreign language classes in which teachers are the center due to cultural factors; however, they were not dependent on the teacher. Though students were aware of the importance of learner autonomy, especially in learning languages at university, they were not guided through different methodologies of self-study. From the aspect of teachers, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) referred to 11 problems in enhancing learner autonomy in learning English.

In developing the learners' autonomy, students must present themselves as good students and be responsible for and conscious of their learning (Holec, 1981). Thus, students would become active and perform well in their learning with the recommendations and guidelines from the teachers. Moreover, Chan (2001) suggested that the students capable of learner autonomy need to stick to their learning orientation and objectives. Besides, they must have an opportunity to face difficult situations and to improve their learning. They not only need to have fun with their learning
but also to be flexible, dynamic, and willing to ask questions. Similarly, teachers are supporters, organizers, and providers of the learning resources, comments, and encouragement, creating a positive learning environment (Holec, 1981). Camilleri (1999) suggested that teachers must understand teaching methods and management skills because they will influence students; besides, they were also counselors. They need to know the academic progress of the students and help them. Little (2007) emphasized the role of the teachers in promoting learner autonomy of students. Furthermore, teachers must find out how students recognize, think about, and assess their learning and progress. Enhancement of students' autonomy is considered one of the important and deciding factors in the success of language learning. Scharle and Szabo (2000) emphasized this characteristic, autonomy enhances motivation, and motivation develops ability; that development happens through self-recognition activities and self-assessment. However, Little (1995) also emphasized the critical role, mainly in developing the ability to learn a foreign language. He stressed that learner autonomy was not what teachers make students, or students' knowledge is learned, but teachers do not teach them. Students must be active and dynamic in all situations.

Methods
Participants
Participants were selected randomly from the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam. All participants provided informed consent after receiving an explanation of the purpose of the research. The survey instrument was distributed to 300 Vietnamese participants, of which 258 questionnaires returned, for a 86 percent return rate, which exceeds the 30 percent response rate most researchers require for analysis (Dillman, 2000). More females (76.4%) than males (23.6%) among the 258 Vietnamese undergraduate students completed the survey.

Instruments
Questionnaires were designed to survey undergraduate students at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. First, social-demographic items were introduced in the questionnaire. Then, Vietnamese undergraduate students’ perception of non-language-major-students' autonomy in learning English were measured by a total of 18 questions. The responses of the participants were provided in five different levels based on a Five-Point Likert Scale (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011).

Analysis
All participants provided informed consent after receiving an explanation of the purpose of the research. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used for data analyses. The coding procedure was performed as follows: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. According to Narli (2010), the interval width of the Five-Point Likert Scale should be computed to set up the group boundary value for result discussions. Interval Width = (Upper value – Lower value)/n = (5-1)/5 = 0.8. Group boundary values are built that help to discuss research results based on the above interval width, which appear in Table 1.
Table 1. *Group boundary values of Five-Point Likert Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval width</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00 – 1.80</td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.81 – 2.60</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.61 – 3.40</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.41 – 4.20</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.21 – 5.00</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The measuring scales were assessed mainly by the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of Reliability. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient is used to eliminate unrelated latent variables. Variables with a correlational coefficient smaller than 0.3 are excluded. The measuring scale is valid when the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient is over 0.6.

Table 2. *Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of criteria*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups of criteria</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First section</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals, self-assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second section</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 1 of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability, all variables are over 0.6. Thus, they proceeded through the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). After testing the coefficient of reliability of the measuring scale, the researchers continued using the Exploratory Factor Analysis to evaluate the level of convergence of observed variables following specific factors.

Table 3. *Analysis of exploratory factors of groups of criteria*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of criteria</th>
<th>The number of variables after analyzing</th>
<th>KMO verification</th>
<th>Bartlett's verification</th>
<th>Average variance extracted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First section</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals, self-assessment</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>60.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>57.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>55.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second section</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of students</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>66.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles of teachers</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>59.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To sum up, the KMO and Bartlett's verification of factors showed that the KMO coefficient was significant as $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$. The significance of Bartlett's verification showed that the Exploratory Factors Analysis was suitable. The average variances extracted from the criteria were over 50 percent, so they were valid.

Result

An independent samples t-test was used to compare the autonomy of non-language-major students in learning English in HCMUE between males and females. The fact that neither Shapiro-Wilk statistics nor Levene's Test was insignificant indicated that the assumption of normality was not violated, and equal variances can be assumed. There was $t(256) = 2.20$, $p < 0.05$, two-tailed. The difference between the two group means was 0.19 and 95% CI [0.02; 0.36]. That meant the male group ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.60$) had a better mean than the female group ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 0.58$) and had got significant difference for autonomy of non-language-majors-students in learning English in HCMUE.

With the results of descriptive statistics, the authors identified four broad categories:
- Defining goals, developing skills, and self-assessment (Group 1);
- Learning before class (Group 2);
- Autonomy in Learning English through literature search and using other instruments (Group 3);
- The roles of teachers and students in developing learners' autonomy in learning English in HCMUE.

**Group 1: Defining goals, developing skills, and self-assessment.**

The results of the survey showed that 42.6 percent of the students said that they occasionally decided to set goals for learning English. Above half of the participants (57.58 percent) were not confident about speaking in front of a crowd in English. Meanwhile, about three quarters did not communicate with teachers and friends in English after school and use the method of recording their voice to practice or use English to talk to foreigners. However, only 5.9 percent of the students have engaged in the above activities when studying English.

**Group 2: Learning before class.**

In foreign language classes, 32.95 percent of students regularly reviewed lessons before they went to class. Nearly one third of the students occasionally reviewed lessons before class. Approximately half of the student participants sometimes reviewed the lessons.

**Group 3: Autonomy in Learning English through literature search and using other instruments.**

From the survey results, 34.8 percent of the students never improved their English by borrowing English books, CDs, or other multi-media resources from the library. However, 33.6 percent of students preferred to learn English by watching English movies, listening to the British Broadcasting Channel (BBC), and reading English newspapers. With the development of technology, 84.91 percent of the students had used the Internet, computers, and telephones to improve their English ability.
The roles of lecturers and students in developing learners' autonomy in learning English in HCMUE.

The role of students: From the results, 81.9 percent of students agreed that they played an active role in finding resources that were indispensable for improving and developing their English skills. Over 78 percent of students said that they needed to assess advantages and disadvantages when they wanted to develop their autonomy in learning English. 77.2 percent of the students ultimately agreed that they needed to build clear goals before studying English. 36.3 percent of the students admitted that their learning depended on the test.

The role of lecturers: Although the results showed that 41.3 percent of students disagreed that students were dependent on teachers, students confirmed the role of lecturers in assisting them to improve their English. Lecturers had the responsibility to help students understand English, point out the students' mistakes, and introduce the reference sources. Notably, 81.3 percent of the students said that the lecturers not only taught but also helped students to seek effective methods of learning. Depending on lecturers, nearly 50 percent of students were aware of the role of teachers and students who impart and acquire knowledge, respectively.

Discussion

From the survey, results in the evaluation of learners' autonomy in learning English and the role of lecturers and students in developing learners' autonomy in learning English in HCMUE were withdrawn. There was a significant difference in the autonomy of non-language-major-students in learning English in HCMUE between males and females at HCMUE. The males were better than the females. Besides, most students did not effectively use their spare time to practice their English skills, review lessons before class, and practice English after the lesson ends. They did not actively participate in all activities in English class, also did not usually use English to communicate with people in real life. They seemed not to apply English learning strategies and methods effectively. It is found out that in order to self-improve their English skills, students search for resources actively, assess their competencies, and build specific goals before learning English. In terms of the lecturers' role, they not only teach but also help students to find effective learning methods, point out students' mistakes, and introduce reference sources. They are the ones to impart knowledge to students. However, the study finding did not show that the students were entirely dependent on the lecturers. This result is also consistent with the research of Holec (1981) and Chan (2001) when students have identified their learning goals, they will build their learning plans and take responsibility for their choices.

Conclusion

Most of the non-language-majors in HCMUE did not understand what autonomy in learning a foreign language, specifically English, is. They never or seldom did any activities to show their learning autonomy, nor did they actively seek reference sources to enhance learning autonomy and improve their English proficiency. Though the libraries were always available for the students for useful and appropriate resources, students did not often use it. They used multiple online resources with the Internet and computers. However, students were aware of their role in enhancing English learning autonomy. Interestingly, although they were aware of the need to actively find ways to learn English by themselves, search for useful resources, identify goals, and
build learning plans, students still thought that teachers played a decisive role in their English learning.

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References


A Cross-linguistic Analysis of Formulaic Language and Meta-discourse in Linguistics Research Articles by Natives and Arabs: Modeling Saudis and Egyptians

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Abstract
This corpus-based study aims to identify the interactional and interactive metadiscourse markers in terms of frequency in the abstract and discussion sections of research articles on linguistics, written in English by native, Egyptian, and Saudi researchers. To attain this aim, 60 research articles have been randomly compiled and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively via AntConc.3.2.4 depending on Hyland’s (2005) classification of metadiscourse markers (MM). Taking the abstracts and discussions written by the natives as a benchmark, this study poses the following essential question: How close and far is the amount of the interactional and interactive resources in Egyptian and Saudi abstracts and discussions to and from the native level? The results showed that except for hedges, evidential markers, and endophorics, the usage of attitudes, code glosses, engagement markers, self-mentions and transitions in the E-abstracts (i.e. written by Egyptian researchers) was much far from the native level. But in S-abstracts (i.e. abstracts written by Saudi researchers), only two close points to the native level have been recorded: transitions and engagements. In the E-discussion sections, unlike code glosses and frame markers, attitudes, boosters, endophorics, hedges, and self-mentions were reported very close to the N-level. In the S-discussion sections, boosters, code glosses, emphatic, engagement, frame markers, and transitions have recorded far rates from the N-level; whereas only attitudes and hedges were much close to the native normal level.

Keywords: cross-linguistics, Hyland’s classification, interactional marker, interactive devices

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.12
Introduction

Research articles, Thompson (2013) argued, pose a substantial challenge for non-native researchers because of the utter size of the text, the difficulty in arranging the research, and generating consistent arguments. Such an attempt, of course, sets formidable efforts on the Egyptian and Saudi researchers in terms of pragmatic concerns to breed interaction among discourse communities. Regarding the discussion and abstract sections, Farjami (2013) pointed out that this attempt becomes more and more magnified as non-native writers crave more succor since they are expected to stick to traits of discussion and abstract writing and English language for the given communicative setting with a realization of patterns preferred by this type of writing.

One of the ways to generate effective academic writing is the use of some metadiscoursal devices, such as frame markers (FMs), logical connectives (LCs), endophorics (Es), evidential devices, and boosters. FMs, a basic element of written discourse, provide scope information about “text boundaries or elements of schematic text structure” (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 168). They are used to serve four major functions encompassing (1) labeling text stages (e.g. to sum up), (2) showing topic shift (e.g. concerning; in connection with), (3) sequencing (e.g. to start with; finally; and then) and (4) declaring the writer’s goal (e.g. my goal; the prime focus) (Hyland, 2005). LCs, like FMs, is a crucial metadiscoursal device. They are used to express semantic relation between two main clauses (e.g. and, but, so, in addition, thus). A third metadiscoursal device is the EMs; they refer to different parts in same text (e.g. see section two; fig three; noted below). Evidential markers, unlike EMs, refer to the sources of information from other texts (e.g. according to X; Z (2017) pointed out). Boosters, a substantial metadiscourse tool, are used to reflect the writer’s certainty in message (e.g. as a matter of fact, actually, definitely).

Despite their diverse types and roles in academic writing, non-native researchers experience difficulties in the effective use of these metadiscoursal devices. Therefore, non-native researchers rely on restricted number of devices because of the scarce emphasis on the usefulness of these devices in not only processing but also structuring the academic texts in educational settings. In this regard, very few studies examined the functions of FMs and the other discoursal devices (i.e. logical connectives (LCs), endophorics, evidential markers, and boosters) in research articles on linguistics written in English by Saudi and Egyptian researchers. Over and above, less attention was given to the sections of discussions and abstracts, and the research conducted in Egypt and Saudi Arabia is relatively little.

To fill this gap, an insight into this matter is expected to contribute to the study importance to gain deep understanding of how some metadiscoursal devices are manifested and used in two significant parts of research articles: abstracts and discussions. Thus, this study attempted to spotlight how Egyptian and Saudi researchers structure and process their abstracts and discussions through frame markers, logical connectives, endophorics, evidential devices, hedges, self-mentions and boosters with various types, frequencies and functions to clarify the differences and similarities between these two different groups of discourse societies.

Theoretical Background

To study the language in action or to look at text in relation to the given social context in which it is used has become a focal tool for identifying language peculiarities in different genres
(Hyland, 2009a &b). That is why; discourse analysis in general and metadiscourse in particular have recently gained mounting attention from scholars. Metadiscourse refers to the way by which the writers and speakers interact through their language use with their audience (i.e. readers or listeners). Thus, metadiscourse is a commentary on a text or an utterance made by its producer. It is a widely employed terminology in language teaching, contemporary discourse analysis and pragmatics. The linguists who study metadiscourse are always motivated by a desire to comprehend the relation between language and its context. That is, how speakers and writers use language to explicate communicative situations, and how they count on their perception of communicative situations to make their intended meanings crystal clear to their interlocutors. Metadiscourse can be employed in the service of not only language but also literacy education. However, while many researchers and teachers find the thought of using metadiscourse in the service of language and literacy to be conceptually substantial and analytically strong, it is not without difficulties of clear-cut definitions, well-defined categorization, and detailed analysis (Hyland, 2017).

Because it is an open category and usually perceived in different ways, metadiscourse has a variety of models, each one proposed to explicate a particular linguistic dimension (Crismore, 1993; Hyland, 2005; Vande Kopple, 1985). The first model, introduced by Vande Kopple (1985) (See Appendix A, Table one), presents two categories of metadiscourse: textual and interpersonal. Four devices – text connectives (TCs), code glosses (CGs), validity markers (VMs) and narrators – form textual metadiscourse, and three metadiscoursal devices – illocution markers (IMs), attitude markers (AMs) and commentaries – constituted the interpersonal metadiscourse. Kopple’s model, for having been criticized as vague and presenting functionally overlapping devices, has been revised and modified by Crismore, Markkanen, and Steffensen, (1993). The revised model, introduced by Crismore et al. (1993) (See Appendix A, Table two) has presented three metadiscoursal devices: textual, interpretive and interpersonal. Textual markers include features that organize the discourse, and interpretive markers are those features that help the readers to interpret and understand the writer’s message.

The model proposed by Hyland (2005; 2017) (See table one below) comprises two major categories: interactive and interactional. This model is based on and benefited from the previous models set by Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore et al. (1993). What characterizes Hyland’s model and makes it peculiar is that it includes stance and engagement markers. The interactive resources, on the one hand, concern the authors’ awareness of their readers, and the formers’ attempts to satisfy the needs of the readers by making the arguments satisfactory for them. The interactional resources, sometimes called formulaic markers, on the other hand, concern the authors’ attempts to make their opinions very evident, and to engage the readers by expecting their responses to the text (Hyland, 2005; 2017).

Interactional resources that get the readers involved in the argument are sometimes called formulaic devices and excluded from the metadiscourse markers; it is attributed to the fact that hedges, boosters, and engagement markers are not mostly employed by themselves, rather, they are accompanied with other phrases to constitute a formulaic phrase (Santos, 2019)
Table 1. *Hyland’s taxonomy of metadiscoursal devices (2005; 2017)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interactive resources</td>
<td>Help to guide reader through the text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>Express semantic relation between main clauses in</td>
<td>Addition / hence / but / thus / and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame markers</td>
<td>Refer to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages</td>
<td>finally / to conclude / my purpose is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endophorics</td>
<td>Refer to information in other parts of the text</td>
<td>noted above / see Fig / in section 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidential devices</td>
<td>Refer to source of information from other texts</td>
<td>according to X / (Y, 1990) / Z states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code glosses</td>
<td>Help readers grasp meanings of ideational material</td>
<td>namely / e.g. / such as / in other words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactional resources</td>
<td>Involve the reader in the argument (formulaic language)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedges</td>
<td>Withhold writer's full commitment to proposition</td>
<td>might / perhaps / possible / about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boosters</td>
<td>Emphasize force or writer's certainty in proposition</td>
<td>in fact / definitely / it is clear that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude markers</td>
<td>Express writer's attitude to proposition</td>
<td>unfortunately / I agree / surprising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement markers</td>
<td>Explicitly refer to or build relationship with reader</td>
<td>consider / note that / you can see that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-mentions</td>
<td>Explicit reference to author(s)</td>
<td>I / we / my / our</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Review of Literature**

A general overview of the previous studies on metadiscourse resources showed that metadiscoursal devices varied across different text types such as newspapers (Abdulaal, M., 2020; Yeganeh, Heravi, & Sawari, 2015; Dafouz-Milne, 2008), textbooks (Hyland, 1999; 2004), research articles (Dahl, 2004; Kim & Lim, 2013), academic essays (Hyland, 2007; Adel, 2012; Bruce, 2010), argumentative essays (Anwardeen, Luyee, Gabriel, & Kalajahi, 2013) and theses/dissertations (Hyland, 2010) generated by native and non-native writers of English. Although these research studies focused mostly on the overall frequency of metadiscourse devices, they clearly ignored the functional analysis of the resources. Besides, a vast range of studies (e.g., García-Calvo, 2002; Lee, 2006; Yeganeh, Heravi, & Sawari, 2015; Jones, 2011) focused only on interactional resources ignoring the interactive devices employed in the text.

There is a scarcity of research studies that concentrated on the written manuscripts produced by Egyptian and Saudi researchers with an emphasis on metadiscourse. For example, Burneikaitė (2008) and Bal-Gezegin and Baş (2020) demonstrated that the text connectives were among the frequently employed markers in postgraduate writings produced by Lithuanian non-native writers of English in comparison with British native students. A deep function analysis revealed that these discourse markers were generally used to signal text stages rather than to manifest the goal of writers. In another close study, Burneikaitė (2009) concentrated on metadiscoursal functions of sequencers in some English research articles and revealed over-dependence of Lithuanian learners of English on these resources. Besides, Marandi’s (2003) study, one of the scarce contrastive researches on metadiscoursal devices in research articles, manifested no statistically significant differences in terms of frequency of frame markers and connectors in...
the articles produced by native Persian and native English writers. According to Marandi (2003), reminders, which has been termed *the announcements* in Hyland’s (2005) typology, had higher numbers of occurrences in discussions compared to introductions which in turn encompassed higher intention markers (e.g. to sum up, to conclude, in the next section I will discuss), which are labeling items. Over and above, topicalizers in Marandi’s taxonomy were rarely employed by all groups. To complete what Marandi (2003) started, Mirshamsi and Allami (2013) examined both Persian and English research papers, and they reported that the metadiscourse devices occurred with the same percentages in the two groups. Lee and Casal (2014), concentrating on English and Spanish, found that results and discussion parts of Spanish authors encompassed more discourse markers than those of English writers.

As form discussions and abstracts, their analysis has not been given their deserved place in the linguistic literature. Lores (2004), for example, focused on the rhetorical and thematic structure of the abstracts. Unlike Lores (2004), Santos (2019), Martin-Martin (2003), and Ren and Li (2011) concentrated on the rhetorical variation in abstracts and discussions. There was less focus on the use of the metadiscoursal devices used in abstracts and discussions (e.g. Akbaş, 2012; Wang & Zhang, 2016). Less attention was given to master theses compared to PhD dissertations. Actually, it is usually the graduate students who encounter some difficulties and need far more assistance in writing as they are far less familiar with this type of academic writing (Lee & Casal, 2014). For example, Akbaş (2012) investigated metadiscourse devices in PhD dissertation abstracts composed by native and non-native English speakers and native authors of Turkish. He found that native English abstracts contained the highest frequency of metadiscourse devices compared to the native Turkish abstracts. Unlike Akbas (2012), in their descriptive study, Özdemir and Longo (2014) revealed that Turkish students’ master abstracts contained higher numbers of metadiscourse resources; especially frame markers compared to the American students’ master abstracts.

**Research Objectives**

This research attempts to attain the following objectives:
1. To explore the similarities and/or differences between Egyptian and Saudi researchers in relation to the interactional and interactive metadiscourse markers used in their research articles.
2. To investigate the influence of Arabic cultural background, if any, on the use of metadiscourse devices in the abstract and discussion parts of the Egyptian and Saudi researchers.
3. To show how far away or close the Egyptian and Saudi researchers from their native counterparts.

**Research questions**

1. Taking the abstracts written by natives as a benchmark, how close and far are the interactional and interactive resources in E- and S-abstracts to and from the N-level?
2. Considering the discussion parts written by natives as a benchmark, how close and far are the interactional and interactive resources in E- and S-discussions to and from the N-level?
3. Which metadiscourse devices in E- and S-abstracts and discussions recorded typical rates with the N-level?
6. Hypotheses
1. There are no statistically significant differences in E-, S-, and N-, abstracts in terms of the used amount of discourse markers.
2. There are statistically significant differences in E-, S-, and N-, discussions in terms of the used amount of discourse markers.
3. There are some typical rates of discourse markers in E- and S-research articles.

Methodology

Research Design
In the current study, a mixed research design was employed. It is a procedure in which qualitative and quantitative methods were used in combination. Qualitatively, each metadiscoursal device was identified and its function was highlighted in the context in which it occurred. Quantitatively, the metadiscourse markers were calculated to define the overall frequency and functions and then they were compared and contrasted among the three groups of articles’ abstracts and discussions.

Study Corpus
All the academic articles, which are approximate in word count, have been collected and downloaded from recent issues of high-impact refereed linguistics journals, such as International Journal of English Linguistics, Arab World English Journal, Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, and Modern Language Journal. Translated articles are discarded. The academic articles investigated in this study consist of 20 discussion and abstract sections of research articles, written by Egyptian researchers, and the same number and kind of sections written Saudi and native English researchers in the field of linguistics. The corpus is limited to a twenty-year period between 2000 and 2020.

Table 2. The abstracts and discussions corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Item</th>
<th>E Abstracts</th>
<th>E Discussions</th>
<th>S Abstracts</th>
<th>S Discussions</th>
<th>N Abstracts</th>
<th>N Discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of items</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of words</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>12568</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>11582</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>12698</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Procedures
To conduct the analysis, abstracts and discussion sections are cut out from articles written by Egyptian, Saudi, and English native researchers in linguistics. The selected sections are read thoroughly and analyzed carefully spotlighting metadiscourse resources. The analysis is repeated again after one month and the results are compared together in order to validate the results. Then, the results have been subjected to statistical analysis. The major problem encountered is that some Saudi and Egyptian researchers merge the discussion section with the findings part.

Results
In this section, a comparison is drawn between the qualitative and quantitative nature of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers used in the abstracts and discussions of linguistics research articles produced by Egyptian, Saudi, and English native scholars. Table three
shows the frequency and the percentage of the interactive and interactional discourse devices in the Egyptian scholars’ research articles. The distribution of discourse markers in table three demonstrates the excessive use of interactive rather than the interactional markers in E-abstracts and E-discussions (i.e. abstracts and discussions written by Egyptian linguists). Over and above, it shows the overwhelming use of transitions in E-abstracts and discussions as an interactive discourse device. It finally exhibits the excessive employment of engagement markers and hedges in E-abstracts and E-discussions respectively as the dominant interactional discourse markers. It is also noticed that the endophorics are recorded as the least interactive discourse marker used in E-abstracts in comparison with engagement devices that are reported as the least interactional discourse device in E-discussions.

Table 3. The frequencies of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in the abstracts and discussions of linguistics papers written by Egyptian researchers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Markers</th>
<th>E-Abstracts</th>
<th>E-Discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15.37071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame markers</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>11.21157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code glosses</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>14.10488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidential devices</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>12.4774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endophorics</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.169982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-mentions</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.435805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement markers</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>15.18987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude markers</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>11.75407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedges</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7.9566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boosters</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6.329114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Σ</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>6.329114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar finding can be extracted from table four in which the discourse marker distribution displays clearly the dominant use of interactive rather than the interactional markers in S-Abstracts and S-Discussions (i.e. abstracts and discussions written by Saudi researchers). Further, table four shows the prevailing use of transitions in S-Abstracts and Discussions as an interactive discourse device. It also displays the excessive employment of boosters and hedges in S-Abstracts and S-Discussions respectively as the dominant interactional discourse markers. It is also noticed that the engagement markers and self-mentions are registered as the least interactional discourse markers used in S-abstracts and S-discussions. Table five reveals four basic results, first, the controlling employment of interactive markers in the native researchers’ abstracts and discussions; 244 and 673 respectively; a second essential result in the same table is the prevailing usage of frame markers rather than transitions in N-Abstracts and N-Discussions as an interactive discourse device. A third result is the super usage of hedges in N-Abstracts and N-Discussions respectively as the dominant interactional discourse markers. A final result is that only engagement markers are registered as the least interactional discourse markers used in Native abstracts and discussions.
Table 4. *The frequencies of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in the abstracts and discussions of linguistics papers written by Saudi researchers*

| Discourse Markers | S- Abstracts | | | S- discussions | | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------|--------|----------------|--------|
|                   | **Total Number** | **Percentage %** | **Total Number** | **Percentage %** |
| Interactive       |              |          |          |                |
| Transitions       | 71           | 24.31507 | 313     | 27.79751       |
| Frame markers     | 41           | 14.0411  | 122     | 10.83481       |
| Code glosses      | 52           | 17.80822 | 72      | 6.394316       |
| Evidential devices| 43           | 14.72603 | 87      | 7.726465       |
| Endophorics       | 4            | 1.369863 | 40      | 3.552398       |
| Self-mentions     | 6            | 2.054795 | 31      | 2.753108       |
| Engagement markers| 3            | 1.027397 | 116     | 10.30195       |
| Interactional     |              |          |          |                |
| Attitude markers  | 14           | 4.794521 | 56      | 4.973357       |
| Hedges            | 16           | 5.479452 | 219     | 19.44938       |
| Boosters          | 42           | 14.38356 | 70      | 6.216696       |
| **∑**             | 292          | 1126     |          |                |

Table 5. *The frequencies of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in native researchers’ abstracts and discussions*

| Discourse Markers | N- Abstracts | | | N- Discussions | | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------|--------|----------------|--------|
|                   | **Total Number** | **Percentage %** | **Total Number** | **Percentage %** |
| Interactive       |              |          |          |                |
| Transitions       | 63           | 17.21311 | 219     | 22.05438       |
| Frame markers     | 72           | 19.67213 | 259     | 26.08258       |
| Code glosses      | 24           | 6.557377 | 35      | 3.524673       |
| Evidential devices| 63           | 17.21311 | 92      | 9.264854       |
| Endophorics       | 22           | 6.010929 | 68      | 6.847936       |
| Self-mentions     | 33           | 9.016393 | 34      | 3.423968       |
| Engagement markers| 6            | 1.639344 | 4       | 0.40282        |
| Interactional     |              |          |          |                |
| Attitude markers  | 26           | 7.103825 | 42      | 4.229607       |
| Hedges            | 36           | 9.836066 | 195     | 19.63746       |
| Boosters          | 21           | 5.737705 | 45      | 4.531722       |
| **∑**             | 366          | 993     |          |                |

To validate the first hypothesis, One-Way ANOVA and its prerequisite tests (i.e. Anderson-Darling normality test and Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances) were conducted. Anderson-Darling normality test has been conducted for E-, S-, and N- abstracts to check their normal distribution. It shows that p-value >.05 (i.e. 14.9%), with a skewness of 0.19616 and a kurtosis at -1.23479 (See figure one below). The probability plot of the three categories of abstracts also proved the normal distribution with P-value > 0.05 and SD equals 25.76 (See figure two below); therefore, the null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted and the alternative (Hₐ) is rejected.
Figure 1. Anderson-Darling normality test of Egyptian, Saudi, and native abstracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anderson-Darling Normality Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-Squared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StdDev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Minimum                               | 3.000     |
| 1st Quartile                          | 18.250    |
| Median                                | 38.500    |
| 3rd Quartile                          | 63.500    |
| Maximum                               | 85.000    |

95% Confidence Interval for Mean
30.746 - 49.987
95% Confidence Interval for Median
22.457 - 59.713
95% Confidence Interval for StdDev
20.518 - 34.634

95% Confidence Intervals

Figure 1. Probability plot of the normal distribution of collected abstracts

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and Multiple Comparisons Test (i.e. homogeneity of variance test) are inferential statistical tests conducted to assesses the assumption that the variances of the populations from which different samples are drawn are equal (i.e. H₀: µ₁ = µ₂). The alternative hypothesis states that there are unequal variances among the populations from which the samples are drawn (i.e. Hₐ: µ₁ ≠ µ₂). In figure three below, the p-value in Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and Multiple Comparisons Test are 80.6% and 77.1% respectively (i.e., p > .05). It indicates the equality of the variances among the populations from which the samples are drawn. In other words, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative one is rejected.
Since normality and homogeneity were satisfied (See Anderson-Darling normality test and Levene's Test for Equality of Variances in Figures, one, two, & three), the One-Way ANOVA test were conducted to check the statistic differences between means of the three groups of abstracts. The null hypothesis ($H_0$) is that $\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$ and the alternative is that at least two of the means of the three groups of abstracts are not equal. The $p$-value as indicated in (test section one) below is bigger than 0.05 (i.e. 6%); therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative is rejected. The validation of the first hypothesis crystalized that there are no statistic differences between the used amounts of discourse markers in the three groups of abstracts. However, the test shows that Egyptian researchers’ abstracts included the highest number of discourse devices, whereas the Saudi researchers’ abstracts ranked the lowest as (test section two) shows. Fisher Test below (See figure four) displays two essential results; first, there are no statistically significant differences between N-abstracts and E-abstracts from one part and also there are no statistically significant differences between N-abstracts and S-abstracts from the other part. It is simply because the intervals between N- and S-abstracts and N- and E-abstracts contain a zero. Second, the only slight significant difference can be noticed between S-abstracts and E-abstracts as the interval between them does not contain a zero as Fisher Test reveals.

Table 6. The One-Way ANOVA test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F-Value</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3619</td>
<td>1809.4</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15630</td>
<td>578.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
Factor          N  Mean   StDev      95% CI
E-Abstracts    10  55.30  26.42   (39.69; 70.91)
S-Abstracts    10  29.20  23.63   (13.59; 44.81)
N-Abstracts    10  36.60  21.92   (20.99; 52.21)
Pooled StDev = 24.0602

Fisher Pairwise Comparisons
Grouping Information Using the Fisher LSD Method and 95% Confidence
Factor          N  Mean   Grouping
E-Abstracts    10  55.30  A
N-Abstracts    10  36.60  A B
S-Abstracts    10  29.20  B
Means that do not share a letter are significantly different.

Figure 4. Fisher test: the intervals between each pair of abstract groups

To validate the second hypothesis, the Chi-square is conducted to draw a comparison between the means of the three groups of discussions. This non-parametric test is selected as normality and homogeneity are not met. In Table 7, the value of observed chi-square ($x^2 = 313.851$) is meaningful at $\alpha$ level ($\alpha = 0.05$) with a degree of freedom of 18. The null hypothesis (Ho) states that there are no statistical differences between $\mu_1$, $\mu_2$, and $\mu_3$; whereas the alternative hypothesis states that there are statistical differences between the means of the three groups of discussions. Since p-value is smaller than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative is accepted. It indicates that there are significant differences between Egyptian, Saudi, and Native discussions in terms of the amount of discourse markers used in each.
Table 7. *Chi-Square Tabulated Statistics: Discourse markers in Egyptian, Saudi, and Native Discussions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>E-Discussions</th>
<th>N-Discussions</th>
<th>S-Discussions</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>38.10</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.965</td>
<td>4.230</td>
<td>4.973</td>
<td>4.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46.71</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>53.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boosters</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.91</td>
<td>25.86</td>
<td>40.23</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.978</td>
<td>4.532</td>
<td>6.217</td>
<td>5.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55.29</td>
<td>55.63</td>
<td>63.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37.43</td>
<td>20.47</td>
<td>42.11</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.484</td>
<td>3.525</td>
<td>6.394</td>
<td>5.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.34</td>
<td>54.67</td>
<td>61.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Endophorics</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.74</td>
<td>41.72</td>
<td>24.54</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.572</td>
<td>6.848</td>
<td>3.552</td>
<td>5.248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.80</td>
<td>52.11</td>
<td>59.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>92.80</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.507</td>
<td>0.403</td>
<td>10.302</td>
<td>4.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.72</td>
<td>39.96</td>
<td>45.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidential markers</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.21</td>
<td>34.33</td>
<td>32.46</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.017</td>
<td>9.265</td>
<td>7.726</td>
<td>8.628</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>85.16</td>
<td>85.68</td>
<td>97.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frame</strong></td>
<td>119</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.80</td>
<td>51.80</td>
<td>24.40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.057</td>
<td>26.083</td>
<td>10.835</td>
<td>16.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>158.89</td>
<td>159.85</td>
<td>181.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hedges</strong></td>
<td>216</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34.29</td>
<td>30.95</td>
<td>34.76</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200.20</td>
<td>201.41</td>
<td>228.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-mentions</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22.62</td>
<td>40.48</td>
<td>36.90</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26.69</td>
<td>26.86</td>
<td>30.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transitions</strong></td>
<td>312</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.97</td>
<td>25.95</td>
<td>37.09</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.611</td>
<td>22.054</td>
<td>27.798</td>
<td>27.173</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>268.20</td>
<td>269.83</td>
<td>305.97</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All</strong></td>
<td>987</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>1126</td>
<td>3106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.78</td>
<td>31.97</td>
<td>36.25</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.777</td>
<td>31.970</td>
<td>36.252</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To closely examine differences and similarities between the three groups, the discourse markers are coded from one to ten (See Figure five). Taking N-abstracts as a benchmark, it is quite obvious that the Egyptian researchers are going far above from the normal usage of attitudes; whereas the Saudi researchers are less below the accepted native level. As for boosters, Egyptian researchers are a little bit closer than Saudi ones to the normal level. The code glosses in Egyptian and Saudi abstracts recorded higher levels than the normal native benchmark. In terms the endophorics, both the Egyptian and the Saudis are below the normal level, with a slight Egyptian superiority. As for engagement markers in Saudi abstracts, they are closer to the normal level than those in the Egyptian researchers’ abstracts which have recorded a tremendously high level, rated second to the usage of transitions in the same group. Unlike the engagement markers in the Egyptian researchers’ abstracts which skewed away from the normal level, the evidential markers behaved different, coming so close to the normal level, leaving their counterparts in the abstracts of the Saudi researchers much below the N-level. Frame markers, in Saudi and Egyptian abstracts, come both below the N-level with a slight superiority to the E-abstracts. Again like engagement markers in E-abstracts, the hedges in the same group of abstracts get closer to the N-level than their Saudi counterparts. Like frame markers, the self-mentions devices in E- and S-abstracts came lower to the normal level in N-abstracts. As for transitions, Saudi researchers seemed to be very much close to the native normal level leaving their Egyptian counterparts swaying up away from the N-level.

Figure 5 Scatterplot of E-, S-, and N- abstract Frequencies versus

Recoded Discourse Markers

To investigate the differences and similarities between E-discussions and S-discussions, N-discussion is considered as a benchmark and discourse markers are coded from one to ten (See Figure six). Concerning attitudes and boosters (i.e. codes one & two), it is obvious that Egyptian researchers have been closer than the Saudi ones to the native normal level. For code glosses, the S- and E-discussions recorded very close rates, which were slightly above the normal native level.
Endophorics recorded very close rates in both E- and S- discussions; both were below the N-level though. Engagement markers in E-discussions rated typically with the N-level from which Saudi researchers were kept much higher. Codes six, eight, and nine (i.e. evidential markers, hedges, and self-mentions) have recorded typical rates in E- and S-discussions with the N-level. Typicality in rates came up again between S- and E- discussions in the use of frame markers, in spite of being both much below the normal native level. Unlike frame markers, transitions achieved typical rates in the two group of discussions, marking much higher level than that of the native benchmark.

Figure 6. Scatterplot of E-, S-, and N- Discussion Frequencies versus Recoded Discourse Markers

Discussion

In this research study, three basic questions have been raised. Considering the abstracts written by native researchers as a benchmark, the first question investigates how close and far the interactional and interactive resources in E- and S-abstracts to and from the N-level. The results showed that the usage of attitudes, code glosses, engagement markers, self-mentions and transitions in the E-abstracts was much far from the normal N-level. However, the usage of hedges, evidential markers, and endophorics in the same abstracts was much closer to the native rate. The close rates of evidential devices and endophorics reflect the Egyptian researchers’ high sense of citation to avoid plagiarism. The close rates of hedges can be interpreted as cautiousness from the Egyptian researchers to distinguish between facts and claims. These findings go in harmony with Jones (2011) who pointed that metadiscourse markers enhance coherence in academic writing, raise precision rates, and makes the authors differentiate between truths and allegations. Further, this finding is in complete accordance with Ho (2018) who concluded that the proper use of hedges and evidential and endophorics leads to the readers’ full persuasion and utter trust in the authors.

In S-abstracts, only to close points to the N-level have been recorded: transitions and engagements. The rest of the metadiscourse markers has been much far from the N-level. It seems
that Saudi researchers used engagement markers to create and maintain relationship with their readers, impacting them by addressing them directly in numerous ways. The use of transitions is attributed to the Saudi researchers’ keen intentions to signal relationship between ideas. This result goes in harmony with Bal-Gezegen and Baş (2020) who underscored the importance setting relationship between prepositional contents and of getting the readers involved in the academic research, referring to the excellence of the Asian researchers in this domain.

Considering the discussion parts written by natives as a benchmark, the second research question examines how close and far are the interactional and interactive resources in discussion parts written by Saudi and Egyptian researchers from the N-level. In the E-discussion parts, attitudes, boosters, endophorics, hedges, and self-mentions were reported very close to the N-level, unlike code glosses, frame markers, and transitions that were reported much far from the native normal level. The closeness rates can be attributed to the Egyptian researchers’ keen desire to represent and emphasize their stances in every situation. This finding goes in harmony with Abdi (2002), Cao (2014), Abdulaal and Abuslema (2020), and Abdollahzadeh (2011) who pointed out that academic articles fall down if their authors do not show clearly their emphatic stances in every single situation. In the Saudi discussion sections, on the other hand, boosters, code glosses, engagement, frame markers, and transitions have reported far rates from the N-level; whereas only attitudes and hedges were much close to the native normal level.

As for typicality, it was reported in Saudi discussion sections as evidential markers and self-mentions were used in typical rates with the native ones. Also, typicality was noticed in the Egyptian discussion sections, as engagement and evidential markers were used in typical rates with the native ones.

**Conclusion and Implications**

This study sought to examine the metadiscourse markers use in linguistics research articles written by Egyptian, Saudi, and native researchers in terms of frequency and functions. The results of the study displayed that the abstract and discussion sections of the three groups of researchers differed from one another in terms of frequency of metadiscourse markers to a great extent. This study, on one hand, has evidenced that Egyptian researchers heavily relied on transitions and engagement markers in writing their abstracts and on transitions and hedges in their discussion sections. This study has also evidenced that Saudi researchers heavily counted on transitions and code glosses in writing their abstracts and, like the Egyptian researchers, on transitions and hedges in their discussion sections. On the other hand, the Native researchers excessively depended on frame markers and evidential devices in writing their abstracts and on frame markers and hedges in their discussion sections. The conclusion that is drawn from these findings is that the Egyptian and Saudi researchers pursue totally different rhetorical conventions in the articulation of persuasion in their research articles through different use of metadiscourse markers. These findings are intended to generate awareness among Egyptian and Saudi researchers when organizing their research abstracts and discussions. Further, these findings encourage Saudi and Egyptian instructors to incorporate metadiscourse markers in academic writing courses to assist learners to structure their discourse in a much better native-like way.
Acknowledgments
I take this opportunity to thank Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia alongside its Deanship of Scientific Research, for all technical support it has unstintingly provided towards the fulfillment of the current research project, number [2020/02/16463].

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References


**Appendix [A]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Classification system for Metadiscourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual metadiscourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Connectives (TCs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Glosses (CGs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity Markers (VM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal metadiscourse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illocution Markers (IMs) | They show the acts that the writer performs (e.g. to conclude, I hypothesize, we assume)
---|---
Attitude Markers (AMs) | They express the writer’s attitudes to material presented (e.g. fortunately, I wish, how terrible that).
Commentaries | They are markers used to address the audience directly (e.g. you certainly agree that, you may want the fourth section first).

*Note 1. Adapted from Vande Kopple (1985, pp. 82-92)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Textual Markers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical connectives</td>
<td>Show connection between ideas</td>
<td>Therefore; so; in addition; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequencers</td>
<td>Indicate sequence</td>
<td>First; next; finally; 1,2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminders</td>
<td>Refer to earlier text material</td>
<td>As we saw in chapter one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topicalizers</td>
<td>Indicate a shift in topic</td>
<td>Well, now we discuss …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretive markers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code glosses</td>
<td>Explain text material</td>
<td>For example; that is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illocution markers</td>
<td>Name the act performed</td>
<td>To conclude; in sum; I predict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>Announce upcoming material</td>
<td>In the next section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal metadiscourse</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedges</td>
<td>Show uncertainty to the truth of assertion</td>
<td>Might; possible; likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certainty markers</td>
<td>Express full commitment to assertion</td>
<td>Certainly; know; shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributers</td>
<td>Give source/support of information</td>
<td>Smith claims that …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude markers</td>
<td>Display writer’s affective values</td>
<td>I hope/agree; surprisingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary</td>
<td>Build relationship with reader</td>
<td>You may not agree that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note 2. Adapted from Crismore et al. (1993, pp.47-54)*
Planning for Transformation: A Semantic-Grammatical Based Discourse Analysis of Saudi Vision 2030

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Abstract
The need for transformation has led kingdom to envision and encode the Saudi Vision 2030 document; it is not merely an idealistic divination but a manuscript with an appropriate plan to accomplish its anticipated economic and social goals. In fact, planning is a critical factor in the document, which shapes it as a discourse of realization and fascination, made in the public interest. The present research aims to investigate the ways strategic planning has been articulated in the Vision 2030 document. It can help to get a deep linguistic understanding of this ideological discourse as well as to make it comprehensible for familiar readers. The core purpose of the present study is to examine this ideological discourse for the linguistic items that encapsulate the planning factor. For this purpose, the text has been reviewed using the foundational document model projected by Holland (2014). This semantic-grammatical based linguistic model helps to investigate the ideological strand of planning in the selected text. The research design is quantitative, using a content analysis method. The results reveal that planning strategies are well voiced in the Vision 2030 document, using a variety of vocabulary items; Investment, support, cooperation, provision, and increment are found as the fundamental strategies. The study suggests that other linguistic features can also be investigated to explain this document in the public interest. Keywords: foundational document, semantic-grammatical discourse analysis, strategic planning, Vision 2030

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.13
Introduction

Change is the key for staying active as well as staying connected with the world. Translated as transformation, this becomes a more significant phenomenon when applied to a higher social or national level. With opulent antiquity and cultural tenets, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken many bold initiatives to transform its conservative image into an economically and socially elevated country. One of these is the Saudi Vision 2030, documented as a blueprint of the road to success. It was presented by the Saudi government in 2016 and was declared as the kingdom’s plan to manage a celebrated future in the world. Nuruzzaman (2018) comments in this regard that this serves as a plan of transformation that can lead the country to a better future mainly through the enriched economy and enlightened society. The local authorities consider it a source to “basically uncap the potential in Saudi Arabia” (Khalid, 2020). Over time, the Vision document (from 2016 to 2020) has led to design many policies and actions in the kingdom. Whether making a policy of marriage prohibition before eighteen years of age, giving women the right to drive, opening the land for international tourism, etc. almost all of these actions are in line with Vision 2030 document. Thus, this text acts as one of the influential state discourses as a document. This document explains the necessary steps for the kingdom to achieve the status of an economically prosperous and socially preeminent country by 2030. Thus, it serves as a foundational document, which is defined by Holland (2014) as documents that “provide cultural metanarrative for religious, political, social and business organizations” (p. 383). Such texts provide frameworks of narration and action to accomplish desired ideological stances for an organization or at a higher level for a nation. What makes these foundational documents significant for researchers is the power to persuade and mobilize the community through appropriate rhetorical discourse. In other words, language is used as a gizmo to contour and compose these documents in the desired manner to obtain desired results, whether it is the supporters’ favor, the resources’ division, the required agents, or the worldly gains.

Being a foundational document for the Kingdom, Saudi Vision 2030 is a permutation of dominant discourse and anticipated image. Thus, the readers must understand the planning strategies in the text. In this regard, the present research aims to scrutinize the ideological discourse through the foundational document model proposed by Holland (2015). This model is a semantic-grammatical approach that examines the various strands of conversation to disclose underlying ideologies. These include ethical norms, utopian schemes, folklore narrative, role attribution, and strategic planning. However, as per the dimension and magnitude of the present study, only the last discourse category, i.e., planning is focused, in the selected text. The main quest of the study is to examine the linguistic strands outlined to frame strategic planning. Thus, the research question is:

Q. How does the Vision 2030 document present strategic planning by using language items?

In line, the research objectives are the following:

- to analyze the discourse of Saudi Vision 2030 to understand the ideology proliferated for planning
- to explore the factor of strategic planning employed through the use of language in the selected text
The research is significant in many ways. Firstly, it contributes to the field of linguistics in the domain of the Foundational Document Model (FDM), the theory proposed by Holland (2014), as an appropriate tool to study the foundational documents. It also helps to understand discourse items and patterns used to display the strategic planning feature of any foundational document. From a social perspective, the research can assist the general public in understanding the different features of a text such as vision document 2030 of the Saudi kingdom. For general readers, it can give an insight into how a vision can serve as an ideological discourse with concrete outcomes.

Literature Review:

This section reviews some essential terms, concepts, and works related to the present study. The keyword of the present study is “foundational”, which generally means “related to the foundation” or “underlying”; thus, inline, a foundational document can be considered as a text that provides building foundations. According to Collins online dictionary (2019), the definition of the term foundational document, as a general term, is “the charter incorporating or establishing a society or institution and the statutes or rules governing its affairs (n.p.).” Thus, following the lines Holland (2014), considers any document as foundational, which outlines the rules and regulations for a foundation to achieve its desired goals. In this regard, Gammelgaard (n.d.) comments that many examples of such texts prevail around us, for instance, the religious books (Bible, Quran, Torah, etc.), The Universal Declaration of Human Rights or Constitution for America, etc. Moreover, de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex also serves as foundational text providing a frame of action to the feminist movement. He further asserts that these texts achieve a specific standing as they propose a truth and communicate values that can act as superintendent principles (Gammelgaard, n.d.). Following the lines, Holland (2014) implied this term for his discourse analysis model known as the Foundational Document Model (FDM). This model examines the discourse of any document that serves as a foundation to provide vision, dogma, design or, line of action for an organization, a society or a nation, etc. Moreover, the primary focus is on the discourse from a critical perspective to identify various ideological strands placed together to achieve the targeted goals by an establishment or a group of people who frame such documents.

The term discourse which, generally refers to “language in use”, is applied to a variety of texts meant to convey, converse, and concoct something significant by using language. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) defines it as a serious mode of oral or written speech on a particular subject. However, an important feature of any discourse is that there are always some agentive forces behind the veil; moreover, every time, the motive is to make some impression on the audience. Gee (1999) points out that such discourses are “embedded in a medley of social institutions” (p. 18), which enables it to mobilize the minds and actions of the targeted population. From media to politics and from academia to corporations, discourses create an impact; often, this is as an ideological strand of the discourse. Fairclough (2001) opines that discourses are epithets of ideologies used to persuade, inspire, and influence the addressees. Here ideologies can be defined as simply shared beliefs or ideas of a group, a society, or a nation (van Dijk, 2002). Thus, ideologies exist both verbally as well as psychologically. Eagleton (2014) comments that ideologies are beliefs that we keep in mind and practice in societies, whereas Simpson (2005) purports that language is a carter of these ideologies. In the light of this link, discourses are no doubt epithets of ideologies.
Discourse analysis is one of the poignant fields in Linguistics, aiming to scrutinize and analyze oral and written speeches to expose underlying drives, structures, and ideologies. Mohammad and Alshahrani (2019) explain it as a strategy that “enables linguists and social scientists to explore endless aspects of human interaction and how the message is mediated between the speaker and the interlocutors” (p. 18). In this regard, there are two prominent approaches: formal and functional. Formal approach refers to the structural analysis of discourse where each strand of words, phrases, and sentences play their part to generate intended meaning: whereas, functional methods go beyond the architectural features and insist on reading between the lines or often concerning the physical context (Drid, 2010). Schifrin, Tannen, and Hamilton (2001) combine both approaches and defines discourse analysis as a “study of language use above and beyond the sentences” (p. 170). This approach helps to understand discourse in both linguistics and physical contexts and generates more meaningful results. Another strand to this is critical discourse analysis, which emerged from the vital approaches towards language use in texts. It is a more socio-political strand that aims to analyze discourses from a critical perspective to reveal secreted agendas, intended ideologies, and power structures in society (Fairclough, 2001).

Different researchers have used diverse approaches to examine and explore various types of discourses. Griffin (2007) analyzed news reports to make connections between gender and migration trends. Hall (2012) investigated the discourse of protest as published in UK newspapers. He mainly focused on speech acts to theorize how readers are informed or misinformed about the actual events of demonstrations in favor of governmental organizations. Sipra and Rashid (2013) used a critical discourse analysis model to examine Luther King’s speech. They used the Fairclough version of CDA to explore color and race prejudice in the selected text.

The Foundational Document Model (FDM) by Holland (2014) is also an aspect of critical discourse analysis approaches. This approach is a semantic-grammatical based model, which helps to critically evaluate various grammatical categories, incipient meanings, and contextual enactments to expose hidden ideologies. According to Holland and Nichelle (2015), “the FDM is not only concerned with ideological content but also with higher orders of a text’s grammatical layout” (p. 2). Holland (2014) also states that this model can be used to explore documents as ideological layouts that provide the public with frameworks ensuring perfect world order, strategic planning, motivational appeals, and role attribution. For the said purpose, he provided with the following five ideological strands: the utopian scheme, ethical norms, role attribution, folklore narratives, and strategic planning. The first category is the utopian scheme, which designates the encouraging words to spectators for a better world; in contrast, the second category is of ethical norms that refer to the choice of words representing moral responsibilities and values. The next in line is the role attribution about the division of roles allocated to various agentive forces. In addition, the fourth strand is folklore narrative, which provides a link to history and other types of stories to create a meta-link within the text. The final category of strategic planning highlights the words and phrasal choices that aim to focus on the practical implication for premeditated ideologies. Each of these categories works on identified sets of words with their role in the syntactic organization and the meanings to identify proliferated ideologies. This model was first implemented by Holland and Nichelle (2015) to analyze mission statements in Coca-Cola and PepsiCo ads from a socio-political perspective. Another research was conducted by Sardar (2018) to analyze corporate discourses in Pakistan. She employed the FDM model to analyze mission vision statements and corporate responsibility discourse, provided in websites of the selected
cellular companies. She concluded that selected texts used ethical norms and utopian schemes efficaciously to create a binding relationship with the audience.

The present study focuses on Saudi Kingdom’s discourse produced as Saudi Vision document in 2016. This document serves as a foundational text for the country, as it verbalizes a new layout for a prosperous future. According to Mohammad and Alshahrani (2019), it is “one of the most important documents for Saudi Arabia in recent history” (p. 16). The selected document is examined by a few researchers, for example, Alshuwaikhat and Muhammad (2017), Yusuf (2017) and Moshashai, Leber, and Savage (2018). Alshuwaikhat and Muhammad (2017) analyzed the selected document from the sustainability perspective and reported what it needs to make the visionary dreams come true for a sustainable future. Yusuf (2017) explained existing issues in the educational sector, which are not parallel with the new Vision. Moshashai, Leber, and Savage (2018) have analyzed the document’s goals and policies laid down to achieve them in light of the reformation plan. Besides, Mohammad and Alshahrani (2019) conducted the critical discourse analysis of the news related to the Vision 2030 using corpus-based data. They identified the major themes related to Vision 2030 in the Saudi News corpus from 2013 to 2018. However, there is no such study (as per the researcher’s knowledge) with a focus on the Saudi Vision document itself, from the critical discourse analysis perspective. The present research intends to fill the gap.

Research Methodology:

The present research explores the Saudi vision document for the ideological strand of strategic planning using the Foundational Document Model by Holland (2015). It is a primarily semantic-grammatical approach, which allows examining lexical items related to selected ideology. The nexus of lexical items reflects particular ideology, whereas these lexical items are linked through associative meanings. The present research is quantitative as it involves the identification of key words and phrases related to planning strategy in the selected text. For the said purpose, the data is collected in two phases. It is essential to discuss the method of extracting data to provide strength and clarity to our analysis. In the first step, the document was converted into a word format to highlight the STRT easily. The text was coded manually in the first round by reading and highlighting parts of the text that dealt with planning, strategy, or future goals. The second-round coding involved finding frequencies for most prominent or recurring words/ phrases and then putting synonymous words under each category. For example, in the first round of coding, we found out that the term “build” has occurred 35 times in the text, making it one of the categories in STRT. The second round of coding found synonymous words like “establish” (28 times), “creating” (19 times), and “create” (17 times). So, these are labeled as sub-categories for the main category “build”.

Our methodology mainly stresses upon picking those linguistic items that ideologically deal with planning and are action-oriented. Moreover, it is also significant to discuss their frequencies because we need to understand which themes or categories in STRT are prioritized by the Saudi government.

In the second phase, the researcher studied the concordance of each item to comprehend the usage of nominated lexical items. Generally, the corpus-based studies focus on the concordance by using a variety of software. However, this study does not use any particular software as the corpus is relatively small (containing 11423 words only). The researcher studied the textual environment of the selected lexical items by using Microsoft Word. This approach offers an insight...
into words and structures where these categories are located, and provide us an understanding of other words or phrases that have an impact on not only these categories but also bring out the strategic stance of the organization.

The research does not have any ethical issues as Saudi Vision 2030 is a publically accessible document for everyone. The link to the pdf version is available in the appendix.

Results and Discussion:

This section deals with the analysis of data extracted in the first and second rounds of coding following Holland’s (2014) method of finding thematic strands in the form of words or phrases. The major part of analysis and interpretation is about presenting linguistic items from the Saudi Vision 2030 document related to Strategic Planning or STRT, as denoted in the Foundational Document Model. The results also show a discussion on the concordance of these categories and sub-categories in STRT.

This section presents the results of the first round of coding, followed by a short discussion. The next part has outlined categories with sub-categories along with concordance results and detailed analysis of each type. The following table one presents the results of data/words extracted in the first round of coding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Frequently occurring items in the category Strategic Planning (STRT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support 156</td>
<td>Seek 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build 153</td>
<td>Continue 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase 112</td>
<td>Project 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attract 67</td>
<td>Commit 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work 64</td>
<td>Ensure 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service 48</td>
<td>Contribute 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve 35</td>
<td>Management 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide 32</td>
<td>Focus 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan 29</td>
<td>Review 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transform 26</td>
<td>Implement 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one shows 30 words found in the first round of coding the text. These words represent ideological strands or ideas related to planning and strategy development. The terms associated with Strategic Planning with the highest frequency are “support” and “build”, followed by “increase”, “attract”, and “work” respectively. These items semantically relate to the practical implications of propagated ideologies (Holland, 2014). For example, the category “support” has been found 156 times (including frequencies of the sub-categories) in the text, suggesting that the Saudi Vision is strategically inclined towards supporting and strengthening existing developmental programs, infrastructure, and policy issues. Other prominent categories also indicate that Saudi Vision is sketched on details like building the economy, expanding growth, and attracting investment to accelerate the progress rate of the country. These words/categories semantically represent an image of growth and expansion by employing hard work (described by the category “work”, repeated 60 times) and “achieving” transformation through “service” and “planning”.
These categories in the first phase of coding are significant for discussion because these indicate a pattern or thematic layout, which gives an ideological structure to the foundational text. If certain linguistic or semantic items repeat themselves in a particular fashion in a manuscript, then it emerges as an ideological content and can be labeled as a “foundational text” because such texts become foundation or basis for presenting fundamental ideologies of an organization. In this case, the document containing Saudi Vision appears to be a foundational text. These categories have been placed in the script in a repeated and peculiar pattern, thereby strengthening specific themes. These ideas not only reflect the ideological stance of the Saudi government but also serve the purpose of building its positive image.

Words or categories in the left side column show the frequently occurring themes. If we examine these words meticulously, it is evident that the Saudi government intends to achieve growth by taking practical and strategic steps, i.e. by supporting, expanding, transforming, and serving its citizens. The FDM approach in this scenario is quite handy because the coding of categories gives us a quick and easy overview of the language used in discourse. Such analysis helps us understand the ideological preferences of an organization, to build its image and to get its popularity. It is vital to discuss the least occurring (but prominent) categories in the first phase of coding. For example, lack of words like “monitoring”, “protecting”, and “allocate” represent that the Saudi vision has laid less emphasis on strict control, protection of social structure, and allocation of funds and lands. This analysis helps to trace issues where organizations have less focus on. Further, by studying concordance, we can understand these matters clearly.

The second phase of coding involves finding frequently-occurring words related to the terms collected in the first round (based on their similar meanings or context). An example is discussed here for clarity. The word “increase” has appeared 30 times in the document, so it is the main category. Other synonymous words like “grow” (18 times), “enhance” (14 times), and “promote” (13 times) are grouped under the main category due to their incidences. The total of frequencies for all the words in this category is 112, and it has ten different words which mean the same as “increase”. This specific category is on the fourth position because the other three groups have higher frequencies. “support” is on number one because it has 14 synonymous sub-categories, and the total of frequencies is 156. “Build” and “increase” follow the first category with the frequencies of 153 and 112. It is important to note that these are the three main categories with total occurrences of more than 100.

Table two gives a detailed distribution of main categories and sub-categories in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Main and Sub-categories of Planning strategy and Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support 31 (156)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boost 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table two presents items in both the rounds of coding. The first category is “Support” with the highest frequency of 156. It has 14 sub-categories, which comprise of words having similar meanings as the word “support”. If we look at the occurrence of this item in the document, this term has been frequently found with words like “social health care systems”, “families”, “private sector”, “SMEs”, “projects”, and “industries”. These ideas suggest that Saudi Vision is mainly about supporting and helping different sectors of the economy and overall development. Analyzing sub-categories: “improve”, “help”, “enable”, and “encourage” are few of the dominating themes.
These words have neighboring ideas such as: “business environment”, “services to pilgrims”, “academic partnerships”, “visa issuance”, “microfinancing”, strengthening “defense exports”, aiding “entrepreneurs”, boosting “exports”, “small businesses”, and “infrastructures”. These ideologies represent that the government firmly believes in strengthening and empowering different sectors of the economy. These concordances reveal that Saudi vision relies heavily on providing support to different segments of the economy, to promote overall growth. Strategic and planned support is vital for holistic growth, and these textual examples substantiate this point.

Category number two in STRT is “Build” and has 11 sub-categories. It is an imperative term in the text because it focuses on creating and developing the country. As the table shows, the word “build” appears 35 times, followed by “establish” (28 times), “creating” (19 times), and “make” (15 times). “Build” has been found with ideas like: “building better future”, “systems”, “children’s fundamental character”, and “broad talent base”. If we examine concordance for “establish”, it has neighboring items such as: “recycling projects”, “facilities and projects”, “SMEs”, and “new business partnerships”. “Creating” has occurred with progressive ideas, such as: “economic opportunities”, “jobs”, and “supportive cooperative environment”. Results for the sub-category “developing” show that this word has been found in the context of “early childhood education”, “skills and networks”, “industries”, “funding methods” and “our country”. Such occurrences indicate that future Vision firmly relies on the notions of supporting and building different aspects of the economy, which are significant for growth and prosperity.

The third category is “increase”, which has a total frequency of 112 with nine sub-categories having similar meanings and context. “Increase” is surrounded by words like “capacity”, “household spending”, “life expectancy”, “women’s participation”, “investments”, “private sector contribution”, “financing of small retail enterprises”, and “exports”. All these items show positive and progressive strategic planning outlined in the document. The first sub-category in this section is “grow” which has frequently occurred with “economy”, “retail sector”, “cities”, and “non-profit sector”. Other sub-categories for example, “enhance” and “promote” have following concordance results including: “government funds”, “quality of life”, “cultural activities”, “healthcare facilities”, “national unity”, “use of water resources”, “strategic partnerships”, and “accountability and transparency”. If we observe these ideas, it is evident that the Saudi government is focused on increasing growth in various sectors, thus ensuring overall development and expansion. Other notable sub-categories are “expand”, “raise”, “increase”, “double”, and maximize”. Concordance results for these words indicate the growth of relevant sectors and segments of the Saudi economy.

“Attract” is the fourth category in coded data. With an overall frequency of 67, this category has six sub-categories. These are “launch”, “open”, “initiate”, “stimulate”, and “start”. Neighboring phrases for the word “attract” are “finest talent and best investments”, “local and international investors”, “global trends”, “finest Saudi minds”, and “international brands”. The document has frequently used the word “investors” and “investments”, suggesting that the Saudi government believes in bringing investment for success and expansion of the economy. Sub-categories: “launch” and “open” also have the similar meanings as the main category and following ideas have been found to co-occur with them: “executive programs”, “projects”, “new services for pilgrims”, “renewable energy initiative”, “investment opportunities”, and “open for business”.

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
we analyze concordance results for the other four sub-categories, we can conclude that the government of Saudi Arabia has plans to start new projects, invest in new programs, open employment opportunities, and initiate new collaborations. The main goal is to improve the health sector, education system, and housing. They not only aim for providing new opportunities but attracting the competition, welcoming new ideas, and to start all ventures with definite plans.

The next category in the discussion is “work” with a total frequency of 64. There is one sub-category “working”, which has occurred ten times. The textual environment of this category indicates that the organization plans to work for up-grading accommodation, restoring of cultural sites, and restructuring of government agencies. The sixth category is “Service”, having a frequency of 48. There is one sub-category, i.e. “serve” (12). Interpretation of neighboring text reveals that the Saudi Vision focuses on serving the public in the employment sector, improving quality, helping pilgrims, working in housing and legislation. “Achieve” (35) is another category that reflects strategic planning, and concordance analysis shows that the focus of the text is on achieving dreams, plans, and goals set for growth.

The eighth category in the data is “provide” with the total frequency of 32, and the neighboring text includes ideas like: “better opportunities”, “good hospitality”, “roads and transport”, “financial support”, “give privilege”, and “better training”. “Plan” is the next category in the list with three sub-categories (Planning, Policies, Strategy), and a total frequency of 29. The concordance items in this section are: “programs”, “public sector”, “laws and regulations”, “long term partnerships”, and “decision making”. Significantly, the document outlines plans; however, planning has occurred 29 times, and the usage is infrequent.

Another relevant category in the analysis is “transform” (26 times), which suggests “change” and “restructuring”. These items have the textual environment comprising: “strategic location”, “Aramco” (the oil company), “public investment fund”, “real estate”, “knowledge and technology”, and “economic cities”. These items show that the Vision is based on bringing change to a wide range of sectors, organizations, and social structures. Such usages imply that the planning is holistic and covers major sections of the economy.

Category number 11 is “seek, and it has three sub-categories, i.e. “follow”, “pursue”, and “tracking”. Analysis of the adjacent ideological context reveals that the government of Saudi Arabia plans to follow Islamic guidelines, best practices, and public-private partnerships. They aim to pursue cultural ventures, offer services to pilgrims, and support the Saudi companies. The analysis suggests that the organization has a clear focus and vision to materialize their plans for the future. The next item under discussion is “Continue”, which has the frequency of 24 and no sub-category. This idea has occurred with language items, including “building a better country”, “continue to excel”, “to work”, “modernizing and encouraging”, “collaborate”, and “develop regulations”. Such language use in foundational texts shows a progressive ideology and forward-looking approach.

The next category is “Project” with a frequency of 20. The textual environment for this category includes “train project”, “Makkah Metro”, “tourist and recycling projects”, “industrial and real estate”, and “support and management projects”. The mentioning of projects throughout
the documents implies that the government plans to work on the developmental projects, which would help in the growth and prosperity of the country. Category number 14 is “Commit” (19), and number 15 is “Ensure” (18). There are no sub-categories for both these words. The text shows the Saudi commitment to “world-class government services”, “transparency”, “accountability”, “effective public spending”, and “achieve our goals”. On the other hand, “ensure” co-occurs with “Traffic safety”, “high-quality services”, “independence”, “best management practices”, and “business continuity”. Both these categories indicate planning and commitment towards growth and progress. “Contribute”, “Management”, and “Focus” are the next three categories, significant in our discussion of results. According to the second phase of coding, the document promises to contribute towards “economy”, “development”, “economic growth”, and “the achieving goals”. Results for the category “Management” are “waste management”, “funds management”, “HR and performance”, and “development”. The word “focus” has occurred with “preventive care”, “planning and legislation”, “innovation”, and “social impact”. These language practices are indicative of commitment and focus to achieve long term growth.

“Review” (14) is the nineteenth category in the list. The concordance results show what the government plans to review. These results indicate that their Vision promises to review “laws and regulations”, “licensing procedures”, “renewable energy framework”, and “existing roles”. The next category “Implement” (12) also has similar findings where we see items like “existing laws and regulations”, “performance management”, “initiatives”, “leveraging unique position”, and “strategic locations”. For the next category “Use” (11), the findings are based on “utilizing resources”, “primary care”, “global leadership”, and “utilizing the capacity of hospitals”. Another category “Prevent” (11) focuses on “reducing gaps”, “obstacles”, “infectious diseases”, “traffic accidents”, and “resource wastage”. If this category is compared with the grouping “Increase” (112), we can understand that the document is focused more on the representation of positive views than the negative concepts. The frequencies for both opposing ideas also substantiate this finding, and help to project a positive image of the Saudi government.

To discuss the last categories, it is useful to analyze groups with a total frequency greater than five. These categories are “Diversify” (10), “Cooperation” (10), “Investing” (7), and “Adopt” (7). The category “diversify” means bringing variety or expanding something, and the government of KSA plans to diversify their revenues, capabilities of their economy, resources, and communication channels. Such steps bring innovation and modernization in the country. The next category, “Cooperation” exists with concepts like “Aramco” (oil company), “Gulf Cooperation Council”, and “empathy and mutual responsibility”. “Investing” and “Adopt” have the same frequency, i.e. seven and as per the Vision document, they aim to invest in education, training, trading, infrastructure and make long term investments. As far as “Adopt” is concerned, their government plans to adopt “transparency”, “measures to ensure “traffic safety”, “planning culture”, and “principles of performance measurement”. It is important to mention other categories that shape up Strategic Planning in the document, and these are; “Monitoring”, “Rewarding”, “Protecting”, and “Allocate”. Their frequencies are low, but these suggest that development and implementation of strategy require monitoring and control over all the systems; further, it needs rewarding human resources, protecting society and allocating resources. These categories also indicate the idea of fruitful planning and useful tactics that ensure growth in all sections of the economy.
According to Holland and Nichelle (2015), FDM is a useful technique to deconstruct textual semantic units in a foundational document, to reveal underlying ideological content. The findings of the present study confirm that any kind of strategy employed by the discourse producers can be effectively highlighted by using this model. Such discourses are not merely prophetic visions but are also carriers of practical dogmas, channeled by certain groups in power (Gee, 1999). The different assorted categories help us to understand the power of the discourse to convince and mobilize the respective audience. The findings show how the kingdom’s authority is quite positive in their intentions with appropriate planning. Inline, Yusuf (2017) has also exposed the positive strategies that are adopted in the new visionary plan to meet the educational needs of the country. Thus, overall it can be argued that the Vision 2030 is quite successful in its approach and use of linguistic patterns to persuade the targeted audience.

Conclusion:

The present research aims to critically analyze the discourse of the Saudi Vision document 2030 to examine the planning related ideology. The primary purpose is to scrutinize the ideological discourse for the rhetorical excerpts that summarize the Kingdom’s proposal to recognize targeted dominions, patterns for execution, and tactics for engaging the potential recipients. For the said purpose, the researcher uses the Foundational Document Model (FDM), proposed by Halliday (2014), which is a semantic-grammatical based model to determine ideologies purported through linguistic patterns. The research uses a quantitative paradigm to analyze the content of the selected document. For the said purpose, the document is manually coded, and various categories are identified and tabulated. The findings reveal that the document is outlined primarily on Strategic Planning, as suggested by Holland (2014). The emerging themes from the text indicate that providing “support” to the economic systems and providing aid to developing sectors are the top priorities for the Saudi government. The second aspect of planning is inclined towards “building” and creating a developed society. The third priority is to “increase” capacity, rate of growth, efficiency, and investments. The strategic idea of number four is to “attract” investments, supreme talents, and launch new programs and projects. These ideas have been repeated frequently in the document, thus shaping its ideological content in a specific direction, i.e. development of the country. Overall, these categories show the interest of the authorities to achieve the desired goals through proper planning, and not merely setting a perfect dream for the intended audience. The study concludes that the Saudi Vision 2030 is not only a prophetically generous doctrine but also linguistically well planned to represent an ambitious Vision. For the said purpose, planning is well articulated and well-structured to persuade the intended audience.

However, there is dire need to research and explore other factors that contribute to the kingdom’s transformation plan as professed in the vision 2030, to see its different potential linguistic patterns. This exploration can reveal how language plays a role in shaping ideologies. Finally, the study recommends FDM as a combination of the theoretical and methodological approaches to effectively analyze such foundational documents for various ideological strands.

Acknowledgement: The authors would like to thank the Deanship of Scientific Research at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz university, AlKharj, KSA, for the support in the publication of this manuscript.
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Appendices
Appendix
The link to the Saudi Vision 2030 document is the following: https://vision2030.gov.sa/en/download/file/fid/353
Planning for Transformation: A Semantic-Grammatical Hameed, Jabeen & Jabeen

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Abstract

Google Translate App (GTA) use is ubiquitous among second language learners in Saudi Arabia for translating between Arabic and English and vice versa. Learners perform various translation tasks drawing on different features of GTA. However, what specific features they draw on when using Google Translate, and how the app influences their English learning process is unknown. This study aims to answer the following research question: what are the affordances of GTA as perceived by second language learners in Saudi Arabia? The research participants were twelve second language learners at a university in Saudi Arabia. Focus group interviews and individual interviews were conducted to gather the data over six-weeks. Thematic analysis indicates that GTA provides five different modes of writing in English, offering options to use the app in-class and in everyday life, and serving as a language learning resource. The findings also indicate that the personal histories of learners with GTA related to their introduction to and frequency of using the app in everyday life, and the benefits they observed when doing so. The study recommends language instructors promote the use of the app as a mini dictionary, and encourage language learners to use it as a resource to ensure accurate spelling and pronunciation.

Keywords: affordances, English learning, Google Translate App (GTA), Saudi Second Language learners

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.14
Introduction

The Google Translate website was launched as a translation service by Google to translate from one language into another. Since 2006, it has been used by five hundred million people worldwide and translates over one hundred billion words per day (Turovsky, 2016). It started as a webpage but with the spread of mobile technologies an app was produced in a downloadable form to be used on any mobile device. The Google Translate App (GTA) provides translation services in multiple languages, and consequently language learners have been drawn to it to help them learn a particular language and navigate any obstacles they encounter while doing so. Second language learners consult Google Translate to complete their work, and the presence of Google Translate in the classroom cannot be denied (Ducar & Schocket, 2018). When using Google Translate in the classroom, learners are typically referring to the downloaded app on their smartphones.

In Saudi Arabia, language learners extensively use Google Translate, especially those studying at university. Arabic is the first language used in Saudi Arabia, and English is taught as a second language, being a compulsory subject in the Saudi educational system. English is referred to as a second language in Saudi Arabia, based on the assumption that any language additional to the first language is a second language (Dewaele, 2018). The majority of students at the university level who are majoring in English in Saudi Arabia refer to Google Translate to assist them in their assignments (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017; Alsalem, 2019). This is supported by the fact that translations between Arabic and English were reported to be among the most popular on Google Translate (Turovsky, 2016). Researchers in the field of language education have therefore been advised to investigate Google Translate and any contributions its use makes to the process of learning English (Amin, 2020). This study answers this call by exploring the affordances of GTA as perceived by second language learners in a university in Saudi Arabia. It also aims to explore the participants’ personal histories with GTA.

What is GTA?

GTA is most readily defined in terms of the features it offers users. According to Ducar and Schocket (2018), Google translate offers an instant translation of typed words or phrases, as well as facilities related to the three other skills: listening, speaking and reading. GTA allows features such as typing and drawing characters and letters, the option to engage in a bilingual conversation, translating after the user speaks a word or phrase, pronouncing the translated statement, and “[translating] a text image into another language” (Ducar & Schocket, 2018, p. 782).

Definition of Affordance

The term affordance describes the quality of a specific device in relation to the people who engage with it. Barton and Lee (2013) explained that the concept of affordances was introduced by Gibson in 1979 to describe the scope of meaningful actions that an individual perceives selectively in a particular environment. They stated:

When it comes to perceiving action possibilities in online spaces, this means more than providing a list of the features originally intended by the designers. There is a long history of the mismatch between designers’ original expectations and the ways people bend technologies to their own purposes. (Barton & Lee, 2013, p. 27)
Thus, the affordances of an app are more than just the built-in features provided by the designers and developers of that app, because how people utilize the built-in features of the app to fulfil their unique purposes might not match the original designers’ intentions. The term affordances was also defined as “the possibilities for action which people identify in relation to specific resources” (Barton & Potts, 2013, pp. 816-817). This definition related activities to their intended purposes relative to a particular resource.

The concept of ‘affordance’ is essential in this paper, as the participants use the features of GTA to enhance their literacy in English. In summary, herein affordances are the characteristics of the built-in features of GTA as used by second language learners.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the affordances of GTA as perceived by second language learners in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the personal histories of second language learners in Saudi Arabia with GTA?

**Literature Review**

**Literacies Concepts**

The concepts of literacies, including vernacular literacies and digital literacies, were referred to by scholars in the literature pertaining to this area, and so this section previews these concepts. Literacies within ‘New Literacy Studies’ refers to the activities of reading and writing as a set of practices associated with everyday social contexts, not merely as skills to be learned out of context (Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Papen, 2005; Street, 1993). The term ‘vernacular literacies’ was first used by Barton and Hamilton (1998) in their examination of literacies relative to the everyday lives of people in England of the 1990s. The term ‘vernacular literacies’ was used to refer to a broad range of voluntary and spontaneously produced literacy practices. They explained that these literacies originate from everyday experience and support the completion of daily tasks. This implies these kinds of literacies related only to everyday experiences and so are not linked to the literacies learned in classrooms and universities.

The term ‘digital literacies’ is close to vernacular literacies and refers to the literacies that take place online via digital technologies. The view of digital literacies proposed by Barton and Lee (2013) shares chief characteristics with vernacular literacies. They stated “When we say ‘digital literacies’, ‘new (media) literacies’, and ‘new vernacular literacies’, we are broadly referring to everyday reading and writing activities online” (Barton & Lee, 2013, p. 8), and the plural use of literacies stresses that literacy is not a skill, but includes the multiple literacies required for various purposes.

The concept of digital literacies involves vernacular practices and influences upon language learning. For example, Jones (2017) drew on Jones and Hafner (2012) and Lankshear and Knobel (2008) to conceptualize digital literacies as: “the study of the everyday, vernacular literacy practices people engage in using digital technology and the ways these practices affect language learning and language use” (Jones, 2017, p.286). Thus, Jones’ concept invites language educators to use the concept of digital literacies when examining everyday literacies involving technology. He related vernacular literacy practices to language learning, asserting that people draw upon digital tools when performing vernacular practices and that these tools influence how people learn a particular language.
This paper builds on the concepts of vernacular literacies and digital literacies, by citing the activities of English as a second language learners in Saudi Arabia, specifically in relation to the use of GTA.

**Quality of Translation on Google Translate**

Previous studies have focused on the translation feature and the final texts produced by Google Translate. For example, Patil and Davies (2014) evaluated the accuracy of Google Translate for translating important medical statements from English into 26 languages and found that the accuracy of the translation differs from one language to another. Vidhayasai, Keyuravong, and Bunsom (2015) explored the accuracy of Google Translate for translating a legal document from Vietnamese into English. The document related to the terms and conditions on an airline website and it was found that the translation was inaccurate and unintelligible and potentially could create a negative impression for passengers and other customers of the airline. Groves and Mundt (2015) examined the accuracy of a text produced by Google Translate after being translated from Malay and Chinese into English and found that the text had translation errors. Ghasemi and Hashemian (2016) investigated the errors produced by Google Translate in a translation from English to Persian and vice versa and found no difference in the translation quality, as both ways had errors. This research will discuss all the features of GTA as used by second language learners to translate between Arabic and English, and to investigate the personal histories of these learners with GTA.

**Google Translate and Language learners**

Several studies have investigated the use of Google Translate and language learning, where English Language is the target language. To create an overview, Ducar and Schocket (2018) synthesized previous research dealing with the use of Google Translate. They explored in detail the strengths and drawbacks of using Google Translate and presented the pedagogical implications of incorporating Google Translate into second language classrooms where English was used. They reported that Google Translate never produces spelling errors, effectively corrects the spelling errors of students, and translates high-frequency idioms effectively, as well as detecting the use of proper nouns by capital letters. However, they cautioned learners and instructors that Google Translate produces grammatically inaccurate sentences in English.

Views pertaining to using Google Translate, as expressed by students majoring in English in Saudi Arabia, were reported by Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017). They explored the attitudes of ninety-two EFL students majoring in English. They utilized a quantitative tool, and a questionnaire was used to collect students’ perceptions. They found that the majority of their study participants used Google Translate to determine the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary, assist them in completing their written assignments and when reading in English. They asserted, “The students had very positive attitudes toward GT as it is free and easy to use and translates text quickly; its translation is better than their own, and it is helpful for learning vocabulary” (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017, p.79). They found that translation was the least used feature on Google Translate.

The views of EFL students majoring in English in Taiwan were explored after using Google Translate to draft assignments (Tsai, 2019). The study included three levels of students majoring in English (freshmen, sophomores and seniors), and evaluated the effects of using Google Translate and language learning, where English Language is the target language.
Translate for translation tasks with English. Data were collected from eighty-four students in the form of writing product and questionnaire responses. The students were asked to translate a text into English without the help of Google Translate, and one with the assistance of Google Translate, and the results were collected. A computerized assessment was performed to compare the students’ writing outcomes with and without the help of Google Translate. He stated:

Google Translate can provide EFL students with a ‘second audience’. For example, when having difficulty in expressing their thoughts and ideas in English, EFL students can use Google Translate to immediately translate their thoughts and ideas in English. The GT texts can offer students initial advice on word usage and sentence structures for further reference and revision in their English writing (Tsai, 2019, p. 520).

Tsai (2019) found that the students’ writing outcomes with the help of Google Translate contained fewer errors in both grammar and content. The study also revealed that students found using Google Translate to assist them in their English writing a positive experience, as it helped them with selecting vocabulary items, and improving their written English. Interestingly, the students thought that their writing outcomes with the aid of Google Translate contained more grammatical errors, although the evaluation process proved the opposite.

Another study considered the use of Google Translate as a spell-checking resource. This research, conducted by Bin Dahmash (2019), investigated the materials and resources used by a group of Saudi friends at a university to understand English on social media, and reported the use of Google Translate among other resources to correct English as a second language. She used focus groups, semi-structured interviews, observations, informal interviews and an online log with seven female participants majoring in English language and translation over three-months. She found that Saudi undergraduates used GTA principally to correct and enhance their English. Her study revealed that the participants used GTA to check their accuracy with English spelling in two ways; firstly, by typing a word in English (if the word was translated it must have been spelled correctly and if not then it was misspelled), and by writing the word in Arabic and tapping to translate it into English to see the word spelled correctly. She asserted:

Using Google Translate app in checking what a word mean in English reflects the influence of their academic major studies on their everyday literacies. They were taught to use Google Translate app to assist them in translating texts from English to Arabic in one of their academic courses (Bin Dahmash, 2019, p. 147)

More recently, Amin (2020) systematically synthesized previous research on the use of Google apps in learning and teaching English on Google Scholar and ERIC digital databases, and reported on previous studies that had examined Google Translate. She examined thirty-four studies of Google apps (without specifying the name of the app) for learning and teaching English. She found the Google apps generally improved English language learning, and that the writing skill was the most regularly targeted. She revealed that Google translation website in particular affected the translation skills of second language learners.
The studies mentioned above by Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017), Tsai (2019) and Bin Dahmash (2019) did not ask participants to disclose the specific features they used on Google Translate. Participants in Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017) and Tsai (2019) were asked to fill in a questionnaire, but the version of Google Translate, i.e. app or webpage, was not specified. Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017) explored the attitudes of students towards the use of Google Translate, while Tsai (2019) required that participants use Google Translate to complete language-based activities and subsequently collected their views. Bin Dahmash (2019) focused on the use of English on social media and did not ask about the use of English with Google Translate in particular.

Studies by Ducar and Schocket (2018) and Amin (2020) did not include participants, but rather synthesized previous research regarding second language learners using Google Translate. Thus, they did not consider the personal accounts and experiences of second language learners. Ducar and Schocket (2018) demonstrated the strengths and drawbacks of Google Translate and its pedagogical implications, and Amin (2020) reported that previous literature examining Google and Google Translate did not draw on qualitative tools to collect data.

The current study addresses these gaps by employing qualitative methods to explore the specific features of GTA second language learners draw on to manage their literacies in English. The current study also explores the personal histories of second language learners with regard to using GTA.

**Research Design**

Qualitative research methods were employed in this study, and these took the form of focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. Interviews are appropriate to collect a detailed description of a particular situation and to interpret and understand the aspects of study participants’ personal experiences (Kvale, 1996). Focus group interviews, in particular, are valuable to generate a collective view of the participants’ values, experiences and perceptions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Therefore, focus group and individual interviews were employed to generate a nuanced description of the use of Google Translate by second language learners and their personal histories with the app in Saudi Arabia.

**Research Procedures**

Data collection involved two sessions of focus group interviews and 23 individual interviews and took place over six-weeks starting from May 2020. Data was collected during COVID-19 pandemic, when no face to face interaction was permitted due to partial and total lockdown in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Thus, all the interviews were conducted synchronously via an online platform chosen by the participants. The focus group interviews involved six participants in each session and were conducted via a WhatsApp group. The individual interviews involved 12 participants in the first session and 11 participants in the second session and were carried out using WhatsApp private chat. The participants sent videos of the recordings from their smartphone screens and sent screenshots to clarify their accounts of the features they draw on when engaging
in literacies via GTA.

Participants

Participants were recruited drawing on a sampling technique, referred to as snowball sampling (Morgan, 2008; Patton, 2001). Using this technique, the researcher asked one of the participants to invite other potential participants meeting the study criteria to contribute to the study. The researcher asked an instructor who teaches English to send a WhatsApp message containing detailed information about the research, as well as the researchers’ name and contact number, to one of her students to invite her to participate.

The researcher ensured ethical considerations were met; participation was purely voluntary, the aims of research were clearly stated, the participants’ identities were treated confidentially with pseudonyms, and withdrawal from the research was permitted at any time without incurring negative consequences. The participants contacted the researcher and the researcher ensured that all the participants had completed an English course in the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020. The participants were female learners of English aged between 19 and 21 years and studying at the College of Applied Studies and Community Service at King Saud University.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using Kvale’s (2007) ‘content analysis’ and Saldaña’s (2016) ‘coding’ techniques. The data was coded and analyzed with ATLAS.ti, a software that assists in qualitative analysis. The use of ATLAS.ti supported retrieval of all the quotations selected in the data with a particular code, and this ensured the reliability and trustworthiness of the results (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Analysis of data through coding and content analysis assisted in the production of specific themes to address the research questions.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the results of the current study in relation to the research questions and the previous literature.

The first question: What are the affordances of GTA as perceived by second language learners in Saudi Arabia?

The data suggested that the affordances of GTA as perceived by second language learners can be grouped into four themes: 1) writing modes, 2) in-class use, 3) everyday use, and 4) as a language learning resource.

Writing in English using GTA was carried out in five modes. These modes were copying and pasting a text, taking a photo of the text, typing letters to form a word, drawing letters with fingers on a touch screen and dictating the desired word with one own’s voice (see Figure one A). Figure one A illustrates the text area in which the participants performed two modes of writing: copying and pasting a particular word and typing the word by selecting the letters from the smartphone keyboard. Participant 11 recorded her smartphone screen to clarify how she writes on GTA in three different ways. She began by tapping on an area where she was able to enter a text by selecting letters from the keyboard to complete the word ‘engineer’. After that she tapped on
‘handwriting’ to write the word ‘engineer’ and as she began to draw the first letter of the word the keyboard started to suggest words to complete it. The third method Participant 11 used was to tap ‘voice’ and then speak the word ‘engineer’. Participant 5 illustrated the ‘handwriting’ feature with a screenshot of her drawing of the word ‘play’ on the virtual keyboard for GTA (see Figure one B).

![Figure 1](image1.png)

**Figure 1.** Five writing modes in A and Participant 5’s handwriting approach in B

Participant 1 used a smartphone screen recording to explain her photo writing mode. She opened GTA, tapped ‘camera’ and aimed her camera at an English text on her TV and then tapped ‘instant’ and a translation was generated from English to Arabic. After that she tapped ‘scan’ and GTA asked her to use her finger to highlight the text she wished to translate. Writing by copying and pasting and photography was demonstrated by Participant 3. Participant 3 screenshots her uses of GTA to clarify her writing approach. She explained that she copies and pastes a word in English on GTA, using ‘food poisoning’ as an example (see Figure two A) and then using the ‘camera’ to translate a long text. From Participant 3’s account, when using the camera several steps are followed; the first step is to take a photo of the desired text, after that she uses her fingers to highlight the desired word or words (see Figure two B) and then a translation is produced by tapping on the selected words (see Figure two C).

![Figure 2](image2.png)

**Figure 2.** Participant 3’s explanation of her writing modes on GTA
It appears that the choice of mode of writing, i.e. taking a photo or typing letters, depended on the length of the English text the second language learners needed to translate. The majority of the participants in the second session of their individual interviews stated that they use their cameras to take a photograph if the English text is long and they want the entire text translated. However, they select letters from the keyboard to write if the English text is only one or two words. The results concerning the use of voice to write in the app agrees with the findings of Bin Dahmash (2019), who reported that female undergraduates in Saudi Arabia use their voices to search Google apps. This evidence indicates that second language learners were creative when drawing on five different modes of writing in GTA.

This research found GTA was used in the classroom on several occasions. It seems that the use of GTA was intensified during the virtual classes conducted within the COVID-19 pandemic. In focus group two, Participant 1 attached a screenshot of GTA and stated that she used it in class, and the other participants in the group explained they used the app more often when attending virtual classes. Participant 5 illustrated that GTA is beneficial to students struggling with the proper pronunciation of some English words, as the app plays the desired word several times so the learner can practice pronouncing it before speaking in the virtual class. Participant 7 mentioned that Google Translate suited beginner level students when translating terms in class from English to Arabic, and when seeking to understand the content of lectures, as most instructors avoid using Arabic in class. Similarly, Participant 4 reported that a shy student like herself rarely asks the instructor to translate terms related to her major ‘medical secretary’ and so uses GTA in class to enable her to verify the meaning of these terms. Participant 5 explained that she uses GTA in class to translate unfamiliar vocabulary, and to answer questions in reading classes. Participant 5 further added that sometimes she knows the answer to a question posed in Arabic and that she uses GTA to translate from Arabic to English and participate in class. It seems that GTA might assist learners differently to navigate the challenges they encounter in the classroom. Shy students and beginner level students refer to it to assist them in reaching their potential. This evidence indicates that GTA enables learners to participate in class and increase their interaction with their peers and the instructor by enhancing their pronunciation, reading and vocabulary. These results are consistent with the results presented by Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017), who reported that Google Translate was used by English language learners to assist them when understanding the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary as a way to improve their reading skills. This evidence also shows that Google Translate increased learner’s comprehension when translating keywords in class.

Everyday use of GTA was restricted to translation from English to Arabic and vice versa. Translation was accomplished via two features: ‘conversation’ enabling users to engage in a bilingual conversation and ‘camera’, in which users receive an instant translation of a text image. Many of the participants explained that they used the ‘conversation’ function on GTA simply by tapping ‘conversation’ then tapping the mic and speaking in formal Arabic. After that they show the other person engaged in the conversation the smartphone screen to enable that person to read the translated word, and then invite that person to tap the mic to reply by speaking to get an instant translation of their response. Participant 7 mentioned that the ‘conversation’ feature had been beneficial to her many times, as she often uses it with fast food delivery men and online shopping when she wants additional explanation. Participant 10 gave the example that she used the camera to translate information about a hair mask to see if one would be suitable for her curly hair. Participant
3 explained that she translates food recipes from English to Arabic using the camera, as she has changed her eating habits. This evidence therefore indicates that GTA was used as a translation tool during daily life.

GTA was also used as a language learning resource, as it improved the participants’ English grammar, pronunciation, spelling and vocabulary. Progress in grammar development was accomplished with Google Translate using the ‘do you mean’ feature, and by specifying the part of speech the desired word belongs to with examples. The ‘examples’ feature uses quotation marks around meaningful sentences that include the desired word. Participant 7 explained that ‘do you mean’ corrected her use of ‘were’ in a sentence (see Figure three A). Participant 1 reported that Google Translate clarified whether the word is a verb, noun, adjective, preposition or an adverb and places it in a sentence. She illustrated this with a screenshot of ‘under’, stating that it can be a preposition, adverb or an adjective, and that Google Translate uses ‘under’ in meaningful sentences (see Figure three B), and that reading these examples improved her grammatical competence.

English pronunciation was enhanced by tapping the speaker icon to listen to the desired word after writing it down. The participants in focus group one explained that tapping the speaker icon after writing a specific word meant they could listen to an accurate pronunciation several times, and that pronouncing the word after listening to it helped them to participate confidently in class. GTA improved spelling skills by correcting words the participants had written in the app with ‘do you mean’ feature and thereby motivating participants to memorize the spelling before typing out the English word. Participant 8 explained that she memorizes accurate spellings before writing an English word in Google Translate and that when she makes a spelling error the app corrects her. Participant 7 showed an image of how Google Translate corrected her spelling of the word ‘beautiful’ with the ‘do you mean’ feature (see Figure three A).

![Figure 3](image1.png)  
![Figure 3](image2.png)

Figure 3. Participant 7’s account of ‘do you mean’ in A, and Participant 1’s account of ‘under’ in B.
English vocabulary was also improved with GTA features, using the ‘definition’ and ‘translate’ from English to Arabic and vice versa functions, as well as by saving the translated word. The participants in focus group two mentioned that their vocabulary learning capacity was enhanced by the translation feature, which helped them understand the meaning of the vocabulary item and the examples provided by the ‘definition’ feature. The examples feature also enabled the participants to evaluate how a word can be used in context. Participant 3 reported that the ‘definition’ feature boosted her vocabulary, by providing the part of speech of the word, defining it in English, using it in a sentence and provided synonyms for it. Participant 3 illustrated this with the example of ‘race’, which can be a verb or a noun, and observed that reading the definition, examples and synonyms enhanced her capacity to use English vocabulary (see Figure four A). Participant 12 illustrated that she saves the words she checks on Google Translate by tapping ‘save’, and after that she reads over her saved words in her free time. She explained that viewing and rereading the saved words helped her improve her vocabulary (see Figure four B).

The preceding evidence demonstrated how GTA was used as a language learning resource to enhance second language learner’s grammar, pronunciation, spelling and vocabulary. These findings fill a gap in the literature identified by Amin (2020), who recommended researching how GTA might be used by English learners. The participants were found to use the ‘do you mean’ feature as a spelling resource, and this result is consistent with the finding of Bin Dahmash (2019) that female undergraduates in Saudi Arabia used Google Translate to check the accuracy of English spellings. The findings related to the use of the ‘do you mean’ feature to correct spelling and learners’ motivation to memorize accurate spelling before typing in English on Google Translate fill a gap in the literature identified by Tsai (2019), who reported that the influence of Google Translate on EFL students’ performance in writing had not been explored. The use of the ‘do you mean’ feature to correct grammar contradicts the evidence presented by Ducar and Schocket (2018) and Alsalem (2019) that sentences translated into English and produced by Google Translate contained grammatical errors.
The second question: What are the personal histories of second language learners with GTA?

The second language learners gave personal accounts of their unique histories with GTA. They described how they began using it, how frequently they use it in everyday life, and how they benefit from engaging with the activities on the app.

The initial uses of GTA by second language learners comprised part of their personal histories with the app. All the participants reported that they first used the app to translate from English to Arabic and vice versa; however, where they had learned about Google Translate from varied. Participant 9 explained that she had downloaded GTA when she enrolled at university to assist her in translation, and she then learned how to use the app by herself. Participant 4 explained that her father had introduced her to Google Translate as a website seven years previously when she was an intermediate stage student. In her case, Participant 4 explained that she had downloaded Google Translate as an app three years previously and learned how to use it by trial and error. Similar to Participant 4, Participant 5, Participant 12 and Participant 3 reported that they used Google Translate first as a website to translate terms used in their English courses when they were intermediate students. However, Participant 5 and Participant 12 downloaded the app after seeing an advertisement on the Google search engine, while Participant 3 downloaded it based on a friend’s advice. Participant 7 indicated that she was searching for a translation app to assist her in translating a long text in English for an assignment and found that GTA translated it instantly when she placed the camera over the text. Participant 8 and Participant 10 mentioned that they had searched the app store for a translation app and found GTA attractive as it was the only app that could produce an instant translation by placing a smartphone camera over the source text. It appears that for the majority of participants Google Translate was first used as a webpage for translation purposes, and knowledge of the app came from Google search engine advertisements, personal searches or advice from someone close. The ability to translate texts from images using a smartphone camera was the main feature that initially attracted the participants to GTA.

Another constituent of the second language learners’ personal histories was their frequency of use of GTA in everyday life. Participant 4 explained that her frequency of use of GTA depends on the activities she is involved in during the day, and that she uses the app more often when she watches an English movie without subtitles. Participant 5, similar to Participant 4, mentioned that her use of the app depends on what she is doing, and that the last time she used GTA was when watching a TV series in English. Participant 6 and Participant 10 reported that they use GTA more throughout the academic year when they are attending university. Participant 3 expressed that her frequency of using GTA rises during academic terms as her major is taught in English, and that her use then decreases during holidays when she is only translating essential language. It appears that the frequency of using GTA in everyday life varies over the holidays, depending on the need to translate from English to Arabic.

The value second language learners placed on engaging in activities with GTA constituted part of their personal histories with the app. The majority of the participants stated that GTA has become one of the most essential apps on their smartphones, and that managing those aspects of their lives in which they encounter English without the app would be challenging. Participant 2 explained that having GTA is a necessity, as she heavily uses the ‘conversation’ feature to engage in bilingual conversation. Participant 9 asserted that many learners of English depend on the app to
improve their English competency, while Participant 5 equated GTA to a free English teacher. Participant 4 considers GTA as a tool to resolve crisis situations, while Participant 12 views the app as an essential tool. It seems that the participants have incorporated GTA into their everyday lives, attributing significant value to it. The positive attitudes of these learners correspond with the views of Saudi students at Aljouf University, as reported by Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017). The results pertaining to the value these learners place on GTA indicates their satisfaction with it, and this result is consistent with the findings of Tsai (2019), who reported that university students in Taiwan were pleased with their experiences of using Google Translate to complete writing tasks.

**Conclusion and Implications**

This paper has explored the affordances of GTA as perceived by second language learners in Saudi Arabia, and described the personal histories of the participants with the app. The findings illustrated that GTA provides five different modes of writing in English and offers value for learners in two domains: in-class and in everyday life. It indicated that GTA was used as a resource for language learning, as second language learners referred to it to improve their language competency. The findings also illustrated the personal histories of the learners with GTA, detailing their initial use of it, and their current frequency of using the app in everyday life, and their preferences regarding the options available.

Based on the findings, language learners are advised to use all five of the writing modes reported in this study. They can clearly improve their writing skill by exploiting GTA as a resource for spelling. They could also use the app to ensure accurate pronunciation and improve their speaking skill. Meanwhile, language instructors are advised to encourage their students to use GTA to verify the meaning of any unfamiliar vocabulary they encounter during reading classes, and to read the definitions of unfamiliar vocabulary in English. Language instructors can inform their students about the ‘definition’ feature and the extent to which it provides ‘synonyms’ of the desired word and puts the word in context. Thus, the definition feature could serve as a mini dictionary.

The current study had limitations in terms of the sample size and in the gender of participants. Further researchers could conduct a similar study with a larger sample size and learners of both genders. The current study examined the use of GTA in general without requiring the participant to use it in specific classes. Future research could implement the use of GTA in the English classroom, explore its impact on learners’ overall achievement in English, and identify individual differences in learners’ use patterns and level of benefit obtained, by applying an experimental design.

**About the Author**

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An Observational Study on the Effects of Native English-Speaking Teachers and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers on Students’ English Proficiency and Perceptions

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Abstract  
This study investigated the effects of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NEST) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNEST) on students’ English proficiency and perceptions. The research methodology employed an observational study based using critical applied linguistic. Data collection was through a mixed method. The tools used were the Cambridge English: Key English Test (KET), classroom observation evaluation forms, and interviews. The participants consisted of 252 upper primary students from one private school in Chiang Mai, Thailand, during the academic year 2019. Results indicated that students’ English proficiency was increased significantly at .01 level in both groups. The gain score suggested that NNEST can make a higher gain score than NEST in all grade levels. Student’s answers show NNEST score a higher agreeability towards teachers’ teaching abilities, English abilities, and the creation of an engaging learning atmosphere over NEST. Classroom observations implemented by three English Learning Teachers confirmed the results that NNEST is more agreeable than NEST in teachers’ teaching ability and motivating learning atmospheres in classrooms. However, in teachers’ English skills, the experts’ perceptions were opposite that of the students. Lastly, the interviews with the students reflected three key aspects: their preferences of English teacher advantages, disadvantages, and strengths of both NNEST and NEST.

Keywords: Native English-Speaking Teachers (NEST), Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNEST), Cambridge English: Key English test, students’ proficiency (KET), Critical applied linguistics (CALx), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English Language Teachers (ELT)

Introduction:

Although English is not the official language in Thailand, it is compulsory in all curriculums like English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Lessons are usually taught by foreign teachers who can be either Native English-Speaking Teachers (NEST) or Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNEST).

Thailand, as well as other countries in Asian regions where English is not the native language, the educational goal is to use English as a bridge language, connecting it to the global world. Therefore, using English instructed by qualified English as a Foreign Language, and English as a Second Language (EFL/ESL) teachers is an invaluable opportunity for practice as most students do not have the chance to speak and use English with high regularity. (Jieyin & Gajaseni, 2018). The disparity comes when distinguishing the output and personal preferences in comparing both NEST and NNEST. The preferred norm is to have these classes taught by native speakers. Kiczkowiak (2014) reports that Korean schools usually reject applicants who are not native English speakers. Producing more effective communication with instruction by Native Speakers is the preferred consensus. This same phenomenon is beginning to arise in educational institutes, including schools in Thailand. Wahyudi (2012) also proposes that NNEST are less successful in finding employment, especially in Asian countries. This partnered with the largest voiced concern from both EFL students and parents that they prefer NEST instruct English over NNEST. The assumption is they will articulate English more accurately and have greater success. This thinking becomes a critical recruiting obstacle when hiring for schools.

Consequently, a lot of EFL scholars have recently recognized the differences between native speakers and non-native speakers (Mylnikova, 2016). Correspondingly, Jenkins (2015) suggests that the model in English Language Teaching (ELT) should focus on teaching skills and abilities of each English teacher. Also diversely, the native speakers of English should learn and adapt to other varieties of English usage (Jenkins, 2015). These ideas have introduced the terms World Englishes and the three concentric circles of English user counties by Kachru (1991). His three concentric circles are composed of the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. They present the new mindset of using the English language and its varieties by the term called, World Englishes. Kachru’s claims alluded to a controversial dichotomy in English teachers’ nationality among many teachers and administrators (Fithriani, 2018). After the work of Robert Phillipson in 1992 and Peter Medgyes in 1994, the issues relating to Non-Native English Teachers. The publication in 1999 encouraged several graduate students and scholars to research this native and non-native English speaker issue, (Moussu & Llurda, 2008).

Inclusive of all the research, theories, and studies noted, the output of students and gained competency does not depend solely on instruction presented by NEST or NNEST, but teachers characteristics and overall teaching skills trump all. Quirk (1990) suggests that more discussion of the native speaker as a model be studied in language teaching and the ideas of good model native speaker teachers. Therefore, this study will add more discussion and essential data related to student’s English proficiency and perceptions that support the dichotomous issue of being NEST or NNEST in Thailand’s EFL setting. In this paper, a standing myth that only NEST can provide a good language model (Kiczkowiak, 2014) is being investigated.
Research Question

1. What are the differences in English proficiency between students taught by Native English-Speaking Teachers (NEST) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers’ (NNEST)?
2. What are the students’ perceptions of classes taught by NEST and NNEST?

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the differences in the English proficiency of students taught by Native English-Speaking Teachers (NEST) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNEST).
2. To explore the students’ perceptions regarding NEST and NNEST.

Literature Review

The spreading of English

The dispersal of the English language in the world has led to a new term World Englishes which Kachru’s paper introduced in 1965. However, it became initiated with formal implications in 1978 (Kachru, 1991). According to the World Englishes concept, Kachru had drawn the Three Concentric Circles of English, showing circles classifying the different speakers (Kachru, 1985).

![Figure 1: The spreading of English in the Three Concentric Circles](image)

Adapted from Kachru, 1991 and Crystal, 2003

The Inner Circle symbolizes the Native English-Speaking countries where English acts as the primary language. These include Australia, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, (Crystal, 2003). The Outer Circle countries are considered as norm-developing because they use English as a second language, and the Expanding Circle countries (which includes most other countries of the world) are considered norm-dependent due to their variety in English usage that differs from the standards set by the native speakers. The number of NNEST in the Outer Circle undeniably has increased these days according to the role of English as a global language. This is particularly true regarding the EFL context, which refer to the countries in the Expanding Circle, where learners have difficulty finding opportunities to use English outside the classrooms (Luo, 2016). English has taken a prominent role as a lingua franca
in Thailand. Most Thai English users primarily make English conversations with non-native English speakers, particularly people from Asian countries. (Kongkerd, 2013).

NEST and NNEST Dichotomy

Studies have confirmed a belief that only NEST can signify qualified English teachers. Although merely knowing how to speak a language does not automatically guarantee that one would be an expert teacher of it (Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). According to Medgyes (1992), both native and non-native English-speaking teachers are variant in their teaching behavior, which cannot imply that non-native teachers are less efficient. The results of his investigation presented that both natives and non-natives have become successful teachers. It has been argued that teachers teaching style, English knowledge, effective methodology, and professional credentials make them qualified, not their native Language (Mahboob, 2015). Although the misperception of the superiority of native speaker teachers has put the challenges in the professional ELT literature, many continue to support this misguided belief, often resulting in discriminatory practices towards non-native speaking teachers. Richardson (2016) argued that the distinction between NNEST or NNEST cannot determine the proficient qualifications of good English teachers since speaking and teaching a language are two completely different phenomena. The former involving acquisition through listening and communication, the latter involving studying theories of how students learn and studying effective methods to deliver lesson content.

Thus recently, many scholars, especially in Asian countries, have tried hard to investigate the notion of being NEST and NNEST in ELT. Elyas & Alghofaili (2019) observed two groups of students taught by NEST and NNEST at Saudi Arabian University. Their findings indicated that teacher’s native-ness and backgrounds have no significant effects on Saudi EFL learners speaking and listening skills. Besides, the students' perspective towards NEST and NNEST teaching styles and students’ preferred teaching styles reflected in the study at the State Islamic University, Indonesia. The results of the study revealed that both NEST and NNEST were perceived to have a personal typical teaching style and distinctive roles in teaching-learning that are complementary to creating a thriving learning environment (Rahman & Yuzar, 2020). Therefore, the assumption that language teaching should best be placed in the hands of native speakers only, may not always be correct.

Related theories in English Language Learning

Krashen (1986) introduced the, Input Hypothesis. This emphasized the importance of understanding messages that teacher use will lead to the language acquisition or, in other words, through receiving comprehensible input. He suggested that as long as there are sufficient amount of clear, understandable inputs which should not exceed the learner's ability to comprehend it or as called i+1, are provided, and the students will acquire the target language automatically. The i+1 principle has done a dominant role in applied linguistics. In other words, languages could be acquired simply by exposing learners through meaningful and motivating input (Spada, 2007). This idea leads to the new teaching approach called Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes the communication of messages and meaning. However, it should integrate grammatical, lexical, and socio-pragmatic features with communicative skills (Spada. 2007) Nunan (1991) has summarized CLT characteristics that it should focus more on learning processes,
not the language itself. Also, learners’ personal experiences are invaluable contributions in the classroom. CLT requires teachers to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

Canale and Swain (1980) describe the four areas of students’ language competencies which are: the ability to use linguistic rules, the use of proper language in the real-world setting, the use of flowery style, and strategies approached in solving language difficulties that arise in interlocution. Nevertheless, according to Richards (2006), there are three main forms of communicative competence. First is the knowledge of using language ability to produce sentences. This is as an understanding of the fundamental components of sentences (clauses, patterns, phrases, tenses, and parts of speech) and how they form proper sentences. The second point is the grammatical competence, which uses linguistic rules correctly and provides workbook exercises for comprehensive practice. Learners who master the language structure rules may not necessarily communicate effectively. The last one is the knowledge of using the language for a multitude of purposes relates to the specific participants and settings. The quality of communicative competence that learners must acquire depends on the abilities in knowledge and language usage or the ability to identify that something is accepted correctly or considered inappropriate in a particular context (Hymes, 1972).

Research Methodology

This study applied observational research to investigate the differences in the English proficiency of students taught by Native English-Speaking Teachers (NEST) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNEST). Through the process of the Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx), which refers to the necessary analytical, critical process in the reasons behind the inequitable situations related to social, cultural, economic, and political topics such as identity, sexuality, ethics, and difference (Pennycook, 1999). The fundamental principle of this Critical Theory is to question and investigate the new suggested assumption or explain the new alternative supports, possibilities of the issues argued in some contexts. These issues possibly include some discriminated aspects (Suwanarak, 2010).

The data collected in this observational research uses the mixed methods, including both qualitative and quantitative, to collect and analyze data.

Population and Sample

The research population consists of 252 mixed ability students: 121 boys and 131 girls who are studying in Primary four to Primary six during the second semester of the academic year 2019 (P. 4/6 and P. 4/3, P. 5/3 and P. 5/4 and P. 6/1 and P. 6/2). Since this paper was aimed to observe the different effects between NEST and NNEST, the sample groups were purposively selected to be the representatives of English classes taught at each grade level.

Research Instruments

There are three research instruments in this study: Key English test, teacher observation evaluation form, and semi-structured interviews.

1. Cambridge English: Key English test

The Cambridge English Qualifications that are designed for young learners (YLE Movers). It consists of 2 parts: 40 items evaluating reading and writing and 15 listening
An Observational Study on the Effects of Native English

questions (55 total points). The pre-test and post-test scores of each group will be analyzed comparing mean scores and t-test.

2. Teacher perception questionnaire and classroom observation evaluation form.

3. The Teacher perception questionnaire and classroom observation evaluation form were designed to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The evaluated aspects were applied from the two studies below:

2.1 Characteristics of competent English teachers perceived by high school teachers and students in Korea (Park and Lee (2006). The researchers examine the characteristics of effective EFL teachers perceived by 169 teachers and 339 students in Korea. Their data collection tool was a self-report questionnaire. They summarized the main components of English as a Foreign Language Teacher (EFLT) in three dimensions which are, Subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills.

2.2 In the Eyes of Turkish EFL Learners: What Makes an Effective Foreign Language Teacher? University Students’ Perceptions of Native and Non-native Speaker Teachers of English (Çelik, Arikan & Caner (2013). This study was conducted in Turkey where English is taught as a foreign language done by a group of three researchers to find out the qualities of effective EFL teachers derived from 998 Turkish undergraduate students. They were enrolled at a state university in Turkey and had taken EFL courses for more than ten years. From analyzing data, effective EFL teachers should be fair and enthusiastic, and they must have skills in reducing students’ anxieties, abilities to teach reading, speaking, and writing skills. They should be able to explain some problematic content in student’s L1. They must have knowledge of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Lastly, they must be able to manage the class effectively.

4. Semi-structured interviews.

The interview was semi-structured to obtain qualitative data. The main questions:

3.1 Have you ever learned with a Native English-Speaking Teacher (NEST) or a Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher (NNEST)?

3.2 Whom do you prefer? Why?

3.3 Is there any difference between the teaching performances between NEST and NNEST? (Regarding pronunciation, classroom management, and teaching activities).

The interview was done in groups of 5 mixed-ability students to make them feel safe and confident, expressing actual feelings. Each group interview lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. In total: 30 students (10 representatives from each grade level). All students were informed that their responses would be used for research towards improvement purposes.

Data Collection and Analysis

The Cambridge English: Key exam, was used to gather the pre-test and post-test scores. The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to answer the research question #1 through T-Test comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of the same and different
groups. Following, the gain scores were calculated (% Post-test) - (% Pre-test) / (100 %) - (% Pre-test) to compare the impact of teachers teaching abilities on student’s English proficiency. The interpretation of normalized gain scores are (g) < 0.3 understand as low gain, (g) 0.3-0.7 interpret as medium gain, and (g) >0.7 interpret as high gain (Hake, 2002). For question #2, the Likert scale was employed to analyze the students’ perceptions and the three EFL experts’ classroom observations. The researcher has applied the ranking scales from the calculation of Mohammed (2016). He determines the minimum and the maximum length of the 5-point Likert type scale, the range is calculated by (5 - 1 = 4) then divided by five as it is the highest value of the scale (4 ÷ 5 = 0.80). The value’s interpretations are from 1.00 to 1.80 mean strongly disagree, from 1.81 to 2.60 mean to disagree, from 2.61 to 3.40 mean undecided, from 3.41 to 4.20 mean agree and from 4.21 to 5.00 mean “strongly agree. This present study applied the two-group independent T-test to see the similarities or differences between the students and the expert’s evaluation results.

Additionally, the researcher applied content and thematic analysis to extract the results from the interviews. The findings were categorized into three themes, reflecting the three main interview questions.

Findings

Students’ English proficiency

Results of the differences in English proficiency of students taught by Native English-Speaking Teachers (NEST) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNEST).

Table 1. English Proficiency of students before the observation study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-Sig.</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.4/6 (NEST)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22.60</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>Not-Different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.4/3 (NNEST)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23.49</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>Not-Different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.5/3 (NEST)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29.60</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>Not-Different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.5/4 (NNEST)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29.82</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.6/1 (NEST)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27.75</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>-1.46</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>Not-Different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.6/2 (NNEST)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30.07</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from table 1 show that before using treatment (students were taught by NEST or (NNEST) English proficiency of students are not different.
The results from table 2 show that the English proficiency of students in all classes taught by NEST teacher was increased significantly at .01 level.

Table 3. *Comparing Pre-test and Post-test English proficiency of students who were taught by NNEST.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/Test</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-Sig.</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.4/3 (Pre-test)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>8.83</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.4/3 (Post-test)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38.85</td>
<td>8.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Increase)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.5/3 (Pre-test)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29.82</td>
<td>10.33</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.5/3 (Post-test)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35.77</td>
<td>9.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Increase)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.6/2 (Pre-test)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31.17</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.6/2 (Post-test)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38.79</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Increase)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result in table 3 show that the English proficiency of students in all classes taught by NNEST was increased significantly at .01 level.

Table 4. *Comparing Gain score of English proficiency Pre-test and Post-test of students who were taught by NEST and NNEST.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Pretest (%)</th>
<th>Posttest (%)</th>
<th>g</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.4/6 (NEST)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22.60</td>
<td>41.09</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.4/3 (NNEST)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>38.85</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.5/3 (NEST)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29.68</td>
<td>34.90</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.5/4 (NNEST)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29.82</td>
<td>35.77</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.6/1 (NEST)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27.75</td>
<td>33.50</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.6/2 (NNEST)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31.17</td>
<td>38.79</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in table 4 show that NNEST gain scores are higher than NEST at all levels. In P.4, they are 0.13 and 0.50. P5 is 0.21 and 0.24. P.6 are 0.21 and 0.41.

*Students’ perceptions of NNEST and NNEST*

This section presents the students’ perception of NNEST and NNEST through questionnaires and interview. There are 121 boys and 131 girls responding to the survey. The answers can be analyzed as follows:
Table 5. *The perceptions of students toward NEST.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>percentage</th>
<th>Level of agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Teaching Abilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 I understand the English lessons taught by the teacher.</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>40.74</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 The teacher can teach me new English words.</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>60.83</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 The teacher teaches me to use English fluently.</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>20.71</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 The teacher teaches me to pronounce words.</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 The teacher teaches me to speak short phrases or basic sentences in English.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>81.20</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 The teacher teaches me to read words, sentences, or passages in the textbook.</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>82.00</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 The teacher creates many exciting activities such as doing group work/pair work, playing games, watching video clips, singing songs, doing role-plays.</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>77.80</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 I can do the exercises both in the textbook and handouts according to the lessons taught by this teacher correctly.</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>92.0</td>
<td>77.20</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 The teacher can develop my English skills.</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>92.0</td>
<td>79.60</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 I can apply the lessons learned confidently in everyday life situations.</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td>74.20</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Abilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>92.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>60.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>78.40</strong></td>
<td><strong>Agree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Teacher’s English Abilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The teacher always uses English in the class.</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>88.80</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The teacher’s English accent sounds comprehensible.</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>78.60</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 The teacher explains content clearly.</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>80.20</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 I understand the content the teacher teaches.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>74.60</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 The teacher can answer my questions.</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>82.40</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher’s English Abilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>04.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>68.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>80.80</strong></td>
<td><strong>Agree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Motivating Classroom Learning Atmosphere</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results in Table 5 show that the overall perceptions of students to NEST are in agreement regarding teaching potential; calculated at mean 3.92. The understanding of English abilities is the highest Mean at 4.04, followed by teaching skills at 3.92. The lowest agreement is the teachers’ abilities to motivate the classroom learning atmosphere at 3.82.

Table 6. *The perceptions of students toward NNEST.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Levels of Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>games, watching video clips, singing songs, doing role-plays.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>79.00</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 I can do the exercises both in the textbook and handouts, according to the lessons taught by this teacher correctly.</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>79.60</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 The teacher can develop my English skills.</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>81.80</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 I can apply the lessons learned confidently in everyday life situations.</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>75.40</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Abilities</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>79.40</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Teacher’s English Abilities

2.1 The teacher always uses English in the class.                             | 4.38     | 0.90  | 87.60      | Agree               |
2.2 The teacher’s English accent sounds comprehensible.                      | 4.23     | 0.94  | 84.60      | Strongly agree      |
2.3 The teacher explains content clearly.                                     | 4.16     | 0.93  | 83.20      | Strongly agree      |
2.4 I understand the content the teacher teaches.                            | 4.07     | 0.92  | 81.40      | Agree               |
2.5 The teacher can answer my questions.                                     | 4.09     | 1.06  | 81.80      | Agree               |

Teacher’s English Abilities                                                 | 4.19     | 0.69  | 83.80      | Agree               |

3. Motivating Classroom Learning Atmosphere(                                 | 4.09     | 1.07  | 81.80      | Agree               |
3.1 I enjoy studying English with the teacher.                               | 4.09     | 1.07  | 81.80      | Agree               |
3.2 The teacher makes me feel comfortable to ask questions, give answers, or share ideas. | 3.69     | 1.19  | 73.80      | Agree               |
3.3 The teacher usually encourages me to learn by asking questions or playing games. | 4.03     | 1.03  | 80.60      | Agree               |
3.4 The teacher motivates me to learn by increasing my positive attitudes towards English. | 4.05     | 0.98  | 81.00      | Agree               |
3.5 The teacher creates a safe learning environment for English class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivating Classroom Learning Atmosphere</th>
<th>NEST</th>
<th>NNEST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe learning environment</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall perceptions</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in table 6 show that the overall perceptions of students to NNEST were calculated at mean 4.04, which is in agreement level of NEST. The understanding of English abilities is the highest mean at 4.19, followed by the teachers’ proficiency in motivating the classroom learning atmosphere at 4.02. The lowest Mean reflects understanding of teaching abilities at 3.97.

To triangulate the students’ perception and the results of the English proficiency students test, three experts in ELT and research measurement observed all classes in this study. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 7. The arithmetic means, the standard deviation of teaching evaluation between NEST and NNEST teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>NEST</th>
<th>NNEST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.4</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.5</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.6</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Average</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in table 7 show that means of NEST teaching evaluation were higher than NNEST in all evaluated aspects in grade 5. However, the means of NNEST of grades 4 and 6 were higher than NEST in teaching skills and motivating classroom learning atmosphere, but the evaluation...
result in English abilities was equal in grade 6. The level of agreement calculated is at the strongly agree level.

The interview findings were translated from Thai into English. The results were categorized into three themes: preferences, strengths, and weaknesses. These three themes are supported by Abriel (2015).

**Reasons supporting Preferences**
All interviewed students were asked to compare their learning experiences between NEST and NNEST teachers and choose the teacher whom they prefer to study with and the reasons. There are many reasons why students prefer one teacher over another for instance, the ability to give more precise explanations partnered with more engaging activities. The interviewees responded that they enjoy role play, singing, and games as a regular part of the class. The interviews reflected that students’ preferences about learning depend on the ways the teachers teach, not because of the teacher’s mother tongue.

**Strengths and weaknesses of NEST**
Regarding strengths, NEST was perceived by 30 interviewees to have bright, understandable accents. Some of them said NEST have a variety of teaching strategies. For example, ten interviewees mentioned that the NEST incorporated role-playing, songs, and games, which added enjoyment and motivated learning. Moreover, they stated that NEST provided an example of authentic language usage to practice, giving increased confidence.

For weaknesses, three students said that NEST seemed to speak more quickly than NNEST. The most significant weakness commented by students regarded the classroom management skills of NEST. There are 25 students who agree that their NEST cannot control the class effectively.

**Strengths and weaknesses of NNEST**
All 30 students agree that NNEST always provides slow language speed and clear instructions and explanations, which creates a more reliable connection to the lesson with more understanding. The students also reported that NNEST can create a productive classroom learning atmosphere and control the class better than the NEST. However, a few students who were taught by the same NNEST said that their NNEST were too strict. One student reported that he felt uncomfortable with NNEST pronunciation, such as the Filipino teachers usually have a string sound of p and t.

**Conclusion**
This study explored the effects of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NEST) and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNEST) on student’s English proficiency as well as investigated students’ perceptions regarding the teachings of the two groups of teachers. The analysis of the research found from the pre-test and post-test showed that NEST and NNEST could develop students’ English proficiency at a statistic level of 0.01. The gain score of both groups is interpreted in a low gained level based on Hake (2002). However, NNEST produce a higher gain score on
The questionnaire responses show the level at “strongly agree” for NEST and NNEST in evaluation of teaching abilities, English abilities, and motivational skills in the classroom atmosphere. From table 4.5 and 4.6, the responses from students reflect all teachers leverage their learning. It is interesting to note that NEST overscored (in percent) NNEST teachers in regarding, speaking English phrases and sentences (item 1.5), using English in the classroom always (item 2.1), and answering students’ questions (item 3.5). All other items showed a higher percent for the NNEST performance in comparison to the NEST. Collectively these results show that students perceive both groups of teachers relatively equal with respect to measuring abilities to teach and include meaningful activities in the classroom. The results from comparing the total average of students’ perceptions, inclusive of the questionnaires and classroom observations by the three experts, shows that the data are significantly similar in teachers teaching ability and motivating classroom teaching atmosphere at the statistically significant level of 0.05. In other words, both experts and students agree that NNEST can produce a higher score than NEST. These results suggested another perspective in perceptions of NNEST that is against an old belief: NEST is the only standard model of good English teachers (Kiezkowiak, 2014).

However, in the aspect of teachers’ English abilities, the three experts gave higher scores to NEST than NNEST, which was significantly different from the students at a statistically significant level of 0.05. The reasons behind these differences are reveal in the questionnaire items 2.2 and 2.4 in the students questionnaire. In question 2.2, the students agree that the pronunciation of NNEST is easier to understand than NEST (84.60% and 78.60 % ). In question 2.4, 81.80% of students agree that NNEST makes them understand the lessons, while about 74.60% agrees that NNEST do. It is possible that the students likely agree that the language they comprehended more accessible and assumed that it refers to the teachers’ English abilities. This finding is like previous studies that stated that NNEST is well appreciated overall for their keen knowledge in explaining grammar: (Mahboob, 2004). This result can be supported by the “Input Hypothesis” introduced by Krashen (1989). He claimed that the teachers should speak clearly and slowly or use short sentences to modify their speech so that it is comprehensible because these comprehensible inputs will lead to language acquisition.

Lastly, there were three main perceptions derived from the interviews with students: EFL teachers’ preferences, strengths, weaknesses of NEST, and the strengths and weaknesses of NNEST. It was a common perception that students prefer to study with teachers either NEST or NNEST, who can explain the lessons clearly and provide an environment that keeps them engaged. Noted activities were role-playing, storytelling, and group games. These results were in line with the research conducted by Gudu, Benter Oseno (2015). They illustrated in their study that teachers should integrate various activities in a lesson to meet learners' needs. The findings of this present study also suggest that students did not prefer one type of teacher to another. They agreed that teachers’ teaching abilities and classroom management affect their learning effectiveness the most. Students had strong feelings regarding the teacher’s strengths and weaknesses, which were seen in both groups of teachers. They agreed that NEST, have clear comprehensible English pronunciation. Some of them found NEST spoke too quickly. This finding is like previous studies that stated that NNEST is well appreciated overall for their keen knowledge in explaining grammar.
(Mahboob, 2004). Brown & Lee (2015) claimed that one of the advantages of NNEST is that they can provide useful explanations about target forms, meaning, and uses. The participants mentioned that NNEST has more interesting classroom activities, as well. This is mainly because NNEST can apply the teaching methods they like and consider useful when they were second language learners. NNEST are indicated to have slower, more precise, and more understandable explanations. However, with regards to the weaknesses of NNEST, few high-level students said they heard strange sounds pronounced by NNEST, such as too strong p and t, mainly by Filipino teachers. As Alseweed (2012), argued that higher-level students somehow prefer NEST while students who cannot catch up as quickly prefer the articulation of English from NNEST because their language proficiency was not as advanced.

The results of this study suggest that there is not one precise characteristic that can be singled out between NNEST and NEST, as often claimed by many other studies regarding the strength and weaknesses of NEST and NNEST. The students can understand language presented by NNEST as clearly as NEST if they spoke slowly and annunciated clearly. Another exciting aspect found both NEST and NNEST have equal possibilities to provide either engaging or dreadfully robotic and boring activities. It depends on the teachers’ individual personality and creativeness. This leads to the results exemplifying the simple conclusion that both NEST and NNEST have equal ability to be effective, output building English instructors. Students of this generation are more focused on the deliverance of the lesson, and the overall capacity for them to understand well and apply the lessons. They are looking for clear explanations, engaging activities, and the opportunity to use their new language acquisition in a current manner that fits their interests and generation. Canale and Swain (1980) suggested the abilities to use the language correctly, are based on conquering grammatical correctness, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. They know vocabulary, grammar rules, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, and spelling. It can no longer be only conversational English. The all-encompassing demands of our times require students nowadays, to be taught a balanced ratio of English and feel control of each: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. English language acquisition is no longer memorization; it needs to meet any social setting or circumstance presented upon the student. All these tools are useful for normal development and importantly, when communication is required in a language that is not their native tongue. Therefore, successful teaching of English as a foreign language must cover all four skills. It cannot be restricted to grammar rules, vocabulary, or sounds. Kirkpatrick (2010) also argues that phonological proficiency of L2 learners in the Southeast Asian regions should not be judged based on the Native-Speaker standards. Still it should be measured alongside with the students’ ability to use English as a lingua franca to communicate with other Asian nations where there are a variety of English speakers. It is crucial that English grammar and pronunciation based on the native English-speaking model, play a minor role in English lessons. Instead, a variety of English accents and learners’ intercultural communicative competence should be essential to reach the primary goal of communication (Kongerd, 2013). The results of this research agree with the mentioned claim that English teaching goals in this globalization era must pay less emphasis on whether the teachers are native or non-native but instead hone in specifically on teachers’ teaching ability, engagement, and overall output of developing students’ intercultural communicative competence. Apart from the pedagogical implications mentioned above, this study also has professional associations, especially for practitioners. The school can improve areas that
both NEST and NNEST are still weak. The results suggest that teachers’ development plans be required and inclusive of the expected qualifications of EFL teachers. They can propose a set of qualities that all teachers, regardless of their language or geographical backgrounds, should have (Floris, 2019).

Besides the applications in pedagogical aspects mentioned, this paper also can raise greater awareness among school administrators and stakeholders. They can be more informed about hiring decisions and educational practices since it offers suggestions on how ELT can promote non-native speaker teachers' professional credibility. Nonetheless, there are a few limitation points that should be brought into consideration. First, this present study was done with upper Primary students in a private school in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The results cannot be generalized to more extensive settings. However, it can be used as the first step with other studies that aim to investigate higher application levels of students to see the possibilities of proficiency and perceptions.

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An Observational Study on the Effects of Native English

Fuangkarn & Rimkeeratikul


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The Functions of Code-switching in the Interaction of the Cartoon Characters in *Dora the Explorer*

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College of Sciences and Arts in Arras
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**Abstract**
This paper investigates code-switching from Standard Arabic into English in six episodes of the TV cartoon series *Dora the Explorer*. The significance of this study is that it will provide an in-depth understanding of the strategies and structures of code-switching used to address children in order to teach them English. The study addresses two research questions: 1) What are the patterns of code-switching found in the interaction of the cartoon characters in *Dora the Explorer*? 2) What is the function of code-switching in each pattern? Quantitative analysis was used to analyze the frequency of each pattern of code-switching, while qualitative analysis was used to determine the functions of code-switching. The results show several patterns of code-switching into English: code-switching from Arabic to English without translation; Arabic lexical items followed by an English translation; English lexical items followed by an Arabic translation; translation from Arabic into English in two turns; and metadiscursive code-switching. English lexical items are introduced through code-switching in each episode. English words without translation account for the highest percentage of code-switching. In the code-switching to English, some English units are permanent, while some are context units that depend on the episode topic: these include basic formulaic and non-formulaic expressions. Lexical items for greeting, appreciation, and evaluation are the most frequent pragmatic functions of code-switching. Further research is recommended on code-switching in other TV animated series in other languages to determine the patterns of code-switching and the part of speech that is the focus of switching.

**Keywords:** Arabic, Cartoons, Code-switching, Dora the Explorer, English, Formulaic, Non-formulaic

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.16
Introduction

Code-switching has a crucial communicative function. Even in Arabic-speaking countries, children are exposed to code-switching at an early age. Several educational TV animated cartoon series include code-switching. For example, the creators of cartoon TV series such as Dora the Explorer and The Adventures of Manny the Manitas claim that they could help children under the age of nine learn English; these TV series are marketed to parents and children as educational programs. In addition, the Arabic version of these TV series could even help children to learn Standard Arabic. This is because Standard Arabic is not the mother tongue of Arabic speakers, who speak different varieties of Arabic in their daily lives; the variety they speak varies from one Arabic-speaking country to another.

Dora the Explorer, which is the focus of this study, is broadcast predominantly in Standard Arabic in Arabic countries (English in English-speaking countries). The characters code-switch between Standard Arabic (the first language, henceforth L1) and English (the second or foreign language in our case, henceforth L2) to translate and explain some L2 lexical items.

Few studies have been conducted on code-switching in animated TV shows. Among the existing studies is Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012), which investigated code-switching in Handy Manny, focusing on its potential impact on teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in a Spanish L1 context. Another study conducted by Elbwart (2014) analyzed three popular U.S. children’s TV shows – Dora the Explorer (Nickelodeon), Maya & Miguel (PBS), and Handy Manny (Disney Channel) – focusing on their incorporation of different linguistic systems and how languages are alternated to represent Hispanic culture on mainstream television.

The present study focuses on code-switching in the fictional discourse, analyzing a popular children’s TV show, Dora the Explorer, in terms of incorporating different linguistic systems and how languages are alternated through code-switching. The aim is to determine the patterns and functions of code-switching in the interaction of the cartoon characters. Therefore, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the patterns of code-switching found in the interaction of the cartoon characters in Dora the Explorer, and which pattern is the most common?
2. What is the function of code-switching in each pattern?

The significance of this study is that it will provide a deep understanding of the strategies and structures of code-switching used to address children in order to teach them English. Moreover, it will enable us to assess its potential impact on teaching and learning EFL in an Arabic L1 context. The study also contributes to the existing research on code-switching in children’s TV series, and to my knowledge, it is the first study on code-switching in Arabic-language children’s TV shows.
Literature Review

Bilingualism and Code-switching

In its simplest form, bilingualism can be defined as knowing two languages (Valdez & Figueora, 1994). Bilinguals’ level of proficiency varies as some bilinguals are highly proficient in both languages while others are highly proficient in one language, which is the dominant or preferred language, and less proficient in the other. Since the degree of proficiency tends to play a crucial role in determining bilingualism, Mackey (1968) suggested considering it simply as the alternate use of two languages. This definition of bilingualism is associated with language alternation approaches (Elbwart, 2014). Recently, bilingualism has been explained as existing on a continuum, meaning that it fits a variety of individual situations (cf. Grosjean, 2001). Bilinguals can thus be defined as “individuals or groups of people that result from interactions via language in which two or more linguistic codes (including dialects) are used for communication” (Butler & Hakuta 2006, p. 114). This paper focuses on bilingualism in speech communities, specifically on analyzing language choices in a bilingual television show. Therefore, the degree of bilingualism and proficiency in the two languages in play do not need to be assessed.

Bilingual speakers often code-switch between languages, especially when the two languages are used in the same environment. There are several reasons for code-switching, including filling a lexical gap. The current paper aims to discuss code-switching patterns found in an animated TV show which is classified as educational. The goal of code-switching in this context is to introduce English words to Arabic-speaking children aged three to nine years old.

Definition and Theories of Code-switching

Switching between languages may occur “between the turns of different speakers in the same conversation, sometimes between utterances within a single turn, and sometimes even within a single utterance” (Milroy & Muysken, 1995, p. 7). Gumperz (1982) defined code-switching as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (p. 59). Myers-Scotton (1993a) described code-switching as “the selection by bilinguals or multilinguals of forms from an embedded language (or languages) in utterances of a matrix language during the same conversation” (p. 4). This means that in bilingual or multilingual communities, speakers can use their languages or codes naturally. They switch between languages or codes to fill a lexical gap, such as when they do not know a specific word in one of the codes, or they might switch for another specific purpose (Bassiouney, 2009).

Gumperz (1982) referred to code-switching not as a phenomenon resulting from the speaker’s language deficiency in one of his/her languages but as an additional resource through which a range of social and rhetorical meanings are expressed. He noted that the alternation of languages has an expressive function and pragmatic purpose. He also stated that non-linguistic
aspects of the speech situation could affect code choices, such as the social relationships of the speakers, their social roles, conversation type, type of international exchange, audience design and occasion, and topic. In addition to these factors, Bentahila, Davies, and Owens (2013) noted that the languages involved in the switching should all be part of the regular oral communicative repertoire of the community engaged in the code-switching.

It is essential to distinguish between two kinds of code-switching, i.e., inter-sentential code-switching and intra-sentential code-switching, the latter of which could be termed code-mixing or intra-sentential code-mixing (Muysken, 2000). Inter-sentential code-switching occurs at clause boundaries, whereas intra-sentential code-switching (or mixing) occurs within the domain of a clause (Mejdell, 2006). Some analysts prefer the expression “alternational code-switching” for switching between stretches of speech belonging to different codes/languages/varieties. In contrast, insertional code-switching or code-mixing (Muysken, 2000) denotes single items of one code occurring in stretches of the other code. Some sociolinguists have proposed reserving code-switching to describe socially meaningful changes of code in conversational interaction (Auer, 1995, 1998).


The field of CS (code-switching) research is replete with a confusing range of terms descriptive of various aspects of the phenomenon. Sometimes the referential scope of a set of these terms overlaps, and sometimes particular terms are used in different ways by different writers. (p. 12)

This problem has also been outlined in Clyne (1987). Among the issues in question is whether code-switching and code-mixing are the same or different phenomena.

As well as differences regarding the location of switching, code-switching can be either situational or metaphorical (Blom & Gumperz, 1972). The former refers to a shift that results from external changes, such as a change of participants or setting (i.e., speakers move from one domain into another and change their codes as a result). In contrast, the latter refers to a shift in the emphasis of the topic, such as when the speakers change codes in the middle of a situation. However, Bassiouney (2009) criticized Gumperz’s division of code-switching into situational and metaphorical code-switching, arguing that this division is not always easy to identify in practice and that it assumes different motivations for each type of code-switching.

Myers-Scotton’s (1993a) model is based on the notion that the languages or codes involved in code-switching have equal status and play different roles in the mix, which consists of a Matrix Language (ML) and an Embedded Language (EL). The ML alone sets the morpho-syntactic frame
for the clause and provides the system morphemes and most of the content morphemes. On the other hand, the EL may provide the constituents and single content morphemes which are inserted into the ML base. Her model has inspired many studies, such as those by Boussofara-Omar (1999, 2003) and Bassiouney (2006). It has also been met with “critique and counter-evidence and is constantly developed, to the extent that it has lost its initial simplicity and thus for many scholars its attractiveness” (Mejdell, 2012, p. 31). Both Bassiouney (2006, 2009) and Boussofara-Omar (1999, 2003) highlighted several problems when applying this model to their data.

In the TV show which the current study focuses on, Arabic functions as an ML, whereas English is the embedded, less frequently used language.

**Code-switching and Code-mixing**

Code-switching and code-mixing constitute the most controversial area of debate in the analysis of language contact phenomena. Linguists and researchers have overlapping views and hold different opinions on code-switching and code-mixing (Muysken, 2000).

Clyne (1991) argued that both code-switching and code-mixing refer to the same phenomena in which “the speaker stops using language ‘A’ and employs language ‘B’” (p. 161). Romaine (1995), furthermore, viewed code-switching as a phenomenon that occurs in a continuum where both inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-alternation take place.

Other researchers have differentiated between code-switching and code-mixing depending on the place where the alternation occurs. For instance, Wei (1998) stated that if code-alternation occurs at or above the clause level, it is considered code-switching, but if it occurs below the clause level, then it is considered code-mixing. Similarly, in differentiating between code-switching and code-mixing, Bokamba (1989) associated code-switching with inter-sentential code-switching and code-mixing with intra-sentential code-switching.

Mazraani (1997) argued that there is a difference between code-switching and code-mixing. In her perspective, code-switching usually has a discourse function. It is defined as a phenomenon where “sections in one code are followed by sections in another one in the same conversation” (pp. 8–9). She noted that code-switching could affect most of the linguistic levels, i.e., syntactic, morphological, phonological, and lexical. On the other hand, she defined code-mixing as “the mixing of different varieties within a single utterance or even within a single word” (pp. 8–9). In contrast to code-switching, she contended that code-mixing does not have to affect all linguistic levels. However, Bassiouney (2009) asserted that Mazraani’s definitions of code-switching are still vague, arguing that Mazraani did not clearly define the words “sections” and “utterance.”
Primarily, two types of switches have been proposed: intra-sentential and inter-sentential. Some linguists prefer the word code-mixing to be used only for intra-sentential and intra-clausal switches and have used code-switching as a cover term for all types of switches (Grosjean, 1996; Myers-Scotton, 1993b, 2006; Poplack, 1993). Some other linguists, for instance, Clyne (2011), have used the word “transference” to cover mixing at all linguistic levels: phonological, morphological, and syntactic. According to Muysken (2000), intra-sentential code-mixing “refers to all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence” (p. 1). This takes place through three different processes: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. Muysken claimed that code-switching is suitable for only the alternational type of mixing in a single speech event between turns or utterances. Muysken (2000) argued that the word code-switching suggests the meaning of alternation, and it separates code-mixing from borrowing and interference. For these two reasons, he avoided describing the general process of mixing as code-switching.

Unlike Muysken (2000), Poplack (1993) used code-switching as a cover term for both the intra-sentential and inter-sentential mixing of two languages when she suggested that code-switching should contain switches at all levels of linguistic structure: “Code-switching may occur at various levels of linguistic structure (e.g., sentential, intra-sentential, tag) and it may be flagged or smooth” (p. 255). In Grosjean’s (1996) definition, the cover term is code-switching, which involves switching at the word, phrase, and sentence level. Myers-Scotton (2006) included both inter-sentential and intra-sentential switches as instances of code-switching. She defined inter-sentential switching as “containing complete sentences in the clause boundaries.” She preferred the expression intra-clause switching to intra-sentential switching because intra-clause switching involves switching within one clause rather than switching between two clauses.

On the other hand, Auer (1995) referred to the alternating use of two or more languages as code-alternation or language alternation. He used the word “alternation” to cover “all cases in which semiotic systems are put in a relationship of contiguous juxtaposition, such that the appropriate recipients of the resulting complex sign are in a position to interpret this juxtaposition as such” (p. 116). Auer (1998) proposed a continuum of language alternation or code-alternation phenomena, “which spans out between three well-documented cases (conceived as prototypes) which will be labeled code-switching, language mixing (LM) and fused lects (FLs), with code-switching and FLs representing the polar extremes of the continuum and LM a point in between” (p. 1). In his study of code-switching and code-mixing in Welsh bilinguals’ talk, Musk (2010) referred to code-switching and code-mixing as code-alternation, indicating that code-alternation acts as a general cover term for different outcomes of language contact.

The current study is based on Poplack (1993), Grosjean (1996), and Myers-Scotton’s (1993b, 2006) definitions and classifications of code-switching. However, intra-sentential code-
switching parallels Muysken’s approach of intra-sentential code-mixing as he focused on switching within the same sentence. Therefore, both intra-sentential code-switching and intra-sentential code-mixing describe the same linguistic phenomena. The current study will highlight both types of code-switching with a special focus on inter-sentential code-switching, as the author noticed that it was the most common type of code-switching when analyzing the data.

**Strategies for Language Choice in Animated TV Shows**

Elbwart (2014) discussed two major strategies of language choice in animated TV shows. The first strategy is translation, which has always been a prominent strategy in second/foreign language acquisition and can be seen as a basic skill of bilinguals. Although translation strategy was banned from foreign language teaching contexts for the past centuries, it is now considered as a legitimate pedagogical technique (Ellis, 1997; Popovic, 2001) to promote learning. Children’s TV shows are usually targeted at pre-schoolers or young children, and use translation techniques to present the meaning of words (Elbwart, 2014). Therefore, it is important to analyze whether translated words and phrases appear contextualized or tend to be isolated and thus draw attention to aspects that would otherwise go unnoticed (Popovic, 2001, p. 3). In fact, translation creates an opportunity for the acquisition and learning of a foreign language. Popovic (2001) defined it as “using the first language as a base for understanding and/or producing the second language” (p. 4).

Within the context of children’s animated TV programming, translation strategies are used as a means of verifying comprehension and accuracy (Cordero, 1984). Translating single words or phrases, it ensures that the viewer understands the utterance and follows the storyline so that he or she can avoid problems of comprehension. Translation is not limited to introducing lexical items; although children’s programs mainly use it to introduce their viewers to new vocabulary, it also facilitates comprehension, as can be seen in the TV show *Dora the Explorer*. Translation appears to be one of the learning strategies which facilitates comprehension. Additionally, television pictures, which back up the linguistic content, are another helpful tool to convey the message.

The second strategy introduced by Elbwart (2014) is repetition. Similar to translation, the strategy of repetition was banned from language learning contexts due to the rejection of audiolingual drills and approaches (Duff, 2000). Through the process of repeating and reproducing words or phrases, learners proceed “from highly controlled language use to more automatic or spontaneous production of internalized forms” (Duff, 2000, p. 109). Furthermore, repetition is used to provide cohesion and signal discourse topics while helping learners to attend to new vocabulary and grammar (Duff, 2000). In children’s television, these features may help viewers to easily follow the bilingual discourse. By repeating and revoicing numerous utterances, understanding of new words is facilitated. The following is an example from *Dora the Explorer*:

*Be careful butterfly*  
*دورا: في ميولون*  
*ال أمراء معأ:*  

“Dora: Will you say be careful butterfly?”
Friends: Be careful butterfly!”

Comprehension of bilingual discourse in children’s programming appears to be supported by certain language use strategies such as translation and repetition, which help children learn new linguistic structures.

**Pragmatic Expressions**

Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012) conducted a study on *Handy Manny*, finding formulaic and appraisal expressions among the different types of L2 target utterances introduced during code-switching in characters’ conversations. Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012) stated that the literature lacks a full account of formulaic expressions; however, these expressions are now widely accepted as part of the process of language learning and teaching. This area has become a fast-growing research issue in its own right (Wray, 2006). Formulaic language “has been most recently blossoming as a major focus of attention” (Wray, 2006, p. 592).

It is now widely accepted that speakers’ capacity for linguistic novelty is far less than originally thought. As Coulmas (cited in Gregori-Signes & Alcantud-Diaz, 2012, p. 66) argued:

[C]onversation is a structured activity and as such a large part of it consists of enacting routines. We greet and say goodbye to one another, we introduce ourselves, we thank, we apologize, we make requests, we exchange good wishes, we give advice, we seek information, etc., - all of these are conducted within a large range of conventionalized, pre-patterned expressions.

Different languages have different patterns and routines with regard to conversational practices such as requests or opening and closing conversations.

Formulas or formulaic sequences “exist in so many different forms that it is difficult to develop a comprehensive definition of the phenomenon” (Schmitt & Carter, 2004, p. 4). This is consistent with Wray (2008), who admitted that these discrepancies have caused “considerable scope for discussion about what should and should not be counted” (p. 35). Formulaic expressions may consist of single or multi-word units. The criteria used for classifying formulaic sequences by different authors are “institutionalization, fixedness, [...] non-compositionality and frequency of occurrence” (Schmitt & Carter, 2004, p. 2). Schmitt and Carter focused on multi-word sequences, while Wray (2002) also included single words and morphemes as examples of formulaic language. Wray (2006) stated that “for most researchers, the expression “formulaic language” refers to two or more words which may or may not be adjacent and which have a particular mutual affinity that gives them a joint grammatical, semantic, pragmatic, or textual effect” (p. 953). She acknowledged the discrepancies between child language acquisition, sociolinguistics, literary style, phraseology,
grammars, discourse, and psycholinguistics, each with a different conception of the purpose of
formulaic language; and proposed a holistic definition:

Formulaic language is a generic strategic solution to a recurrent challenge for us as
humans:
how to promote our own interests. The rationale for this proposal resides in the way that
humans use language to manipulate others. Manipulation entails persuading another
person to think, feel, or act in some way that you desire. Selecting linguistic material that
enables you as a speaker to fluently express your message and enables your hearer or
hearers to easily decode it supports this self-promotional goal (Wray, 2006, p. 593).

According to Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012), formulaic expressions in Handy Manny
may assist children to improve their conversational skills and pragmatic competence in English,
as:
[A]utomatic retrieval of words and fixed expressions undoubtedly contributes significantly
to smooth performance and normal paced delivery […] [since] [t]he extremely high
frequency of occurrence of such chunks in native-speaker and expert-user conversation
reveals their regular, fixed forms and the pragmatically specialised functions they have
acquired over many millions of utterances. (McCarthy, 2010, p. 4)

Many of the formulaic expressions Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz’s corpus (2012) may be
classified as appraisal or evaluating devices, which should be viewed as belonging to the field of
interpersonal semantics (Eggins & Slade, 1997). Appraisal refers to the attitudinal colouring of
talk among dimensions such as certainty, emotional response, social evaluation, and intensity. As
reported by these authors, appreciation, affect, judgment, and amplification are four main
categories that should be included in appraisal analysis. Eggins and Slade (1997) defined each as
follows: appreciation indicates “the speaker’s reactions and evaluation of reality,” while affect is
“the expression of emotional states both positive and negative” (p. 125). The judgment includes
“the speaker’s judgments about the ethics, morality or social values of other people.” Finally,
amplification is “the way speakers maximize or minimize the intensity and degree of the reality
they are negotiating” (p. 125). In the corpus of the present study, formulas and formulaic appraisal
expressions perform the pragmatic function of helping to regulate the relationship between the
fictional characters. Appraisal expressions convey positive emotional states and judgments of the
situations the characters get involved in, thus creating solidarity, friendship, and group

Methodology
The Sample
The data for this study consists of six randomly selected episodes of Dora the
Explorer, which were obtained from YouTube. The quality of the videos is generally good, and
each episode is 23 minutes in duration.
**Dora the Explorer** is by far the most popular bilingual children’s television program, and ever since it was first aired, it has been among the top-rated preschool programs. It was first broadcast in the USA on the Nickelodeon TV channel with English as a matrix language and Spanish as an embedded language. Since 2000, a dubbed version into Standard Arabic with code-switching into English has been broadcast through MBC Nickelodeon TV channels to the Arab world. The series centers around Dora Marquez, a seven-year-old Latina girl, who has adventures with her friend Boots (Moozo in the Arabic-English dubbed version), a five-year-old monkey. Usually these adventures relate to problem-solving strategies and activities, during which the team is supported by their Backpack, providing all necessary tools, and their Map, the useful helper for directions. In almost every episode, the fox Swiper appears and tries to steal an item belonging to either Dora or her friends. Dora and her friends then have to retrieve the lost item during the show. Through its interactive computer style, viewers are asked to join Dora and help her to solve the tasks. According to the producers of the show, *Dora the Explorer* not only introduces new words but also encourages movement and asks viewers to be confident in order to overcome challenges. Most episodes have a similar pattern and start with the theme song after which Dora and Moozo greet their viewers.

**Instrumentation**

The data of this study were obtained from YouTube and Excel was used for quantitative analysis. Each occurrence of code-switching into English with or without translation into Arabic in each of the six episodes was counted and classified into the five code-switching patterns suggested by Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012). The percentage of occurrence of each pattern was then calculated to determine which pattern was the most common.

**Data Analysis**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis were used to account for the use of code-switching in *Dora the Explorer*. The methodology used in this study was adopted from Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012). The quantitative analysis addresses the presence of L2 (English) in the analyzed episodes, which are mainly broadcast in L1 (Standard Arabic). On the other hand, the qualitative analysis assesses the pragmatic function of the different types of code-switching units in the corpus: permanent and context units. If the lexical items are present in most of the episodes and represent the hallmark of the series, such as its song or the names of characters, they are considered permanent. On the other hand, context lexical items are more episode related and can be classified as formulaic and non-formulaic and evaluative expressions. Formulaic units are “vocabulary or expressions that are related to the topic of the episode” (Gregori-Signes & Alcantud-Diaz, 2012, p. 69). Formulaic and evaluative expressions that work on the pragmatic level help to express the characters’ attitudes towards the situation and towards other characters. This study aims to clarify the function of these items that result from code-switching.

In the quantitative analysis, five types of code-switching are considered:
The Functions of Code-switching in the Interaction

a) Type one consists of L1 + L2
b) Type two consists of L2 + L1
c) Type three consists of L2 without translation
d) Type four consists of translation (L1 + L2) in two different turns
e) Type five consists of metadiscursive code-switching (L2 + L1), which involves the use of a definition formula.

The qualitative analysis includes the classification of the lexical items into two types:

- Permanent units such as the song of the series and the names of the characters.
- Context units which are dependent on the topic of each episode. Thus, two main categories emerge: non-formulaic and formulaic expressions.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the results of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses are discussed.

Quantitative Analysis

A total of 343 L2 lexical items were found in the corpus. Proper names of the characters were excluded from the analysis apart from those with lexical meaning, such as Quackers and Backpack. Terms of address (Mr., Mrs., etc.) were also included. Table 1 illustrates the percentages of L2 lexical items according to the different types of code-switching mentioned above. Similar to the findings of Elbwart (2014), it appears that there are differences in the quantitative occurrence of code-switching in each episode.

Table 1 Percentages of L2 lexical items according to the different types of code-switching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episodes</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>L1 + L2</th>
<th>L2+ L1 (2 turns)</th>
<th>L1+ L2 (2 turns)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It could be concluded from Table 1 that, in line with Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012), code-switching into L2 without translation (Type 3) accounts for the highest percentage (73%) of L2 lexical items. However, even though the percentage is high and a high number of L2 lexical items are introduced in the series, in qualitative terms most instances are repetitions of the same word. Also, certain expressions are repeated several times throughout the series, such as various greetings (e.g., Hi, Welcome), and words of encouragement such as come on, and let’s go.
Similar to the findings of Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012), code-switching to L2 without translation also carries pragmatic functions such as accepting or agreeing, giving orders (e.g., look), and evaluating (e.g., excellent, fantastic).

L1 with translation into L2 within the same turn (Type one) accounts for the second-highest percentage of L2 lexical items, which is contrary to Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012) who found that this type came in third place. Type two, L2 with translation into L1 in the same turn, is the third most frequent type of code-switching in the current study, representing 8% of the total. In both Type two and Type three, the function represents giving an order, for example, (e.g., فطروا jump, for Type 1). In Type two and Type three, there is evidence of intra-sentential code-switching (i.e., code-mixing). Moreover, Type two is used for thanking and giving orders. Regarding Type five, metadiscursive code-switching, a few cases are evident in the episode data, in instances where Dora explains the meaning of the expression in L2; this supports the finding in Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012).

Qualitative Analysis
As mentioned in the analysis section above, the lexical items can be classified into permanent and context units. These will be discussed in the following subsections.

Permanent Lexical Items
The song at the beginning of the series appears in all the episodes and is played by Dora and her friends. This song intersperses L1 words and expressions with L2 ones. The song is as follows:

Let’s go my friends. .. هيا يا أصدقاء

Working together. .. دورا دورا و الأصدقاء في المدينة

Some names of the characters are also in English: Kate, Maya, Backpack, Quackers, Penny, Antonio, the adventurer. Some of these names serve the purpose of introducing proper nouns, and some refer to their characteristics. Moreover, titles (Sr/ Mr.) are useful in forcing the learners to learn them. Some other permanent lexical items belong to formulaic conversational routines such as the greeting Welcome my friends, which is uttered every time Dora starts an episode. The affirmation yes is also permanent.

Context Lexical Items
Formulaic expressions and formulaic appraisal expressions are prominent in the series. They are used to establish a relationship between the characters, the situation, and the audience (i.e., in an indirect way). For instance, expressions for greetings such as Welcome my friends, Hi,
Hello, Goodbye, Bye, and Goodnight are among the most common. Other formulaic expressions are directives such as take care and let’s go, apologies such as I’m sorry, and evaluating or appraisal expressions such as fantastic, correct, good, brave, excellent, and delicious. Non-formulaic items include nouns such as girl, friends, duck, and book, which are examples of common everyday words.

Discussion and Implications

Results indicate that L2 lexical items are introduced through code-switching in each episode, including several basic formulaic and non-formulaic expressions in English. Code-switching into English is sometimes followed by a translation into Arabic, and sometimes the lexical item is said in Arabic followed by L2 items, which are equivalent to the Arabic lexical item in meaning. Previous studies (McCarthy, 2010; Schmitt & Carter, 2004) indicated the importance of formulaic language in applied linguistics and pragmatics and how it may improve learners’ pragmatic competence. The formulaic expressions fulfill some pragmatic functions such as greetings, thanking, apologizing, requesting, identifying, and evaluating through appreciation, judgment, and amplification. Other formulas are interjections and discourse markers.

In line with Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2012), qualitatively positive pragmatic expressions are more prevalent than negative ones. Most of these expressions are introduced by the main character, Dora. Since the goal of this series is educational, Dora’s discourse is polite and introduces basic lexical items such as those for greetings, expressing appreciation, and apologizing. These expressions could be useful for young learners to master the process of language learning.

One drawback of such a series is that the characters in the Arabic version are voiced by Arabic speakers (i.e., in this TV series, the speakers are Egyptian: their mother tongue is Egyptian Arabic, and they speak Standard Arabic). Their L2 pronunciation reflects minor mistakes resulting from the influence of their L1 on L2. Moreover, most of the L2 lexical items introduced seem to be random. Some are repeated across the six episodes analyzed such as those for greetings (such as Welcome my friends, Hi, Hello, Goodbye, Bye, Goodnight), agreement (such as yes, of course), apologies (such as I am sorry) and appreciation (such as fantastic, wonderful). However, some other items are mentioned once or twice in each episode and thus will not enhance learning them, such as nouns (e.g., giant, queen, bee).

The non-formulaic expressions found in the episodes analyzed include common verbs (e.g., wait, look, let’s go). Similarly, basic nouns and adjectives are introduced, which are suitable for young children to learn (e.g., girl, good, correct, wonderful, excellent). Nouns occur frequently in the episodes.
Conclusion

This study investigated the structure and functions of code-switching in *Dora the Explorer*. Different patterns of code-switching were analyzed according to the order in which L1 and L2 were combined. Though L2 lexical items without translation account for the highest percentage of code-switching in the episodes, most of these items are repeated and are considered basic lexical items. In addition, translation into Arabic seems unnecessary in some instances where the meaning is clear, such as when the main character Dora points at the things she refers to or performs. Formulaic expressions with pragmatic functions in the conversation are useful for improving young children’s pragmatic competence. Basic lexical items were introduced, such as those for the purpose of greetings, expressing appreciation, and apologizing. These lexical items could be useful for young learners to master the process of language learning.

The study has highlighted drawbacks in the implementation of code-switching in this TV series: careless pronunciation of L2 by L1 native speakers, and the learners not having enough exposure to specific L2 lexical items as they appear as context lexical items.

Future research needs to be conducted on code-switching in other educational TV animated series in other languages. Moreover, in this study, there is frequent code-switching to nouns in L2; thus, additional studies are needed to determine which part of speech is the focus of switching. In addition, given the presence of both inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching, further studies need to be conducted on the constraints of intra-sentential code-switching.

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References


Plural and Gender Inflection of English Loanwords in Colloquial Saudi Arabic

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Abstract  
This study aims at investigating how borrowed nouns from English are inflected for plural and gender in Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA). The attempt is also made to account for the possible linguistic factors which may affect this inflection in light of some theories in morphology. The analysis is based on more than 250 loanwords collected from different sources (dictionaries, social, media, and TV series). The results showed that foreign nouns are found to be marked for all types of plural (broken plural (BP), female sound plural (FSP), and masculine sound plural (MSP)). More than 77% of borrowed nouns are inflected for FSP. However, this result disagrees with the plural formation rule operating in native nominal stems, which states that BP is the most common, and SP seldom occurs. Views from morphology theory as proposed by Abd-Rabbo (1990) and McCarthy and Prince (1990a; 1990b) were employed to account for this phenomenon. Another feature which is also peculiar to FSP formation is related to the attachment of –haːt and –yaːt to singular borrowed nouns to form FSP instead of -aːt. Like plural marking, gender assignment to borrowed nouns is also subject to the CSA rules. All English loan nouns are inflected either for masculine by attaching the ɸ morpheme (the unmarked) or feminine gender by attaching –ah (the marked). Out of the three functions of the feminine marker –ah introduced by Drozdik (1998), the inflectional function is the only function that is found at work within foreign nouns. The study concludes with recommendations for further research on loanword variation with regard to plural formation and other morpho-syntactic processes across the different dialects of Arabic.

Keywords:  Colloquial Saudi Arabic, English, gender inflection, loanwords, plural inflection

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.17
Introduction

Linguistic borrowing is one of the significant outcomes of language contact situation. According to Poplack, Sankoff, and Miller (1988) borrowing involves the integration of second language (L2) (lending or source language) words into the lexicon of first language (L1) (borrowing or recipient language), usually undergo phonological and morpho-syntactic changes to conform with the structure of that language. Statistically, nouns are always the most frequent category in any corpus of loanwords (Cannon, 1998; Matras, 2009). Therefore, the process of nominal inflection is considered to be one of the most salient morphological properties of the borrowing language and always at work in the process of loanword adaptation. It has been agreed upon (Weinreich, 1966; Comrie, 2008) that as soon as a foreign noun is nativized in the lexicon of the language, it should be dealt with as any other native nominal form within the word class system of that language. In light of this agreement, the main objective of the current study is to see how borrowed nouns from English are morphologically inflected for plural and gender in Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA) and to which extent.

In the standard variety of Arabic, there are three numbers: singular, dual, and plural. However, in modern Arabic dialects, including CSA, only two numbers are assigned to nouns; they are singular and plural; dual number is no more used (the New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1993; Trudgill, 2009). A great deal of nouns and adjectives are pluralized in some way or another. Consequently, the process of plural assignment is highly productive in Arabic. On the other hand, and as Ratcliffe (1990) puts it, plural formation in Arabic is “a notoriously irregular process” (p. 102) Two types of plural formation are distinguished in CSA: the sound (regular) plural (SP) and the broken (irregular) plural (BP). SP formation is usually carried out by attaching a suffix to nominal stems whose internal structure remains intact. SPs are further divided into two types: masculine sound plural (MSP) and feminine sound plural (FSP). MSP is usually marked by the suffix –i:n like the native muhandis ‘a male engineer’ muhandisi:n ‘male engineers’. In Standard Arabic, however, the plural marker –u:n syntactically refers to the nominative case while –i:n refers either to the accusative or the genitive case. In CSA –i:n is used in all cases. FSP is formed by the plural marker –a:t as the native muhandisah ‘a female engineer’, muhandisa:t ‘female engineers’. BP formation, however, is made by modifying the internal vowels of nominal stems and hence manifesting different morphological patterns like the native nouns kita:b ‘a book’ kutub, and walad ‘a boy’ ?awla:d (Neme & Laporte, 2013). The second pattern ?awla:d (which is according to the pattern ?afεa:l) suggests that some patterns of BP may also undergo the prefixation process.

Noun stems in Arabic differ in their inflection for either SP or BP. In an attempt to recognize which nouns are permissible for either type of plural, many studies have been conducted in this respect. One of these attempts is Abd-Rabbo (1990), who develops what he calls the number of consonants constraint (NCC). This constraint is used as a criterion that depends on the number of consonants the noun stem may contain in the various morphological processes, including plural formation. As for plural assignment, the NCC states that “BP formation takes as inputs only forms with three or four consonants” (Abd-Rabbo, 1990, p. 55). This would mean that nouns that are not triliteral or quadiliteral are morphologically obstructed by the NCC and no more inflected for BP and only take FSP instead. This restriction is not only applied to input forms that are above quadrilateral, but also to those stems which are bilateral (containing only two consonants). Being
biliterals, all the names of Arabic characters, therefore, are obstructed to form BP. They only take FSP like \(\text{si:n-si:na:t} \) ‘the letter corresponds to ‘s’’, \(\text{la:m-la:ma:t} \) ‘the letter corresponds to ‘l’’, etc.

In their theory of prosodic morphology, McCarthy and Prince (1990b) use another criterion to account for the permissible singular nouns in Arabic in terms of the number of syllables these stems may contain. For them and on the basis of Arabic rigid restrictions on the forms that singular nouns can take, noun stems are "minimally bimoraic". In other words, every noun stem must not have more than two syllables, and every bi-syllabic noun stem must contain only one consonant in the onset and coda positions (except for monosyllabic stems which appear in the syllable structure CVCC). McCarthy and Prince (1990a) primarily call these syllable-based limitations as the maximal stem constraint (MSC), which states that "templates (permissible forms) are maximally disyllabic" (p. 25). The MSC suggests that singular nouns consisting of three syllables or more should be scarce and very irregular in their inflection. To put it differently, they are said to be morphologically unacceptable. With regard to plural inflection, especially in native materials, McCarthy and Prince (1990b) confirm that “essentially, all canonically-shaped lexical nouns of Arabic take broken plurals” (p. 212). Based on the principles and constraints mentioned above, namely the NCC and MSC, the attempt in the current study is to see to which extent can such constraints account for the possible factors that may lie behind the inflection of different types of plural to the borrowed nouns in CSA.

As far as gender formation is concerned, both the standard variety of Arabic and the dialects, including CSA, agree in their inflection for gender to singular nouns (Drozdík, 1998; Holes, 2004; Ryding 2005). Holes (2004), for example, states that the same system of gender assignment applies in the Arabic dialects. Still, there are a few individual differences in the category of nouns which are feminine by convention. Arabic, in general, and CSA, in particular, have two genders: masculine and feminine. In contrast, English has three: masculine, feminine, and neuter (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2002). Neuter gender does not exist in Arabic. While nominal forms are grammatically inflected in some way in Arabic, English does not use any inflectional suffixes to show gender distinction. In CSA, feminine singular nouns are inflected grammatically by the typical feminine marker –ah which is known as \(\text{ta:\text{?marbu:ţah}} \) in Arabic traditional grammar (e.g. \(\text{xa:l} \) ‘aunt’ compared to the masculine \(\text{xa:l} \) ‘uncle’). This process is referred to as gender inflection by form. Other instances of gender marking other than grammatical gender are less common. They include feminine by meaning (e.g. \(\text{bint} \) ‘a girl’, \(\text{?um} \) ‘mother’, etc.) or by conventional usage (e.g. \(\text{šams} \) ‘the sun’, \(\text{rijl} \) ‘a leg’, \(\text{?uðn} \) ‘an ear’, etc.). When used in the discourse, these nouns need feminine adjectives and verb agreement, even though they are not marked with the feminine suffix –ah. Almost all other singular nominal forms which do not belong to these types of feminine gender (feminine by form and feminine by convention) are masculine. Since CSA masculine is not overtly represented in the writing system of the language, it is said to be inflected by nothing or rather by \(\phi \), that is zero morpheme as opposed to the overt feminine marker –ah. Thus, it can be safely postulated that CSA feminine is the marked category while CSA masculine is the unmarked one.

In addition to gender marking, the feminine suffix –ah manifest a number of other functions which are best argued in Drozdík (1998). According to him, the feminine morpheme employs three main functions: i) the inflectional function, ii) the shared inflectional-and-derivational marking,
and iii) the exclusive derivational marking. The first indicates those members of feminine gender which denote animate entities that can be classified in sex-gender pairs (e.g. "mudi:r- mudi:rah 'male manager-female manage', qit- qit:ah 'male cat- female cat', etc.). The second function refers to those members of feminine gender in which the feminine singular may be formed by attaching the feminine suffix to collective nouns, verbal nouns, or intensive pattern fajaa:l and thus such newly-derived forms can be categorized as members of one of the –ah-marked derivational classes (e.g. "sajar 'trees' >sajarah 'a tree', ramyy 'shooting' >ramyah 'a shot', tayya:r 'a pilot’ >tayyarah ‘a plane', respectively). Finally, the third function indicates a derivational aspect which has nothing to do with gender assignment (e.g. "na:bi'g 'very smart' >na:bi:ghah 'extremely smart/ genius', ea:lim ‘a scholar, an erudite’ >ealla:mah ‘most erudite, very learned’). Obviously, the feminine ending –ah in this function does not mark the singular nouns with feminine gender; its only task is derivational. These singular forms, therefore, are treated as masculine and most often designate male-person entities. This particular function of the feminine suffix has come into existence, as Drozdík (1998) argues, due to certain socio-cultural restrictions of the Arab speech community.

Upon adopting a borrowed noun in the recipient language, it comparatively behaves like other native nouns in the lexicon and morphology of that language. When integrated into the morphological system of CSA, borrowed nouns from English should conform to the morpho-syntactic rules of Arabic. In the view of the structure of plural and gender in Arabic mentioned above, the main purpose of the present study is to examine how CSA loanwords from English are morphologically marked for plural and gender and to which extent. In other words, this research paper attempts to address the following questions:

1) How are borrowed nouns from English inflected for plural in CSA?
2) How are borrowed nouns from English inflected for gender in CSA?
3) What are the possible factors that may affect the preference of one plural rule over the other?

Review of Literature

Lexical borrowing is a product of linguistic contact between languages. According to Haspelmath (2009), loanword (or lexical borrowing) is defined as "a word that at some point in the history of a language entered its lexicon as a result of borrowing (or transfer, or copying)" (p. 36). Tranter (2000) further points out that “lexical borrowing is an important feature of language contact and is acknowledged for its significant role in the history of languages and language change" (p. 377). As a result of linguistic contact with other languages in the modern age, Arabic has borrowed hundreds of foreign elements not only from European languages like Italian, French, and English but also from other languages such as Turkish, Hindi, and Persian. The issue of loanword adaptation in Arabic has been investigated in different ways. Loanwords from these languages have been analyzed from phonological, semantic, and morphological points of view, either in Standard Arabic or in its other spoken varieties.

One reason for studying loanwords is to see their development or their regression through history. Watson (2004) directed the attention to the socio-political history of loanwords in San’ani Arabic, one of the dialects spoken in Yemen. Borrowed words from Turkish, Persian, French, Italian, Indian, and English languages were investigated. These loans occurred in a number of semantic fields such as agriculture, the military, foodstuffs, transport, and modern technology. The study focused more on those loanwords which have been, over years, replaced by other foreign
elements or by native forms (e.g. the Italian loan sbe:tih 'bicycle' is replaced by the English loan saykal 'bicycle' and the Turkish astahanih 'hospital' is replaced by the Arabic word mustašfa 'hospital'). Similarly, there are some loanwords that have been totally disappeared from the lexicon of San'ani Arabic (e.g. the Turkish loans sala:mli̇k 'reception room', and yasak 'prohibited'). In both cases, such kind of loanwords are known in the literature as "obsolete loanwords".

The other study on English loanwords in Arabic as used in the Arab Gulf is Al-Athwary (2016). The article studied the semantic change of borrowings in Arabic Media language, focusing on semantic fields of loanwords, their change in meaning and the phenomenon of synonymy. Al-Athwary collected more than 290 English loanwords from six online newspapers issued in the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Loanwords are found to occur in fifteen semantic fields, with the domain of computer and technology having the highest frequency. According to Al-Athwary, English loanwords in Arabic Media language underwent several types of semantic change: extension, restriction, amelioration, pejoration, and metaphor, but the direction of change in the meaning of the majority of borrowings is towards narrowing and pejoration. For Al-Athwary, the main reasons for such changes refer to the need to fill a lexical gap and semantic similarity, in addition to some other psychological and social factors like prestige and taboo.

On the other hand, Al-Btoush (2014) and Alnamer and Alnamer (2018) are purely sociolinguistic studies of English loanwords and dealt with the topic from a quantitative perspective rather than a qualitative one. They have nothing to do with the issue of loanword integration into the lexicon of the recipient language. Al-Btoush (2014) confined his study to the attitudes and perceptions of the speakers of Colloquial Jordanian Arabic towards the use of loanwords in this dialect. A questionnaire was distributed to 50 respondents. The study concluded that lexical need was the crucial factor in the use of loanwords in their conversations. Modernity, prestige, and habits were among the other factors attested in the study. Al-Btoush concluded that female speakers tend to use English in their daily conversations more often than male speakers do.

Alnamer and Alnamer (2018) is also connected to the issue of loanwords employment in everyday talks, but this time in Emirati Arabic. Unlike Al-Btoush (2014), this study involved loanwords from different languages such as Turkish, Persian, Hindi, and English with a few words of Spanish, French, German, and Italian origin. To identify and verify loanword data, the authors used an interesting technique: picture illustrations were used, and participants were asked to say what the exact words they usually use to refer to these pictures. The study aimed at investigating the effect of speakers' age, education, and gender on the employment of loanwords in Emirati Arabic. To measure this, a questionnaire was used with 90 speakers of Emirati Arabic. Alnamer and Alnamer(2018) found that female, educated, and young speakers of Emirati Arabic employ loanwords more than their counterparts in the given groups. The study findings partially agree with Al-Btoush (2014), especially in terms of gender.

To the best of our knowledge, Sa'eed (2010) and Al-Saidat (2011) are the only serious attempts that have been carried out so far on the morphological integration of loanwords in Arabic. Sa'eed (2010) investigated the productivity of plural assignment in Mosuli Arabic in Iraqi. He focused on those English loans which have been adapted in the lexicon of Mosuli dialect during the twentieth century. Sa'eed concluded that the sound-feminine plural is the most productive rule
among the three pluralization types in the dialect. The sound-masculine plural, on the other hand, is assigned to a very few nouns and hence proved to be the least productive pattern of the data. The qualitative analysis showed that the application of the broken plural and the sound masculine plural is hindered by a number of linguistic factors. One of these factors is morphological and associated with the structure of broken plural, which is complicated and has many patterns. The other one is semantic and refers to the referents of the sound-masculine plural, which must be animate personal nouns, and this restricts the formation of this type of plural.

Al-Saidat (2011) focused on the gender and number markers used to mark English loanwords in Jordanian Arabic. His data consisted of lexical items retrieved from recorded casual speech. Upon transcription, the loanwords were classified according to gender and number. Al-Saidat noticed that English loanwords have a gender distinction, which is grammatical gender, on the basis of the phonological environment at the end of the nominal form. He also argued that all processes of gender and number assignment are not foreign ones, but the native language here plays the role of the governor. This indicates that, unlike English, Arabic has its own linguistic mechanisms to mark gender and number to loanwords.

Although it was not entirely devoted to the issue of morphological adaptation, Bahumaid (2015) remains a significant study on the topic. Bahumaid made use of a list of 125 English loans in Hadhrami Arabic collected from oral and printed materials. The focus was on the English loans that belong to electric, mechanical, and vehicle fields. The main purpose of the study was to conduct a thorough analysis and see how Hadhrami Arabic borrowings from English are adapted semantically, morphologically, and phonologically. The major part of the study was devoted to the phonological adaptations made to English loanwords in the dialect. As for morphological integration, Bahumaid argued that English loanwords just follow the same rules that apply to native ones in terms of number, gender, and verb formation. No inflectional irregularities were demonstrated except for the plural formation of masculine singular nouns ending with a vowel. In this case, the semi-vowel –yy– is inserted and geminated before attaching the feminine plural marker –a:t such as lo:ri – lo:riyya:t 'lorry – lorries' and balanti – balantiyya:t 'penalty – penalties'.

About 160 English loan nouns collected from Twitter in Kuwaiti Arabic were analyzed from morphological and pedagogical perspectives by Dashti and Dashti (2017). The study concluded that loanwords undergo an intensive morphological integration by Kuwaitis in everyday conversations and on twitter. Pedagogically, the interviews show that some Kuwaitis think that the use of loanwords on Twitter helps increase the size of their lexicon. In contrast, others claim that the use of Twitter has a negative impact on their writings in the standard variety of Arabic. It also seems that some of the collected loanwords like voyis 'voice', lokašin 'location', medžorsši:ta't 'major sheets', anfoło 'unfollow', and many others are not well-established borrowings from English. They can be dealt with only as code-switches. The morphological adaptation features of loanwords are briefly addressed without any linguistic explanations of such adaptations in Kuwaiti Arabic. The analysis doesn't show any irregular morphological behavior of loanwords.

As for studies on loanwords in Saudi Arabic, Thomburg (1980) and Jarrah (2013) are probably the only studies which have been conducted in this regard. They both dealt with the phonological adaptation of loanwords in some Saudi dialects. In terms of generative phonology,
Thomburg (1980) examined 283 English words as used in East District Saudi Arabic. She did not only study the modifications made in consonants and consonant clusters of English loans, but also investigated the impact of these modifications on Arabic phonology. Thomburg came out with a set of phonological rules which she called borrowing rules. Similarly, Jarrah (2013) focused also on the phonology of English loanwords in Madina Hijazi Arabic from the point of view of Optimality Theory. The article discusses the phonological modifications in syllable structure that take place in English loanwords regularly used by the speakers of Madina Hijazi Arabic. Nothing was said about the morphological integration of loanwords.

The brief review of the literature above has revealed that research on English loanwords in CSA is very scant. To the best of our knowledge, there is no attempt conducted on the morphological integration of loanwords in CSA. Therefore, the current research has come to fill in this missing gap in the literature of Arabic contact linguistics. The attempt in this study, therefore, is to investigate how English loanwords are inflected for plural and gender in CSA. The attempt is also made to account for the possible linguistic factors which may affect the inflection of English loanwords for number in CSA in light of some models in morphology proposed by McCarthy and Prince (1990a; 1990b) and Abd-Rabbo (1990).

**Methods**

This study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. The qualitative research method is a valuable tool in providing richer descriptions of the borrowing process and the integration of loanwords in the recipient language. Although CSA is mainly a spoken variety of Arabic, with the advent of the internet and social media, it has been increasingly used in the written form in social media chats and conversations. According to Alshutayri and Atwell (2018), "social media sources of texts contain people’s opinions written in their dialects which make it the most viable resources of dialectal Arabic" (p. 3). Therefore, Facebook, Twitter, and online newspaper comments are the main source of loanword data. The daily conversations and chats of these sites, especially of young people, cover the different domains of life such as technology and the internet, food and clothes, sports and entertainment, etc. Data collection is also based on Abdur Rahim's (2011) dictionary. This dictionary compiles a long list of loanwords incorporated into Arabic (both the standard and dialects) from other languages like English, Italian, Turkish, and so on. An additional source of the loanword data is a number of TV series broadcast in some Arabic space channels and YouTube. Moreover, A panel of experts (three academics who are natives of CSA) were consulted in order to evaluate and validate the form and content of the collected loanword data. The main task of the experts was to establish and check the pronunciation, meaning, and the morphological forms of Arabic borrowings from English. One of the researchers also, as a native speaker of CSA, serves as a source of data as well as an informant in checking the phonetic structure of loanword data. He also uses his own intuitions and insights in the evaluation process.

The total number of loanword data is 255. The collected data is only confined to the borrowing proper (the directly borrowed items) and excludes the productive forms (the indirectly derived items representing the product of Arabic-internal derivation processes). Almost all the collected items are nouns. The analysis is only confined to loan nouns for two reasons: first, it is nouns which are usually inflected for number and gender, and second loan nouns are always the most frequent category among loanword data as mentioned above. The attempt is also made to
avoid using the highly scientific and technical loanwords and focus only on the most common elements that are usually used in the everyday interactions and talks. Moreover, data collection is exclusively restricted to well-established loanwords in CSA; those borrowed words which have become an integral part of the lexical system of borrowing language and frequently used by the majority of its speakers. Consequently, nonce borrowings or what is known as code-switching is totally excluded. In short, the data include those loanwords that have been fully or partially adapted to fit the phonological system of CSA.

Analysis and Results

Plural inflection

The 255 English loanwords collected from CSA are first analyzed morphologically from the point of view of number. Borrowed nouns from English are found to be inflected for all types of plural formation more or less in the same way as native Arabic counterparts do. They are assigned for FSP (se:nama 'a cinema' > se:nama:t 'cinemas', trilla 'a trailer' > trilla:t 'trailers', mo:l 'a mall' > mo:la:t 'malls', etc.), MSP (mi:kani:ki' a mechanic' > mi:kani:ki:n 'mechanics'), and BP (ro:b 'a robe' > ?arwa:b 'robes', sakru:b 'a screw (driver)' > sa:ri:b/ saka:ri:b 'screwdrivers').

Table one shows how borrowed nouns from English behave in the morphology of CSA with respect to number assignment. The analysis only includes proper borrowings (the 255 cases) and excludes any other derivatives. The first category in the table is related to those borrowed nouns which may undergo some kind of plural or another and represents 69% of the entire data.

Table 1. Plural distribution of loanword data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The loanword data</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potentially pluralized</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually not pluralized</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowed as plural</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, the category "usually not pluralized" involves those borrowed nouns which are not inflected for plural and thus remain singular in CSA due to some grammatical factors, the main of which is their unaccountability in the recipient language. They represent a considerable number of the loanword data. These include mass nouns (hirwi:n ‘heroin’, dra:ma ‘drama’, binzi:n ‘benzene’, ka:s ‘cash’, etc.), names of diseases (?ani:miya 'anemia', ?i:dz ‘AIDS’, etc.), sport games (tinis ‘tennis’, gulf ‘golf’), social media (fe:sbok 'Facebook', watsab 'WhatsApp', twi:tar 'Twitter', etc.), and those nouns that represent single referents in the world (kirismis ‘Christmas’, ?ubik ‘OPEC’, etc.). Terms related to sport games and computer and electricity measurement units (me:gado:b ‘megabyte’, ge:gado:b ‘gigabyte’, fult ‘volt’) may come in plural in some contexts, especially when they are used after some other plural or numeral words and the terms themselves remain in the singular form. Therefore, we may find expressions like ?alεa:b at-tinis ‘tennis games’, ?ala:θahge:ga ‘three giga(bytes)’, and so on.

The category "borrowed as plural" in Table one refers to very few nouns (06/ 03%) which have been incorporated into CSA in their plural forms, namely kuma:ndo:z ‘commandos’, mari:nez/
marini:z ‘marines’, and windo:z ‘Windows (of a computer)’. Such loan nouns are neither employed in their singular forms nor undergo the CSA plural rules; they always keep the English plural suffix –s in their phonetic structure. Therefore, singular structures like mari:n and its plural form mari:nziyi:n or marini:ziyi:n never occur in the plural system of CSA. It is also worth mentioning that the presence of the English ending –s in some loanwords of the current data is exceptional and restricted only to the examples mentioned above. The main reason behind borrowing such nouns in their plural form is most probably due to their frequent occurrence as plural in the lending language, that is English. The only exceptional cases found in the collected data are the loanword klibs ‘clips (of a car)’ and šibs ‘chips’. They are borrowed in their plural form, but they are used as a singular in CSA, the plural being the FSP klibsa:t and šibsa:t, respectively. Similar to this group are some cases of borrowed nouns which show another specific incorporation process related to plural formation. Loanwords like ?iliktru:niyya:t, ?iksiswa:ra:t, and ho:ba:t are the Arabicized forms of the English 'electronics', 'accessories' and 'hubs (of a car)', respectively. They are usually dealt with in CSA as SP plurals that end with the feminine suffix –a:t.

The categories FSP, MSP, and BP in Table two below are associated with the two types of plural in CSA: the regular sound plural and the irregular broken one. The statistics indicate that the loan nouns may either inflected for SP (both FSP and MSP) or BP. The table also shows that FSP is the most frequent mood of plural among English loanwords in CSA, followed by BP with MSP being the least frequent. A total of 177 cases of the data are attested to be potentially inflected for FSP, MSP, and BP. The cases of MSP are only four and hence represent a peripheral status among the borrowing proper. Statistically speaking, FSP interestingly represents 77% (136/177), whereas BP represents only 11% (20/177), and the rest, 10% (17/177), is related to either FSB or BP or the so-called the plural doublets.

Table 2. Frequency of occurrence of plural in CSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feminine sound plural (FSP)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine sound plural (MSP)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken plural (BP)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural doublets (FSP/BP)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As soon as the borrowed nouns are marked for these three kinds of plural, they exhibit certain interesting peculiarities. The first striking peculiarity has something to do with the assignment of feminine sound plural (FSP). The overwhelming majority of borrowed nouns, as shown in Table two above, are inflected for FSP and take the FSP marker –a:t rather than the MSP marker –yi:n or the BP. FSP is basically formed by suffixing the ending –a:t to the borrowed singular nouns as in (1) below. When the singular stem ends with the feminine suffix –ah or the vocalic segment –a, they are both dropped out, and the suffix –a:t is attached as in (1b). If the singular noun is feminine and unmarked for feminine, the FSP –a:t is attached directly as in (1a).

(1) Singular | Gloss | FSP
a. guru:b | a group | guru:ba:t
b. ki:bo:rd | a keyboard | ki:bo:nda:t
What is borrowing-specific here is twofold. First, those singular foreign nouns which are masculine and are supposed to be inflected by –yi:n, like other masculine native nouns, but they really don't and only take the FSP suffix –a:t instead. To illustrate this inflection process, the examples in (2) will suffice.

(2) Singular (mas.) | Gloss | Plural (fem.)
--- | --- | ---
mo:l | a mall | mo:la:t
?i:me:l | an email | ?i:me:la:t
ja:ke:t | a jacket | ja:ke:ta:t
la:btub | a laptop | la:btubba:t
fre:zar | a freezer | fre:zara:t
jinara:l | a general | genara:la:t

This would mean that FSP is much more productive within English loanwords in CSA than MSP and BP.

The other specific feature pertaining to borrowing is that there is a number of singular borrowed nouns ending with either a short vowel or a long vowel such as /o, u, i, i:/, etc. which are impermissible in the coda position of native singular noun stems of Arabic phonetic system in general and of CSA in particular. For these cases, a specific rule of plural marking is created where –ha:t or –ya:t are suffixed to the singular loan nouns instead of the usual feminine marker –a:t, as illustrated in (3) below:

(3) Singular | Gloss | FSP
--- | --- | ---
−ha:t | biya:no | biya:noha:t
ra:diyu | a radio | ra:diyuha:t
si: di: | a CD | si:di:ha:t
fi:diyu | a video | fi:diyuha:t
−ya:t | ja:ku:zi | ja:ku:ziya:t
sli:fi | a selfie | sli:fiya:t

The logical interpretation for the particular plural assignment in (3) is that the occurrence of a two-vowel sequence is not allowed in the phonology of CSA. In our case, the two vowels are the final vowel of the singular noun stem and the long vowel a: that belongs to the feminine suffix. In order to meet this phonetic constraint, a glide like h or y is required and must be inserted between them. It is worth mentioning that singular nouns ending with a rounded vowel only accept –ha:t while those ending with spread vowels can receive either –ya:t or –ha:t.
MSP, on the other hand, is assigned to singular nouns in CSA by suffixing –yi:n; it is only inflected to those singular noun stems that have rational (or human) referents. The only four cases attested in the data are shown in (4) below.

(4) Singular    Gloss          MSP
  dikta:to:r    a dictator    dikta:to:ryi:n
  mi:ka:ni:ki   a mechanic    mi:ka:ni:kiyi:n
  sikirte:r     a secretary   sikirta:ryi:n
  hakar         a hacker      muhakkiri:n

Finally, the formation of BP, as argued above, refers to the modification of the internal vowel of nominal stems resulting into a number of typical morphological patterns (ša:riε 'a street'–šawa:riε 'streets', etc). The total number of BP cases found in the current loanword data is twenty cases, all of which are in accordance with Arabic BP native patterns. Examples in (5) show some of these patterns with their native counterparts as models.

(5) singular    BP          Native counterpart
  banšar 'a puncture'    bana:šir    mala:εiq  'spoons' = faεa:lil
  se:kal 'a bicycle'     saya:kil
  sija:rah 'a cigarette' saja:yir
  ta:niki 'a tank (container)'    tawa:nik
  sakru:b 'a screw (driver)' sakra:bi
  ša:lu:n 'a saloon (car)' šawa:li:n
  go:l 'a goal'          ?agwa:l
  ko:d 'a code'          ?akwa:d

The last column in (5) suggests that all forms of BP are permissible and conform to native materials. However, BP patterns attested in the loanword data are much less than the basic Arabic patterns of BP which exceed twenty-two patterns and they are all in the actual use (Neme & Laporte, 2013).

It is also worth noting that there are some instances of loanwords in which a borrowed noun may be either inflected for FSP or BP. They are called plural doublets (see Table two above) and represent 10% (17 cases) of the collected data. The BP form, however, is still much more common than the FSP one. Examples in (6) illustrate this kind of plural category.

(6) Singular    FSP          BP
  fillah 'a villa'    filla:t    filal
  je:ms 'a G.M.C (car)'    je:msa:t    jumu:s
  blo:zah 'a blouse'    blo:za:t    bala:yiz
  ke:bal 'a cable'    ke:bala:t    kawa:bi

Gender Inflection

The assignment of gender to loanwords is now addressed in this section for the purpose to see the extent to which gender rules in CSA are applied to borrowed nouns. Like plural marking, the inflection for gender to borrowed nouns is also subject to the CSA rules which are responsible
for inflecting gender markers to native noun stems. Upon their incorporation into CSA, all English loan nouns are inflected either for masculine or feminine gender and receive the gender markers in the same way as native noun stems do: –ah for feminine singulars (the marked) and φ for masculine singulars (the unmarked).

The number of loanwords which are inflected for the feminine marker –ah is 26 items out of the total sample. The phonetic structure of the borrowed items is usually one of the main motivations of assigning feminine gender. This would mean that when a loan noun ends with the vowel –a, for instance, it is most often mistakenly interpreted by Saudi speakers as the final –a in native feminine singulars as in as hålwa ‘sweet’, eása ‘a stick’, etc. or as the feminine marker –ah as inšajarah ‘a tree’, madrasah ‘a school’, etc. As a result, the final –a of the foreign nouns either remains as it is as in dra:ma< ‘drama’, kafite:riya< ‘a cafeteria’, etc. or is dropped and replaced by the CSA feminine suffix –ah like in bandah< ‘a panda’ and fi:zah< ‘a visa’. In many other cases, CSA attaches the ending –ah to borrowed nouns which don't end with –a in their original form such as blo:zah< ‘a blouse’, kre:mah< ‘cream’, and ?aka:di:miyyah< ‘an academy’. In English, such nouns are neuter, but in CSA, they are treated as feminine, and this can be accounted for in terms of semantic correlations between these items and the native ones. For example, the English ‘cream’ (thick yellow-white liquid) and ‘an academy’ (a college where students are taught a particular subject or skill) are most likely connected to similar CSA singulars: zibdah ‘butter’, and kulliyyah ‘a college’, respectively, hence the borrowed singulars kre:mah, ?aka:di:miyyah, etc. emerge. This is not always the case, however. In other cases as in mi:da:liyyah< ‘a medal’, baţţa:riyah< ‘a battery’, –ah suffixation seems to be arbitrary.

Discussion

The analysis on plural inflection above has clearly revealed that FSPs in CSA are much productive (77%) than BPs (11%). This finding agrees with Sa'eed (2010) and Al-Saidat (2011) who worked on number assignment in loanwords in Iraqi Arabic and Jordanian Arabic, respectively. In terms of Arabic native nominal forms, however, these results disagree with many studies such as McCarthy and Prince (1990b) and Neme and Laporte (2013). They assert that in Arabic, while SP (either MSP or FSP) is rare, BP is the most common practice. McCarthy and Prince (1990b), for example, claim that:

> Although the term sound plural suggests normality - and indeed its form is entirely predictable from gender and other grammatical information - the sound plural is no way the regular or usual mode of pluralization (…) For the lexicon as a whole, broken plural formation is by far the norm rather than the exception. (p. 212)

It has become clear that there is a notable dissimilarity in plural formation between borrowed nouns and native nouns. This phenomenon, therefore, requires some explanation to say why FSP applies to the majority of loan nouns while BP does not. This will be done with critical reference to some theories in morphology stated in the introduction above, namely McCarthy and Prince (1990a; 1990b), and Abd-Rabbo (1990).

To a considerable extent, the number of consonants constraint (NCC) introduced by Abd-Rabbo (1990) applies to English loanwords. Foreign nouns which contain three consonants
(trilitertal) or four consonant (quadriliteral) are clearly inflected for BP as examples in (5) above show and repeated in (7) for convenience.

(7) Triliteral borrowed nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>BP</th>
<th>Quadrilateral borrowed nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>se:kal</td>
<td>saya:kil</td>
<td>banšar 'a puncture'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sa:lu:n</td>
<td>şawa:li:n</td>
<td>sakru:b 'a screw (driver)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sija:rah</td>
<td>saja:yir</td>
<td>saka:ri:b 'a screw (driver)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta:niki</td>
<td>tawa:nik</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These also include loanwords like kart ‘a card’ >kuru:t, bank ‘a bank’ >bunu:k (triliteral) and basku:t ‘biscuit’ >basa:kit and dukto:r ‘a doctor’ >daka:tit (quadriliteral).

On the other hand, and according to NCC, those loan nouns whose roots consist of two consonants (bilateral) or more than four consonants (above quadrilateral) are supposed to be inflected for FSP, but not for BP as examples in (8) illustrate:

(8) Biliteral borrowed nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>BP</th>
<th>Above quadrilateral borrowed nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mo:l</td>
<td>mo:la:t</td>
<td>sandawitš 'a sandwich'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ra:m</td>
<td>ra:ma:t</td>
<td>kafite:riya 'a cafeteria'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ge:m</td>
<td>ge:ma:t</td>
<td>brujiktara:t 'a projector'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ši:f</td>
<td>ši:fa:t</td>
<td>kawntara:t 'a counter'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, it seems that the NCC fails to account for the entire data in the corpus. In fact, there are many instances of borrowed nouns in the data which satisfy Abd-Rabbo’s constraint in the sense that they are permissible and have three or four consonants, yet they are not marked for BP. They receive FSP marker –a:t instead. Examples of such counter cases are stated in (9) below:


Moreover, there is a number of singular nouns (7 out of 20) which are bilateral, but they don’t take the FSP marker –a:t as in (8) above. They are rather inflected for BP. These include ko:t 'a coat' >?akwa:t, ro:b 'a robe' >?arwa:b, fi:zah 'a visa' >fiyaz, etc.

The examples in (9) above are a clear indication of NCC inadequacy and its failure to provide a satisfactory interpretation for these counter cases. Therefore, a need arises for a more appropriate and insightful explanation.

According to prosodic morphology and the maximum stem constrain (MSC) mentioned in the introduction above, the permissible foreign nouns are those noun stems which are monosyllabic or disyllabic. Since noun stems in (7) above accept BP marking, it is safe to state that they are canonical because they maximally consist of two syllables. In this way, the MSC definitely supports the principle of NCC proposed by Abd-Rabbo (1990). On the other hand, those borrowed nouns whose phonetic structure consists of three or more syllables are impermissible ones. As a result, they receive FSP marker –a:t instead.
matter of fact, these elements enjoy a high frequency among loanword data, and do not take part in BP formation. They are only inflected for FSP. The reason why nominal forms in (9) such as *denāmu:, siminā:r*, etc., fail to be marked for BP has become clear now. It is not due to the number of consonants as proposed by the NCC, it is rather because each noun contains three syllables. More examples which have more than three syllables are given in (10):


It is obvious, as the MSC suggests, the borrowed nouns in (9) and (10) which are super-multisyllabic words (having three or more syllables) occur beyond the morphological system of the Arabic language.

There are however about 66 borrowed nouns in the collected data which show the inappropriateness of the present constraints. These cases are in line with both the NCC and the MSC in the sense that they contain three consonants (triliteral) or four consonants (quadriliteral), on one hand, and are monosyllabic (of the structure CVCC) or disyllabic, on the other. Nevertheless, this kind of nominal forms receives only FSP rather than BP. Some examples of these nouns are presented in (11) below:


In addition to investigating the BP formation of natives nouns, McCarthy and Prince (1990b) also comment on the pluralization process among borrowed nouns. They note that what blocks foreign nouns from marking for BP is not their status as loanwords, but their impermissible structure or what they call "their noncanonicity" while the canonical loans simply accept broken plurals. This argument is partially true and can be applied to borrowed nouns like those in (9) and (10), but it does not apply to those loan nouns in (11). This would mean that the crucial factor here is not the noncanonicity of loanwords. McCarthy and Prince's statement above can be modified a little bit. It can be assumed that it is the status of the foreign nouns which prevent them from marking for BP rather than their noncanonicity.

There is, as we see it, another factor which may explain the problem in (11) and has nothing to do with the canonicity or noncanonicity of foreign nouns. It is related to the linguistic strategy of CSA toward simplification. Referring to the loanword status suggested by the assumption above, the loan noun is primarily inflected for FSP as soon as it enters the recipient language regardless of whether its structure is permissible or not. The language borrower prefers using FSP at this stage because this kind of plural is so regular and so predictable; it is only formed by the rule: just attach the ending –a:t to the singular noun. For example, it is more acceptable to form the FSPs fa:ksa:t, sirfar:a:t, etc. in (11) from fa:ks and sirfar, respectively, instead of the unnatural BPs fuku:s, saya:fi:r, or the like. Thus, many of the borrowed nouns are initially assigned to FSP as soon as they are incorporated into the lexical system of CSA.
As for gender inflection in borrowed nouns, the derivational functions of the feminine marker –ah mentioned in types ii) and iii) in section (1.1) above are not at work among borrowed nouns in CSA. The only function working among loan nouns is the inflectional function of the type i) which is responsible for attaching –ah to singular noun stems. What has been said in the analysis above about –ah-assignment to borrowed nouns takes place within the domain of the inflectional function of the feminine marker. Furthermore, the occurrence of male-female gender pairs within borrowed nouns in the native fashion (mudi:r-mudi:rah 'male manager- female manage', etc.) is in fact due to the inflectional function. The examples in (12) below show some pairs of foreign nouns that are formed by this function.

(12) sikirte:r-sikirte:rah ‘male-, female-secretary’
brufusu:r-brufusu:rah ‘male-, female-professor’
milyune:r-milyune:rah ‘male-, female-millionaire’
dukto:r-dukto:rah ‘male-, female-doctor’

Some borrowed nouns such as le:zar ‘laser’, hi:lukubtar ‘helicopter’, ?al?-?ubik: ‘OPEC’, etc. behave in Arabic as feminine despite the fact that they don't end with the feminine marker – ah. This can be explained by the fact that in some contexts these nouns are usually preceded by some native elements like ?ašīsah ‘rays’, ṭa: ?irah ‘aircraft’, munad́damah 'organization', respectively, which are originally feminine. As a result the foreign nouns are treated as feminine rather than masculine.

Conclusion
This study has examined English loanwords in CSA in order to see how these loanwords are inflected for number and gender and what are the possible factors that may affect this inflection. The loanword data have been analyzed morphologically to account for number and gender inflection among English borrowed nouns in CSA. The analysis has generally revealed that foreign nouns are found to be inflected for all types of plural formation (BP, FSP and MSP) more or less in the same way as native Arabic counterparts do. FSP is the most frequent mood of plural among English loanwords in CSA (77%), followed by BP (11%) with MSP being the least frequent (02%).

This finding, however, disagrees with the plural formation rule operating in native nominal stems which states that BP is the most common and Sp seldom occurs. In order to look for an adequate explanation for this phenomenon, the principles of number of consonants constraint (NCC) and the maximum stem constraint (MSC) proposed by Abd-Rabbo (1990) and McCarthy and Prince (1990a; 1990b), respectively have been critically employed. The two constraints succeed in accounting for the problem to some extent, but they don't provide a satisfactory explanation. These hypotheses prove to be inadequate when they are applied to some counter cases like those in (11) above. Despite that fact that such cases are fairly permissible and in line with the NCC (all are triliteral or quadriliteral noun stems) and the MSC (all are maximally disyllabic stems), they are not inflected for BP as proposed by these two principles. They only take FSP instead. The reason behind this has nothing to do with the canonicity or noncanoncity of foreign nouns, but it has something to do with the status of loanwords themselves and with the tendency of CSA towards linguistic simplification, a tendency which makes the borrower resort to attaching –a:t rather than getting into the problem of the various patterns of BP. Another characteristic which is borrowing-specific is also related to FSP formation. In some borrowed nouns, the suffixes –ha:t and –ya:t are
attached to form FSP instead of –a:t. The insertion of the glides h and y is necessary when a sequence of two vowels occurs at the end of a borrowed noun (the original vowel of the singular noun and the long vowel of the Arabic suffix –a:t). Like plural marking, gender marking to borrowed nouns is also subject to the CSA rules. All English loan nouns are inflected either for masculine by attaching the φ morpheme (the unmarked) or feminine gender by attaching –ah (the marked). Unlike native nominal forms, the only operating function of the feminine marker –ah among borrowed nouns is the inflectional function and no room for the derivational functions.

Loanword morphology in Arabic dialects still requires more research and more investigation. A comparison can be held to show the variation of plural formation of loanwords among the various dialects of Arabic or in the dialects of the same country. Another study can focus on the obsolete borrowings in the Arabic language; those loans which were once used in the lexicon of the language but at present, they are not used any more (e.g. flo:bi 'a floppy', ka:tit 'a cassette', kande:šan 'an air-conditioning', etc.). Finally, research work can be carried out on a number of morphophonemic and morpho-syntactic processes pertaining to loanwords such as gemination (consonant doubling), the attachment of the Arabic article ?al- 'the' to the acronym loans like ?al- di: ?in ?e:h 'DNA', ?al-yu:nisko 'UNESCO', ?al-fi:fa 'FIFA', etc., and the orthographic realization of the English /g/ in loanwords in Arabic.

Acknowledgment
The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Ministry of Education and the Deanship of Scientific Research, Najran University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for their financial and technical support under code number NU/SHEd/17/122.

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References


**Appendix**

The phonetic symbols used in transliterating Arabic forms

- š ش voiceless palatal fricative
- j ج voiced lamino-palatal affricate
- s ص emphatic voiceless alveolar fricative
- t ط emphatic voiceless denti-alveolar plosive
- g غ voiced uvular fricative
- e ع voiced pharyngeal fricative
- θ ث voiceless interdental fricative
- ظ ذ emphatic voiced interdental fricative
- ء ؤ glottal stop
Investigating EFL Learners’ Awareness of Cognitive and Metacognitive Reading Strategies of Students in Different Disciplines

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Abstract
This research explores the awareness and use of cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies of Omani EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students studying different disciplines. The participants were three hundred and seventy-five Omani EFL first year diploma students studying biology, business, information technology, engineering, and English in a higher education institution in Oman. The study compared and contrasted strategy use across disciplines and examined the relationships among strategy preferences and discipline. Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), a self-report questionnaire by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) was used to collect data. Statistical and descriptive analysis indicates that Omani EFL learner's most preferred category of reading strategies was cognitive strategies, followed by support strategies and metacognitive strategies. One-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) revealed no significant differences between students of the disciplines mentioned above in terms of strategy preferences for metacognitive, cognitive, and support strategies. The findings provide insight for curriculum developers and teachers towards the strategy preferences of Omani EFL students.

Keywords: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, Omani EFL learners, reading strategies

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.18
Introduction

Metacognitive awareness of reading strategies helps learners decide which strategies they can use and how they should use them. Research associated with reading English in L1 and L2 reveals that metacognitive awareness significantly impacts reading comprehension (Baker, 2008; Carrell, Gajdusek, & Wise, 1998; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989). Researchers have found that skilled readers in L1 and L2 are aware of metacognitive skills such as planning, monitoring, goal setting, and assessment strategies (Carrell et al., 1998; Cohen, 1998; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2008).

Afflerbach (1998) suggests that successful readers have a command of the language, knowledge, and experience of strategies to solve the difficulties they encounter during reading. On the other hand, less successful readers must work hard and develop their reading proficiency by using different strategies. Therefore, in an academic setting, teachers need to be aware of the strategies that both successful and less successful students use to assist them.

Various factors impact learners' strategy preferences such as age, gender, years of study, language proficiency, learning style, and ethnicity (Peacock & Ho, 2003; Sheu, Wang, & Hsu, 2013). Some studies have also found that learner's field of specialization also influences their reading strategy preferences. Several studies have explored the metacognitive strategy preferences of learners in different disciplines such as English, science, business, and humanities (Park, 2010; Magogwe, 2013; Dabaghi & Akvan, 2014). With the growing number of colleges and universities in Oman, teachers need to be aware of cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies used by students studying in different disciplines.

Purpose of the Study

The current study aims to examine the cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies preferences of Omani EFL students studying engineering, business studies, information technology, English, and biology disciplines.

Research Question

The present study aims to investigate the following research question:

1. Which categories of reading strategies, namely cognitive, metacognitive, and support strategies, do students of engineering, business studies, information technology, English, and biology use?

Literature Review

What is Reading?

Reading helps the learners to develop their language and knowledge of vocabulary. Snow (2002) states that reading comprehension is “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (p.11). When learners read, they interpret, integrate, critique, infer, analyze, connect, and evaluate ideas in texts. They also try to negotiate multiple meanings in their minds. Understanding a text is not only a process that involves breaking down complicated units of language into simple ones. Nevertheless, it also involves a process in which multiple units combine to build a larger picture.
Several definitions of reading strategies are found in the literature. Carrell et al. (1998) described reading strategies as the approaches readers use to comprehend the text. Also, Brantmeier (2002) stated reading strategies as “the comprehension processes that readers use in order to make sense of what they read” (p.1). In other words, reading strategies comprise ways in which readers respond to a task, such as a focus on context clues, use prior knowledge, and search for content clues to comprehend a text.

O’Malley and Chamot (1990) further explained that reading strategies are conscious or unconscious procedures, actions, techniques, or behaviors that learners use to overcome the problems they encounter during comprehension and interpretation of a text.

Classification of Reading Strategies

Literature reveals that there are different categories of reading strategies. The most common classification of reading strategies is the distinction between metacognitive and cognitive strategies. El-Kaumy (2004) categorized metacognitive strategies into three categories: planning, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. Santrock (2008) found that metacognitive strategies involve goal setting, selective attention, planning for the organization, monitoring, self-assessment, and regulation.

Singhal (2001) describes cognitive strategies as those utilized by learners to transform the language and consist of summarizing, paraphrasing, analyzing, and using context clues. Akyel and Ercetin (2009) suggest that cognitive strategies can help readers make meaning from a text.

Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) divided reading strategies into three categories: metacognitive, cognitive, and support strategies. According to their definitions, metacognitive strategies were intentionally, and carefully planned techniques used by learners to monitor their reading. Cognitive strategies were specific actions and procedures which learners used while working directly with the text. Support strategies referred to approached readers used tools to understand a text, such as using a dictionary, taking notes, or underlining or highlighting the text. Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) renamed these two categories of ESL reading strategies. Thus, metacognitive strategies were called global reading strategies and cognitive strategies as problem-solving reading strategies.

Review of Research on Cognitive and Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Reading strategies is one of the most researched areas in the field of research on the English language. Many studies have investigated the metacognitive reading strategies of learners. However, these studies were limited to comparing high and low-proficiency students and those studying at the secondary or pre-university levels (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001). Moreover, few studies explored the strategy preferences of undergraduate learners. Magogwe (2013) examined the reading strategy preferences of university students studying social sciences in Botswana. Results of the study revealed that social sciences students used cognitive strategies with high frequency, while metacognitive strategies and support strategies were reported as medium use.

Maarof and Maasum (2012) inspected the reading strategies of EFL undergraduates in Malaysia. The findings indicated that cognitive strategies were the most favored strategies of the undergraduates, so they were frequently used. Metacognitive strategies were the second most
preferred strategies and were ranked as high usage, while support strategies were the least preferred strategies but ranked as medium use.

In another study, Commander, Ashtong, and Zhao (2016) diagnosed the language learning strategy preferences of undergraduate students in the United States and China. The study found that the overall strategy preferences of the US and Chinese students were the same. Both groups' most preferred strategies were cognitive strategies. After that, the second most preferred category was metacognitive strategies, while the least preferred was support strategies.

Shoerey and Mokhtari (2001) conducted a study to identify the metacognitive reading strategy differences between native and non-native college students in the United States. They found that both ESL and native English-speaking US students' preferences for the three categories of Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) were the same. Both groups' most preferred category was cognitive strategies. The second most preferred strategies were metacognitive, and the least preferred ones were support strategies.

Regarding Oman, there have been numerous studies that have investigated metacognitive reading strategies preferences of Omani EFL learners (Awadh, 2003; Alami, 2016; Al Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2015; Amer, Al Barwani & Ibrahim, 2010). However, few studies focused on the strategy preferences of learners at higher education institutions. Amer et al. (2010) investigated online reading strategies of first-year and fourth-year Omani students undergoing teacher training in a university. Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) was used in an online survey format. The researchers did not find any significant differences between both groups on overall strategy use as well as their preferences for metacognitive, cognitive, and support strategies.

Awadh (2003) studied the language learning strategies used by first-year graduates enrolled in Sultan Qaboos University. She reported that Omani students used cognitive strategies more than metacognitive strategies.

Methodology
Participants

The participants in this study were 375 undergraduate students. Among them, 246 were females, and 129 were males. These students were enrolled in the first-year Diploma program and belonged to various specializations, namely English, biology, engineering, information technology (hereafter IT), and business studies.

Instrument

This study employed the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) as the instrument. SORS is based on the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI), which was initially developed by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002). According to Mokhtari and Shoorey (2002), SORS aims to “measure the type and frequency of reading strategies that adolescent and adult ESL students perceive they use while reading academic materials in English.” (p.4). The instrument consists of 30 items, each of which uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from always (five), usually (four), sometimes (three), occasionally (two), and never (one). The questionnaire requires 10-15
minutes to complete it. Results reveal that the higher the score, the more chances the student is aware of and is most likely to use a reading strategy.

For this study, SORS was translated into Arabic to help the participants respond accurately to the items. A pilot study was conducted with seventy undergraduate students to measure the reliability and validity of the instrument. The internal consistency of the SORS instrument was found to be Cronbach's alpha = .85, thus indicating a high level of consistency. The reliability of the three subscales was as follows: Global Reading Strategies (Metacognitive Strategies) (0.68), Problem Solving Strategies (Cognitive Strategies) (0.69), and Support strategies (0.71). These indices reveal that the instrument is reliable for assessing students' cognitive and metacognitive strategies in different disciplines (Taber, 2017).

Procedure
The participants were informed about the aim of the study. They were asked to sign a consent form. The students were instructed that the questionnaire had a rating scale ranging from one to five, and they had to circle the appropriate number indicating the frequency with which they used the reading strategy.

Data Analysis
Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were performed on the three categories of strategies in order to identify the most and least frequently used strategies of different disciplines. The descriptive statistics included means and standard deviation of the three categories of strategies across students of biology, business studies, IT, engineering, and English. One-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test if the specializations differ significantly in their preferences of metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and support strategies.

Results
According to Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), as the frequency of strategy use on the SORS scale ranges from one to five, the students' responses can be classified using the three levels of strategy use developed by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) for general learning strategy use. In this classification, a mean of 3.5 or higher is considered high, a mean range between 2.5-3.4 is considered moderate usage, and a mean of 2.4 or lower is considered low usage. Table 1 reveals overall strategy preferences across majors.

Table 1 Overall Strategy Preferences Across Majors (n= 375)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Strategy</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD.</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 1 indicates, cognitive strategies were given the highest mean (M=3.75), followed by support strategies (M=3.63), while metacognitive strategies (M=3.37) were given moderate mean. Thus, we can conclude that cognitive strategies and support strategies were the most preferred strategies of students of biology, business studies, IT, engineering, and English. In contrast,
metacognitive strategies were rated at moderate usage by students of the disciplines mentioned above.

**Metacognitive Strategy Preferences of Various Disciplines**

Table 2 Most Preferred Metacognitive Strategy Preferences of Various Disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Most Preferred Metacognitive Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biology, engineering, IT, English</td>
<td>I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business studies</td>
<td>I check my understanding when I come across new information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 2, “I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding” was the most preferred metacognitive strategy of biology (M=3.92, SD=0.96), IT (M=3.79, SD=0.94), engineering (M=3.80, SD=1.02), and English (M=3.87, SD=1.02) students. Nevertheless, business studies students selected “I check my understanding when I come across new information” (M=3.67, SD=0.93) as their most preferred metacognitive strategy.

Table 3 Least Preferred Metacognitive Strategy Preferences of Various Disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Least Preferred Metacognitive Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>business studies, IT engineering, English</td>
<td>I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biology</td>
<td>When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that “I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text” was selected as the least preferred metacognitive strategy by business studies (M=2.55, SD=1.14), IT (M=2.76, SD=1.14), engineering (M=2.90, SD=1.06) and English (M=2.67, SD=1.22) students. On the other hand, biology students least preferred metacognitive strategy was “When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore” (M=2.95, SD=1.23).

**Cognitive Strategy Preferences of Various Disciplines**

Table 4 Most Preferred Cognitive Strategy Preferences of Various Disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Most Preferred Cognitive Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biology, engineering, IT.</td>
<td>I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business studies, English</td>
<td>When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4, “I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading” was the most preferred cognitive strategy of biology (M=4.16, SD=0.83), IT (M=3.79, SD=1.04), and engineering (M=4.00, SD=1.01) students. On the other hand, business studies (M=4.06,
SD=1.10) and English students (M=4.29, SD=0.99) selected “When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading” as their most preferred cognitive strategy.

Table 5 *Least Preferred Cognitive Strategy Preferences of Various Disciplines*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Least Preferred Cognitive Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biology, business studies,</td>
<td>I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engineering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English, IT.</td>
<td>I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 reveals that the least preferred cognitive strategy of biology (M=3.63, SD=1.06), business studies (M=3.30, SD=1.20), and engineering (M=3.32, SD=1.12) students were “I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.” In contrast, the least preferred strategy of IT (M=3.44, SD=0.95) and English (M=3.19, SD=1.06) students was “I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.”

**Support Strategy Preferences of Various Disciplines**

Table 6 *Most Preferred Support Strategy Preferences of Various Disciplines*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Most Preferred Support Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biology, I.T.</td>
<td>I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business studies,</td>
<td>When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English engineering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 indicates that the most preferred support strategy of biology (M=4.10, SD=0.99) and IT (M=4.08, SD=0.91) students were “I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.” On the other hand, the most preferred support strategy of business studies (M=4.17, SD=0.88), engineering (M=3.99, SD=1.02), and English (M=4.05, SD=0.96) students was “When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.”

Table 7 *Least Preferred Support Strategy Preferences of Various Disciplines*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Least Preferred Support Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>business studies,</td>
<td>When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT, engineering</td>
<td>I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biology</td>
<td>I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Table 7, the least preferred support strategy of business studies (M=2.98, SD =1.63) and English (M=2.98, SD= 1.41) students was “When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read." In contrast, the least preferred support strategy of IT (M=3.16, SD=1.15) and engineering (M=3.31, SD=1.01) was “I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it." On the other hand, biology students' least preferred support strategy was "I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read" (M=3.81, SD=1.24).

**Statistical Analysis for the Research Question**

Using the three scales as dependent variables, and the specializations as independent variables, one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used for statistical analysis. Table 8 *Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>1.792</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>1.688</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support strategies</td>
<td>.627</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>.644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 reveals that the assumption of the equality of variances across groups, which is required for post-hoc separate ANOVAs, is not violated for each of the three dependent variables. This is because the p-value of Levene's test is greater than 0.05 for each of the three dependent variables: metacognitive (p=0.152), cognitive (p=0.130), and support strategy (p=0.644). Also, the assumption of multivariate normality may be assumed to be fulfilled as the data is large, with 375 participants for each dependent variable.

Table 9 *Results of Multivariate Tests*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Hypothesis df</th>
<th>Error df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>6229.484*</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>368.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Wilks' Lambda</td>
<td>0.966</td>
<td>1.064</td>
<td>12.000</td>
<td>973.928</td>
<td>.388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Exact statistic  
b. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.  
c. Design: Intercept + Discipline

The results of multivariate tests in Table 9 reveal that assumptions of variance-covariance matrices, equality of variances across groups, and multivariate normality of the MANOVA are satisfied. Also, multivariate test results show that Wilks' Lambda (p=0.368) is not significant at 0.05 level as the p-value is greater than 0.05. Hence, we can conclude that there are no significant disciplinary differences along with these measures.
Discussion

This study explored the cognitive and metacognitive strategy preferences of students studying different disciplines, namely biology, business studies, IT, engineering, and English. It was found that students of biology, business studies, IT, engineering, and English most preferred category of reading strategies were cognitive strategies (M=3.75, SD=.58), followed by support strategies (M=3.63, SD=.63) and metacognitive strategies (M=3.37, SD=0.50). These findings suggest that Omani EFL learners have greater awareness and used cognitive strategies more frequently than the other two categories of reading strategies. This finding is consistent with research studies conducted in similar EFL learning environments (Maarof & Maasum, 2012; Commander et al., 2016), which report cognitive strategies were the most preferred category of strategies of EFL learners.

Besides cognitive strategies, the students rated support strategies with high usage, and metacognitive strategies were rated with moderate usage. However, these results contradict previous studies conducted in a similar second language learning environment. These studies state that learners' second most preferred category of strategies was metacognitive strategies and least preferred was support strategies (Magogwe, 2013; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001).

From the results, it can be inferred that the students did not select metacognitive strategies as they found them challenging. Metacognitive strategies such as "analyzing and evaluating what is read" and "confirming predictions," require additional training to know how to use them. Therefore, it can be assumed that students do not know how to use them. In comparison to metacognitive strategies, support strategies such as "taking notes while reading," "underlining information in text," and "going back and forth in text" were preferred by many students as they were familiar with them. The researcher believes that students need to be given training for metacognitive strategies.

Conclusion

This study has made a significant contribution towards understanding cognitive and metacognitive reading strategy awareness and the use of Omani EFL learners studying biology, business studies, IT, engineering, and English in a higher education institution in Oman. Based on the findings, this study concludes that cognitive strategies are the most preferred reading strategies among Omani EFL students studying biology, engineering, business studies, IT, and English. Support strategies were the second most preferred category, while metacognitive strategies ranked least preferred by Omani students of different disciplines. The results go hand in hand with the existing literature that has revealed that cognitive strategies are the most preferred strategies of Omani learners (Awadh, 2003; Amer et al., 2010). However, we cannot underestimate the importance of metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies go beyond the cognitive mechanism and allow learners to manage their learning through planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Researchers have spoken about the positive effects of applying metacognitive strategies in the reading process (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2008; Baker, 2008). Hence, there is a need to help Omani students develop their metacognitive awareness, which will enable them to deal with different problems encountered while reading a text.
Implications

The findings of the study have an essential pedagogical implication. The research results have shown that the importance of metacognitive strategies for EFL learners is an area that needs more attention. To assist less successful learners, teachers should focus on the metacognitive strategies identified in the instrument and add them to the curriculum. Therefore, curriculum designers should collaborate with English language instructors and integrate metacognitive reading instruction in the Foundation and Post-Foundation programs. Thus, it is essential to assess the needs of the learners and plan the courses. The institution’s management needs to recruit trainers who can guide teachers about the instruction of different metacognitive strategies.

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Is the linguists’ View of Prescriptive Grammar Reductionist?
(A Re-examination of the Accusations Made against the Prescriptive Tradition)

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Rustaq College of Education
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Abstract
This paper seeks to intellectually stimulate researchers who are interested in the history of grammar and the long-standing debate about prescriptivism. Contrary to popular belief, there are scholars who still put forward arguments about the significant role played by prescriptive grammar in the development of Modern Standard English. Such counter-arguments are usually absent in many introductory textbooks to linguistics, which portray prescriptive grammar in a negative light. Nonetheless, only by listening to both sides of the debate, researchers can make a more objective judgment, avoid reductionist views, and encourage students of linguistics to engage in critical thinking. Therefore, the aim of this study is to re-examine the accusations made against prescriptive grammar by investigating various sources that give a different perspective on the origins and significance of the prescriptive tradition. The study has found that there is a strong connection between the prescriptive school of grammar and the development and preservation of Modern Standard English. Instead of being an impediment, the prescriptive approach that began in the 18th Century was a historical necessity at a time when linguistic variations were out of proportion and accepted standards were absent. The founders of this school did a great service to the English-speaking world by their contributions to the creation of a standard variety that has facilitated communication between speakers of diverse dialects of English. Unfortunately, the merits of this school have been buried by blanket accusations that lack careful analysis of what the works of prescriptive grammarians contained. The study has also shown how the dismissal of the prescriptive grammar can have negative outcomes and why it is important to re-examine the allegations made against it by modern linguists.

Keywords: descriptive grammar, language change, meaning shift, prescriptive grammar, standard language, vernaculars,

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.19
Introduction

Any statement about language that contains the word “should” is a prescriptive one since it tells people how they ought to use the language. In modern linguistics, prescriptive statements about correct usage are no longer tenable. “Leave your language alone!” declared Robert A. Hall in his classic book “Linguistics and your language”, whose original title was the same as the quoted declaration. What he meant by this statement is that people need to disregard what traditional linguistic authorities (e.g., grammar books or dictionaries) have to say concerning one’s language, particularly about correct or proper usage. In almost every introductory book to linguistics (e.g., Hornsby, 2014), there is an unrelenting emphasis on the merits of descriptivism and the demerits of prescriptivism. It is, as it were, the central pillar of the linguists’ doctrine. Prescriptivism is a relic of the past; it belongs to an ‘unscientific’ age, linguists tell us. On the other hand, descriptive linguistics aims to study language as it is actually used by its native speakers at a particular period of time.

The ancients, as many people today, wrongly assumed that authorities such as grammarians or lexicographers have legitimate authority to prescribe (what someone ought to do) and proscribe (what someone ought not to do) the correct and proper linguistic habits. In contrast, linguists affirm that the only authority is the usage of native speakers. In his polemic against prescriptive grammar, Pinker (1995) condemned “language mavens” (i.e., traditional grammarians) who do not grasp the fact that humans are born with “a grammar gene” and unconsciously follow the grammar of their language (or dialect), even if they are illiterate. He insisted, “The way to determine whether a construction is ‘grammatical’ is to find people who speak the language and ask them” (p. 370). It is not by consulting grammar books, dictionaries, great writers, but by asking native speakers. If most native speakers happen to use it, then every argument preferring any other alternative is patently irrational.

The Research Problem & the Significance of the Study

Modern linguists’ view of prescriptivism is very tempting in a contemporary society that has cultivated a negative and skeptical attitude towards authority. As Mulroy (2003) rightly observed, “concern with correct speech is taken as a sign that a person is a despotic, reactionary old fogey, indifferent to social justice and contemptuous of cultural diversity” (p. 79). Nonetheless, the marginalization of prescriptive grammar poses several issues that need to be addressed. First of all, prescriptive grammar is inextricably intertwined with Standard English, the most prestigious variety that is taught to English learners and used in formal institutions. Many of these so-called prescriptive rules are in fact descriptive of Standard English, and as Denham and Lobeck (2013) indicated, such rules have positive social values. To tell English learners to dismiss prescriptive grammar entirely can be a source of confusion for such learners. Moreover, the prescriptive grammar of the 18th Century, as shall be seen later, played a major role in the creation and spread of Modern Standard English, which helped solve the problems of mutual intelligibility between speakers of different English dialects. If this is the case, then why do linguists attack prescriptive grammarians who were responsible for the creation and spread of a standard variety that acted (and still acts) as a unifying force for all English speakers? Another intriguing question that a student of modern linguistics might grapple with is: why were prescriptive grammars so influential in the English-speaking world? Why would a book like Lindley Murray’s sell over 20 million copies if it consisted of nothing but artificial rules laid down by armchair pundits? The lack of clear and convincing answers was the main motivation for writing this paper. A better understanding of such issues can be of some help to students of linguistics as well as English teachers and learners. In the following sections, there will be an
Is the linguists’ View of Prescriptive Grammar Reductionist?  

Al- Rushaidi

attempt to search for answers to these questions. The first section will give a brief history of why prescriptivism fell out of favour and whether the grounds for rejecting it are unquestionably valid. The second section will demonstrate the historical connection between prescriptivism and the development and preservation of Standard English, a highly valuable asset for all speakers of the language. The third section will elucidate the negative consequences of abandoning prescriptive grammar such as unruly language change.

The Rise and the Fall of Prescriptivism

Prescriptive Grammar: The Beginnings

In modern linguistics, “prescriptive grammar” refers to a grammar approach that emerged in the 18th Century and reached its peak during the 19th Century as “born out by the large numbers of grammars that were produced” (Ostade, 2008, p. 6). During the 17th and 18th Centuries, disturbed by the ever-increasing language variation, some people called for the establishment of an English academy to regulate the use of the English language. Nonetheless, proposals for such academies “died aborning” in both England and the United States (Mulroy, 2003). Something else, however, filled this gap. It was an increase in the publications of authoritative English grammars. These works became immensely popular, so much so that the 18th century has been described as “a period when ideas of correctness became an obsession” (Hitchings, 2011, p. 80). Three works were particularly influential: Bishop Robert Lowth’s Short Introduction to Grammar (1762), Lindley Murray’s English Grammar (1794), and Dr. Samuel Johnson’s magnum opus A Dictionary of the English Language (1755) (Crystal, 2019). These works intended to demonstrate what the authors believed to be correct and proper usage. They were normative in nature. Nonetheless, as shall be seen in due course, the claim that these prescriptive works were mere opinions about language usage created by pundits who lived in ivory towers does not hold water.

In their works, prescriptive grammarians did not accept everything that was common among people. Indeed, they were selective. This is evident in the way Johnson described some words as “low”, “improper”, and “barbarous” (Hitchings, 2011). Some usages were thought to be examples of corrupted speech, such as the use of double negative, which, albeit very common, has not made its way into Standard English to this day. As Johnson stated in his preface, “I have studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the restoration, whose works I regard as the wells of English undefiled, as the pure sources of genuine diction” (Cited in Crystal, 2006, p. 85).

One of the distinguishing characteristics of prescriptive grammars is their authoritative nature. As Crystal (2017) puts it, prescriptive grammar “lays down rules to which all usage must conform” (p. 94). One of the primary sources of “good language” is the usage of great writers (the wells of English undefiled), not the usage of the general public, however common it is. Besides, prescriptive grammarians taught that ‘polite English’ should be ‘purified’ from vulgarities (that is why modern linguists call them language purists). Modern linguists do not believe that there is such a thing as “pure language”. The arguments against prescriptivism will be discussed in a later section.

Despite being portrayed in a negative light, the works of grammarians such as Lowth and Murray were immediate successes. One of the intriguing questions that a student of modern linguistics might grapple with is: why were prescriptive grammars so popular? One answer is found in The
Language Instinct (1995), a popular work by linguist Steven Pinker. When England turned into a major world power, the language variety of its capital (the London dialect) became suddenly a very important language on the international scene. However, unlike Latin, there were scarce resources that did not satisfy the demands made by a large number of interested learners. The writing of usage manuals would soon prove very profitable, so much so that “the competition became cutthroat, the manuals tried to outdo one another by including greater numbers of increasingly fastidious rules that no refined person could afford to ignore” (Pinker, 1995, p. 373). The market demand was one of the forces, according to Pinker, that contributed to the development of prescriptive grammar. In the upcoming sections, different arguments will be discussed, which contradicts the desire-to-earn-profit explanation of the origin of prescriptive grammar.

Latin-based Grammar

One of the main reasons for the dismissal of prescriptive grammar by modern linguists is the claim that is unjustifiably modelled on Latin. According to linguists, English is a different tongue, and its grammar rules should not be based on another language that is syntactically different. “The grammar of English was for many years described using the same categories as those applied to Latin, and many of our prescriptive rules…. derive ultimately from Latin” (Hornsby, 2014, p. 16). The fact that some English grammarians relied heavily on Latin in their analysis of English is undeniable. Nonetheless, it is worth asking: what is the proportion of Latin-based rules to the overall number of rules presented in English prescriptive grammars? Are most of the rules inapplicable to the English language? Secondly, during the time in which these prescriptive grammars were written, what was the norm among people? The English tongue has certainly changed since the time such works appeared. In the next two sections, different views about what prescriptive grammar taught will be presented.

The Actual Content of Prescriptive Grammars

A cursory glance at the attacks against prescriptivism would lead any student of linguistics to believe that prescriptive grammars contained nothing but pedantic rules. The same examples of prescriptive rules are given in countless numbers of books. “Do not end a sentence with a preposition”, “do not split infinitives”, and “do not use double negatives”. Such examples would drive a person to believe that prescriptive grammar books only included a series of rules that are artificial or derived from Latin and have nothing to do with the English language. Nonetheless, not all scholars of the history of English give weight to this view. For instance, according to Hitchings (2011),

‘Close attention to the books that advanced the doctrine of correctness shows that they were not so very doctrinaire. It has become orthodox to lay into ‘eighteenth-century prescriptivists’ and accuse them of establishing silly rules. Yet while there really were some hardcore prescriptivists in this period, it is an oversimplification to say that eighteenth-century thinking about English was militarily rigid’ (p. 87).

Crystal (2017), himself a critic of prescriptivism, has pointed out, “one of the dangers in the usage trade is seeing everything in black and white terms. Prescriptivism bad; descriptivism good” (p.109). No book on language would claim to be error-free. However, it is certainly an error to overlook all of the merits of such books and select a handful of examples in order to make an overall judgement about books that were so influential in the history of the English language. Crystal (2017) gives an example of a good language principle proposed by Lindley Murray, which is “Never to crowd into one sentence things which have so little connexion, that they could bear to be divided into two or three sentences”.

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
For instance, “Archbishop Tillotson died in this year. He was exceedingly beloved by king William and queen Mary, who nominated Dr. Tennison, bishop of Lincoln, to succeed him.” Crystal comments, “It is an eminently sensible principle, which English teachers would immediately identify with” (pp. 109-110). Furthermore, Mulroy (2003), the author of “War Against Grammar” and who will be extensively referred to in this paper, examined Bishop Lowth’s *Introduction to English Grammar* in order to find how prescriptive it is. To his dismay, he discovered that “the largest portion of the work is devoted to a description of English grammar, not to a catalogue of solecisms” (p. 83). Mulroy cites different examples from Lowth’s Grammar. For instance, Lowth was perfectly descriptive of how English works when he stated, “a noun without any article is taken in its widest sense”. In addition, Lowth was not the hardliner who fought tooth and nail to force people to “end a sentence with a preposition”. In contrast, he differentiated between what is appropriate in speech and what is appropriate in “elegant writing”. Ending a sentence with a proposition is not proscribed in his grammar because it “suits very well with the familiar style in writing”, but it is not recommended in “elevated style” (Mulroy, 2003, p.83). What Mulroy has advanced about the content of the most famous prescriptive grammar calls for a serious re-examination of the too common accusations that abound in some linguistics books.

The Descriptivism of Today is the Prescriptivism of Tomorrow

As one reads previous works on language, it is common to be struck by the unfamiliar grammar rules or by the meanings that lexicographers attach to words that are used differently today. The prevalent belief that prescriptive grammarians forged such rules and that lexicographers unduly used etymology to attach meanings to words should not be accepted beyond any doubt. Let us take the example of the famous rule that proscribes splitting infinitives. The practice of splitting infinitives is prevalent in modern English. Therefore, the rule that we should never split an infinitive is a prescriptive rule, and according to linguists, it was derived from Latin. Nonetheless, this rule was not actually a prescriptive rule in the past. According to Alford (1810-1871), the author of “A Plea for the Queen’s English”, splitting infinitives is “a practice entirely unknown to English speakers and writers” (cited in Mulroy, 2003, p. 84). By the same token, when lexicographers such as Johnson spoke of the meaning of a word, they described how it was used, especially by people of note. Dr. Johnson, to whom the badge of prescriptivism is attached, did not use etymology or his own imagination in writing his definitions. An author of two books on the life and works of Dr. Johnson, Hitchings (2011) argues that “most of the time he did not issue proclamations about what words ‘should’ mean” (p. 89). In conclusion, one should not haste to condemn such works as prescriptive because they do not describe how the language is used today. They described how the English language was used then, before it went through some linguistic changes.

The Fall of Prescriptivism

Several developments in modern linguistics led to the fall of prescriptivism. One of the main arguments against traditional grammar is its lack of scientific rigour. Modern linguists, in trying to establish the independence of their science, separated their work from language studies of the past by emphasizing that modern linguistics is scientific. Any field of study has to assert that it is objective, impartial, and using scientific methods of investigation. Otherwise, it loses its credibility. Nonetheless, the study of language does not lend itself easily to empirical observation. Once you apply this ‘scientific rigour’ to the traditional study of language, you will find many cracks and gaps. For instance, in traditional grammar, one of the first and most fundamental steps is learning parts of
speech. Once these broad categories are grasped, the learner starts to appreciate the structure of sentences. Modern linguists tried to undermine this traditional approach by calling it imprecise. They have come up with countless subdivisions. As Mulroy (2003) remarked, “The point missed by such criticism is that the purpose of the taxonomy is practical guidance, not theoretical exactitude” (p.37). Therefore, the claim that traditional grammar is not scientific is not sound because their aim was not to find absolute theoretical truths, but to provide practical guidance, which they did. Another evidence for the lack of ‘scientificity’ in traditional grammar is the practice of giving value judgements. In contrast, modern linguistics is scientific because it avoids linguistic value judgements, which have only a social basis (Hornsby, 2014). In other words, it is just our perception that some linguistic forms or expressions are better than others. Therefore, common people who believe that value judgements are applicable to language are simply misguided. Hornsby (2014) likens judgements about language such as “sloppy speech” to someone who makes value judgements about planets (e.g. Jupiter’s moons are ugly). According to him, linguistic value judgements are exactly like that. Just as the astronomer tries to describe the heavenly bodies without any prejudice, linguists must also be impartial in that they only describe the things that they observe. In the linguist’s eye, no language variety has more intrinsic value or is inherently better than another. This view has significantly undermined the importance of traditional grammar teaching, which placed heavy emphasis on the intrinsic value of Standard English. Besides, as Hornsby (2014) indicated, “Prescriptive rules are generally associated with the usage of a dominant or prestige group” (p. 17). If prescriptive grammar does not teach what is correct and proper, but what is socially acceptable among higher classes, then there is a need to acknowledge that there is an anti-democratic element in this approach.

These accusations that were directed against prescriptive grammar combined with dull ways of teaching grammar at schools led to a shocking decision. In the 1960s, grammar was removed from the school curriculum in the English-speaking world (Crystal, 2017). Grammar teaching has come to be seen as obsolete. Were there any consequences of not teaching grammar? Undoubtedly, there were. Mulroy (2003) argues that there is a correlation between the decrease in literacy skills and the removal of grammar teaching. The UK reacted before the US in rectifying this situation, and grammar came back as part of the National Curriculum in the 1990s, although the emphasis now is not only on structure, but on use as well (Crystal, 2017). At present, the status of traditional grammar teaching is the subject of much debate. However, in order to judge the importance of traditional grammar, it might be useful to zoom out, as it were, from the present situation and look at the historical role that grammar teaching played in the development and preservation of Standard English and why Standard English is hugely beneficial, for all speakers of this world language.

Prescriptivism and its Role in the Development and Preservation of Standard English

On the Necessity of Having a Standard Language

“A linguistically or dialectally diverse nation needs a standard language to permit mutual intelligibility” (Crystal, 2006, p. 22).

The reason that Americans can communicate with Australians or South Africans is the existence of a standard language. It is the same reason why Omani people can communicate with Moroccans despite the fact that each country is on a different continent. Standard languages are “a blessing that we all take for granted, but probably should not” (Mulroy, 2003, p. 79). Historically speaking, the development of Standard English was an urgent necessity. According to Crystal (2006), during the 15th century, linguistic variations in English were ubiquitous, and there was a pressing problem of
“mutual intelligibility”. A simple word like “might” could have more than 20 spellings. It was a time when “even small geographical distances were barriers to communication” (p. 18). William Caxton, who established the first printing house in England, was disturbed by the extent of this linguistic variation. He complained, “Lo, what should a man in these days now write, egges or eyren? Certainly it is hard to please every man by cause of diversity or change of language” (cited in Crystal, 2006, p. 15). There had to be a solution, and there was none but the creation of a standard language.

England was not alone. According to Mulroy (2003), the establishment of language academies such as the French Academy was crucial for the development of standard languages, which were necessary for solving problems of mutual intelligibility between speakers of different dialects. However, as mentioned before, proposals for language academies “died aborning” in both England and the United States, and the gap was filled by the spread of authoritative works on language. The need for such reference works was so dire, and their lack was, as Hitchings (2011) described it, “a national embarrassment”. Mulroy (2003) said,

‘By dint of honest efforts, Samuel Johnson, Bishop Lowth, and individuals like them contributed significantly to the creation of modern Standard English, with all of its benefits. One might think, therefore, that these pioneers would be respected, if not revered, for what they did’ (p. 81).

Without such authoritative works, one might wonder whether Standard English would have been possible. Similarly, the ‘hardliners’ who fought tooth and nail to preserve ‘classical Arabic’ through grammar teaching have done a great service for every modern Arabic speaker. For instance, Any Arab can open the Revival of Religious Sciences By AL Ghazali, written over 1000 years ago, and read it without having to consult any dictionary most of the time.

**The Standard Language is More Valuable Than Vernaculars**

It is not uncommon to come across the following argument in some linguistics books (e.g., Hall, 1960, Pinker, 1995): standard English was just a dialect. It happened to be the variety that the most powerful people spoke. Therefore, it was chosen to be the ‘standard’ that everyone had to follow. If it has any prestige, it is not because of its intrinsic qualities. It comes from the social status of those who spoke it. In modern linguistics, there is an immense emphasis that all dialects are equal (Hornsby, 2014). The pervasive belief that the standard language is superior is only a perception; it is a social construct. It has no basis in reality. If there is any reason why you should bother with the prescriptions about the standard language, then it is for your advancement in the material world. Unfortunately, there are people out there who will misjudge you or refuse to hire you unless you speak Standard English. Therefore, you would be better off learning Standard English.

This type of reasoning is appealing to those who are zealous about ideas of equality and democracy. However, it is misleading. In reality, there are more good reasons why one should strive to learn the standard language, and they are discussed below.

**The Eloquence Argument**

According to Mulroy (2003), “A Standard Language has a written literature with classical works, dictionaries, grammars, and systems of education” (p. 81). Several Arabic scholars insist that vernaculars cannot compete with Standard Arabic in terms of lexical richness which makes it the Arab World English Journal

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ISSN: 2229-9327
perfect medium for the study of various fields of knowledge (e.g., Al Masdi, 2011). The same point is made by Mulroy (2003) “Spoken dialects have relatively tiny vocabularies. Deficient vocabularies may not prevent speakers from expressing everyday feelings, but fully developed ones enable them to express themselves with much greater precision and on a wider range of subjects” (p. 86). In most standard languages, there is a group of works that have passed the test of time by their endurability. Prescriptive grammarians believe that studying such perennial works that represent the pinnacle of eloquence can have a positive effect on one’s language and that is why they extensively quote them. Just being exposed to non-standard dialects is not a sufficient condition for developing eloquence. Dr. Johnson explained the meaning of the words in his dictionary by “illustrating their use from the best authors since the time of the Elizabethans” (Crystal, 2019, p.78). A standard language that has existed for centuries provides people with, as it were, a vast ocean of linguistic resources from which they can draw the finest pearls of the language. Nobody can deny that some individuals have greater linguistic genius than the rest of us. When all of these individuals choose one linguistic variety to be the medium of their linguistic creativity, this language variety is deeply enriched. After a few centuries, the great literature produced in this variety becomes a resource for anyone whose ambition is to acquire the power of expression and the eloquence that can be not only effective, but also delightful.

Linguist Pinker (2014), a harsh critic of prescriptivism, has been fascinated by the question “why some writers are so great?” He, like most people, intuitively feels that language can be powerful, effective, moving, delightful, expressive, etc. In a word, it can be eloquent. Upon closer examination, it turns out that their eloquence is not just a natural gift.

‘No one is born with skills in English composition per se. Those skills may not have come from stylebooks, but they must have come from somewhere. That somewhere is the writing of other writers. Good writers are avid readers. They have absorbed a vast inventory of words, idioms, constructions, tropes,........ Writers acquire their technique by spotting, savoring, and reverse-engineering examples of good prose.’ (p. 12)

One might wonder how writers can absorb these words, idioms, etc. if they only read the works of authors who lived during the last 50 years or so. Now, let us compare them with writers who have access to a tradition that stretches for more than one thousand years. This explains why the Arabic language, which has resisted radical changes, has a very rich vocabulary. In the Arab world, arguments have been advanced to replace regional dialects for Classical Arabic (Al Masdi, 2011). These arguments rest upon one thing: the dialects are easier to understand. Nonetheless, there is no correlation between easiness and effectiveness. Learning classical Arabic involves studying a lot of prescriptions and proscriptions about its grammar. Nevertheless, it is an endeavour that can pay off in the end since it will give you access to millions of books that can enrich your lexicon. Literally, millions of books have been written in classical Arabic. Compare that with what has been written in the Egyptian dialect, for instance.

The ‘Moral Virtue’ Argument

The belief that the standard language is more eloquent, elegant, refined, or beautiful is viewed with suspicion (or even ridicule) by modern linguists. As mentioned before, linguists reject linguistic value judgements. For instance, vulgar expressions are not seen as inherently wrong. The only reason why they are regarded as bad is that they are equated with the lower classes. It is just our perception
that such expressions are inferior. After his discussion of the phenomenon of taboo, Hall (1960) concludes, “the “badness” of swear-words of this kind comes from the fact that people- people who are dominant in our society-are displeased by them and will act unfavourably towards people who use them” (p. 22). In recent years, the use of taboo words has become more common in the media, so much so that most people do not feel they are morally repugnant. So, if the society does object to the use of such words, then such words are perfectly fine. In fact, linguists claim that taboos are not universal, and they change from one place to another and from one time to another. Prescriptive grammarians or lexicographers have no authority in telling people what to use and what to avoid.

On the other hand, several traditional scholars such as Lindley Murray in his English Grammar argue that good language is more than “socially acceptable speech”. As Hornsby (2014) notes, “Murray was neither the first, nor the last, to equate ‘good’ English with moral virtue” (p. 33). Some linguistic expressions, independent of the society's approval, are inherently disagreeable. In his book on the vices of the tongue, Al Ghazali (1058-1111), an influential Muslim thinker, regarded the use of “euphemisms” when referring to matters done in private such as those related to sexual intercourse as a sign of moral virtue. In contrast, the use of vulgar terms that are explicit is a sign of immorality. Hence, in Al Ghazal’s views, using standard and elevated words is intricately tied to moral virtue. Norman Tebbit, a British politician, said, ‘If you allow standards to slip to the stage where good English is no better than bad English, where people turn up filthy … at school … all those things tend to cause people to have no standards at all, and once you lose standards there’s no imperative to stay out of crime’ (cited in Hornsby, 2014, p. 33).

To conclude, authoritative works on language which indeed contained countless prescriptions have played a major role in the creation and preservation of Standard English (and Standard Arabic as well). Such works do not recommend Hall’s advice “leave your language alone”. In contrast, by preaching the standard variety, they promise the learner the reward of eloquence and refined character. Heffer (2010) pointed out that despite what linguists say, “Millions of English speakers believe there is such a thing as good English, and aspire to write it and speak it.” (p. xvi). Because millions were willing to listen to such works, Standard English is a reality today.

Language Change can ‘Run Wild’

One of the main differences between prescriptivists and modern linguists is in their attitude to language change. While linguists are interested in describing how language is used without making any value judgements, prescriptive grammarians are concerned more about maintaining standards of usage and fostering the variety that they believe is correct. Therefore, prescriptive grammarians are less willing to accept language change than modern linguists, who think it is entirely normal and inevitable. This point of contention has led to fierce arguments about whether language change is normal or should be resisted. The following sections will discuss the main disagreements between prescriptivists and modern linguists when it comes to language change.

The Inevitability of Language Change

Is fixing the language entirely pointless? If we look at the history of English, one might be tempted to be fatalistic about language change. As Hall (1960) remarked, “purists have always been complaining of change in language, and have never accomplished anything by their complaints” (p.
Dr. Johnson metaphorically described the effort to fix a language as “lashing the wind” (Crystal, 2017). Objecting to the coinage of new words is irrational. Trying to resist the regularization of an irregular verb will prove futile. In short, to demand that language should stay exactly the same in all ages is not possible. Nevertheless, there is a very important fact about which many linguists neglected to comment. Most people did not have access to education in the past. Indeed, the majority were illiterate. There was no universal education through which knowledge of the standard language could be disseminated. Asking people to follow any standards was extremely difficult. Therefore, the illiterate and the semi-literate were the ones who initiated all kinds of language change. As Heffer (2010) observed, “at a time when so few people were educated, but when even completely uneducated people spoke the language, any attempt to regulate that language would inevitably fail (p. xix). The present situation is completely different. When education became available, the attempts to slow down the process of change were not futile. As Mulroy (2003) noted, “The spread of Standard English through schools has retarded the rate of change in the English tongue” (p. 86). Therefore, the view that language change is uncontrollable, and nothing should be done about it is not reasonable.

The Desirability of Language Change

Whether language change is desirable or not is a matter of debate. People who try to fix the language claim that the stability of language will help us understand our ancestors, and will help future generations to understand us. On the other hand, linguists argue that language change is completely natural. “The only languages that don’t change are dead ones” (Crystal, 2010, p. 131). Language must change in order to reflect the needs of the speakers, changes in the environments, scientific and technological developments, new cultural norms, etc. In short, as Hall (1960) emphasizes:

‘we should accept linguistic change and its results as something entirely natural and normal, and something which we expect to happen as surely as we expect everything else in the world to change, whether it suits our personal tastes or not’ (p. 190).

It is difficult to give a general answer about language change. As Heffer (2010) indicated, “this is not a question on which it is comfortable to sit firmly on one side or the other” (p. xxvii). Nonetheless, it might be useful to reformulate the question as follows: What kind of language change is desirable, and what kind of language change is not? To accept that all language change is natural is questionable. The standard language should be preserved if we are to reap its benefits that were discussed in the previous section. Language change that is necessary and desirable is dealt with at length in linguistics books (e.g., Crystal, 2010). Therefore, the next section will deal with language change that is neither necessary nor desirable, and some of its consequences.

Meaning Shift

Meaning shift is one of the kinds of language changes that make reading literature of the past difficult, but in a way that the reader might not be aware of. Meaning shift is common in English as well as in other languages. It is when a word does not change phonologically, but its central meaning is replaced by another meaning. A classical example is the word nice. It had various meanings in different epochs. It is pointless to try to tell people that they should use the word nice to mean silly, or to mean precise, or to mean something that the word meant in a particular period of time (Hall, 1960). The reason why linguists do not object to meaning shift is their belief that words do not have real meanings. Sounds are arbitrary signs. The meaning of a word, as Hall (1960) pointed out, is whatever its speakers give it.
Those who try to preserve a standard language object to meaning shift because it does more harm than good when it comes to comprehensibility. When the ‘original’ meaning of a word is lost, misinterpretation and confusion when reading old texts will occur more often. For instance, Arabic scholars argue that the real meaning of a word is the meaning given to it by the Quran. The continuous addition of entirely different meanings is something that we should resist. Otherwise, the reading of the Quran will be impossible for posterity.

What Arabic scholars fear is what exactly happened to Shakespeare’s English. In his book Think on my Words: Exploring Shakespeare’s Language, Crystal (2008) explained, “we find the majority of Shakespeare’s difficult words – difficult not because they are different in form from the vocabulary we know today but because they have changed their meaning” (p. 156). Some familiar words that people use today meant something different during the time of Shakespeare. For example, in Shakespeare’s time, naughty means (‘wicked’), heavy (‘sorrowful’), humorous (‘moody’), sad (‘serious’), ecstasy (‘madness’), owe (‘own’), merely (‘totally’), and envious (‘malicious’) (Crystal, 2008). In order to dig deep into Shakespearean works, you need a glossary. Otherwise, misinterpretation or confusion will be the inevitable result. As we can see, meaning shift here is not an advantage for anyone whose intention is to read great works of the past. When it comes to Holy texts, the issue is far more serious. Misinterpretations of Holy texts can bring about unsolicited quarrels between different sects.

Al Ghazali, in The Book of Knowledge, Book 1 of his encyclopedic work The Revival, explained how the meanings of some fundamental words in Islam had been shifted. He argued that these words meant something different in the time of the companions of the Prophet. He also says:

‘The origin of the confusion between blameworthy disciplines and the legal [i.e. praiseworthy] disciplines was the distortion of the names of the praiseworthy [disciplines]. [These names] were changed and transformed -for corrupt reasons- to mean something other than the righteous predecessors and the first generation intended’ (2015, p. 86).

One of the examples is the word “Tawheed” which means, not detailed knowledge about dialectical theology, but to see that “all affairs are from God by the way of a vision that turns one’s attention away from [secondary] causes and intermediary means” (p. 86). As we can see, meaning shift can cause all sorts of problems. Can we accept it as something entirely natural? One might ponder.

No doubt the teaching of the standard language in educational institutions using authoritative grammars and dictionaries can keep meaning shift in check. Poor knowledge of what words meant is the reason why people use them in new contexts where they do not belong. Undoubtedly, more people would read and derive much more from Shakespeare if meaning shift was averted.

The Lost Art of Diction

In his book Figh Allogah (Understanding Language), scholar of Arabic Al Tha’labi expounds the subtle differences of meaning in words that are otherwise thought to be synonyms. Such precision is important if one’s intention is to express his/her ideas most cogently. The linguistic change whereby words become perfect synonyms is undesirable because subtle differences in meaning are completely lost. The virtue of precision in one’s language is no longer present. Modern speakers of Arabic use many words interchangeably. Nonetheless, looking at the contexts in which they were used, it is clear that some words are not perfect synonyms. For instance, some words have favorable connotations,
while other words have negative ones. Being unaware of such nuances of meaning is one of the common pitfalls in translation. For example, modern-day Arabs interchangeably use "إخوة" and "إخوان" to mean “brothers”. In the Quranic usage, however, إخوة refers to biological brothers, whereas إخوان refers to brothers in faith or brotherhood as a result of friendship (Al-Duri, 2014). The English equivalent of this term is “brethren”. Such subtle differences are not easily noticed. One must read dictionaries to be familiar with such nuances of meanings.

Using words interchangeably, although they are not perfect synonyms, cannot be regarded as entirely natural or desirable change. To further illustrate the point, in linguistics, phonetic change and phonemic change are not the same thing. Each term conveys a precise meaning. No linguist would be happy to see one of his/her students using these words interchangeably. Indeed, marks will be lost in the exam. Nor will such change help future students of linguistics to understand what has been written in the past about the subject. This is not to say that a language can deteriorate to the degree that people can never be precise again. That is of course not true. If the precise meaning of a word dies away, people can coin another word or use other means to get their meaning across. Nonetheless, this is unnecessary. The best we can do is to know the precise meaning of words that already exist in the language. That will enable us to be more precise and to understand better millions of works produced by our ancestors.

Discussion & conclusion

According to Mulroy (2003), “That we can communicate with our instinctive abilities is undeniable; that we can do so “with exquisite precision” on the basis of instinct alone is doubtful” (p. 85). The foundation on which prescriptive grammar is built is that we need to study the grammar of the standard language, with all its prescriptions and proscriptions. Although this approach seems to be intolerant to diversity and resistant to language change, it has helped in the development and preservation of Modern Standard English. Any learner who wishes to master Standard English has to be aware of its rules, which might be different from his/her way of speaking. Therefore, its acquisition is going to involve studying a lot of prescriptions and proscriptions about its grammar. As Mulroy (2003) indicated, “writing well involves the conscious mastery of countless prescriptions” (p.85). Modern linguists’ adage that we should “leave our language alone” is questionable. Most people are not born speaking the standard variety of their language. While one’s dialect should be honoured, the standard variety has a central place in the educational system, used in formal institutions, and can bring forth huge benefits for its speakers. Through the standard language, people can participate in the great dialogue to which numerous intellectuals of successive centuries have contributed.

In conclusion, this article has tried to demonstrate that the black-and-white approach to the issue of prescriptive grammar is not justified. Prescriptive grammar, despite its pitfalls and limitations, has played a major role in the development of Modern Standard English, which is a great asset for all English speakers. Moreover, the prescriptive grammars of the 18th Century did not consist of artificial rules that had nothing to do with the English language. Although these grammars taught rules that were not descriptive of all English varieties, they contained sound principles about the structure of the English language in general. Of course, there is a lot to be unearthed about this tradition. This article is only a call for more serious re-examinations of the history of prescriptive grammar.
Is the linguists’ View of Prescriptive Grammar Reductionist?  

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Saudization of English: A study of the Innovative Linguistic and Textual Strategies in the Academic and Multiple Discourses of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract
The research work attempts to investigate that in any geographical contact zone, where the diverse languages and cultures intersect, there would inevitably be linguistic and cultural integration and assimilation. In a similar vein, the worldwide dissemination of the English language has radically shaped the linguistic and textual devices installed by the Saudi English writers in their texts. Besides, the Saudi English writers have reconstructed L2 (English) on the linguistic pattern of L1(Arabic) to foreground their distinctive ideological and cultural norms. Also, the research work investigates, can Saudi English be considered an authentic linguistic instrument? The researcher also has focused and authenticated on the emergence of Saudi English regarding the innovative linguistic and textual tactics inducted by the Saudi writers in their texts. Besides, the research study has investigated the reconstruction of L2 (English) on the lexical, rhetorical, and grammatical patterns of L1(Arabic). The research work also has a great significance regarding the pedagogical, and theoretical linguistic debate about the emergence of the Asian and African variants of Englishes. Likewise, the researcher has chosen the appropriating linguistic theory, and multiple canons approach as a theoretical framework to analyze the selected Saudi English texts. The research work also has concluded that the Saudi English has emerged as a practical linguistic instrument like any other Asian variants of Englishes. Consequently, the researcher has suggested to the Saudi English writers to reconstruct L2 (English) as a functional instrument to disseminate their national, ideological, and cultural norms for global readers.

Keywords: Eurocentric canons, multiple canons, pluralistic discourses, Saudization of English, textual strategies

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.20
Introduction

The research work has investigated that with the worldwide dissemination of the English language, and the western culture have diametrically shaped the identity, language, and culture of the non-western states. Undoubtedly, in this age of the cross-cultural and the trans-border world, no nation can afford to keep itself isolation from the overwhelming impact of the English language, and the western culture concerning the advancement of research in science and arts, astronomy, technology, fiscal trade, politics, pedagogy, and diplomacy. Likewise, the researcher has observed, wherever two or more than two languages and cultures interface, there would inevitably be linguistic and cultural hybridity. Hence, the researcher has investigated that Saudi English researchers and academicians have constructed L2 (English) on the lexical, syntactical, morphological, graphological, semantical, and phonological patterns of L1 (Arabic) to install their distinctive cultural, national, and ideological traditions in their texts. Besides, it also has investigated that Saudi English writers have installed the innovative linguistic, and textual devices of appropriation (adopt L2, and reconstruct it with the vocabulary of L1), like neologism (coinage of new words), interlanguage, (integration of two diverse languages), untranslated words (insertion of lexical items of L1 into L2 without translation) transliteration (construction of new words or phrases of L1 from the vocabulary of L2), glossing, (explanation of vernacular terms with parenthesis or without parenthesis), code-mixing (mixing of codes of two diverse languages), and literal translation (translation of L2 on the verbal pattern of L1) in their writings to foreground the linguistic qualities of L1 (Arabic). Also, the researcher has chosen the appropriating linguistic theory, and the multiple canons approach as the theoretical and methodological framework of this research work. Also, the researcher has analyzed and interpreted the innovative linguistic, literary, and textual tactics inducted by Saudi English writers in the context of such a theoretical and methodological framework.

In a similar linguistic perspective, Kachru (2000) has argued that the English language has played a phenomenal role to spread scientific and technological knowledge across the globe. He has referred to what “Quirk et al. have termed it the vehicular load of a language, which English carries as the primary medium for the twentieth-century science and technology” (317). In a similar vein, Crystal (2003) has postulated that the English language has got the role of the global language of communication and interaction. He has postulated that “Everyone who has learned it now owns it – has a share in it, and has the right to use it in the way they want” (2). Besides, in a similar linguistic perspective, Kachru (1998) has classified the English language on his celebrated model of “three concentric circles”. Firstly, the “Inner Circle” refers to the historical origins of English, as it is used as a native language in countries like Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Secondly, the “Outer Circle” States, where English as a second language has played a historical and institutional role in the multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural perspectives like South Asia, West Indies, and western Africa. Thirdly, the “Expanding Circle” States like Turkey, the Gulf States, and Saudi Arabia, where the researchers, journalists, and academicians have chosen L2 (English) as a practical linguistic tool to install their distinctive ideological, national, and cultural traditions in their texts. Also, the English language in the “Expanding Circle” States is chosen as a practical linguistic tool concerning academic research, pedagogy, media, diplomacy, advertisement, and tourism.
In a similar contextual vein, Kachru and Nelson (2006) have also postulated that the “Expanding Circle” States like China, Japan, Korea, the Middle East, and Latin America, where the foreign language has been circulated mainly as a universal linguistic tool to conduct the business, commerce, diplomacy, and finance. “The English language in this circle, however, is also finding increased use in internal domains of academia, media, and professions such as medicine, and engineering” (10). In a similar contextual vein, Mahboob (2013) has postulated that “The English language is commonly being used by the Arabs, and expatriates in the Gulf States to conduct their business, and trade in the big multinational companies like (Aramco Petro), and other industries”. Hence, the research work also has focused on the “Expanding Circle” States like Saudi Arabia, where the English language has the economic, social, and capital status regarding academic research, job opportunity, fiscal trade, foreign diplomacy, and business transaction.

In a similar vein, Saudi writers and researchers have constructed L2 (English) on the linguistic patterns of L1 (Arabic) to transmit their distinctive ideological, national, and cultural norms for the global readers. Likewise, the Saudi English writers and researchers have adopted L2 (English) to spread and foreground the enlightened, broad-minded, and moderate image of Islam across the globe. In a similar vein, Ahmad (2015) has cited views of Widdowson that once “language is used, it can’t be kept under your control, people do appropriate it. Simultaneously, it also enables one to serve global citizens and would not take their sense of belonging as well” (1-8).

Nonetheless, like the other Anglophone States, the researcher has observed that the debate regarding L2 (English) also has engaged linguists, academicians, researchers, and theorists in the academic settings of Saudi Arab. It is still unresolvable as the two-language groups have contended the pros and cons of the dissemination of the English language in Saudi Arabia. One linguistic group has resisted the imposition of L2 (English), as it has undermined the status of L1 (Arabic), Islamic ideology, and Islamic cultural traditions. Nonetheless, the second language group has supported the approval of L2 (English) as a practical linguistic instrument to transmit the enlightened teaching of Islam and the Arabian traditions for international readers. Also, the urban youths in Saudi Arabia have chosen L2 (English) as a practical linguistic tool for global communication and collaboration. Contrarily, the young learners from rural areas have resisted adopting L2 (English). They have considered it a grave threat to the purity of L1 (Arabic), and their tribal traditions. Despite, the strong resistance of the latter language group, yet L2 (English) has taken a pivotal role in terms of pedagogy, research, advertisement, business, economy, job opportunity, and tourism in the indigenous perspectives of Saudi Arab. The researcher also has observed that L2 (English) has radically altered the linguistic, syntactical, and textual structures of L1 (Arabic). In a similar linguistic context, Fallatah (2016) referred to the investigative study of Fussell, who has foregrounded the distinctive features of the “Gulf English” regarding the indigenous settings of the Gulf States. According to, Fussell most of the foreign workers and the local citizens of the Gulf States try to communicate and interact with one another through the English language. Besides, the Emirati English writers, journalists, and researchers have constructed L2 (English) on the linguistic pattern of L1(Arabic) as a practical and neutral instrument to highlight the ideological, tribal, and cultural traditions of the Gulf States.

In a similar linguistic perspective, the researcher has observed that the English language has got a vital and predominant role in terms of the advancement of academic research, computer technology, astronomy, print media, electronic media, social media, film, theatre, tourism, sports,
video games, music, advertisement, economy, politics, and foreign diplomacy in this age of trans-borders and trans-cultures. In a similar linguistic vein, Meboob and Elyas (2014) have described that English in Saudia has fundamentally connected with the “discourse of petroleum.” Both theses researchers have referred Karmani views that oil has proven to be very vital to the spread of the English language, and have labeled the study of dynamics of oil with the dissemination of English in the Arabian Gulf region as “Petro-linguistics” (130). The researcher also has observed that the western lexicographers and writers have borrowed many original Arabic words and phrases like zinc, camphor, alcohol, chemistry, cable, and admiral during the political, technological, fiscal, and intellectual domination of the Arab Muslims across the continents. Also, Ahmad (2017) has quoted in a similar perspective, what Donne (1624) said, “no man is an island to himself. And also, no culture is an island to itself” (1-9). Hence, from the historical and anthropological perspective, the researcher has authenticated that no culture and language is pure. Besides, the researcher also has substantiated that the purity of the English language and culture is a myth. In a similar perspective, the purity and superiority of race is also a myth and fantasy. Likewise, the researcher has observed that linguistic hybridity and cultural assimilation is a universal norm across the globe. Contrarily, the western discourse theorists have advocated consistently for the originality, authenticity, superiority, and universality of the Eurocentric traditions. Hence, in the next section, the analogical literature would be surveyed, which has a close similarity with this research work.

Literature Review

In this section, the researcher has attempted to identify the reconstructing linguistic, and textual strategies inducted by the creative English writers in their texts in terms of their multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-racial, and multi-cultural perspectives. The researcher also has attempted to explore and highlight that the appropriating linguistic strategies installed by these innovative English writers have a close similarity with Saudi English writers. In a similar vein, Ashcroft (2000) has postulated that the “dominant language and its discursive forms are appropriated to express widely differing cultural lived experiences and to interpolate these experiences into the imposed dominant modes of representation to reach the widest possible audience” (19). In a similar contextual perspective, Kachru (2005) has postulated that the creative English writers of India have installed the ethnographic Indian experiences in their discourses in terms of “its multiculturalism, its pluralism, and its immense hybridity (10). In a similar vein, Talib (2002) has discussed that the English language has undergone a “process of Indianization” in India. He further has referred that Narayan- a noted Indian English novelist has installed the reconstructed English language in his novel - The Painter of Signs (1978) in the context of his complex Indian experiences. Also, he has inserted the term Sanskrit in this novel like: “I feel as if we had known each other for several Janmas’, he said rather plaintively. ‘It is imagination really’ she said. ‘Do you believe in reincarnation?” (119). Hence, he has inserted the Sanskrit term of Janmas, as the imposed English language was inadequate to address such a historical, mythical, and cultural gaps in terms of the Indian settings. Likewise, according to the Hindu’s mythologies, the vernacular term Janmas means that every man has to undergo through the process of creation and reincarnation in one’s life several times, till his soul gets sublimation or nirvana. In a similar linguistic approach, Ahmad (2019) has contended that Ali - a renowned Pakistani English novelist has inserted the interlanguage and code-mixing approach in his novel Twilight in Delhi (1940) to install the complex experiences faced by the Indian Muslims. He has
inserted the colloquial term in his novel “Dhum! Qalandar, God will alone” to foreground the distinctive ideological and cultural norms of the Muslims of the Subcontinent during the British Rule in India (1-12).

In a similar contextual vein, Chinua Achebe- an eminent Nigerian English writer and critic has inducted the glossing approach in his discourses to highlight the unique and distinctive African cultures. Also, Achebe has inserted the term Igbo (people of South Eastern of Nigeria) several times in his novel Things Fall Apart (1958) to highlight the distinctive social and cultural customs of Africa. Hence, in a similar contextual perspective, Ashcroft (1989) has posited that the term Obi (hut) has foregrounded the typical cultural traditions of Igbo’s people. In a similar linguistic vein, Alsharhani (2016) has added views of Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013), and Osailan (2009) that the English language has served as a practical linguistic tool for Saudi’s people to communicate and interact with the individuals of multiple cultures for the dissemination of the enlightened, moderate and universal teaching of Islam.

Hence, in a similar contextual perspective, Saudi English has emerged as a practical linguistic tool to carry the burden of the post-modern concerns like tribal norms, nationhood, language, identity, culture, and representation concerning Saudi Arabian perspectives. Henceforth, in the next section, the research methods and the theoretical framework would be focused on.

**Methodology**

This research plan has focused on qualitative research in terms of the critical analysis and interpretation of Saudi English texts. The theoretical and methodological framework of this research work also has focused on the appropriating linguistic theory, multiple canons approach, and the Kachruvian “three concentric circles” of the English language. Likewise, the researcher has chosen such research methods and critical literary theories to address the irresolvable debate of the authenticity and universality of the Eurocentric or logocentric canons, variants of Englishes, and the lived reality of the non-western multiple canons approach. Also, the researcher has analyzed and interpreted the selected Saudi English texts regarding the reconstruction of L2 (English), and its textual approaches in their indigenous settings of Saudi Arab.

Besides, the research work also has focused on the linguistic and textual characteristics of L1 (Arabic) inducted by Saudi academicians and researchers in their creative English texts. The researcher also has focused that the non-native English writers have reconstructed L2 (English) in terms of their indigenous diverse linguistic and cultural experiences. The research paper also has foregrounded that Saudi, and the non-western writers have installed the reconstructed language as an alternative linguistic tool concerning their academic research, print media, advertisement, and pedagogy. The research work also has highlighted, if the widespread dissemination of the English language has posed a serious challenge to the national identity, subjectivity, and the cultural norms of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and the Middle Eastern States. Despite, the overwhelming impact of the English language across the Middle East and Saudi Arabia, yet L1(Arabic) has not to undergo any major transformation (due to the petrodollar economy of Saudi Arab, and the Gulf States). On the contrary, the English language has radically transformed the political, institutional, and cultural norms of the non-western states of Asia and Africa.

In a similar nativizing linguistic context, Kachru (1995) has postulated that:
It provides a powerful linguistic tool for manipulation and control. Besides, this alchemy of English has left a deep mark on the languages and literature of the non-western world. English has thus caused the transmutation of languages, equipping them in the process of new societal, scientific, and technological demands. The process of Englishization has initiated stylistic and thematic innovations and has ‘modernized’ registers. (p/ 295)

In a similar vein, Green, and le Bihan (1996) have postulated that with the constant imposition of the “canonical English literature may have marginalized the colonial subject, which resists the powerful influence of the empire not by denying it but by engaging with it” (283). The researcher also has chosen the appropriating linguistic theory, and multiple canons approach, as a theoretical and methodological framework to analyze and interpret the innovative Saudi English texts. Also, the researcher has analyzed and interpreted the selected texts from academic research papers, and multiple journalistic discourses regarding the appropriating linguistic theory, and the multiple canons approach.

Finding
After the analysis and interpretation of the selected Saudi English writings, the researcher has concluded the authenticity of the Saudization of English in terms of the innovative English texts in the indigenous perspectives of Saudi Arabia. The research work also has concluded that Saudi academic researchers, teachers, and journalists have reconstructed L2 (English) on the linguistic pattern of L1 (Arabic) to highlight their national, ideological, and cultural traditions. The researcher also has authenticated that these creative English writers have reformulated L2 (English) as a practical linguistic tool to install the socio-linguistic, ethnic-rhythmic, lexicogrammatical, metaphorical, and the rhetorical characteristics of L1 (Arabic) in their creative texts. Hence, after the interpretation and evaluation of the selected discourses, the researcher has authenticated the practical and institutional function of Saudi English in terms of the pedagogy, academic research, social media, medicine, engineering, tourism, advertisement, billboard, diplomacy, economy, job opportunity, and business transaction. Accordingly, like the other Asian, Caribbean, and African variants of Englishes, Saudi English also has emerged as a practical linguistic instrument to foreground the social, national, and cultural norms of Saudi Arabia.

Consequently, the researcher would like to encourage Saudi English writers to adopt Saudi English as a practical linguistic instrument in terms of the dissemination of their ideological, national, and cultural norms for global readers. Henceforth, the researcher has analyzed and interpreted the innovative linguistic practices like lexical innovation, glossing, transliteration, literal translation, and code-mixing installed by Saudi English writers and journalists in their discourses in the theoretical framework of the appropriating linguistic theory, and the multiple canons approach. Likewise, the researcher has interpreted and evaluated the selected journalistic and academic writings in the following section, of the data analysis and discussion.

Discussion
Accordingly, the researcher has attempted to identify and analyze the innovative linguistic, textual, and structural devices installed by the Saudi English writers, researchers, and academicians in their creative texts. It also has focused on linguistic and textual devices like the invention of new words, phrases clauses, transliteration, and code-mixing. Likewise, Saudi innovative English
writers and researchers have reconstructed L2 (English) to install their distinctive socio-cultural, and geopolitical norms in their texts. Also, these Saudi academicians, researchers, and Journalists have used the adopted English language as a reliable and neutral linguistic tool to disseminate widely the ideological, tribal, and cultural norms of Saudi Arabia. Also, Saudi English writers have used the English language in their texts to spread the soft, moderate, and enlightened image of the Arab Muslims for global readers. Contrarily, the western authors have portrayed the identity of the Arab Muslims, and their culture as patriarchal, tribal, atavistic, and illogical in their discourses. It also has foregrounded that these Saudi English writers and journalists have inserted mood, tone, cadence, and the metaphorical characteristics of L1 (Arabic) into L2 (English) in terms of the process of Saudization of English. Henceforth, the researcher has analyzed and interpreted the selected innovative linguistic devices like interlanguage, transliteration, glossing, untranslated words, direct translation, and code-mixing inducted by Saudi English writers in their texts.

**Interlanguage and Transliteration**

In a similar linguistic perspective, Bamiro (2006) has posited that:

Language use is underdetermined when it subverts the hegemony of English through the strategy of nativization of linguistic forms that are altered to have different cultural overtones when used by the African and the other non-native English speakers and writers. (p. 315)

In a similar vein, the researcher has investigated that Saudi English writers have constructed L2 (English) on the linguistic pattern of L1 (Arabic). These English writers have borrowed English letters and vocabulary, and have constituted new Arabic terms, phrases, clauses, and sentences on the linguistic pattern of L1 (Arabic). Likewise, they have lexically and syntactically merged two diverse languages in their texts to highlight their ethnographic and linguistic norms. Besides, during such a linguistic process of Saudization of English, these Saudi writers have constructed L2 (English) on the lexical, syntactical, grammatical, morphological, graphological, and phonological pattern of L1 (Arabic). Also, the researcher has analyzed such lexical components from the literary and journalistic discourses in the context of the appropriating linguistic theory, and multiple canons approach perspectives. Likewise, for instance, the Arabic lexical term like *Sharia* (Basic Islamic laws and rules) teaching has been constituted on the inherent pattern of L1 (Arabic) to foreground the Islamic laws, and cultural traditions of the Arabian Peninsula. Besides, these English writers have inserted such lexical elements to authenticate Saudi English in the context of its institutional role in academic research, pedagogy, and journalistic writings. For instance, Saudi English writers and journalists have frequently inserted such inherent terms, phrases, and clauses in their writings as under:

- *Allah, Tawheed, Al Harams, Haj, Imam, ummah, halal, and haram.*

Hence, the above-cited lexical components and terminologies like *Allah, Tawheed, Al Harams, etc.* have also validated the Saudization and nativization of the English regarding the linguistic and cultural perspectives of Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, the research work has authenticated that Saudi English has emerged as one of the practical instruments like other variants of Englishes, namely Emirati English, Pakistani English, Indian English, Nigerian English, Korean English, and Singaporean English. Henceforth, the researcher has analyzed and interpreted the linguistic strategy of glossing installed by Saudi academic writers, and journalists in their texts.
Glossing

In a similar linguistic perspective, Bussmann (1998) has defined that glossing is:

Explications of unintelligible passages in the text or their translation. Depending on the place of the explication, a distinction is made between interlinear glosses, marginal glosses, and context glosses, which are often written in a secret language, yields important insights into the linguistic and cultural history. (472)

In a similar linguistic context, Mehboob and Elyas (2014) have inserted Hadith-the Sunna (Sayings of Hazrat Muhammad-Rasūl Allāh) to highlight the reality and significance of world languages from an Islamic perspective. Both, these researchers have inserted the Arabic clause as a glossing linguistic strategy to transmit and foreground the significance of the Islamic legal and educational system:

“重重ن لغة الآخرين يحمي منه ما فكر.” (p.130)

In a similar context, Louber (2015) has inserted the terminology “Bilad Al Haramain” to highlight the ideological, cultural, political, and geographical role of Saudi Arabia regarding its legacy of the two most holy places of Islam. These two most sacred places of Islam, are the Holy Kaaba located in Masjid al-Haram in Makkah, and the Al-Masjid a Nabawi-the Prophet’s Mosque, in Madinah. Hence, the insertion of such Arabic terminology has foregrounded the glory of Islam and its splendid civilization. Such a conversational term, “Bilad Al Haramain” also has conveyed the message that these two most sacred places of Islam have radically influenced and transformed millions of Muslims across the globe in terms of their ideological, cultural, political, fiscal, and educational perspectives.

Besides, with the insertion of such Arabic phrases and clauses in Saudi English texts, it has authenticated that these writers have shaped and reconstructed the adopted English language in terms of their indigenous diverse experiences. Also, in such a linguistic approach, a word, a phrase, a clause, a sentence, and a non-English word can be inserted in the creative English text. Also, Saudi and non-Saudi writers have used such linguistic devices in their writings in the context of their indigenous diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives. Likewise, the Anglophone writers have inducted the glossed or, un-glossed lexical components in their discourses to mirror the clear expression of their cultural distinctiveness, resistance, and separateness. Also, Saudi and Arab writers have reformulated the English language to induct the glossed and un-glossed devices in their texts to foreground their linguistic, ideological, tribal, and cultural practices.

Besides, in a similar linguistic view, Al-Olaqi (2012) -an instructor at King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah has installed a term “Eblis” (Satan): which has been used by Byron - the noted romantic poet in terms of the oriental culture and its legendary history. Also, it has foregrounded that the Islamic concept of evil has a broader semantic implication than the western notion of sin or Satan.

Also, these Arab English researchers and academicians have inserted and explained the Arabic phrases or clauses at certain places in the texts, and they sometimes have left these words and phrases un-translated to foreground their distinctive social, ideological, and tribal practices.
Besides, the researcher has analyzed the following glossing linguistic practices inducted in the academic and journalistic discourses as under:

- *Tawheed; (monotheism) Kiswa (cover) of the Kaaba, and Tawaf performers.*

Hence, the above-cited glossing and un-glossing examples have authenticated Saudi English in the context of the indigenous settings of Saudi Arab. Also, Saudi academicians, journalists, and researchers have inserted these terms to install the linguistic characteristics L1 (Arabic) to engage and interact with the global readers. Besides, the Arabic term “Tawheed” has suggested believing in one God, which has the same meaning for every Muslim across the world. But on the other hand, its counterpart English lexical word “Monotheism” means believing in “the Holy Trinity.” Hence, Saudi and Arab Muslim writers have installed glossing linguistic practices in their texts to transmit the message of Islamic ideology, and Islamic cultural norms for the global readers.

**Un-translated Words**

The researcher has investigated that Saudi and Arab writers have inserted the un-translated words (Arabic) in their texts to demonstrate their deep embedded sense of tribal and cultural traditions. Such a linguistic approach of adding un-translated words in their texts have also compelled the Non-Arabic readers to have an inter-active involvement with these Arabic vernacular phrases to understand the cultural sensitivities and subtleties of the People of the Arabian Peninsula. Hence, the researcher has chosen and analyzed the un-translated words as under:

- *Quran, Hadith, Hajj, Umrah, Wuqoof Tawaf, and, Sai.*

The researcher has chosen and analyzed the above-cited instances of the un-translated words from the journalistic and academic writings of Saudi English writers. These writers have added un-translated words in their texts to reflect the religious and cultural practices of the Muslims across the continents. Also, these Arabic terms have no equivalence in the English language to address such ideological and cultural gaps. Also, the Saudi English writers have added un-translated words as a linguistic approach to transfer the rhetorical and metaphorical characteristics of L1 (Arabic) into L2 (English). Besides, these terms also have carried the tone, mood, cadence, rhyme, and the rhythm of the L1 (Arabic) into L2 (English) in terms of the communication and interaction with the global readers. Thus, such Saudi academic and journalistic discourses have authenticated Saudi English as one of the variants of Englishes in the context of the Kachruvian model of “three concentric circles” perspectives of the English language

**Literal Translation**

In a similar linguistic perspective, Ashcroft (1989) has postulated that:

> the variance itself becomes a metonym, the part which stands for the whole. That overlap of language which occurs when texture, sound, rhythm, and words are carried over from the mother tongue to the adopted literary form, or when the appropriated English is adapted to the new situation, is something which the writer may take as evidence of his
ethnographic or Differentiating function – insertion of the truth of the culture into the text. (52)

In a similar vein, Al-Jumiah (2016) in the dedication page of his thesis, employed L2 (English) on the linguistic pattern of L1 (Arabic) to foregrounded the typical English prose style of Saudi and the Arab writers. Likewise, when he has written on the dedication page of his thesis, ‘I dedicate this research to all those who believed on me and inspired my academic willingness,’ he has exactly added the lexical and syntactical sentence pattern of L1(Arabic) in terms of Saudi English prose stylistic perspectives (3). In a similar context, Mallia (2015) has underpinned such arguments that Arab foreign language learners have inserted the literal and rhetorical translation of L1(Arabic) in their creative texts. He has cited views of Ostler - a noted literary discourse theorist that Arab English writers have inducted stylistic preferences of writing on the linguistic patterns of L1 (Arabic). Also, these Arab English writers have reconstructed the English language on the linguistic pattern of L1 (Arabic) to highlight the syntactical, rhetorical, and metaphorical qualities of L1 (Arabic).

Besides, in a similar linguistic process, Saudi and Arab English writers have employed the literal translation approach in their texts to foreground their typical tribal, national, and cultural norms. The researcher has selected and analyzed the following instances of the literal translation practice inducted by the Saudi English writers in their texts as under:

- wasta is halal.
- It’s raining human body parts.
- I was walking on clouds because my wife had been appointed.
- We will not water the thorns in Lebanon!

These above-cited instances of the literal translation have highlighted the directness of the prose style of L1 (Arabic) inducted by Saudi English writers in their texts. Also, such phrases, clauses, and sentences have mirrored the typical instances of the literal translation approach in the literary and non-literary stylistic texts of Saudi English writers. Besides, these Saudi English writers have added direct translation practice in their writings to transfer the semantical, syntactical, and textual pattern of L1 (Arabic) into L2 (English) in their indigenous writing’s perspective. They have inducted the translation equivalence approach in their writings to highlight the proverbial truths, folk myths, and parables in terms of the Arabian social and cultural traditions. Accordingly, their insertion of the literal translations practices has extended the lexico-semantic sensitivity and tone of their L1 (Arabic) into L2 (English). Consequently, these literal translation practices have authenticated the institutional and practical role of the Saudi English language in terms of their innovative and creative texts. Hence, the researcher has chosen and analyzed the code-mixing practices inducted by the Saudi English writers as under.

**Code Mixing or Code-Switching**

In a similar linguistic vein, Bamiro (2006) has cited views of Kachru about the elusive discrepancy between code-switching and code-mixing in the literary text:
In Code-switching one can switch from code A to code B. It can refer to the categorization of one’s verbal repertoire in terms of functions and roles. Code-mixing, on the other hand, entails transferring linguistic units from one code into another (pp. 23-35).

Likewise, in such linguistic practices, the researcher has investigated and interpreted that Saudi researchers and academicians have code-switched and code-mixed in their academic, and journalistic texts to highlight the stylistic prose qualities of L1 (Arabic). The researcher has chosen and analyzed the code-mixing practices installed by Saudi English writers in their academic research and journalistic writings. Besides, the researcher also has observed that Saudi academicians, researchers, and journalists have mixed the codes of L1 (Arabic) into L2 (English) in the context of their day to day written and spoken discourses. The researcher also has noticed that the chairmen of the departments, university colleagues, the English language instructors, and the students of undergraduate or graduate level at King Saud University, have commonly switched code from L2 (English) to L1 (Arabic) during their conversations, teachings, and interactions. The researcher also has observed that some students of King Saud University, have code-mixed and code-switched even in their final examination written scripts and research projects. The researcher has chosen the following instances of code-mixing from the academic and journalistic writings as below:

- *white thobe ihram is worn by Hajji during the performance of Hajj.*

In the above-cited instance, Saudi writers and journalists have inducted the lexical, phonological, graphological, and morphological linguistic patterns of L1 (Arabic) to highlight one of the basic pillars of Islam—Hajj performed by the Muslims during the month of Dhu al-Hijjah. Besides, during the performance of Hajj and Umrah, every pilgrim wears the “white thobe ihram” to realize and remember about the mortal nature of this world, and the eternal nature of the immortal world. Also, during the performance of Hajj and Umrah, every Muslim feels like a part of the universal brotherhood of Islam and the Muslim Ummah irrespective, of his language, culture, tribe, color, blood, race, ethnicity, and nationality.

**Conclusion**

Accordingly, after the analysis and interpretation of the linguistic style and textural approaches installed by Saudi English writers in their texts, the researcher has concluded that Saudi English has emerged as one of the most practical linguistic instruments in terms of indigenous writing’s practices of Saudi Arabia. In a similar vein, after the critical analysis and interpretation of the selected texts, the researcher has concluded that the Saudization of English is a lived and functional reality. Besides, these Saudi English writers have reconstructed the linguistic and textual tactics of L2 (English) on the linguistic pattern of L1 (Arabic) to foreground the lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical qualities of L1 (Arabic). Also, Saudi literary and non-literary writers have used it as an institutional instrument in terms of academic research, pedagogy, print and electronic media, social media, billboards, movies, theatre, and advertisement. The researcher also has concluded that Saudi English has become a practical linguistic tool in terms of foreign policy, tourism, hotel industry, fiscal trade, advertisement, and job opportunity in the indigenous settings of Saudia Arabia. Also, the researcher has concluded that Saudi English has emerged as an authentic linguistic instrument like Nigerian English, Malaysian English, Pakistani English, Korean English, Japanese English, and Indian English.
Consequently, the researcher strongly recommends the Saudi English writers to adopt and disseminate L2 (English) as an alternative and a neutral linguistic tool in their texts to dispel the misperception about the Islamic ideology and the Arabian cultural norms for the European and American readers. The researcher also has recommended to the new researchers to investigate the newly emerged variants of Englishes in the Gulf, and the Middle Eastern States, like Emirati English, Kuwaiti English, Omani English, Iraqi English, and Algerian English.

**Acknowledgment:** It is to certify that King Saud University has not granted any financial support to the researcher for this investigative research.

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Vagueness and Withholding Information in Christie’s (1926) Detective Fiction The Murder of Roger Ackroyd: A Pragma-Stylistic Study

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Abstract
This study is intended to examine the deceptive strategies utilized in the well-renown Agatha Christie’s (1926/2002) detective fiction The Murder of Roger Ackroyd to fill a gap in the literature by conducting a pragma-stylistic analysis of the novel. To do so, the researchers have set two objectives which are phrased as follows: firstly, examining the pragma-stylistic choices that are used to surface the deceptive strategies on the character-character level in the pre-dénouement stage and secondly, investigating the pragma-stylistic choices that are used to surface the deceptive strategies on the narrator-reader level in the pre-dénouement stage. The stylistic idiosyncrasies of Christie’s Dr. Sheppard are carried out through an eclectic pragma-stylistic approach to expose his deceptive strategies for the fulfillment of his selfish ends. Therefore, the study at issue follows an eclectic conceptual framework which comprises Merzah and Abbas’s deceptive principle (2020) and Chen’s (2001) self-politeness, along with the stylistic effects achieved via the manipulation of such linguistic tools, to explore the two levels of discourse, namely, character-character level and narrator-reader level proposed by Black (2006). The qualitative analysis of the novel has exhibited that Dr. Sheppard is an expert deceiver who principally relies on indirect strategies, as he is cognizant of the power of what is insinuated but left unsaid.

Keywords: Agatha Christie, deception, pragma-stylistics, vagueness, withholding information, The Murder of Roger Ackroyd

Introduction

Although the literature on deception is immense, it is only recently that the concept of verbal deception has become more visible (McCornack, 1992). Many different fields of study, such as social psychology (Weber, 2017), forensics (Picornell, 2013), and politics (Al-Hindawi & Al-Aadili, 2017) among others have been of long-standing interest in the field of deception. Knapp, Hart, and Dennis (1974) undertook a psychological study to determine that verbal and nonverbal behaviors are characteristic of intentionally deceptive communication. They collected seventy-six videotaped interviews to provide a database for the analysis of 32 dependent measures. To achieve their aim, they provided a conceptual framework through which they have concluded that deceivers show more reticence, vagueness, uncertainty, nervousness, dependence, and unpleasantness than non-deceivers.

Moreover, Buller and Burgoon (2006) conducted over two dozen psychological experiments in which they asked participants to deceive one another. Following the lead of previous research studies, Buller and Burgoon suggested a theory which is entitled “interpersonal deception theory” whereby they argued that deception is an interpersonal act. They do not advocate the typical one-way communication experiment as a valid method to detect deception. Instead, they asserted that interactive communication is most necessary for the sake of detecting verbal and non-verbal deception. Similar to Knapp et al.’s (1974) study, Buller and Burgoon concluded that there are four message characteristics that reflect the strategic intent: uncertainty and vagueness; nonimmediacy, reticence, and withdrawal; dissociation; and image-and-relationship protecting behaviour.

Nevertheless, one domain hitherto that seems to be under-researched is literary discourse. The literature also shows many studies on stylistics: for example, critical stylistics (Ahmed & Abbas, 2019), discourse stylistics (Abbas, 2020), cognitive stylistics (Jaafar, 2020), etc. However, such stylistic analyses gave no attention to the act of deception. Merzah and Abbas (2020), however, conducted a pragma-stylistic analysis by drawing on synthesizing an eclectic model to explore the deceptive strategies exploited in Flynn’s (2012) psychological thriller Gone Girl. The main objective of the study was to compare the pragma-stylistic and socio-pragmatic differences between the antagonists Amy as a psychopathic character and her husband Nick as a non-psychopathic character. It was found that the style via which Amy and Nick deceive manifests linguistic gender differences. Both characters revealed different linguistic behaviors when deceiving the target: on the one hand, the psychopathic character showed directness and assertiveness. On the other hand, the non-psychopathic character showed uncertainty and reticence.

Unlike the pre-mentioned previous studies, namely, Knap et al. (1974) and Buller and Burgoon (2006), the present study focuses on literary discourse to manifest the deceptive verbal strategies of the antagonist Dr. Sheppard. Moreover, the difference between Merzah and Abbas’s (2020) study and this one is that the former selected whodunnit/psychological thriller, one of the hybrid sub-genres of crime fiction, as data for the analysis. It also has a different model than the one in question. The latter study, however, focuses on a different sub-genre of crime fiction, that is, Golden Age classic detective fiction. This study, furthermore, adopts a different eclectic model than that of Merzah and Abbas. Except for their study, no other research to date examined verbal deception from a pragma-stylistic standpoint in the genre of detective fiction.
Be that as it may, this study aims at bridging the gap in the literature by manifesting certain deceptive strategies of withholding information and vagueness in Christie’s (1926/2002) most successful novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. This can be achieved by drawing on a stylistic analysis. The analysis under consideration is particularly interested in surfacing the deceptive strategies in the genre of crime fiction because it is regarded as a fertile ground for deception. The genre itself carries deceptive connotations. More specifically, the present study is set for two objectives as a means of exposing the unorthodox manner via which Dr. Sheppard issues deceptive strategies: firstly, investigating the pragma-stylistic tools that manifest Dr. Sheppard’s deceptive utterances on the narrator-reader level (N-RL) in the pre-dénouement stage. Secondly, examining the pragma-stylistic tools that reveal Dr. Sheppard’s deceptive utterances on the character-character level (C-CL) in the pre-dénouement stage.

The study under discussion can yield significance to linguistics in general and pragma-stylistics in particular. It offers a linguistic examination of the deceptive utterances in the prototype detective novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. As a result, it is of value not only to the area of linguistics but also to that of literature; it can demonstrate how detective fiction writers deploy deceptive strategies successfully and creatively to challenge the abductive skills of readers, and hence increase the readership of this genre.

**Literature Review**

*Pragma-Stylistics*

Stylistics can be conceptualized as the scientific study of literary discourse and that it is the only linguistic sphere which allows the analysis of literary texts and their literary meaning by employing objective analytical linguistic-oriented tools (Fischer-Starcke, 2010). Based upon this view, stylistics, therefore, fills a gap in the literature of linguistics. In addition to the preceding conceptualization of stylistics, the modern view suggests that stylistics is a method that aims at explaining how meaning in literary or non-literary varieties is formed through the writer’s or speaker’s linguistic choices (Hickey, 1993). Pragmatics, however, is concerned with context-embedded aspects of language (Levinson, 1983). It can be alternatively demonstrated as in the following equation: [Pragmatics = Semantics + Context]. Hickey (1993) coined the term “pragma-stylistics”, which, since then, has come to be an important approach to text analysis. Pragmastylistics, in consonance with Black (2006), is concerned with showing the extent to which pragmatics contributes to the study of literature; it looks at the usefulness of pragmatic theories to the interpretation of literary texts. Busse, Montoro, and Nørgaad (2010) assert that “next to the classic stylistic tool kit of investigating graphological information, sound structure, grammatical structure of lexical patterning, pragmatic models like speech act theory, Grice’s (1975) ‘cooperative principle’, politeness, implicatures, turn-taking management” (p. 43) are few of the pragma-stylistic approaches frequently applied to the language employed in literary discourses.

Following Busse et al. (2010), underlying a pragma-stylistic investigation of dialogue are some central questions of stylistic analysis:

- Why and how does a play text/dialogue mean what it does? What is the specific style of a conventional exchange? How can it be analyzed? What are the effects of the linguistic choices made? (5) What do these choices say about the characters’/speakers’ interpersonal
relations and their inherent power structures? How is humor generated? Why do we perceive interactional exchange as, for example, impolite? (p. 40)

Finally, the question “how deception is created and detected?” might as well be added to the afore-listed questions. By hybridizing pragmatics and stylistics, more comprehensive explanations can be presented for many unexplained phenomena (Hickey, 1993).

**Definitions of Deception**

According to Zuckerman, DePaulo, and Rosenthal (1981), deception is “an act that is intended to foster in another person a belief or understanding that the deceiver considers false” (p. 2). In a similar vein, Buller and Burgoon (2006) argued that deception is defined as “a message knowingly transmitted by a sender to foster a false belief or conclusion by the receiver” (p. 205).

Based on this definition, there are two features that need to be fulfilled to perform the act of deception successfully: firstly, it is necessary for the sender to have a conscious intent to deform reality; secondly, the sender must expect the receiver to be unaware that they are ill-informed. Mahon (2007), on the other hand, conceptualized deception as follows:

[to intentionally cause another person to have or continue to have a false belief that is known or truly believed to be false by bringing about evidence on the basis of which the person has or continues to have a false belief (pp. 189-190).

The problem, however, is that Mahon specified the target as necessarily singular, not plural. Intuitively speaking, A can, via a gesture or a statement, deceive B, C, etc. simultaneously. For this reason, Mahon’s definition is also rejected. Carson (2010) agrees with Mahon (2007) that the process of deception should necessarily involve inserting false data in another person, where the information itself is false. He, nonetheless, disagreed with Mahon because the information can be truly or “partly” believed to be false by the sender. The aforementioned definitions can be summarized in one definition, which is endorsed in the study undertaken, as follows: A person S deceives another person (+) S₂ iff S₁ intentionally causes (+) S₂ to believe X (or persist in believing X), where X is false and S₁ necessarily believes that X is false.

Withholding Information

Ekman (1992) argued that concealment occurs when “the liar [technically, a deceiver, not a liar] withholds some information without actually saying anything untrue” (p. 28).

The problem with this definition is that it treats “deception” and “lying” as two terms that denote the same semantic meaning. This is evident when Ekman (1992) began his definition of lying by saying, “[i]n my definition of a lie or deceit [emphasis added], then, one person intends to mislead another…” (p. 28). This conceptualization can be considered for the study under discussion provided that the researchers substitute the noun “liar” with “deceiver.” Castelfranchi and Poggi (1994), along similar lines, conceptualized concealment as a deceptive behavior that occurs when the speaker “hides some information by giving H [the hearer] some other information that is true but is not the relevant one for H’s goals” (p. 284). In light of this definition, concealment differs from lying in that the latter strategy puts forth “untrue” information. Also, Castelfranchi and Poggi advanced an argument, concluding that concealment is a strategy of omission, which makes the former a subordinate notion.
Galasiński (2000) and Marrelli (2004), however, seem to use the concepts omission and withholding information synonymously. Following this train of thought, Dynel (2018) differentiated between withholding information and deceptively withholding information, maintaining that “deception necessitates withholding information” (p. 299). Withholding information is of paramount importance for all deceptive forms. The phenomenon of lying, for instance, necessitates keeping true information, and the very act of deceiving for that matter, covert since the speaker aims at sustaining a false belief in the targeted hearer. This is a requisite of all forms of deception (Carson, 2010). Deceptively withholding information (which will be called “withholding information” hereafter), however, can be employed strategically to invite a false belief in the target, that is, as a form or a source of deception per se. For completeness, Dynel (2018) averred that it is the relevance of the concealed information, compulsorily coupled with the intention to invite a false belief in the targeted hearer that can architect the jointly sufficient criteria for withholding information.

Concerning the micro-strategies of withholding information, they can be systemized into two strategies: (i) half-truths which can be conceptualized as providing relevant “true” information, yet intentionally failing to deliver the entire truth (Marrelli & Castelfranchi, 1981), (ii) silence which is defined as the absence of talk. It is a non-verbal communication that transmits a plethora of meanings. Dynel (2018) maintained that withholding information can be performed by a “dint of silence”. Silence can be viewed as a strategy of deception only if the withheld information is of relevance to the situation under interaction, and, through which, the sender aims at fostering a false belief in the receiver(s) or to continue having it. Phrased differently, the deceivers may intentionally not participate in an exchange, while they are aware that they should because they have some crucial and relevant information to share with the target.

**Vagueness**

Égré and Icard (2018) put forth an argument in which they conclude that vagueness can be utilized as a deceptive mechanism. Vagueness might be described as a non-committal mechanism to impede the deceived from discovering the (entire) truth. This can happen in cases in which the speaker is “perfectly informed” and being purposefully imprecise to withhold information, hence misdirecting the hearer. Following this strategy, the speaker can certainly mislead but need not lie in the strict sense of the word. An exception, however, is made when the provided “partial” information triggers false implicature. Égré and Icard further argue that it is the context and the intention which determines the deceptiveness of this phenomenon. It can be deduced, so far, that vagueness can be deceptive in three ways: (1) when it is used to refrain from violating the maxim of quality at the expense of exploiting the maxims of manner and quantity (for not giving sufficient information); trigger false implicatures, thus violating the maxim of quality; (3) and when it is disguised in hedging expressions and/or presupposition.

**Unreliable Narration**

Even though fiction writers designed an unconventional literary device known as “unreliable narration,” in the 18th century, the term was first coined by Booth (1960) in his famous *Rhetoric in Fiction* which shaped and prospered the notion of narratology into a discipline. Booth (1961) phrased the notion of unreliable narration as in the subsequent lines: “I have called a narrator unreliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (that is to say, the
implied author’s norms), unreliable when he does not” (pp. 158-159). Heyd (2006) summarised the concept of unreliable narration in few but efficient words: “A narrator is unreliable if he violates the CP without intending an implicature” (p. 225). It can be said, in simple terms, that one of the salient techniques of unreliable narration is the deviation from pragmatic theories. However, the researchers in this study will propose an argument that a new principle should be designed and followed when deceiving.

**The Deceptive Principle**

Merzah and Abbas (2020) composed a new principle which is modeled on Grice’s (1991) cooperative principle. The four maxims of Grice (1991) can be demonstrated as follows: (1) The maxim of quality: (a) Do not say what you believe to be false. (b) Do not make your contribution more informative than as required. (2) The maxim of quantity: (a) Make your contribution as informative as is required. (b) Do not make your contribution more informative than as required. (3) The maxim of relevance: Be relevant. (4) The maxim of manner: (a) Avoid obscurity of expression. (b) Avoid ambiguity. (c) Be brief. (d). Be orderly. In their model, Merzah and Abbas (2020) argued that interlocutors adhere to the following principle when intending to practice deception:

Make your conversational contribution not as is required, at the stage as you make it occur, by the purpose of direction of the talk exchange in which you evade, ambigue, and/or are vague, while withholding your real intentions so as not to be honest or accountable for what you say. One might label this the Deceptive Principle. (p. 92)

As demonstrated below, Merzah and Abbas (2020) proposed four maxims that compose the deceptive principle (henceforth, DP):

(1) **The Maxim of Quantity**: (a) Do make your contribution as (un)informative (i.e., more or less than is required) as you need to achieve the fostering of a false belief in the target. Withhold relevant information if needed. (b) Do make your contribution more/less informative than is required. Distort (hyperbolise or downsize) reality if need be. (2) **The Maxim of Quality**: (a) Do not hesitate to falsify/fabricate/lie if it serves your argument better. (b) Do not hesitate to plant seeds of doubt, or spread rumours you have no evidence to be true. (3) **The Maxim of Relevance**: Be irrelevant. Do not hesitate to plant red herrings for the purpose of irrelevancy. To achieve this: (a) Evade addressing the heart of the matter or answering questions. (b) Practice self-/other face-threatening acts to distract the target’s attention. (4) **The Maxim of Manner**: (a) Be unclear, indirect, and unorderly to enable incoherence, hence deception. (b) Be ambiguous/vague if you need to mislead or hide information of truth/relevance. (p. 93)

The deceptive maxims stated above reveals that the nature of the deceptive principle is parasitic on the cooperative principle. On the surface, they must appear cooperative for the act of deceiving cannot be effective without the parameter of covertness. This is precisely what McCormack’s (1992) IMT has concluded: The speaker pretends to adhere to the cooperative principle —they are careful not to make their violation apparent to the target for the deception lies in the target thinking.

**Chen’s (2001) Self-Politeness**

Chen (2001) provided the notion of self-face, which means politeness directed to the self. He argued that self-politeness or self-face refers to cases in communication where the need to shield and enhance one’s face influences the style and the content of what one says. By drawing on Brown and Levinson’s notion of self-face, the context of the deceptive maxims should be designed carefully to avoid creating any face-threatening acts to the target. In other words, the speakers must ensure that they do not make their violation apparent to the target so as not to create any face-threatening acts.

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**Arab World English Journal**

www.awej.org

ISSN: 2229-9327
and Levinson’s theory, Chen (2001) proposed similar strategies for his model. However, only two strategies are applicable to the selected data of this study: 

1) Withhold the self-face threatening act (henceforth, W-SFTA) – which can be boiled down to being silent altogether. It should be mentioned that this strategy is not discussed in the model that is designed for other-face. The strategy in dispute is realized by the maxim of quantity of the DP.

2) Off record: This strategy is manipulated when much is at stake. It is realized by the three maxims, namely, quality, relevance, and manner, of the DP. The study in question, nevertheless, is limited to the maxims of quantity and manner.

It seems that Chen (2001) has separated two related concepts into two super strategies: off record: the maxim of quantity and the super strategy withhold self-face threatening act (i.e., silence). Because the DP includes silence as the first sub maxim of quantity, it has been decided that W-SFTA should be included within off record: the maxim of quantity to avoid redundancy. The model of Chen is employed in the study in question to surface all the macro-strategies of deception, depending on the intention and the style via which Dr. Sheppard deceives.

**Detective Fiction**

The tradition of classic detective fiction has been given multilabels: the clue-puzzle story, whodunnit, the mystery story, and the analytic detective fiction, all of which refer to the basic structure of the genre, that is, to its characteristic of intriguing and challenging the reader to analyze the murder-detection-explanation stages successfully (Horsley, 2005). During the interwar period (1918-1939), the enclosed British community was the provenance of betrayal, deception, tension, and death (Çelikel & Taniyan, 2015). The period of the 1920s and 1930s, as Çelikel and Taniyan (2015) argued, is known as the “Golden Age” of (classic) detective fiction in England. The term under consideration can refer to either the period itself (interwar), or the type/genre of crime fiction produced. Todorov (1977) averred that detective fiction was at its peak during the interwar period (1918-1939). It is during this age that murder became an indispensable part of crime fiction after focusing on robbery and fraud crimes as in Sherlock Holmes’ stories (Rowland, 2010).

It was also the age where crime writers employed more intricate plots which can be particularized by a gathered group of vastly possible suspects. As Roland (2010) demonstrated, the Golden Age presented crime fiction typically in a secluded country house or any locked room. The Golden Age fiction is characterized by the marginalizing of sex, vulgarity, and violence, which lead to forming the subgenre of cozy mystery (Bertens & D’haen, 2001). It has consistent features introduced in seriatim fashion such as discovering a body, facing a series of red herrings, finding clues to solve the puzzle, and the dénouement of “whodunit” (Rowland, 2010). It is worth noting that the dénouement stage, also known as the solution or the revelation stage, in crime fiction is the segment of the story in which the protagonist or any other character unravels all the mysteries of the murder. It sets the finale of the story for readers and other characters. Simply put, it is “as much a ‘tying up’ of the action as an untying” (Wales, 2011, p. 107).

Scaggs (2005) has used the term “whodunnit” synonymously with “detective fiction.” Readers must be provided with linguistic clues from which the identity of the perpetrator of the crime should be induced before the detective or any other intelligent character solves the mystery in the dénouement stage in the final pages of the story. For this reason, crime fiction challenges the
abductive skills of the reader. Detective fiction has several genres as briefly afore-demonstrated. The Detective fiction *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is a mixed-breed of the three most common detective fiction subgenres, namely, whodunnit, locked room mystery, and cozy mystery (Ashley, 2002; Bertens & D’haen, 2001; Todorov, 1977).

**Christie’s (1926/2002) The Murder of Roger Ackroyd**

Like many mystery novels, and particularly Christie’s works, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is set in a claustrophobic environment that seems isolated from the rest of the world—as a result, the novel does not allude to historical events. Following Todorov (1977), Christie’s *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is one of the top novels that best exemplifies the subgenre of whodunnit. A novel that falls under this category presents not one, but two stories: the story of the murder and the story of the investigation. In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, Dr. Sheppard, the narrator, is presented from the beginning as a sincere, sympathetic, and peaceful person, only to discover in the last part of the book that he is the mysterious murderer, leaving readers to question whom to trust. Presenting the narrator as a physician and a polite man is a red herring in itself, distracting readers and misdirecting suspicion. Contemporary readers, especially those in the 1920s, would be predisposed to trust him on account of the long-standing tradition, stretching back to the *Sherlock Holmes* stories (narrated by the reliable Dr. Watson) in which the narrator of the detective story is the most trustworthy character. In this novel, Christie challenges readers’ assumptions about narration and the conventions of the mystery novel when it is revealed in the final chapter of the novel, entitled Apologia, that the novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is a manuscript written by Dr. Sheppard who appears to be the mysterious murderer. Priestman (2003) asserted that Christie’s *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is “full of impostures” (p. 82).

Dr. Sheppard is not a cold-blooded psychopathic person who likes to harm or slaughter people for his pleasure. Instead, he is an ordinary man who grew weak at some point in his life. Because of his critical financial problems, he blackmails Ms. Ferrars, one of the characters who quickly commits suicide at the beginning of the novel. When Mr. Ackroyd is informed about this, he is soon also murdered by the physician. As Poirot remarks, the mysterious murderer is not a criminal nor a sociopath; he is only a desperate person with a “strain of weakness” as Dr. Sheppard indirectly describes himself. Almost all the characters avoid the truth in different scenes in the novel.

**Methodology**

The framework of the study undertaken comprises two models:

1) Chen’s (2001) self-politeness
2) Merzah and Abbas’s (2020) DP.

They have been selected because of their efficient utility to surface the strategies of deception, namely, withholding information and vagueness. This section is finalized by a synopsis of the techniques of data analysis:

1) Each utterance or related utterances, according to the researchers’ interpretation, will be given numbers in a superscript format to refer to them as representations of the utterances in question instead of re-writing pieces of the extract whenever needed, hence save space.

2) Each extract will be contextualized before providing the analysis.
3) Square brackets are used to enclose material such as symbols, explanation, or addition that the researchers have inserted in a quotation.

4) Tables which demonstrate the frequencies of the deceptive strategies, their realizations, and the pragma-stylistic tools used for analyzing each utterance will be provided, for the sake of precision and characterization. Beck (2003) has suggested that descriptive statistics would be of great value if incorporated within the procedures of the analysis in qualitative research method. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), moreover, the process of tabulation of the frequencies of each characteristic and providing descriptive statistics is an essential method of data analysis in qualitative content analysis.

Data Analysis
The section in dispute shows the analysis of the selected extracts by drawing on the eclectic framework which is demonstrated in the two previous sections.

Extract -1-: N-RL + C-CL


Contextualization of Extract –1-

Poirot proposes to Dr. Sheppard that they should have a meeting with Ackroyd’s family. After gathering in Ackroyd’s house, Poirot first asks Flora to disclose Ralph’s location if she knows his whereabouts since this act will declare his (Ralph’s) name. Flora solemnly insists that has not the slightest idea where Ralph is. Next, Poirot employs the same plea to the others—including Dr. Sheppard, yet he receives no answer.

Analysis of Extract -1-

The above-cited extract is restricted to repeatedly revealing two deceptive micro-strategies: half-truths and silence—both of which are realizations of the deceptive macro-strategy withholding information. After each utterance detective Poirot has produced [N.1; N.2; N.8; N.10; N.11; N.12; N.16; N.19; N.21; N.23] particularly the ones where he asked direct questions that demand eliciting answers [N.12; N.19], issued an order to speak [N.21], along with Raymond’s question [N.4], Dr. Sheppard has practiced deception on the C-CL via silence, as he has had eleven opportunities to confess or reveal the truth, yet chose to be silent.
He is purposefully not engaging in the exchange nor answering questions directed to him while he knows he should, because he has the most relevant and crucial information to share with the target (i.e., Detective Poirot and Roger’s family). Dr. Sheppard relies on their default assumptions that he is cooperative, innocent, and a family friend. These default assumptions are the false beliefs that he has allowed them to nurture by appealing to the first maxim of quantity and the self-politeness strategy of being off record by the submaxim in dispute, that is, “[d]o not make your contribution as (un)informative (i.e., more or less than is required) as you need to achieve fostering a false belief in the target. Withhold relevant information if needed”, after each of the utterances [N.1; N.2; N.4; N.8; N.10. N.11; N.12; N.16; N.19; N.21; N.23]. On a final note, deception on the C-CL in respect to the aforementioned extract is in the form of withholding full utterances (i.e., silence) to keep the deceived parties in a state of complete ignorance and, consequently, make them nurture false beliefs. This is pragma-stylistically realized by withholding the SFTA which, in turn, is triggered by virtue of the deceptive maxim of quantity and the strategy of being off record in terms of self-politeness. It also seems that Dr. Sheppard is practicing deception for protecting and self-serving purposes since he refuses to appear as a murderer in the eyes of his sister, Caroline.

Eventually, detective Poirot gives him the will to commit suicide instead of deforming Caroline’s high expectations of her elder brother (i.e., Dr. Sheppard). In his letter of Apologia (the final chapter of the novel in which Dr. Sheppard puts forth a detailed confession and a suicide note to readers on the narrator-narratee level, namely, N-RL + C-CL), he writes to readers the following lines:

My greatest fear all through has been Caroline. I have fancied she might guess. Curious the way she spoke that day of my ‘strain of weakness.’ Well, she will never know the truth. There is, as Poirot said, one way out… I can trust him. He and Inspector Raglan will manage it between them. I should not like Caroline to know. She is fond of me, and then, too, she is proud… (Christie, 1926/2002, p. 285)

Pragma-stylistically, this is realized by the deceptive maxim of quantity and withhold the SFTA since, based upon Chen’s (2001) notions, the term “self” does not only refer to Dr. Sheppard himself, but also those aligned with him, such as his sister. Following this line of argument, triggered by the intention to save self-face, Dr. Sheppard plans to deceive the targeted hearer/reader every time he keeps silent.

A narrator is reliable only when he demonstrates objectivity, a wide range of knowledge, and leaves nothing of relevance unexposed. In all the utterances [N.3; N.4; N.6. N.9; N.13; N.14; N.15; N.17; N.18; N.20; N.22: N.24], Dr. Sheppard is being truthful in his narration, but not completely. The only reason that prompts Detective Poirot to gather Ackroyd’s family and Dr. Sheppard in one room is to appeal to them to reveal the whereabouts of Ralph and to confess of murdering Ackroyd because he suspects that one of them is the culprit. Since Dr. Sheppard has hidden Ralph and murdered Ackroyd, he is classified as an unreliable narrator for he has withheld the most two relevant and crucial items of information to readers. As such, Dr. Sheppard is practicing deception on the N-RL via employing the micro-deceptive strategy of half-truth 12 times. This is manifested by the third super strategy, that is, off record, of self-politeness which is
triggered by the deceptive maxim of quantity and the strategy of being off record in regard to self-politeness.

**Extract -2: N-RL + C-CL**


**Contextualization of Extract -2**

Raymond, Ackroyd’s secretary, suggests that the criminal act probably began as a robbery since, as he naïvely claims, Ackroyd has no enemies. On the face of it, nothing seems to be stolen. The absence of Ferrars’ letter, however, suggests that the blackmailer is somehow involved.

**Analysis of Extract -2**

Since the verb “say” in utterance [N.1b] is defined and treated synonymously with the verb “utter” (Meriam-Webster, 2020), and the verbs “say” and “utter” can refer to any of the following verbs or illocutionary acts, for example, “asking,” “confirming,” “demanding,” “lying,” “pretending,” etc., this shows that the verb “say” is not precise, as it implies a one-to-many relationship [N.1b]. That is to say, the dialogue tag “said” implies a relationship of one word versus many meanings. It should be mentioned that Dialogue tags are expressions used after a character has spoken, as in “(s)he said/thought/yelled/lie,” to show which character is communicating at the given time. They are also essential to add further details to the dialogue (Evans, 2015). For the sake of comparison and clarification, the following are examples of faithful narration which are extracted from *Gone Girl* (Flynn, 2012). Nick, Amy’s husband, punctiliously exhibits to readers the exact degree of his sincerity in the first two utterances infra:


ii. “I don’t have it with me,” I lied [Nick deceives his mother in-law] (Flynn, 2012, p. 80).

Likewise, the following examples demonstrate the manner through which Amy meticulously expressed her sincerity:

i. “I can just barely,” I lie [Amy is referring to her swimming skills] (Flynn, 2012, p. 262).


Following this train of thought, Dr. Sheppard has deliberately chosen the verb “said” to report his speech instead of, for instance, choosing the verb “pretended” to be vague, hence deceptive. Accordingly, Dr. Sheppard is communicating deception on the N-RL by employing an imprecise
verb, that is, “said” which, in turn, appeals to the maxim of manner and the strategy of being off record by the maxim under consideration in terms of self-politeness [N.1b].

Utterance [N.2], furthermore, is presented by Dr. Sheppard to be true, yet not sufficiently since the fact that Dr. Sheppard is the murderer has been withheld. Because the importance of this fact is vital, it can be concluded that Dr. Sheppard has exploited the micro-deceptive strategy of half-truth which is centered on the deceptive maxim of quantity and the strategy of being off record in respect to self-politeness.

On the C-CL, Dr. Sheppard does not respond to Raymond who has produced an affirmative illocutionary act: “I hereby affirm that the murderer must have been a burglar,” [N.7] and asked two questions concerning the motive of the thief and the scene of the crime [N.8a; N.8b]. Raymond is under the false impression that Dr. Sheppard’s silence is a sign of a lack of knowledge. However, the act of silence here is a sign of deception that is driven by a two-layered intention:

i. An egoistic or self-serving intention to escape punishment from the police and Ackroyd’s family.

ii. W-SFTA, as he is fond of his sister and does not want her to know that he has committed a murder. Therefore, he feels self-ashamed. In his Apologia, Dr. Sheppard shows that he prefers committing suicide over letting Caroline, his sister, knows about the blackmail and the murder. Therefore, Dr. Sheppard allows Raymond’s false belief to be nurtured by the default assumption that it is centered on the micro-deceptive strategy of silence which, in turn, appeals to the maxim of quantity and the self-politeness strategy of being off record by the maxim in question. On the N-RL, however, Dr. Sheppard is communicating true utterances [N.9; N.10; N.11; N.12], yet he is not being informative enough to share the crucial fact that he is the murderer. As such, there is an employment of the deceptive micro-strategy of half-truth which is based on the deceptive maxim of quantity and the strategy of being off record in regard to self-politeness.

Along similar lines, on the N-RL, Dr. Sheppard is issuing a true utterance; however, he has manipulated the utterance by morphing its structure from the active to the passive voice to hide the subject or the doer of the action [N.17]. He has also exploited a verb that cannot collocate with the preposition “by,” that is, “disappeared” to further ascertain that he has not the slightest clue concerning the identity of the person who took the letter. Following this thread of thought, the use of the passive voice triggers the deceptive maxim of quantity and the self-politeness strategy of being off record by the maxim of quantity in respect to self-politeness which, in turn, manifests the micro-deceptive strategy of half-truth [N.17].

Discussion of the Findings
This section advances the findings of the analysis and tabulates them for the sake of maximizing illustration. Further, it offers interpretations which psychologize the character of Dr. Sheppard.

Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of the pragma-stylistic tools of the selected extracts
Pragma-Stylistic Tools \hspace{1cm} Dr. Sheppard
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|} \hline
Self-Politeness & DP & Pre-dénouement Stage & \ \ \\
 & & N-RL & C-CL \hline
Off record: W-SFTA: & Maxim of quantity: 1st sub-maxim & 17 & 94\% & 11 & 100\% \hline
Off record: W-SFTA & Maxim of quantity: 2nd sub-maxim & 0 & 0\% & 0 & 0\% \hline
Off record: & Maxim of manner: 1st sub-maxim & 0 & 0\% & 0 & 0\% \hline
Off record: & Maxim of manner: 2nd sub-maxim & 1 & 6\% & 0 & 0\% \hline
Total & & 18 & 100\% & 11 & 100\% \hline
\end{tabular}

It is exhibited in Table one that the first sub-maxim of quantity was the most exploited sub-maxim vis-à-vis the other sub-maxims of the DP. The frequencies further show that the sub-maxim under consideration was employed on the N-RL more than it was employed on the C-CL. The second sub-maxim of manner was used only once on the N-RL. The rest of the (sub-)maxims showed no appearance in the selected extracts.

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of the macro- and micro- deceptive strategies in the selected extracts

| Micro- and Macro- Deceptive Strategies & Dr. Sheppard & \ \ \\
| & Pre-dénouement Stage & \ \ \\
| & N-RL & C-CL \hline
| Vagueness & 1 & 6\% & 0 & 0\% \hline
| Withholding information: Half-truth & 17 & 94\% & 2 & 18\% \hline
| Withholding information: Silence & 0 & 0\% & 9 & 82\% \hline
| Total & 18 & 100\% & 11 & 100\% \hline

The findings in Table two show that Dr. Sheppard employed the macro-strategy of withholding information significantly more than the strategy of vagueness. On the C-CL, it was found that the micro-strategy of silence was used with the frequency of (9) whereas no employment was found on the N-RL. The micro-strategy of half-truth, moreover, was used (17) times on the N-RL versus two on the C-CL. The strategy of vagueness was used only once in the selected extracts, particularly on the N-RL.

The selected extracts show that Dr. Sheppard is interested in practicing deception via exploiting indirect deceptive strategies (viz., withholding information and vagueness). It is also shown in Table two that the deception is boiled down to silence nine times on the C-CL. Both of the strategies, namely, vagueness and withholding information imply discreetness. It is perhaps difficult for Dr. Sheppard to be silent altogether on the N-RL since he is the narrator, and, therefore, responsible for commenting on the occurring events and offering dialogue tags at the very least. The most workable and reticent alternative deceptive strategy on the C-CL, as a result,
is the micro-deceptive strategy of half-truth, followed by the deceptive strategy of vagueness. Dr. Sheppard’s preference to deploy indirect deceptive strategies can be justified as follows: The following lines are excerpted from The Murder of Roger Ackroyd to support/confirm the argument under discussion: “My greatest fear all through has been Caroline. I have fancied she might guess [...] And then what shall it be? Veronal? There should be a kind of poetic justice [...] I have no pity for myself either” (Christie, 1926/2002, p. 286). It is quite clear that Dr. Sheppard, burdened with remorse, believes that he deserves punishment.

This finding seems to lend support to a recent study in the literature on deception: Merzah and Abbas (2020) examined Nick’s (Amy’s husband) utterances in terms of deception and reached to the finding that he deceives mainly by withholding information. The researchers justified the finding in question by affirming that Nick, in contrast to Amy, is not a psychopathic character. Rather, the reason for his tendency to withhold information is attributed to his feeling of embarrassment and guilt as it is confirmed by the character himself on the N-RL: “I felt a burst of intense guilt, self-loathing. I thought for a second I might cry, finally” (Flynn, 2012, p.79). It is also worth noting that the author Flynn and the character Nick are both Americans, whereas the author Christie and the character Dr. Sheppard are both British. By drawing a parallel between an American and a British non-psychopathic male character, it seems that they both share the same style of deceiving (i.e., withholding information by utilizing the maxim of quantity) the target. Accordingly, though it is out of the scope of the study undertaken, it can be concluded that the findings under argument have the potential to be extrapolated cross-culturally.

By this token, it can be affirmed that the findings of the study under construction along with Merzah and Abbas’s (2020) article replicate the findings of previous classic studies (e.g., Buller & Burgoon, 2006; Knapp et al., 1974) in the field of psychology in terms of the following:

a. It has been traditionally argued that untrained/ordinary deceivers are reticent in comparison to truth-tellers.

b. They also seem more uncertain/hesitant than truth-tellers.

The available findings can be better illustrated in the figure infra:

![Figure 2. Visual representation of the degree of retinene in relation to the pragma-stylistic preferences between ordinary deceitful characters and non-deceivers](image-url)
Conclusion

It has been manifested that Dr. Sheppard slyly deceives by drawing predominately on indirectness and passiveness, both of which coalesce into forming his style of deceit. Detective fiction writers need to write a story that shows deception and challenges readers’ analytical skills to solve the mystery. However, to unravel the mystery, readers need the narrator to be (semi-)truthful; giving false facts on both levels of the discourse will make the task of solving crimes impossible. Therefore, the study in dispute approached the text pragma-stylistically to unpack the choices of the deceptive strategies that are successfully utilized by the writer. As such, the study contributed to the knowledge of pragma-stylistics, deception, and literature. The rigorous and systematic pragma-stylistic tools helped to achieve the two pre-established objectives for this article:

The first deceptive maxim of quantity as a strategy of being off record to save self-face scored the highest frequency in comparison to the other sub-maxims with a percentage of 94% on the N-RL and 100% on the C-CL. This finding exhibits that the macro-deceptive strategy of withholding information was the highest in frequency in comparison to vagueness. Moreover, the micro-deceptive strategy of half-truth scored a higher percentage 94% on the N-RL than it did on the C-CL with a percentage of 18%. The micro-strategy of silence, furthermore, showed a higher frequency on the C-CL with a percentage of 82% than it did on the N-RL with a percentage of 0%. Whereas half-truth scored higher on the N-RL, Table two showed that silence scored a higher percentage on the C-CL. The latter finding was justified by the fact that Dr. Sheppard, as a narrator, is obliged to report the events to readers. Therefore, he could not resort to the micro-strategy of silence. Nevertheless, he chose utilizing the micro-strategy of withholding information instead because he still needed to hide crucial facts from readers. This choice of strategy enabled him to narrate certain aspects of the truth and conceal the most significant ones simultaneously. He also utilized the verb “said” as a dialogue tag to further mislead readers. Although he did not lie in this instance, his employment of the verb “said” is vague and it lacks exactness. As shown in Table two, this surfaced the strategy of being off record to save self-face, which led to the manifestation of the second deceptive maxim of manner. It scored a higher frequency on the N-RL with a percentage of 1% in relation to the C-CL in which the maxim in question scored a percentage of 0%. As such, the first and second objectives have been achieved.

The study in question offers certain implications for novelists/writers in general and crime writers in particular as it helps them to understand the strategies of deception and how they are employed by a first-person narrator/character. It is also helpful for them to know the linguistic characteristic of the sub-genres of detective fiction, namely, locked room mystery, whodunnit, and cozy mystery. On that note, the article under construction can be regarded as a useful source for crime fiction writers specifically; the process of writing a crime novel can be significantly less effortful and more methodical.

Acknowledgments:
The researchers of the present study are indebted to the College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad, Al-Jadiriyya, for carrying out this stud
Vagueness and Withholding Information in Christie’s (1926)  

Merzah & Abbas

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References


The Impact of Cultural Background on Listening Comprehension of Saudi EFL Students

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Abstract
One of the most critical areas where considerable attention is required in teaching a foreign language involves listening skills. Listening plays an essential role in both communication and learning, and it is one of the most crucial necessary language skills in the field of language learning. Recent studies in foreign language listening have extensively focused on the prevailing difficulties of listening. There has been little research on the cultural background as a sociolinguistic dimension of listening. Therefore, this study set out to determine whether Saudi EFL students face particular difficulty in their listening comprehension, to identify possible reasons for the problems, and to find out whether the cultural background affects the listening process. To achieve these objectives, a triangulation method was followed. A diagnostic test and a questionnaire were used on a group of 31 Saudi students of English and a reflective essay was carried out on eight EFL teachers. The findings suggest, first, that listening is the most challenging language skill and, second, that Saudi EFL students encounter substantial difficulty in the perception, parsing, and utilization phases of their listening comprehension for many reasons. The findings also suggest that the cultural background has a significant effect on their listening process. This study is expected to contribute markedly towards increasing the understanding of listening difficulties in language learning, and improving the teaching-learning process, by recommending effective remedies for addressing such challenges.

Keywords: Cultural background, English language teaching, language learning, listening comprehension problems, Saudi students

Introduction

In Saudi Arabia, English is taught as a foreign language (FL). At the tertiary level, students must pass English as a core subject during a preparatory year in which they undergo an intensive English program. Although English is regarded as the language of ‘science and technology, business, industry and commerce’, Saudi Arabian students do not generally pay sufficient attention to its importance as an international language (Ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Instead, it is viewed as a mandatory subject for proceeding to the next level of education.

According to the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, one of the main objectives of teaching English is to enable students “to acquire basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)” (Ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013, p. 114). With this goal, students can benefit linguistically from interacting with individuals in English-speaking nations. This can enhance global collaboration, expanding the understanding of and respect for international intellectual and cultural differences. To achieve this goal, the government of Saudi Arabia made various initiatives to improve the proficiency level of the English language in the country. The educational reform efforts resulted in establishing ‘the language preparatory year programs’ in 2006 to further advance the English proficiency of Saudi students. As a matter of follow-up process, the curriculum was then changed three times to meet the students' levels. Despite the reform efforts of local education authorities in the kingdom, English education has remained irregular (Al-shumaimeri, 2003; Fareh, 2010; Hussain, Albasher, & Salam, 2016). This irregularity might be attributed to the fact that English in Saudi Arabia is highly influenced by economic, social, and religious factors. Although the Saudi government has hardly worked to increase the use of English in its institutions to meet the globalization and modernization policies, English remains resisted due to cultural and religious beliefs (Elyas & Mahboob, 2017).

A particular important skill that has suffered from education reform inconsistencies is listening (Al-Nasser, 2015). It is a crucial skill that should be focused on teaching a FL. Listening plays an essential role in both communication and learning. It is one of the most vital necessary language skills in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and learning. Previous research has confirmed that listening is the most widely used language skill in daily interaction (Rost, 2002). In addition to being the first skill acquired through all spoken languages, listening is also the key to learning a FL or second language (L2) quickly and efficiently. Undoubtedly, speakers cannot communicate effectively without receiving information accurately. Therefore, focusing on listening as a receptive or passive skill is the first concept upon which teachers and learners should focus during language learning. Moreover, listening naturally develops more rapidly than in the other three language skills (Oxford, 1990; Al-khresheh, Khaerurrozikin, & Zaid, 2020).

Concerning the time spent on communication, studies have revealed that listening consumes more daily communication time than other communicative skills, accounting for approximately forty to fifty percent of the total time spent. This confirms that listening is the most frequently used classroom skill, and is also one of the most challenging components of language acquisition. Without adequate listening skills, FL/L2 learners are less likely to communicate effectively, given the complexities of learning and recognizing the sounds, rhythms, intonations, and stresses of the target language (TL). Listening is consistently interconnected with all the other language skills in that it is the basis for developing and improving such skills and for stimulating

In contrast to reading, writing, and speaking, listening is believed to be relatively more difficult for FL/L2 learners, because it involves interpreting, understanding, evaluating, and memorizing. Since listening is one of the most difficult language skills, FL learners are expected to face significant barriers to acquiring proficient listening comprehension. As Hamouda (2013) observed, some university departmental syllabi focus more on English grammar, reading, and vocabulary than on listening; moreover, FL/L2 teachers typically pay more attention to teaching reading, speaking, and writing. This might be due to the fact that many curricula and textbooks inadequately cover listening skills. Similarly, Renukadevi (2014) confirmed that “listening is not yet fully integrated into the curriculum and needs to be given more attention in a language learning setting” (p. 60).

In light of such studies, the present study sets out to confirm the importance of listening to learning a new language. More specifically, listening plays a crucial role in helping language learners acquire vocabulary and correct pronunciation because there is a strong correlation between vocabulary and listening. Listeners might recognize 50% of the words in a passage and make use of them unintentionally while trying to understand the meaning (Paran, 1996; Milton, Wade & Hopkins, 2010; Nowrouzi, Tam, Zareian, & Nimechisalem, 2015). Improving vocabulary always involves the receptive skills of listening and reading. Even if language learners mostly listen and read, acquiring the correct pronunciations of new vocabulary words can help them construct new sentences (Al-khresheh & Al-Ruwaili, 2020). The most important consideration in language learning is knowing what, where, when, to whom, and how to listen. This study suggests that apprising FL/L2 teachers of the difficulties of listening comprehension helps them to develop instructional listening strategies more effectively.

Although listening in language teaching has recently received exceptional focus due to technological devices that support and enhance language learners' listening skills, research on the specific listening problems encountered by Saudi EFL learners is limited. The insufficiency of research on Saudi EFL learners' listening skills has been noticeably acknowledged by several researchers who have declared that despite the prominent role of listening in language acquisition, it has not received adequate attention. This prompts research on the listening problems of EFL learners. Therefore, the present study sought to fill this gap through an in-depth investigation of listening problems by Saudi EFL students. In particular, the study aimed, first, at ascertaining whether Saudi EFL students face difficulty in their perception, parsing, and utilization phases of their listening comprehension and, second, identifying possible reasons for the problems to provide appropriate solutions. The study also aimed to determine whether the cultural background has any significant effect on their listening comprehension. To achieve these objectives, one instrumentation was carried out on eight EFL teachers and two instrumentations were used on a group of Saudi EFL students who live in a traditional, conservative, and family-oriented society where religion plays a highly significant role in shaping its culture.
In light of the above objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

[1] Do Saudi EFL students face difficulty in their perception, parsing, and utilization phases of their listening comprehension?
[2] What are the possible reasons for the low achievement of Saudi EFL students in their listening comprehension?
[3] Does the cultural background of Saudi EFL students have any significant effect on their listening comprehension?

**Literature Review**

**Listening Comprehension**

There are four essential dimensions of the listening-comprehension process that reliably describe listening: physiological, psychological, sociological, and communicative (Wolvin, 2010). Given the breadth of these components, researchers of listening skills have approached the topic from myriad perspectives. To point, consider the range of descriptions that concern listening comprehension. As Goss (1982) stated, listening is the process of understanding what is heard and organizing it into specific lexical components of which meaning may be determined. Nowrouzi et al. (2015) indicated that applying listening skills to an FL requires understanding the accents of various speakers. This means that an active listener can understand pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary simultaneously. In 1997, Purdy proposed a new definition of listening as receiving, constructing meaning, and responding to verbal and, or nonverbal messages. Rost (2002) asserted that listening is a receptive process that entails creating, representing, negotiating, and responding to what a speaker says. Steinberg (2007) presented a different definition of listening, claiming that it is the individual ability to use the auditory sense for deriving meaning and understanding from a message. Richards and Schmidt (2010) stated that listening comprehension is the process of understanding speech in a first or second language. The study of listening comprehension processes in second language learning focuses on the role of individual linguistic units (e.g. phonemes, words, grammatical structures) as well as the role of the listener’s expectations, the situation and context, background knowledge and the topic. (p. 344)

Finally, Jafari and Hashim (2015) defined listening as a channel for receiving understandable and explicable input, indicating that it is the most used skill and, therefore, needs the most attention in learning and teaching an EFL.

According to Rost (2002), the variety of definitions that researchers have proposed might be due to two main explanations. First, there is a general and individual propensity among researchers to define listening. The second explanation involves the discrete characteristics of listening. According to definitions as mentioned earlier, listening in oral communication generally means trying to derive meaning from uttered sounds or comprehending the spoken language of native speakers efficiently. In other words, listening comprehension is a conscious and dynamic process wherein the listener builds meaning concerning cues, commencing with existing knowledge based on compound tactical resources to accomplish the required task.
Teaching Listening

Listening involves three main types of activities in language learning: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. Pre-listening activities generally entail two significant goals, starting with activating students' prior knowledge of the language to clarify and develop their expectations and assumptions of what they are going to hear, followed by providing the environment necessary for completing the involved listening task. Building on prior knowledge can give background information on the speakers, the main topic, and the ideas and vocabulary embedded in the text, thereby stimulating students' interest. Such activities require well-constructed questions by language teachers to utilize the language components necessary to comprehend the text. Simply put, this stage helps students prepare to listen. Besides, teachers should be familiar with the challenges that students might face, such as accents, slang, vocabulary, and colloquialisms (Kazouz, 2014; Rajaei, 2015; Underwood, 1989).

Contemporary scholarship on the pre-listening stage has concluded that teachers must make specific preparations before students begin listening to the material that will be used during the lesson. First, teachers should set up the listening activity by offering students a brief glance of the listening text to activate their prior knowledge and connect it to the context, thus allowing them to predict what they are going to hear. Second, allowing learners to preview the material (e.g., a worksheet) is crucial. In general, a listening track in language learning should be accompanied by a worksheet that matches the students' English proficiency level. Because their students are learning a new language, teachers should first be familiar with the description of each level and take into account that the sounds, vocabulary, and grammar of English might be unlike anything they know in their mother tongue. In this case, the natural approach might work effectively because its main focus is on listening and speaking. Accordingly, speech production comes gradually and is certainly not compulsory (Alkhresheh, 2016; Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Hamouda, 2013; Nation, 2006).

There are three cognitive models for the pre-listening process: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive processing. First, a bottom-up pre-listening activity focuses mainly on pre-teaching the grammar and vocabulary, which are primarily related to the listening track. Second, a top-down activity focuses on students' prior knowledge to comprehend listening text. This activity involves prompting students to remember what they might know about the topic. For instance, if the listening track occurs in a zoo, the students could be asked what people see and do in a zoo or what animals they might see. Keeping the pre-listening activities brief is optimal. Third, interactive listening activities can be conducted in a communicative context, wherein the listener assumes the role of a participant or an addressee to discuss the meaning or to ask for explanations. This can assist teachers in achieving the main objective of student interaction, which shapes discourse and helps solve communication problems (Chiu, 2006; Kurita, 2012; Rajaei, 2015; Renukadevi, 2014; Richards, 2008; Rost, 2005; Zohrabi & Sabouri, 2015).

While-listening activities are generally conducted for centering students’ intellectual capacity for the speaker's language along with organizational patterns. This can give students more confidence to use language, react and respond to the speaker's ideas and perform the involved task. Accordingly, students should listen to both the general idea and specific details to make necessary inferences. Generally, students should listen to the text at least three times. The first time helps
them comprehend the general idea and confirm the accuracy of their predictions, thereby assisting them in setting up an initial framework to catch further information in subsequent listening. The second and third times allow them to obtain specific details of the text. Accordingly, teachers should be able to differentiate between two listening models at the while-listening stage, namely, holistic and segmental listening. Since the former involves students listening to the complete text so that they can use appropriate strategies and build listening stamina, the latter model should follow the holistic one because it is related to particular segments of the listening text. Specifically, there are different stages of speech perception: recognizing message sounds, identifying sounds, storing the aural message in long-term memory, and retaining for later use (Kazouz, 2014; Long & Tanh, 2016; Richards, 2005; Underwood, 1989; Zohrabi & Sabouri, 2015).

In post-listening activities, knowledge obtained from listening is targeted for improving the productive skills of speaking and writing. Simply put, this listening stage allows for further learning of vocabulary along with structures, and for engaging students in a two-way discussion to confirm that they have understood the text. Its purpose is to take students further than the listening text can by letting them practice what they have gained and explore what they have trouble understanding. At this stage, they can understand more clearly the words, phrases, and sentences that they could not understand while listening (El Tayeb, 2017; Long & Tanh, 2016; Underwood, 1989).

Classification of Listening Problems

According to the cognitive theoretical framework of listening comprehension proposed by Anderson (1995), the three phases of listening comprehension are perception, parsing and utilization. According to Buck (2001) and Nowrouzi et al. (2015), all listening difficulties can occur during these phases. Previous studies have reported that a cognitive framework is practical for understanding language learners' listening problems because “it pinpoints those places in cognitive processing where comprehension can break down” (Goh, 2000, p. 57). Such knowledge can facilitate understanding the challenges that FL/L2 learners contend with in their listening comprehension (Anderson, 1995; Goh, 2000; Hu, 2009; Sun & Li, 2008; Vandergrift, 2003; Zhang & Zhang, 2011). Throughout a particular listening event, phases mentioned above can coincide because they are interconnected and heuristic.

Anderson (1995) stated that perceptual processing is the first stage concerned with encoding the aural message once the listener receives the stimuli. The listener might encounter segmental phonemes retained in echoic memory for the subsequent stage of processing. According to Goh (2000), listening problems related to the perception phase might be because learners “do not recognize words they knew; neglect the next part when thinking about meaning; [cannot] chunk streams of speech; miss the beginning of texts; and concentrate too hard or [are] unable to concentrate” (p. 59). During the previous phase, low language proficiency seems to cause lexical and phonological problems (Goh, 1999; Nowrouzi et al., 2015). Nation (2006) clarified the strong relationship between vocabulary and listening, claiming that roughly 6,000–7,000 vocabulary words are necessary for a language learner to comprehend 98% of authentic discourse.

The second stage of cognitive processing is parsing, where what is heard can be transformed “into a mental representation of the combined meaning of [the] audio or visual
stimuli” (Zhang & Zhang, 2011, p. 165). This mental representation is associated with the knowledge stored in long-term memory. Parsing takes place once an utterance is segmented by syntactic structures to create a meaningful representation. Accordingly, EFL/L2 learners might encounter syntactic and semantic problems. At the stage of utilization, completing the interpretation to make it more meaningful requires the listener to accumulate different inferences. Ockey (2007) and Nowrouzi et al. (2015) reported that practical and discoursal problems are highly common at this stage, adding that practical problems are expected to occur because of the learner fails to comprehend the intentional implications, despite understanding the meanings of the words. In contrast, discoursal issues are generally due to an inability to realize the flow of ideas in the involved dialogue.

**Culture and Language Learning**

People around the world come from varied cultural backgrounds and speak different languages. While culture and language may seem distinct, there is an entangled mutual relationship between them. Language is a defining characteristic of culture and plays an integral role in its creation. When outsiders interact with a language, they are interacting with its culture. Understanding a person’s culture without knowledge of their language is infeasible. Language is not just a product of culture, it is also an important symbol. Language and culture develop reciprocally, with customs, cognition, and other cultural patterns being overtly coded into language (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Rallis & Casey, 2005).

The inability to understand social behaviors and cultural settings of a language may result in breakdowns, errors, misunderstandings, and misinterpretations during communication. Language is not just about receiving or sending information, it also maintains appropriate social behaviors in a culture. Communication and culture are two branches of the same tree. Culture dictates both the path and the form that communication takes – a message cannot be understood without knowledge of one’s culture (Emitt & Komesaroff, 2003; Wang, 2011).

Cultural differences involving speakers and listeners may possibly create communication barriers. Such differences comprise variations in vocabulary, accents, confusion regarding roles, and assumptions regarding shared data. Therefore, an effective communicator understands the cultural biases inherent to them. Exercising empathy, a focus on content, and suspending arbitrary judgments can alleviate such biases effectively (Garcia, 2002; Samovar, Porter, & Jain, 1981).

Lustig and Koester (2010) indicated that cultures have unique communication patterns that restrict effective listening if listeners are unaware of appropriate language patterns. Comprehending culture properly endows every word with the right context and meaning. Knowledge of a language’s sociocultural background makes it easier to learn new expressions, words, and speaking methods. Besides, understanding the role of culture is crucial for successful communication with native speakers. It increases engagement levels and promotes thinking in foreign languages. Understanding the lifestyles of native people personalizes the language, making it easier to learn the language (Diaz, 2001).

Knowing your counterpart’s culture enables you to speak eloquently. Instead of translating phrases developed in one’s native language, you can think, speak, use appropriate words within
the right context in the foreign language. For instance, certain concepts only make sense in English, which do not translate accordingly into other languages. But by understanding a language and its sociocultural context, you can develop alternative phrases to express them. Understanding the cultural background of a language, including lifestyle, literature, art, and other factors, makes you proficient in it. Without culture, only garbled machine translations remain, forcing people to use the language mechanically (Hayati, 2009; Namaziandost, Sabzevari, & Hashemifardnia, 2018).

Previous Studies on Listening Problems

Numerous studies have addressed the issue of listening problems encountered by EFL/L2 learners. Underwood (1989) declared that "many English language learners believe that the greatest difficulty with listening comprehension is that the listener cannot control how quickly a speaker speaks" (p. 16). In a study on a group of Omani EFL learners conducted to assess their knowledge in listening comprehension, Higgins (1997) identified three main factors that might hinder or enhance listening: pronunciation, vocabulary, and speech rate. Similarly, Hasan (2000) and Buck (2001) have cited almost the same difficulties that can be mitigated in listening tasks: unfamiliar words, different accents, and complex grammatical structures. Batel (2014) asserted that Saudi EFL learners' listening comprehension might be improved if teachers focus on video utilization rather than the audio one.

Goh (2000) identified ten listening issues through a triangulation method of three self-reported sources: listening diaries, oral reports, and recall protocols. Following the cognitive theoretical framework of language comprehension by Anderson (1995), 50% of the problems were perceptual, but the remaining problems were due to parsing and utilization.

In another study, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) reviewed the factors that affect EFL learners' listening comprehension. The most important outcomes of this study are as follows: First, the most effective way to teach listening is by creating a right environment that encourages listening. Second, teachers should be well prepared, and textbooks should ideally guide teachers by providing suggestions, strategies, and various activities.

Hamouda (2013) and Bingol, Celik, Yildiz, & Mart (2014) confirmed that teaching listening comprehension is replete with difficulties that are worth addressing. They revealed that many schools focus excessively on the skills of reading and writing while paying little attention to listening. The fact is that some teachers believe listening skills develop naturally. They also confirmed that understanding listening problems allows English instructors to assist their students in developing effective listening strategies.

Various English learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds encounter multiple problems in listening and that such problems should be solved. Listening comprehension was considered the weakest of the four language skills. It might be affected by factors such as a lack of background information and sufficient listening materials, poor quality of listening equipment, speech rate, proficiency level, and teacher training. The difficulty of recognizing and understanding grammatical structures could be due to a lack of interest. Researchers recommended that vocabulary building, improving syllabi, and providing appropriate English labs can help resolve such problems (Kazouz, 2014; Nowrouzi et al., 2015; Assaf, 2015; Eltayeb, 2017).
To summarise, a review of the literature confirms that listening in language acquisition is a worthy topic of research. The current study adopted the cognitive theoretical framework of language listening comprehension proposed by Anderson (1995). Moreover, the study also used two methods: a diagnostic test, to affirm that Saudi EFL students experience difficulty in applying their listening skills, and a reliable and valid questionnaire, to explore the three listening phases of perception, parsing, and utilization. These listening phases were not investigated in the Saudi context. Therefore, the focus of the study was on Saudi students, who face considerable difficulty in English learning. Unlike other FL students from the same or diverse linguistic backgrounds, Saudi EFL students are different because of the cultural environment in which they live in, where Islam is the only religion, and in which Arabic is the first and official language. According to Alrashidi and Phan (2015), English in Saudi Arabia was influenced by political, cultural and religious factors. Accordingly, Saudi EFL students do not start learning English in the kindergarten stage. Instead, they start at very late stages (at the age of 14). Elyas and Picard (2010) pointed out that Arabic is hugely valued by Saudi people because of its holiness as the language of a religion. As a matter of language maintenance, they avoid introducing it in the early stages of a child's education. For a long period, English, in Saudi Arabia, used to be taught merely in the intermediary and secondary school stages. Moreover, the number of English classes has been quite limited (e.g., four classes per week), taking into account that Saudi Arabia is a monolingual country; therefore, the only way to practice English is inside classrooms (Alhajailan, 2009). Besides, the Arabian Saudi culture and the English ones are different. The former is a conservative one while the latter is more open-minded. All the English curricula presented in the Saudi context reflect the cultural aspects of western societies. Hussain et al. (2016) revealed that separating culture from language makes the language learning process as a matter of difficulty. In the words of Alrashidi and Phan (2015), the current English listening curricula do not reflect the factual aspiration of the Muslim nation since they are designed based on western culture which is utterly far-off from Islamic principles. Most Saudi university departmental syllabi provide one or two listening courses during the four years of a bachelor's degree. This was acknowledged by Hamouda (2013) and Renukadevi (2014), who stated that listening had not been included in the Saudi English curricula until recently.

All of these mentioned factors can be considered an appropriate motivation for choosing Saudi EFL students as subjects for this study.

Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this study followed a cross-sectional research design for generalizing the results to the whole population of the study. Besides, it requires less time and is less demanding for subjects than other methodologies, thereby facilitating successful completion.

The Subjects

The study comprised a group of Saudi EFL students and teachers at Northern Border University. All the students were English majors between 19 and 36 years of age. To investigate the main problems that Saudi male EFL students confront in applying listening skills, a sample of 31 sophomore students were selected during the second academic semester of 2018–2019. Eight EFL teachers were also involved in this study.

The subjects of this study started learning English in the seventh grade, which means that they had already been learning English for seven years. Also, they had received a university
intensive English program for a year, which is intended to be preparatory and is compulsory for all students. Accordingly, all Northern Border University students are expected to master the four language skills in English, regardless of their major. The subjects had already passed the entrance exam. They had taken two listening courses, which were the only courses available, according to their English programme syllabus.

**Instruments**

In contrast to previous studies where only one instrument was used to gather data, the current study used a triangulation method that included three tools for achieving the research objectives. Buck (2001) elucidated that “one useful way of focusing on what particular tasks are measuring is to identify the necessary information” (p. 129). A diagnostic listening test and a closed-ended questionnaire were administered to 31 students to ascertain whether Saudi EFL students confront difficulty in their perception, parsing, and utilization phases of their listening comprehension and, second, identifying possible reasons for the problems. To determine whether the cultural background has any significant effect on their listening comprehension, eight EFL teachers, who teach the same subjects, were asked to write a reflective essay on how the cultural background may affect the subjects' listening comprehension. Data obtained from this instrumentation was analyzed qualitatively.

The diagnostic test entailed a short conversation by native English speakers. The approximately two-minute dialogue was an excerpt from Gillett’s (2004) Speak English Like an American, accompanied by an audio CD containing all the dialogues written in the book. Gillett wrote and designed the manual to address listening concerns and help EFL/L2 students improve their pronunciation. She asserted that pronunciation could not be enhanced unless listening skills are mastered. The diagnostic test is multiple-choice with ten items that assess students' knowledge of listening skills. The test was selected based on the researcher's familiarity with the participating students' academic levels. The conversation was chosen because of its appropriateness to the subjects' cultural and religious beliefs.

The second instrument used for assessing the subjects' ability was a closed-ended questionnaire designed to determine processing problems in listening comprehension. The 'Listening Comprehension Processing Problems Questionnaire' comprises a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = usually, and 5 = always. This scale is used to measure the level of difficulty encountered by subjects during listening comprehension. It was developed based on related literature and theory, and its validity and reliability have been established by Goh (2000), Nooroozi, Tam, Nimechisalem, and Zareian (2014), and Nowrouzi et al. (2015). The questionnaire contains 23 items divided into three groups. The first ten items cover subjects' perception problems, items 11 to 17 address parsing problems, and items 18 to 23 involve utilization problems.

Both instruments were used on a group of 31 students over two days. On the first day, the students were given ten minutes to review the test. The audio recording was then played three times, and the students were asked to listen carefully and complete the multiple-choice test. They were also given five minutes to review their answers. On the second day, after the test was marked and analyzed, the students were given back their test papers and a discussion between the
researcher and his subjects was carried out. Afterward, the questionnaire was administered to the subjects. The primary purpose of administering the questionnaire on the second day was, first, to give the students a chance to review their marks on the test and, second, to discuss their low achievement candidly on the test, thus increasing their awareness of the importance of listening and the main factors that affected them in taking the test and during their English learning in general. Such an approach to administering a questionnaire can encourage subjects to complete the questionnaire honestly.

Data Analysis and Discussion
A descriptive statistical method was applied to analyzing the data by using Microsoft Office Excel. The percentages, means, and standard deviations were provided. The overall rates of their English proficiency are compared in Figure one, where the mean is 2.97 and the standard deviation is 0.61.

Figure 1. English proficiency-based students' self-rating

Figure one shows that more than half of the subjects rated themselves as fair at English, whereas only 19.4% considered their overall English proficiency to be good. The percentages of the remainder of the subjects who rated themselves as poor and excellent were 16.1% and 0%, respectively. The percentage of 80.6% comprising fair and poor indicates that the subjects had severe problems in their English language learning. Possible explanations for this rating are the subjects’ previous experience in using English, insufficient FL exposure because of Arabic being the only language used in their local environments, inadequately trained language teachers, and inappropriate teaching methods, curricula, and syllabi. Thus, this rating that indicates fair and poor can be considered a proper motivation for this study.

Figure two below presents the overall rates of the four English skills, as reported by the subjects. It shows that the subjects faced difficulties in applying all their English skills. The figure indicates that the poorest skill was listening, with a percentage of 51.6%, followed by speaking and writing skills. Proportionately, a low percentage of them (12.9%) rated themselves as good at listening, whereas 32.3% of them deemed themselves fair at listening. This supports our claim that listening is a difficult task and Saudi EFL students face particular difficulty in their listening skills. Figure two also demonstrates that a great portion of the subjects rated themselves as fair at all language skills. Generally, listening seemed to be slightly difficult for the subjects because of their inability to transfer their L1 to the L2. It is well known that FL/L2 learners tend to transfer certain structures from their L1 to the L2 to facilitate their language learning process (Al-khresheh, 2015).
Other explanations might be a lack of interest, concentration, or motivation; different pronunciation and accents; or the speech rate.

![Figure 2. English skills-based students' self-rating](image)

**The Diagnostic Test**

The analysis of the diagnostic test revealed that the subjects contended with a severe problem in their listening comprehension. Of the 31 subjects, 20 failed the test, whereas the remainder passed. Figure three presents the percentage of students who failed the test compared with those who passed, showing that more than half of the students failed the test with a percentage of 64.50%, whereas only 35% passed.

![Figure 3. Percentage of students passing and failing the test](image)

Figure four presents the percentages of correct and wrong answers for the diagnostic test questions. It shows that the percentages of wrong answers are markedly higher than the correct ones. The results of this test also affirmed that the subjects faced a severe problem in applying their listening skills. As the figure shows, the highest percentage of correct answers was for Question one. This indicates that the subjects became less attentive as the conversation progressed.
The Questionnaire

Analysis of the questionnaire results revealed severe problems in the three cognitive phases of the listening process: perception, parsing, and utilization; the results for which are shown in Tables one, two, and three, respectively. Determining the difficulty level of listening problems was calculated according to the number of answers related to the 5-point Likert scale. For mean values ≤ 2, a 'low' level of difficulty was expected; however, a mean ranging 2–3.4 was considered 'moderate'; finally, if the mean was ≥ 3.5, a 'high' level was assigned.

Perception Problems

Table one presents the results for perception problems, which are covered by the first ten items in the questionnaire.

Table 1. Perception problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hearing sounds but not clear words</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. High speech rate</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Missing the beginning of the text</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Knowing the meaning of a word when seeing it</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Slow in recalling the meaning of familiar words</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mistaking one word for another</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Too many unfamiliar words or expressions</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Not recognizing many sounds or words</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Missing the next part of the text while thinking about the meaning</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Difficulty in concentration</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Means values ≤ 2 (low), 2-3.4 (moderate); and ≥ 3.5 (high) levels of listening problems

Table one shows that the subjects reported experiencing high levels of listening problems in all areas of perception expect for the first item, 'Hearing sounds but not clear words', which yielded a moderate level. 'Difficulty in concentration' was apparently the subjects’ least concern. However, it was reported more frequently than other problems in the perception phase. This is evident because of the high percentage of subjects who could answer the first test question correctly. Students lost their concentration directly after the first question, however, and thus answered the
remaining questions incorrectly. A high speech rate might also be a reason for low concentration. This explanation can be supported by Hamouda (2013), who stated that a high speech rate might compromise concentration and cause the listener to miss the beginning of the text. The subjects of this study also seemed to be intimidated by the high speech rate of native speakers. As pointed out by Nowrouzi et al. (2015), this might be because “English is a stress-timed language and the presentation rate is too fast for those whose native language is syllable-timed” (p. 267). This might explain why the subjects encountered difficulty concentrating while listening. It is well known that comprehension might be affected by diminished concentration. EFL/L2 learners generally find it difficult to listen to a forthcoming sentence while thinking of previous ones.

The items 'Not recognizing many sounds or words' and 'Slow in recalling the meaning of familiar words' were additional problems that severely influenced the learners' listening comprehension. Generally, EFL/L2 students do not recognize many English sounds because their lack of knowledge of pronunciation in connected speech. Another possible reason is that phonological modification might considerably decrease the level of students' comprehension.

**Parsing Problems**

The means, standard deviations, and levels of problems pertaining to the parsing phase are presented in Table two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Forgetting words or phrases just heard</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Not understanding the meaning of sentences</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Difficulty in dividing long sentences into several parts</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Difficulty in guessing the accurate meaning of words in sentences</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Difficulty in following unfamiliar topics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Difficulty in understanding a lot of new information in a short time</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Missing the next parts because of previous problems</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Means values ≤ 2 (low), 2–3.4 (moderate); and ≥ 3.5 (high) levels of listening problems

The results in Table two reveal that the subjects reported high levels of difficulty for all the items. 'Difficulty in following unfamiliar topics' and 'Difficulty in understanding a lot of new information in a short time' were reported to be the highest of difficulty, with means of 4 and 3.9, respectively. These results are in line with those of Nowrouzi et al. (2015). Generally, this phase involves creating a meaningful representation of words. As shown in Table two, the problem of connecting meaning with words is clearly pertinent. As pointed out by Rost (2005), L2 students should carry out a mixture of inferential processes while listening. This means that the ability to infer meaning is reduced because FL/L2 students are considered 'word-by-word processors'.

Homophonic forms can also pose difficulty in understanding how to confront a lexical problem. Because homophones are very common in English, listeners might see that the pronunciations and meanings of words are different contextually. It is evident that the subjects
required further training in sound discrimination and understanding semantics to achieve this phase of listening.

**Utilization Problems**

The failure to understand the entire meaning of an utterance throughout a listening task is a utilization problem. As mentioned, pragmatic and discoursal problems are highly common at this stage, because of the failure to understand the intended meaning. Although the subjects were able to recognize words, they could not understand the message. In Table three, the results of analyzing the utilization problems emphasize the existence of clear difficulty in the subjects' listening comprehension, with a mean of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 1.05. The table also shows that the subjects experienced moderate or high levels of difficulty in realizing the flow of ideas in the involved dialogue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Utilization problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Understanding words but not the intended message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Difficulty in comprehending the order of ideas in text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Becoming confused about the main idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Difficulty in obtaining details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Difficulty in discerning the relationships among ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Difficulty in deriving the supporting ideas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Means values ≤ 2 (low), 2-3.4 (moderate); and ≥ 3.5 (high) levels of listening problems

The next-highest levels of problems in the utilization phase were 'Understanding words but not the intended message', 'Difficulty in comprehending the order of ideas in text', and 'Difficulty in deriving the supporting ideas'. In contrast to the participants of Nowrouzi et al. (2015), the subjects in the current study reported a moderate level of difficulty in obtaining details.

Generally, the analysis of the questionnaire results revealed severe problems in all the listening phases, with moderate and high levels of difficulty. The analysis also indicated that the frequency of the problems pertaining to the parsing phase was slightly higher than those related to the perception and utilization phases of listening comprehension. Table 4 summarises the results for the listening processing problems.

![Figure 5. A summary of listening processing problems](image-url)
Teachers' Reflective Essay Analysis

In light of the detailed analysis above, the study confirmed that Saudi EFL students face considerable adversities in English and particularly in listening. The overall qualitative analysis of the teachers' reflective essay summarized that the Saudi environment, where the subjects of the topic studied live in, is believed to play an essential role not only in the acquisition of listening skills but also on English skills. The first issue is that Saudi EFL students start learning English at very late stages. According to the Critical Period Hypothesis, the best time for learning any FL is in early childhood. Scientifically, most of the brain's connections are formed at the age of 10. After this age, learning a new language becomes harder. This can be one of the factors that affect learning English, listening comprehension skills in particular. The main reason for delaying introducing English in schools might be the influence of certain religious, political, and cultural factors. Because Saudi Arabia is one of the most religious countries in the world and where Islam and Arabic are highly valued, there is a general belief that learning any FL may harmfully affect their Arabic language and their customs and cultures.

The second issue is that the only way that Saudi students practice English is inside the classroom. Linguistically, this artificial environment is not the ideal one for language learning. Thus, listening comprehension problems tend to happen because it is continuously consistent with all the other language skills, and it forms the basis for ultimately achieving language proficiency. The quantitative analysis confirmed that more than half of the subjects rated themselves as having average English proficiency, whereas 19.4% of them considered their overall English proficiency to be good. The analysis also reported that listening is the weakest skill among the subjects.

Interviewees have also pointed out in their reflective essays that culturally, there are significant differences between the English culture and the Arabian Saudi one. Therefore, teachers try to separate language from culture to remain in line with their customs, cultures, and religion. This dramatically affects learning English because language and culture are indivisible. The familiarization of cultural-linguistic knowledge plays an indispensable role in understanding the context. Separating culture from language hinders the language learning process. Most listening materials presented to the Saudi students are influenced by western culture and have more diverse cultural aspects than the students have been accustomed to. This is also another problem that attributes to a lack of interest in Saudi students to practice their listening skills and thus creates a low level of listening comprehension. The lack of cultural and social awareness can also be considered one of the essential factors that influence English teaching in the Saudi context. Consequently, English teachers should be more conscious and knowledgeable about the Saudi context to effectively accomplish the aims of EFL teaching and learning.

Another factor behind the low listening comprehension achievement of the subjects in the study is that most Saudi universities' departmental syllabi provide one or two listening courses throughout a bachelor's degree, and the number of English classes at schools is limited. This was acknowledged by several researchers (Hamouda, 2013; and Renukadevi, 2014).

Lastly, the results of this study are in line with previous literature regarding what might cause listening problems. The discussion is slightly different in terms of cultural environment where the subjects of study live in (Bingol et al., 2014; Buck, 2001; Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011;
Hamouda, 2013; Hasan 2000; Hasan, 2000; Higgins, 1997; Nowrouzi et al., 2015; Underwood, 1989). All of these previous studies confirmed the urgency of paying substantial attention to the problems of listening.

**Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations**

Having identified the main problems that L2 listeners face, the mitigation of listening problems becomes a crucial teaching task. Establishing firm control over listening comprehension requires implementing various well-designed activities.

As discussed, pre-listening, listening, and post-listening activities are reliable for conducting a successful listening lesson. Defining teaching goals and fitting them into the overall curriculum can facilitate the teaching process. One of the significant principles in teaching listening comprehension is to plan a listening lesson carefully, taking into consideration the three listening stages explained earlier, and thereby lending communicative importance to recall in order to assist students in developing their concentration. Making use of students' prior knowledge in the selection of listening courses is another remarkable idea for teaching listening and can highly improve their comprehension. In addition, teachers must remember that the main objective of a listening lesson is teaching, not testing. This means that teachers' feedback should be viewed as a means of making students feel more comfortable and informing them of their progress. One of the misconceptions of teaching listening comprehension is that EFL teachers want their students to understand each word they hear by repeating its pronunciation (Eltayeb, 2017). The consequence of this approach is that students are likely to worry when they do not understand a particular word or phrase clearly. Therefore, they become less motivated, more disappointed, and more discouraged by failure.

Listeners must be able to utilize a mixture of advanced techniques, strategies, and interactive processes in order to derive meaning and access prior relevant linguistic knowledge. Listeners should also be aware of the variety of native-speaker accents. Teachers, on the one hand, should use a low rate of speech; choose the right learning environment and provide authentic listening materials; apply different types of inputs such as news, interviews, radio programs, general lectures, and films; stimulate students' vocabulary; and encourage predicting the content of forthcoming messages while providing as much feedback as possible. On the other hand, listening activities should be designed according to the students’ needs, academic or English proficiency levels, and interests, because these factors profoundly affect the choice of appropriate activity. Moreover, FL teachers should assist their students in becoming more familiar with different native speakers' accents, by teaching them the pronunciation rules and using facial expressions to strengthen verbal messages. Listening comprehension classrooms should also be transformed from teacher-centred to student-based. This can help students expand the skills essential for listening comprehension.

Teachers should also become familiar with the difficulties that their students might face while learning listening comprehension. They should implement task-based approaches, apply schema theory, and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. For instance, teachers should not teach listening separately but should instead combine it with other skills. In so doing, they should follow an integrated teaching approach, bearing in mind that language skills are interrelated and
complement each other. Generally, the reasons for the barriers to disciplined listening comprehension are as follows: the difficulty of concentration in a FL because many sounds are indistinguishable and different from what listeners are accustomed to in their native language, a lack of, or insufficient vocabulary, the speed of the speaker, idiomatic expressions, the quality of recording, pronunciation, accent, anxiety, cultural differences, failure to identify the cues which signify the movement of a speaker from one point to another, providing an illustration, or a recurring point (Flowerdew & Miller, 1996; Renukadevi, 2014).

Syllabus designers in the Arab world in general and Saudi Arabia in particular, should be more inspired in terms of designing outstanding syllabi that take into account the religious and cultural beliefs of such conservative societies and reflect the great message of Islam.

Given this, the study suggests that the English language curriculum in such a conservative, religious, and family-oriented society should be circumspectly selected. Although language should not be separated from culture, listening materials should avoid including conversations about some non-Muslim (western) habits, customs such as dating and drinking alcohol which is ultimately rejected in the Saudi community. Western culture(s) and different concepts of thinking and behaving should be carefully introduced. Some miss-beliefs that call English as the (language of infidels), as mentioned by Elyas and Mahboob (2017), and consider that western culture may destabilize Islamic values and subsequently prejudice Islamic youth, should be well reconsidered.

To improve such EFL students' listening comprehension skills, the study suggests developing their positive attitude towards English in general and listening in particular through providing authentic materials that address their beliefs and are in line with their Islamic values. Integrating video-podcasts into listening courses can profoundly improve their comprehension and reduce many difficulties such as 'difficulty in concentration', which was reported more frequently than other problems in the perception phase. Video-podcasts in conjunction with visual aids is believed to create a good teaching listening comprehension environment and thereby better understanding. According to Shahid and Ali (2017), "using both visual and auditory sensory channels can aid students comprehend and retain information better than using one channel" (p. 147).

Conclusion

The main objectives of this study were to ascertain whether Saudi EFL students face difficulty in their perception, parsing, and utilization phases of their listening comprehension and, second, identifying possible reasons for the problems to provide appropriate solutions. The study also aimed to determine whether the cultural background has any significant effect on their listening comprehension. The findings of this study can substantially contribute towards increasing the understanding of listening difficulties in language learning in general, and to improving the teaching–learning process in Saudi Arabia more specifically.

The analysis affirmed that Saudi EFL students face severe problems in their listening comprehension. The highest percentage of the subjects (64.5%) rated themselves as fair at English. Listening was reported to be the deficient skill (51.6%). The analysis also showed that slightly more than half of the subjects (64.5%) failed the diagnostic test. The data obtained from the
questionnaire revealed 23 processing problems, divided into three major phases; perception, parsing, and utilization. The problem of concentration was reported more frequently than the other problems in the perception phase. Parsing problems comprise a variety of difficulties in following unfamiliar topics, guessing the accurate meaning of words and sentences, and understanding an abundance of new information within a minimal time. In the utilization phase of listening comprehension, it was found that the subjects faced considerable difficulty in understanding the intended message of the speaker despite their understanding of words used. The qualitative analysis of the teachers’ reflective essay confirmed that the Saudi environment plays an indispensable role not only in the acquisition of listening skills but also on English skills. This is because language and culture cannot be separated.

Finally, the conclusion supports the earlier claim that despite the educational reform efforts of local education authorities in the kingdom, English Education has remained irregular. Therefore, this study hopes to increase the awareness of policymakers, educational reformers and educational program directors on what could be done to help Saudi EFL students overcome difficulties as mentioned earlier, improve their language skills, and accomplish academic success. It is also hoped that the findings will increase the sensitivity of education officials to the needs and concerns of Saudi EFL students. Mutual collaboration among syllabus designers, researchers, textbook writers, and decision-makers can lead to highly favorable results. To attain a clearer picture of listening problems and their adverse effects on the English learning process, it is highly recommended that further studies be carried out with a large sample of students from different institutions.

About the Author
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Introducing Socrative as a Tool for Formative Assessment in Saudi EFL Classrooms

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Abstract
As one of the most popular Online Student Response Systems (OSRSs), Socrative is defined as a web-based platform that can be accessed using any browser that is connected to the Internet (Mork, 2014). In an attempt to guide EFL teachers on their journey towards transforming their traditional paper-based formative assessment into using electronic tools, this study seeks to present the expectations and attitudes of Saudi female learners towards the use of mobile-based formative assessment. The study aims to investigate the attitudes of EFL learners towards the use of mobile-based tests in English classes using Socrative as a model for assessment. For this purpose, 35 female students completed all three stages of the experiment; initial survey, Socrative quiz, post-experiment survey. The participants are enrolled in one of the courses of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) offered by the Preparatory Year Program at a Saudi state university. The findings of the study indicate that almost half of the participants preferred paper-based over mobile-based tests in the pre-experiment survey; after the experiment, however, the students changed their preferences in favor of mobile-based tests. The study also highlighted different advantages, reported by the participants, of using Socrative as a tool for formative assessment in EFL classrooms. The study recommends that teachers implement the use of (OSRSs) in their classrooms as they have many pedagogical benefits for language learners.

Keywords: EFL classroom formative assessment, mobile-based testing, paper-based testing, Socrative, Online Student Response Systems (OSRSs).

Introduction

With the increasing technological developments and the young generation growing so attached to their smartphones, it becomes essential to find more innovative and engaging tools in classroom formative assessment to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In the year 2020, the world has come face-to-face with the challenge of finding alternatives for synchronous teaching, communication, and assessment while keeping physical distancing due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Tools for Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) are inevitably needed during this time of crisis. Among these tools, one that holds promising and up-to-date potentials—Socrative—is chosen for formative classroom assessment in this study. When used as a tool for testing, students can access Socrative using their mobile phones. In the present time, Yarahmadzehi and Goodarzi (2020) note that “because of their flexibility, size and capacities, mobile phones are beginning to replace computers” (p.181). Compared to paper-based testing, mobile-based testing is more eco-friendly since printing hundreds of test sheets is no longer needed. Besides, mobile-based testing is more user-friendly than Computer-Based Tests (CBT) because mobile phones are more readily available and affordable.

However, mobile-based testing is not commonly used in Saudi Arabia; therefore, many Saudi EFL learners are not familiar with this technology in an educational context. In order to integrate mobile-based testing effectively in EFL classrooms, it is necessary to present teachers with a clear vision of learners’ attitudes and expectations of this possible change in classroom formative assessment. The importance of this study is in its attempt to track the impact of first experiences with mobile-based testing on Saudi EFL learners who have never experienced formative assessment using their smartphones. As a result, the findings of this study can be used as a base for EFL educators to successfully integrate mobile-based formative assessment in classrooms. The current study introduces Socrative to learners as a replacement for paper-based formative class assessment only; using Socrative as a replacement for summative assessment tools such as paper-based tests or Computer-based Tests (CBT) is not considered in this research.

As one of the most popular Online Student Response Systems (OSRSs), Socrative is defined as a web-based platform that can be accessed using any browser that is connected to the Internet (Deichman, 2014; Luxton, 2019; Macglynn & Kelly, 2017; Mork, 2014). The focus of this study is on the expectations and attitudes of EFL learners who have never used (OSRSs) in language assessment. In this pre-and-post-experiment design study, Socrative is used as a formative assessment tool in an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) course offered by a state university in Saudi Arabia for business students. The current study aims to investigate the attitudes of EFL learners towards the use of OSRSs in language classes using Socrative as a model for assessment. For this purpose, the current study answers the following research questions:

1- What are the attitudes of Saudi EFL learners towards the use of mobile phones in language formative assessment?
2- What are the changes in Saudi EFL learners’ attitudes after experiencing Socrative as a tool for language formative assessment?
Literature Review

Recently, the number of studies that examined the implementation of (OSRSs) has increased considerably due to the advances in information technology. Some researchers tested the use of Socrative for pure assessment purposes, and others sought to highlight the effectiveness of this electronic tool in enhancing cooperative learning and students’ in-class engagement. This section reviews different studies investigating students’ perceptions and attitudes towards the use of Socrative in their EFL classrooms and its impact on their assessment and learning performances.

In several studies, students who experienced using Socrative for test-taking, as well as in-class activities, perceived these experiences positively (Abdulla, 2018; Awedh, Mueen, Zafar, & Manzoor, 2014; Balta, Perera-Rodríguez, & Hervás-Gómez, 2018; Guarascio, Nemecek, & Zimmerman, 2017; Ohashi, 2015; Yoon, 2017). The data collected using surveys by Balta et al. (2018), Awedh et al. (2014), and Abdulla (2018) showed positive attitudes towards using Socrative to support class learning and test achievement. These studies also highlighted the advantages that Socrative proposed to users over other training and testing tools, including enhancing motivation and engagement of the learners in EFL classes. Similarly, Ohashi (2015) implemented the use of Socrative to improve EFL students’ writing performance and, as a result, received positive feedback from the participants. Yoon (2017) concluded that Socrative changed students’ attitudes towards the learning of English, where the initial survey showed that the participants lacked interest in their English classes; however, after implementing Socrative, the students became more interested and had more positive perceptions in the post-experiment survey. When students’ class assessment is not graded, Yoon (2017) proposed allowing students to hide their names to provide them “with a sense of anonymity and safety in order to promote participation, freedom and creativity in answers, and reduce anxiety about being wrong” (p.55). The participants in the previously discussed studies favored Socrative for class learning and assessment because it enabled anonymous login, immediate feedback, and both individual and group access (Abdulla, 2018; Awedh et al., 2014; Balta et al., 2018; Ohashi, 2015; Yoon, 2017). In addition, a study conducted by Guarascio et al. (2017) reported not only positive perceptions of Socrative, but also a preference for using it as an assessment and training tool over another Student Response Systems (SRSs) tool called “TurningPoint.”

In a comparative study, Mohamad, Lestari, Zahidi, and Matore (2019) investigated the perceptions of both learners and lecturers after experiencing the use of Socrative, which resulted in contradictory opinions. The researchers concluded that the learners found Socrative useful, encouraging, and effective in their EFL learning. The students highly benefited from the feature of adding explanations to the quiz items because it aided their understanding of the grammatical rules and “enhanced their English competency” (Mohamad et al., 2019, p.146). However, the students reported some issues related to the availability of the internet in the classroom (Mohamad et al., 2019). The researchers in the aforementioned study presented the perceptions of only two lecturers against thirty-four students; both lecturers disapproved of the usefulness and effectiveness of Socrative in EFL classrooms. The focus of the current study is on learners; therefore, further discussion of instructors’ perceptions is not considered in this review of the literature.
Similar to the focus of the current study, two studies by Chou, Chang, and Lin (2017) and by Yarahmadzehi and Goodarzi (2020) sought to investigate learners’ perceptions while comparing mobile-based tests using Socrative to paper-based tests in language classrooms. The results of these studies indicated positive attitudes towards the use of mobile phones for formative assessment. In both studies, participants reported some advantages of using Socrative over paper-based tests, including better engagement in tasks and higher motivation. Furthermore, the participants of both studies described the experience of using Socrative in EFL formative assessment as entertaining and expressed their desire to use Socrative for formative assessment in other courses, too. Learners’ feelings and attitudes were essential in promoting their performance as Yarahmadzehi and Goodarzi (2020) explained that enjoyment allowed students to “meet certain standards and be aware of the main purpose of their lessons” (p.191). According to Yarahmadzehi and Goodarzi (2020), immediate feedback and quick answers were two advantages that the students appreciated the most. These features played an important role in motivating learners to be more active in learning (Yarahmadzehi & Goodarzi, 2020). In the same sense, Chou et al. (2017) found that the main reason behind participants’ high engagement in learning was their feelings of curiosity towards this new tool of assessment. The only difficulty Socrative-users faced was related to accessing the application in class (Chou et al., 2017; Yarahmadzehi & Goodarzi, 2020).

On the other hand, some studies presented either negative perceptions or unexpectedly low acceptance of Socrative in EFL classrooms (Balta & Tzafilkou, 2019; Pérez Garcias & Marín, 2016; Turan & Meral, 2018). When comparing Socrative to Kahoot!, Turan and Meral (2018), concluded that Kahoot! surpassed Socrative in terms of students’ satisfaction and engagement. Wang (2015) differentiated between Student Response Systems (SRSs) such as Socrative and Game-based Student Response Systems (GSRSs) such as Kahoot! in the sense that the latter involved “the creation of energy and engagement by using gamification” (as cited in Turan and Meral, 2018, p. 107). The gaming nature of Kahoot! reduced students’ anxiety far more than Socrative. In the same sense, Balta and Tzafilkou (2019) concluded that the participants in their study were not as interested as they expected in using Socrative, and there were no differences in perceptions across different genders and different language proficiency levels. However, differences in major had some minor effects on the results, which the researchers attributed to curriculum difficulties. Furthermore, limited experience with mobile-based tests had an impact on students’ perceptions according to Pérez Garcias and Marín (2016). The type, difficulty, and nature of the items presented to students through Socrative played an important role in changing their perceptions and learning engagement in the previously discussed studies (Balta & Tzafilkou, 2019; Pérez Garcias & Marín, 2016; Turan & Meral, 2018).

Similar to the study conducted by Turan and Meral (2018), Kim (2019) tested the effectiveness and learners’ attitudes towards both Socrative and Kahoot! in EFL classes. According to Kim (2019), Kahoot! was defined as “a free game-based learning platform that can be used to create various formative assessments such as online quizzes, surveys, and discussions” (p.61). The researcher concluded that although the results of the grammar formative assessment were not significantly higher than paper-based quizzes, the participants perceived both Kahoot! and Socrative positively. Both Socrative and Kahoot! were more advantageous in teaching grammar than traditional paper-based activities because they allowed for more “active involvement in class.
and motivation to learn” (Kim, 2019, p.70). Based on the results of the survey, Kim (2019) concluded that the group who experienced Kahoot! showed more interest and engagement in learning grammar than the one who experienced Socrative and attributed this finding to the gaming nature of Kahoot! that creates an atmosphere of competition and fun. Nevertheless, Socrative was found more advantageous than Kahoot! due to its well-perceived features that included immediate feedback and anonymity (Kim, 2019).

In a study conducted by Waluyo (2018), Socrative was used in formative language assessment, and the findings illustrated that Socrative could be a useful tool not just in assessment but also in students’ progress. The researcher used ten Socrative quizzes to assess the vocabulary acquisition of 136 English Language students, and to help students monitor their progress. Taking advantage of the instant feedback feature, the students could detect their weaknesses and strengths, learn from their tests, and consequently improve. However, the study resulted in noticeable differences in students’ achievements and engagement due to their different proficiency levels. According to Waluyo (2018), the acceptance of Socrative and the learning progress of intermediate students were more significant than beginners. This result contradicts the findings of Balta and Tzafilkou (2019), discussed earlier, who did not report any effects of students’ proficiency level on their class engagement and perceptions of Socrative.

Based on the studies discussed in this review of the literature, the efforts of different researchers, who investigated the perceptions of students after implementing the use of mobile-based formative assessment in EFL classrooms, covered various aspects of new tools such as Socrative. However, there are limited studies that tackle the learners’ readiness to accept the use of mobile-based tests, particularly Socrative, as an alternative formative assessment tool that might one day replace paper-based tests. It is also worth mentioning that in the local context of this study, Saudi universities and other educational institutions are now moving towards replacing paper-based tests with automated tests such as computer-based tests (CBTs). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the perceptions, expectations, and preferences of the Saudi EFL learners in case their teachers start switching to mobile-based tests in classroom formative assessment. Now in the year 2020, the world is experiencing a global pandemic that has transformed many educational practices to complete reliance on distance online learning. One of these practices is related to classroom formative assessment, where the need for a tool that requires less physical contact between teachers and students is vital. This need draws our attention to the potentials of smartphones in supporting the educational systems that have been neglected for a long time.

**Methodology**

The experiment took the form of a pre- and post-experiment design, where the participants answered a pre-experiment survey about their attitudes towards the use of mobile phones in their language assessment. After that, the participants responded to a post-experiment survey about their new perspectives after experiencing Socrative for the first time. The qualitative data obtained from both surveys were analyzed thematically, and the categories that emerged based on the existing responses were presented as descriptive data in the form of percentages.
Participants and Context

Among the 47 students enrolled in two groups in the Preparatory Year Program at a Saudi state university, only 35 have completed all three stages of the experiment. The participants were all female students in the Administrative Track. They were between 18-20 years old, and their native language was Arabic. Techniques of “homogenous sampling” were employed in this study, where participants from different subgroups share similar characteristics and learning experiences (Dornyei, 2007). They were chosen for this experiment because they have never experienced using mobile phones in language assessment. The level of their English Language proficiency at the time of the experiment was (B1) since they have passed two achievement tests of extensive (A2 & B1) courses in English for General Purposes (EGP) in their first semester in order to be qualified for an ESP course. This (B1) level is equivalent to an intermediate level according to the descriptors of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Woodrow, 2018). The course delivered to the participants at the time of the experiment during the Spring semester in (2019) was Business English. The number of weekly contact hours was sixteen; all hours were given in face-to-face sessions in-campus.

Research Instruments

This experiment was conducted using three tools: a pre-experiment survey, a Socrative quiz, and a post-experiment survey. Each survey contained two open-ended questions, which were translated into the native language of the participants (Arabic) to ensure comprehension. The pre-experiment survey asked about students’ expectations and preferences of two test modes (mobile-based or paper-based tests). The second survey asks about students’ descriptions of their experiences and whether their opinions regarding mobile-based tests have changed or not (see Appendices A and B). Both electronic surveys were sent to the participants via email. The Socrative quiz contained ten multiple-choice items which covered the vocabulary and the grammar of the first five units of the students’ textbook; Commerce 2. The design of the quiz enabled some Socrative features, such as instant feedback, picture clues, explanation, and total score display (see Figures one, two, and three).

After each answer, the test-takers received instant feedback and knew whether they have answered correctly or not, and which option was the correct answer. Some feedback notes included an explanation (Figure one) to help the students learn while taking the test. In addition,
the *Socrative* quiz used in the experiment included some picture clues (Figure two) to help students understand the questions better and choose the correct answer.

![Figure 2. Socrative picture clue feature](image)

At the end of the test, a screen displaying the total score of the test-taker (Figure three) allowed students to monitor their progress and find out how well they have achieved in their tests. The students did not need to wait for their teachers to mark their answers.

![Figure 3. Socrative total score display feature](image)

**Procedures**

The English instructors of both groups approved of the experiment and cooperated in facilitating the communication between the researchers and the students. After designing the *Socrative* quiz and translating the questions of the two surveys into Arabic, a pilot study was conducted on seven university students who experienced all three stages. Based on the results of the piloting study, quiz items and survey questions were revised. The participants, who have voluntarily agreed to join this study, were asked to choose nicknames to enable the researchers to identify the students who completed all three stages of the experiment (see Figure four). Only the responses of the students whose nicknames appeared on both surveys and the quiz were included in the data for this study. Data of students who missed one or more of the stages were excluded because they did not achieve the purpose of the study; identifying EFL students’ attitudes before and after experiencing mobile testing. The whole experiment was carried out online using emails and the *Socrative* Application.

![Figure 4. Stages of the experiment](image)
After the participants completed the initial survey, they logged into the Socrative quiz that was accessible for six hours specified by the participants themselves. Immediately after the students finished the quiz, they received a link via email to complete the second electronic survey. The quiz results and data collected from both surveys were matched based on the participants’ nicknames. It was revealed that only 35 out of 47 participants had completed all three stages of the experiment. Therefore, only the responses of these 35 participants were translated into English and used as data for the current study. Descriptive analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the surveys was used to present the results.

**Results**

The responses of the participants in the pre-experiment survey showed different attitudes towards the use of mobile-based language tests. Figure five summarizes the students’ responses before experiencing the Socrative quiz regarding their expectations of mobile-testing being as simple and effective as paper-based testing.

![Figure 5. EFL learners’ expectations of mobile-based testing (pre-experiment)](image)

The results indicated that more than half of the participants (63%) agreed that using mobile-based tests would be simple and effective. They used phrases like “yes,” “of course,” “I think it will be the same,” and “I don’t see much difference if the questions are the same.” On the other hand, (17%) of the participants disagreed and thought that paper-based tests were easier than mobile-based tests. Several students explained that they “are used to paper-based tests,” and some said that they “do not want to read English from a screen.” Up to (20%) remained undecided, saying that they do not know because they have not experienced any form of mobile-based testing.

Regarding the responses to the second question in both surveys, where students choose between mobile-based testing and paper-based testing, it appeared that the participants favored both paper-based and mobile-based tests almost equally in the pre-experiment survey (see Figure six).

![Figure 6. Students’ preferences in the pre-experiment survey](image)
However, there was a significant change in the students’ preferences after they experienced Socrative for testing as indicated in Figure seven. Up to 77% of participants preferred mobile-based tests over paper-based tests in the post-experiment survey, whereas 17% preferred the traditional paper-based tests over mobile-based tests, and only 6% remained neutral.

![Figure 7. Students’ preferences in the post-experiment survey](image)

Another finding of this study is related to how the participants describe their first experiences of mobile-based testing. The majority of students describe this experience positively as indicated in Figure eight.

![Figure 8. Students’ descriptions of their first mobile-based test experience](image)

It appears that the word ‘nice’ was used more than others to describe students’ first mobile-based testing experience, while concepts such as ‘fun,’ ‘great,’ and ‘smooth’ were used equally by up to 14% of participants. Other words like ‘easy’ and ‘good’ were also used by around 12% which is a similar percentage to the word ‘bad;’ the only negative word used to describe the first experience of mobile-based testing.

**Discussion**

The aim of this study is to investigate students’ attitudes towards the use of mobile-based tests in formative language assessment and to investigate the effect of their first experience of Socrative on their attitudes towards the use of mobile-based testing. Understanding learners’ attitudes and preferences has great influence on their acceptance of mobile-based testing tools which, in turn, affects their academic achievement (Balta et al., 2018). The descriptive analysis of the Arab World English Journal

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ISSN: 2229-9327
participants’ responses answers the research questions. Generally, the participants had positive attitudes before they experienced the use of mobile-based tests, which can be attributed to the fact that they have experienced different mobile applications, especially social media applications, and that they expected this new experience to be as smooth. This conclusion is supported by Yoon (2017), who used an initial survey before the experiment and found that although the participants had negative attitudes towards learning English, they showed interest in interacting with their classmates and instructor through Socrative.

Before the experiment, participants in this study were reluctant to choose mobile-based over paper-based testing because they were used to the traditional paper-based tests. They were intimidated to try new test administration modes considering that tests usually cause stress for most students. This result is in line with the findings of Chou et al. (2017) and Pérez Garcias and Marin (2016) who also explained that the participants in their studies were uncertain regarding the effectiveness and possibilities of Socrative tests even though they preferred mobile-based tests over the traditional paper-based tests. After the experiment in this study, the students felt more at ease probably because their real identities were not exposed during the test since they used nicknames. Ohashi (2015) found similar results when the students replied that anonymity had encouraged their active participation. Another interpretation of this change in participants’ attitudes could be attributed to the additional features of Socrative where questions are augmented with pictures, clues, and explanations. This corresponds with the findings of Waluyo (2018), which indicated that mobile-based testing tools such as Socrative can promote learners’ academic achievement and facilitate teacher’s reliance on formative assessment.

The significant changes in students’ preferences pre- and post- the experiment are attributed to the testing tool, Socrative, used in the experiment itself. They described it using positive terms because it includes testing features that are not found in the traditional paper-based tests; such as instant feedback, picture clues, answer explanation, and total score display. Similar to the participants of Ohashi (2015) and Guarascio et al. (2017) who referred to Socrative as useful, enjoyable, and easy; the satisfaction of the students in this study is projected on the positive words they used to describe their first mobile-based testing experience. Such descriptions included words like ‘nice,’ ‘smooth,’ ‘fun,’ ‘great,’ ‘easy,’ and ‘good,’ which are similar to the words ‘easy’ and ‘attractive’ used by the participants in the study conducted by Yarahmadzehi and Goodarzi (2020). This finding, on the other hand, contradicts the results of Turan and Meral (2018) whose participants experienced more anxiety with Socrative compared to Kahoot! and preferred game-based OSRSs like Kahoot! over non-game-based OSRSs like Socrative. Similarly, Kim (2019) found that the participants who experienced Kahoot! reported higher preference for this tool compared to Socrative users due to the gamification feature found in the former.

The analysis of the qualitative data resulted in other findings that emerged when the students attempted to compare mobile-based tests to paper-based tests to justify their preferences. For example, students who favored mobile-based tests listed some advantages that included saving time (since they did not have to bubble answer sheets), reducing test anxiety, instant feedback, better chances for translating unfamiliar words, display of final score, user-friendliness (since the test is available to take anywhere), and finally better focus (since the screen displays only one question at a time). Abdulla (2018) highlighted similar advantages of using Socrative and related
them to the success of the study experiment. In the same sense, Awedh et al. (2014) and Mohamad et al. (2019) concluded that, being smooth and comfortable to use, **Socrative** is a perfect tool to increase students’ motivation and engagement. In addition, Balta and Tzafilkou (2019) listed ‘saving time’ and ‘instant feedback’ among the most preferred advantages of using **Socrative** in formative classroom assessment.

Although the participants of this study had positive attitudes towards mobile-based testing, some reported a few issues related to Internet access, battery life, and minimizing on-screen time. This finding corresponds to the results of Yoon (2017) whose participants reported issues related to technology use in the classroom. Besides, the participants in the current study, who preferred paper-based to mobile-based tests, explained that they found paper-based tests more reliable since they did not have to worry about technical issues such as difficulties in logging into the quiz room or running out of battery life. To overcome these challenges, teachers can avoid such issues once they point out to students that they need to bring fully charged mobile phones to class, and allow them to log into **Socrative** at the beginning of the class to save time (Ohashi, 2015). Also, teachers are recommended to control the flow of the class and the distribution of time between teaching and **Socrative** activities if they find that students get distracted by their devices (Guarascio et al., 2017). In fact, **Socrative** has a feature that enables the teacher to control the transition between test items, which can be very beneficial in case teachers wanted to limit quiz time or prevent their students from using any supportive applications such as electronic dictionaries. Yoon (2017) suggested that technical issues can be dealt with if teachers use pair/group work and enable mobile phone sharing.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, Saudi EFL students’ first experiences of **Socrative** were generally found to be positive, encouraging, and supportive for language assessment. There was a noteworthy change in students’ attitudes towards the use of mobile-based tests pre- and post- the experiment. The advantages of using mobile-based tests reported by the students far surpass the disadvantages, which are not more than a few technical issues that teachers can easily overcome. EFL teachers, who are willing to use technology for formative assessment in class, are recommended to use OSRSs like **Socrative** because it has various useful features. Furthermore, **Socrative** has a more serious layout that sets test-like mood unlike other game-based OSRSs such as **Kahoot!** For future research, this study can be replicated during real class time with a larger number of participants. A comparative study of the attitudes of both female and male students can bring more insights into EFL learners’ readiness for mobile-based testing. Future researchers are also advised to test other features of **Socrative** that facilitate in-class interactions such as ‘Space Race,’ and the latest update of **Socrative** in 2020 includes more useful features that support online distance learning. Now that the majority of students around the world have better experiences of e-learning tools including **Socrative**, it is essential to conduct more research to investigate its effectiveness as a replacement for paper-based formative assessment.

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**Appendix A**

*Pre-experiment survey questions*

1. Do you expect using mobile-based English Language tests would be as simple and effective as paper-based tests? Why?

2. In your opinion, which one will be easier and more effective to use for your class quizzes: paper-based tests or mobile-based tests? Why?

**Appendix B**

*Post-experiment survey questions*

1. Now after experiencing the use of mobile-based English Language test through Socrative, how would you describe this experience?

2. In your opinion, which one is easier and more effective to use for your class quizzes: paper-based tests or mobile-based tests? Why?
Saudi EFL Teacher Professional Identity and Emotions: Emotions Regulation Perspective

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Abstract
Research has shown that a strong teacher professional identity is an integral part of teaching as well as learning processes. Unlike the traditional view of who teachers are, nowadays conceptualization considers teachers not only as reservoirs of knowledge but individuals that inspire other individuals in unique ways. Teacher professional identity exhibits teachers’ beliefs, emotions, and teaching philosophies. Among other aspects, teacher emotions are a strong indicator of teacher professional identity; therefore, unless teachers are better equipped with cognitive strategies to regulate their emotions and are more emotionally intelligent, achieving their teaching and non-teaching goals will remain a forlorn dream. The current paper encapsulated various aspects of teacher emotions and emotion regulation models and has sought to answer the following overarching research question: How do emotions influence teacher professional identity and how do Saudi EFL teachers regulate their emotions? Hence, the factors that lead to Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers’ emotional arousal and disturbances have been critically summarized. Finally, the applications of emotion regulation models in the Saudi EFL context have been highlighted. The theoretical conceptualizations presented in this paper have implications for EFL teachers, teacher trainers, and professional development specialists.

Keywords: Emotion regulations, Saudi EFL context, teacher emotions, teacher professional identity

Introduction
The dominance of socio-constructionism has transformed the meaning of education and knowledge acquisition to a degree that fundamental beliefs about teaching and teachers have acquired new meanings (Nguyen, 2008). Traditionally, teacher was considered a source of knowledge and skills whose needs were determined by society accordingly. Nowadays teacher is seen as an individual who interacts with other individuals for transforming their lives not through filling their empty minds but enabling them to be who they want to be and are capable of. After realizing the role of teachers, educationalists demand that teachers should be understood, and all aspects of their individuality should be taken care of. In this regard, English as a Foreign language (EFL) teachers, unlike teachers of other subjects, have been widely discussed and researched, because teaching a foreign language is not only teaching certain skills and systems but changing students’ beliefs and perceptions (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Therefore, studying the role of teacher emotions in the formulation of EFL teacher identity has been in the limelight for the last few decades (Barcelos, 2017). In this sense, the Saudi EFL context offers a unique opportunity for theorizing EFL teachers’ emotions and emotion regulation for enhancing their teacher professional identity. The current study is answering the following overarching question:

*How do emotions influence teacher professional identity and how do Saudi EFL teachers regulate their emotions?*

Teacher professional identity and emotions
Over the past few decades, researchers’ focus has shifted from the knowledge transformation aspects of teaching profession to cognitive and psycho-social aspects such as teacher emotions, agency, and self-efficacy (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). These factors are collectively termed as teacher professional identity which denotes how teachers view their selves as individual teachers and how the society looks at their roles and responsibilities as teachers (Sachs, 2005).

Great interest has been given to the influences of emotions on the teachers’ professional identity formation (Barcelos, 2017; Darby, 2008; Shapiro, 2010; Zembylas, 2003). It is also argued that teacher emotions influence the making and remaking of professional identity. Considerable identity research focuses tremendously on how the teacher emotions are recognized and taken care of in order to define their true worth in identity formation. As emotions are inextricably associated with teachers' selves, Nias (1996) identifies that to make a collaborative sense of their personal and professional identity, teachers invest heavily in their emotional self as it is linked to their work. To describe the role of emotions in teaching, Zembylas (2003) offered two views of how emotions play a profound role in teaching. Firstly, he asserts that teachers' emotions are not something constructed as a result of personal disposition, but are formed in family, society, and school. Secondly, teacher's emotions cannot be categorized in public or private, such as reason and emotions; rather they are generated in the form a whole entity. The research on teacher emotions shows that their classroom performance is directly related to their emotions about the workplace, the students, and the profession itself (Akbari, Samar, Kiany & Tahernia, 2017). For example, ill-equipped and less motivated students put a significant stress on the time and emotions of the teachers (Webster & Mosoeta, 2001). Moreover, it is generally observed that teachers are burdened with academic and non-academic demands which are sometimes in conflict with their core
teaching responsibilities. Following this thread, Barkhuzein and Rothman (2006) noted that teaching is the most stressful occupation. Besides, Kinman (2008) validates that the stress level of the academicians is on the rise, as the image and status of teaching career are declining due to increased volumes of students, job dissatisfaction, and an increase in administrative functions. It is believed that the above-mentioned reasons are responsible for the teachers' stress and discomfort in Saudi EFL institutions owing to the fact that in recent years the economic decline has resulted in the lower number of teaching hours and, of course, an increased number of students per class. These reasons, among others, are behind some teacher attempt to leave the institution and join a context where there is less emotional burnout; as according to Bartram, Djurkovic, Casimir and Stanton (2012), there is a strong link between teacher emotional labor and their intention to leave the context or the profession.

To state that emotions constitute professional identity, the question 'what is a teacher?' is one of the constructing factors of a teacher's professional identity. In traditional sense, teaching is considered a "caring" rather than "high status" profession (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996, p. 9), and in some societies teaching is a prophetic profession which means that that the dissemination of knowledge is paramount to the divine service done to humanity. The society expects teachers to be "charged with positive emotions" (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 835) and committed to serving humanity. Similarly, Hargreaves (1994) asserts that the teaching profession is "human nurturance, connectedness, love and warmth" (p.175), since teachers always aspire to help their students. So, caring and inspiring are parts of teacher identity. Nevertheless, Tateo (2012) claims that caring is not only to inspire and motivate inside the classroom, but it also exists outside the classroom situations. Thus, teaching is a complex phenomenon that cannot be easily understood because it takes several intertwined dimensions to define a teacher's professional identity.

Although teaching profession is viewed indispensable to student growth, in the nowadays knowledge societies around the globe where all outcomes are measurable according to a certain standard, the teacher's emotions, no matter how prominent they are in the teaching and learning process, they are considered worthless (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004). Thus, if the teacher emotions such as commitment, desire to motivate, intent to enlighten, happiness, job satisfaction, etc., are not taken care of, the teacher professional identity will diminish and, in turn, the students learning will bear the brunt. This concern is also voiced by the European Commission (2007) that the current system of teacher assessment lacks the acknowledgment of teachers' emotional and empathic skills are responsible for a weakened teacher professional identity.

**Teacher professional identity tensions**

After foreground how teacher emotions have a significant toll on his performance and identity development, teacher identity development tensions are worth discussing. Tateo (2012) delineates teachers' professional identity dilemma in five types of tensions. The first type of tension is between the mainstream teachers' responsibilities and the actual everyday experience. Teachers safeguard their clients' future through positive emotions and attitudes and if negative emotions are generated, they project themselves on colleagues, family, and other targets. But when these negative emotions are directed towards the students, the society cannot afford this heavy toll. When teachers face problems, they feel burnout and vulnerability and these problems are always as a result of being threatened by school administration, parents, and society at large.
The second type of tension is between the different teacher perceptions of his/her professional identity, i.e., his role based on his training and qualification as well as his actual role. Teaching is not only the transmission of knowledge, but it provides for the students' emotional capabilities and individual empowerment. As Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000) describe it,

In our post-modern societies teachers increasingly face moral, social, and emotional dilemmas, such as: How can we educate students for uncertainty? How can we educate students with multicultural and different social backgrounds? How should we cope with consequences of a society in which social control has been replaced by strong processes of individualization? How do we deal with deviant student behavior? How should we judge and discuss other sources of information and technologies that are available to students now? How can we diagnose and help students to overcome problems as a result of divorce, sexual abuse, etc.? (p. 751)

According to the modern student-centered and socio-constructionist model of teaching, teachers' focus is more on learning and less on teaching. Thus, a teacher professional identity is molded according to the new role assumed in the light of educational changes and the emergence of new trends and ideas.

The third type of professional identity development tension is between the established teaching practices and the new pedagogical approaches and this tension arises as a result of reflection process. As Loughran (2006) states that in the post-modern growing complexity of teaching we need easier solutions for teaching and learning that can easily become part of the teaching convention, reflection tells that what worked last time may not work next time. Only reflection can resolve the tension between the actual professional practices and the ideal professional competence. Here it is argued that reflection should be part of the teacher professional development courses and should focus on the situated teaching practices (Mercer, 2017). The fourth type of tension is between the reflective self of a teacher which is also a caring self and institutional self that comes into being as a result of the institutional policies and standards. In other words, the reflective self comes at a professional cost in the sense that caring as a 'non-work' does not have any economic benefits (Forrester, 2005). This idea resonates with the teacher appraisal system in many EFL institutes where the innovation in classroom can result in low scores (Shah, Hussain & Naseef, 2013). The fifth tension regarding the teacher professional identity is between "reality-as-it-is" and "reality-to-be". When there are educational or societal changes, they put a heavy toll on teachers in the form of societal expectations. According to the post-constructivist teaching approach, teachers are expected to make students autonomous learners in order to train them in acquiring key competencies rather than rote-learning. In light of the increased demands from the teachers, there is an increased need of describing teacher quality. According to Tateo (2012),

Teacher’s quality should be an overall concept that comprises not only knowledge and skills, but also personal qualities - such as respect, care, courage, empathy, and personal values, attitudes, identity, beliefs, etc.— making quite evident the tight link between quality and TPI. The way in which these characteristics are implicitly or
explicitly included in indicators of teacher quality reflects dominant social, cultural, economic, and educational views and concerns about teachers’ quality. (p. 348)

To further the discussion of teacher emotion and teacher identity, the teacher qualification could be categorized into two main standards. The first standard includes qualification, teacher preparation programs, degrees, teacher course work, teacher experience, and teacher self-reflection; whereas the second standard encompasses emotional characteristics necessary for teaching. However, to put in one sentence, "You teach by who you are" (ICET, 2008). Thus, the teacher professional identity is a complex and dynamic construct that is subject to different competing interpretations, and emotion plays a paramount role in its making and remaking.

Moreover, the teacher's vulnerability is not due to the lack of subject matter knowledge or pedagogical skills but due to loss of self as a result of educational or societal changes (Woods, 1996). As the policies change and teacher professional identity is put to test, teacher training and professional development can come to the teachers' rescue, as Tateo (2012) puts it, "only with adequate support by researchers and trainers they are able to reconstruct self-understandings, leading to improvements in student achievement, instructional practices, and positive changes leading to emotions of pride and excitement" (p.349).

However, for fostering a positive learning environment for their learners and pleasant teaching classrooms, teachers need to monitor and regulate their emotions on a regular basis (Gates, 2000). Due to an increased demand of contemporary classrooms, the 'social and emotional learning' (SEL) has gained relevance in the teaching profession (Mercer, 2017). Teaching is inherently a social activity, necessitating teachers to build a sound relationship not only with students but among students as well. To this end, teachers are required to find their own emotions and those of their learners by reading their behaviors and facial expressions (Denham & Brown, 2010). Having strong emotional intelligence facilitates the learning process as well as the improve the teacher's wellbeing because research has shown that highly emotionally intelligent people are better able to cope with the multiple issues of the current and emerging classrooms (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010) and consequently teachers experience less emotional stress and high job satisfaction. Nevertheless, despite the colossal importance of the teachers’ social and emotional learning, it has not been part of the teacher training, either pre-service or in-service (Mercer, 2017).

Interest in studying teachers, especially second language teachers, has burgeoned in mainstream and teacher education. Theorists and researchers in the field of applied linguistics have realized that teacher variables warrant due consideration because “teachers make many decisions affecting the lives of students" (Woolfolk & McCune-Nicolich,1984, p. 432). Among teacher variables, teacher emotions and emotional experiences have attracted a great deal of interest (e.g., Aragao, 2011; Méndez López & Fabela Cárdenas, 2014). This heightened interest shows that teacher emotions play a significant role in all teaching propositions including but not limited to student learning outcomes (Cross & Hong, 2012). At the same time, emotion regulation is considered a natural corollary of studying emotions in educational domains.
Emotion regulation

Recent theorization on emotions conceptualizes them as “processes involving multiple components arising from experiential, behavioral, and physiological systems” (Sutton & Harper, 2009, p. 390). To regularize these processes consciously or unconsciously is termed as emotion regulation (Sutton & Harper, 2009). In the realm of psychology, it is believed that emotion regulation plays a pivotal role in maintaining good health and performance (Cicchetti, Ackerman, & Izard, 1995). In academia, teacher emotion regulation is central to all academic undertakings (Mercer, 2017).

Despite having an apparently shared notion, emotion regulation is defined differently by different individuals. Emotion regulation, according to Thompson (1994) is “the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one’s goals” (p.27). This definition entails that for achieving a specific goal in a specific context requires modifications to and maintenance of emotions. Moreover, it is evident from this definition that emotions are found in a raw form and it takes cognitive effort to reshape emotions to a particular situation. Hence, emotion regulation is dependent on a two-pronged approach involving internally acquired skills and external factors. In education, internal factors are teachers’ beliefs and perceptions regarding teaching and learning, whereas external factors are learners’ learning styles, emotional states, educational background and motivational levels.

From constructivist perspectives, emotion regulation is “the ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with the range of emotions in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reaction as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed” (Cole, Michel, & Teti, 1994, p. 74). Like Thompson’s (1994) definition, this one also focuses on the interplay of internal and external processes for emotion regulation, however, this definition regards the process of emotion regulation process as a socio-cultural activity (Vygotsky, 1998). Although emotion is an entirely personal construct, its regulation is influenced by socio-cultural factors which differ from context to context. For instance, in EFL teaching teachers recreate and remodel their emotions according to different contexts.

Gross (1998b) believes that emotion regulation is “the process by which individuals influence which emotions they have when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions” (p. 275). This definition presents rather a simplistic view of emotions being regulated by individuals but highlights human agency in controlling and regulating emotions. This view corroborates the notion that emotion regulation is not an avoidance strategy; rather it is the ability to cope with different situations differently, as Koole (2009) states that emotion regulation refers to the set of processes whereby people seek to redirect the spontaneous flow of their emotions. In a broad sense, emotion regulation refers to the set of processes whereby people manage all their emotionally charged states, including specific emotions, moods, and stress. Emotion regulation determines how easily people can leave a given emotional state. It can thus be distinguished from emotional sensitivity, which determines how easily people can enter an emotional state. (p.29)
Koole (2009) distinguishes emotional sensitivity and emotion regulations, the former being an essential attribute whereas the latter is considered a negative cognitive ability that may deter the accomplishment of a task.

The above theorization of emotions generally refers to any education or non-educational undertakings. However, the notions outlined in them are applicable to education as well.

**Models of emotion regulations**

Various theoretical and psycho-social models of emotion regulation have discussed how emotions manifest and how they are regulated and appropriated for achieving desired goals and purposes. A hot/cool system model was presented by post-positivist social researchers (Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999; Mischel & Ayduk, 2004). This emotion regulation model is also termed as the “willpower” model. This two-system model contains hot and cool inner points to explain the human emotions regulation framework. The cool, “know” system (Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999) is “cognitive, complex, slow, contemplative, and emotionally neutral. It consists of a network of informational cool nodes that “are elaborately connect-ed to each other, and which generate rational, reflective, and strategic behavior” (Sutton & Harper, 2009, p. 391). Cool nodes of emotions are activated when the situation demands to be proactive rather than reactive approach and response. On the other hand, a hot emotional state is “is specialized for quick emotional processing and responding on the basis of unconditional or conditional trigger features” (Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999, p. 4). The hot system, as opposed to the cool system, is activated for processing quick and simple emotions in a given situation. This hot system is nurtured during the early stages of life in childhood and mostly dominates the cool system. The hot system is negatively related to age; that is, it is more vigorous in childhood and less activated in adulthood. This complicated dual system has been extended to the field of teaching by Sutton and Harper (2009). According to their hot/cool model, when confronted with emotion tribulations emotionally intelligent teachers successfully regulate their emotions by changing the hot nodes to cool nodes. This change of emotions is achieved by ignoring the stimulus, distracting themselves, or reformulating the meanings of the stimulus. Ignoring the stimulus requires the teacher to ignore students’ minor misbehavior in order not to disrupt the teaching-learning process. Distracting refers to teachers trying not to laugh at students’ culturally inappropriate jokes or comment and continue the lesson uninterrupted. Reformulating the stimulus means refusing to take students’ misbehavior personally. In contrast, less emotionally intelligent teachers face difficulties in coping with emotional arousal and hence fail to achieve the intended teaching goals. Nevertheless, emotion regulation is a complex process and is mainly dependent on teaching context and students’ socio-cultural background (Sutton & Harper, 2009). That is, a teacher may be successful in emotion regulation in one context but failure in another context. Therefore, according to this model, teaching experience could help in managing emotions effectively. More experienced teachers are aware of the instances inside and outside the classroom that trigger emotional arousal and are able to anticipate what happens in a specific situation with a specific group of learners.

Baumeister and colleagues presented the Resource or Strength model for emotion regulations (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998; Schmeichel & Baumesiter, 2004). According to this model, emotion regulation “takes energy or inner resources but that self-regulatory strength is a limited resource” (Sutton & Harper, 2009, p. 392). In other words,
individuals have limited emotion regulatory resources, and the more they are utilized the more individual’s capacity is depleted. The notion of the exhaustion of emotion regulatory resources have attracted criticism; however, self-motivational strategies can revitalize teachers’ eroded emotion regulatory powers (Muraven & Slessareva, 2003). In this regard, “teachers who are sufficiently motivated may be able to overcome their depleted self-control resources and successfully regulate their emotions even in taxing situations” (Sutton & Harper, 2009, p. 392).

Gross (1998b) put forward a more elaborate and complex model of emotion regulation which is called the Process Model of emotion regulation. According to this model, there are five cognitive processes involved in emotion regulation: situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation. In the five-process model, the first four processes are preventive in nature; that is, they are applied before the emotional reaction is fully aroused, whereas only the fifth one, response modulation, pertains to the adjustment of emotional reaction after it is activated (Gross & Munoz, 1995). To put it simply, emotion regulation is a trajectory wherein “a particular situation is selected, modified, attended to, appraised, and yields a particular set of emotional responses” (Gross, 2014, p. 8). Cognitive change is the next process of emotion regulation in this model which denotes “modifying how one appraises a situation so as to alter its emotional significance, either by changing how one thinks about the situation or about one’s capacity to manage the demand it poses” (Gross, 2014, p. 10). The arousal of emotions at the cognitive stage undergoes three possible courses: enhancing, declining, or transforming the nature of such emotions (Gross, 2002). Strategies such as resorting to self-talk to console oneself are employed in this process. However, once the emotional arousal has happened the response modulation process is readily available at play; unlike the first four apriori processes, this one is posteriori (Gross, 1998b). According to Gross and Thompson’s (2007) response modulation process “refers to influencing physiological, experiential, or behavioral responding as directly as possible” (p.15). For instance, hiding one’s frustration and angst after failing in an exam is response modulation arousal (Gross, 2002).

In the EFL domain, Akbari et al. (2017) found the appropriateness of the process model. They termed the five processes as “1) Teaching Context Preference or Avoidance, 2) Teaching Context Adjustments, 3) Attention Direction, 4) Reappraisal Strategies, and 5) Reactive Strategies” (p.319). Teaching context preference or avoidance which corresponds to situation selection in the Gross model was represented by teachers choosing their students by their language proficiency level, age, and gender. The teachers also chose their teaching contexts: private or public, urban or rural, and small or big classes. They preferred a context where they had less possibility of coming into contact with a stressful situation and negative feelings. The second coping strategy the EFL teachers employed was teaching context adjustment which corresponds to situation modification in Gross (1998) model. Teachers being aware of the context were prepared to experience situations that would provoke negative emotions and therefore took preemptive measures ahead of time and were ready to adjust their emotions to their benefit. This is evidence that EFL teachers instead of acting passively became agents of change and acted proactively to achieve their teaching goals. However, at times the teachers were unable to choose the teaching context or to modify it. In this case, they applied some cognitive strategies to prevent negative emotions from doing harm to them and their students. This stage is called attention direction which is attention deployment in Gross (1998) model. For example, if student...
misbehavior would cause arousal of unpleasant emotion, the teachers would reframe their perspectives and emotions. In addition to the above strategies, the EFL teachers also employed attention direction which is attention deployment in Gross (1998) model. As opposed to the first four preventive and antecedent-focused strategies, reactive strategies, response modulation in Gross (1998) model, were also employed.

From an emotional labor perspective, Hochschild (1983) put forward an emotion regulation model that can be applied in the educational arena. Emotional labor denotes “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). According to Yin & Lee (2012), the concept of emotional labor refers to hiding, creating, recreating, and managing emotions and feelings aligned to teaching professional norms and values. Furthermore, Isenbarger & Zembylas (2006) contend that the Hochschild (1983) model can be incorporated in the teaching profession in three ways: (a) since teachers come in direct contact with students, emotional arousal is frequent, (b) teaching demands teachers to generate emotions such as joy and anger based on the situation, and (c) teacher emotions are influenced by socio-cultural and institutional factors. Therefore, teachers are required to employ emotion regulation strategies; otherwise, teacher burnout is inevitable (Copp, 1998). The notion of burnout was proposed by sociopsychologist Maslach (Maslach & Leiter, 2005). Burnout, according to this three-dimensional model, consists of three intertwined components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Extending these dimensions to teaching, Bibou-Nakou, Stogiannidou, and Kiosseoglou (1999) proposed that teachers get emotionally exhausted with demotivated and careless students; get depersonalized and indifferent while facing negative attitude of others including students and co-workers; experience lessened personal accomplishment and self-worth when their performance and competence are downgraded. In the field of EFL teaching, Ghanizadeh and Royaei (2015) confirmed the above conceptualizations of emotion regulation, emotional labor, and burnout.

**Discussion**

After reviewing teacher emotions, their profound relation to teacher professional, identity, and emotion regulation models, this section elaborates on what emotional strains Saudi EFL teachers experience and how emotion regulation conceptualizations may ameliorate teachers’ emotional states. Unlike other EFL contexts around the globe, the Saudi EFL context is unique in many ways which present challenges to the EFL teachers who hail from various educational and socio-cultural backgrounds (Ahmad, Latada, Wahab, Shah & Khan, 2018)). Literature reveals that Saudi EFL teachers face a plethora of challenges which are social, pedagogical, cultural, and academic (Alharbi, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Shah, Hussain & Naseef, 2013). One of the foremost challenges that activate teachers’ emotional disturbances is demotivated students (Alrabia, 2016). Most EFL students study the English language for attaining a certain academic grade rather than for the fulfillment of intrinsic motives and attainment of altruistic goals. This leads to a herd of demotivated students who, in turn, gives rise to a large number of repeater students in every single class. Therefore, many demotivated and repeater students put a huge strain on teachers who struggle to modify their behavior, teaching methods, and classroom management strategies. Another significant source of teacher emotional disturbance is classroom management (Alkatheery, 2014). Research indicates that Saudi EFL students tend to use mobile phones and L1 quite often during instructions which drain teachers’ emotional resource. Unless teachers have
adequate emotional intelligence skills and emotion regulation strategies a valuable portion of
instruction time is wasted in managing student disruptive behaviors. A possible cause of
demotivated EFL students and their disruptive behaviors is their belief about the role of the English
language in the Saudi Society (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Research indicates that English is seen as a
language of infidels and a vehicle of Western agendas in the Islamic conservative society (Elyas
& Picard, 2018). Although the initiation of the current socio-cultural trends, such as Vision 2030,
has helped in broadening people’s vision about learning the language, the negative belief about the
language is embedded in the society’s unconscious which comes to prominence at certain
sociological encounters. In this atmosphere of disbelief and uncertainty, EFL teachers have to
consider a lot of factors during instructions. One such factor is the students’ cultural sensitivities.
Being a language spoken in Western countries, the English language is loaded with cultural
artifacts of the speakers and teaching it without them is a challenge for EFL teachers in
conservative societies where people value the preservation of their socio-cultural values and
norms. The avoidance of culturally sensitive encounters (Al-Asmari, 2016) in their classrooms,
EFL teachers struggle which results in emotional exhaustion. Such instances result in attenuated
teacher agency which is normally needed for effective language teaching. Numerous studies have
shown that teachers in Saudi EFL context are less agentive than their counterparts in other EFL
contexts (e.g. Ahmad et al., 2018). This is due to teachers’ strict adherence to pacing guide
restrictions and following administrative rules and policies which sometimes run counter to the
norms of good language teaching. The above-mentioned factors not only drain teacher emotional
reservoirs but also impede the students’ learning process. Therefore, unless Saudi EFL teachers
consciously monitor their emotions and regulate them properly, teaching and learning process will
be less than perfect. It is up to the EFL teachers to choose and adapt an emotion regulation models
described in the current study since it has been shown that one-size-fits emotion regulation models
rarely work. As a final analysis, professional EFL teacher education and professional development
may include teacher emotion regulation (Mercer, 2017; Tateo, 2012).

Conclusion
In this paper, EFL teacher identity has been discussed in relation to teacher emotions and emotion
regulations. Several emotion regulation models and their applicability in the Saudi EFL context
have been presented. It was seen that the Saudi EFL teaching profession is fraught with emotional
disturbances due to certain socio-cultural, academic, and administrative factors. EFL teachers bear
the brunt of emotional burnout. Therefore, to achieve their teaching goals, Saudi EFL teachers can
lesSEN their perturbation and emotional upset by applying emotional regulation models outlined in
this paper. As the study of EFL teacher emotions and emotions regulation is in the early phases in
Saudi Arabia, empirical research is needed to investigate teachers’ perceptions and their lived
experiences in the classroom as well as in professional development encounters in relation to their
emotions and emotion regulation strategies.

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References


Relationship between Translation Students’ Grade Point Average Scores and Grammatical and Sociocultural Competencies at King Saud University

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Abstract
The current study is motivated by the dearth of studies regarding English translation students' grammatical and sociocultural competencies and their relationship with their Grade Point Averages (GPAs). To fill this gap, this study sought to find if there is a statistically significant relationship between the respondents' GPAs and their levels of grammatical and cultural knowledge. To do this, a multiple-choice test with four sections was developed and validated by experts in the field to examine the respondents' levels of grammatical and sociocultural knowledge. The first two sections examined respondents' knowledge levels of the functions of the key elements of English language tense and aspect (FELTA) and Acceptable Forms of English Language Tense and Aspect (AFELTA). The other two sections examined their knowledge levels of aspects of the culture of American English native speakers (AspCNS) and culturally appropriate American English language use (AppLU). The sample for this study were selected randomly from the department of English Language and Translation at King Saud University. Seventy-five male English translation students from different college levels responded to the questionnaire test. Using descriptive statistics, the responses were coded and analyzed, and thereafter, the respondents' scores on each single section of the test were compared with their GPA scores to determine the statistical significance of differences and correlation. It was found that there was a statistically significant relationship between the GPA scores, the respondents' knowledge of AFELTA, and the knowledge of AppLU. However, no significant relationships were found between the GPA scores and the respondents' knowledge of FELTA or knowledge of AspCNS.

Keywords: cultural competence, cultural translation, EFL tense and aspect, Grade Point Average, grammatical competence, sociocultural competence

Cite as: Alqahtani, F. M. (2020). Relationship between Translation Students’ Grade Point Average Scores and Grammatical and Sociocultural Competencies at King Saud University. *Arab World English Journal, 11* (3) 398 - 416.
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.25
Introduction

Many research studies on Foreign Language (FL) learning and translation studies have emphasized the development of sociocultural competencies and argued that learners who only master FL rules (grammatical competence) are generally unable to fully understand and communicate in the FL in different contexts of communication.

Language learning and translation studies have tended to stress the inseparability of language and culture and claimed that without sociocultural knowledge, the language learner or translator might produce linguistically accurate but culturally inappropriate language and make cultural rather than linguistic communication mistakes. Bassnett (2002), for example, noted that without adequate cultural knowledge, when translating a foreign text, translators may only look for linguistic equivalence in the target language (TL) text without considering or being aware of the cultural meanings embedded in the language. According to Kramsch (2000), if translators are not aware of the “cultural coherence” in the FL text, appropriate understanding and translation is not possible.

This study aims to investigate whether there were any significant relationships between the Grade Point Average (GPA) scores of selected Saudi college-level translation students and their grammatical and/or sociocultural competencies. To measure their grammatical competence, the students were asked to respond to questions focused on functions and forms of English Language Tense and Aspect (ELTA), and to measure sociocultural competence, they answered questions related to TL cultural knowledge and culturally appropriate language. The results were analyzed and then compared to their GPA scores to determine whether there were any significant correlations.

Several studies have investigated the relationships between the GPA scores of language learners and their language proficiency, some of which found that there were significant relationships between the GPAs of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students and their academic success. However, a few studies that have been conducted on the relationships between the GPAs of language learners and their FL sociocultural knowledge found that higher target culture knowledge could be predicted due to a higher GPA. The importance of these studies stems from the importance of knowing if higher GPA scores could indicate higher FL grammatical and sociocultural knowledge.

Therefore, the main objective of this study lies in its importance to determine whether GPA scores of the selected Saudi translation students could be used as a predictor of their linguistic or sociocultural competence or both, and the study results could be employed to improve the required teaching skills for translation students to ensure accurate and appropriate English language text translations.

For convenience, “Functions of Key Elements of English Language Tense and Aspect” was abbreviated as (FELTA), and “Grammatically Acceptable Forms of Key Elements of English Language Tense and Aspect” were abbreviated as (AFELTA). “Aspects of the culture for the native American English speakers” was abbreviated as (AspCNS), and “culturally appropriate English use” was abbreviated as (AppLU), which also included prefabricated English language utterances as accepted and expected by native American English speakers.
Research Questions
1. What is the current grammatical knowledge level of the selected translation students?
2. What is the current sociocultural knowledge of the selected translation students?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents’ GPA scores and their grammatical and sociocultural knowledge performances on the questionnaire?

Literature Review
Communicative Competence
Context is a major component of successful communication, and to be communicatively competent, language learners and translators need to be cognizant of the context of communication as they use the language in a context with another human being. Kramsch (2019) emphasized that educators need to view "language teaching as educating denizens of a global ecology that requires sensitivity to context, political awareness, ethical answerability and a good dose of situational cunning" (p. 1). FL users can only be successful in communicating their ideas to native speakers if they managed to use a language that is not only grammatical correct but also culturally appropriate to the context of communication. This was stressed by Kramsch and Hua (2016) who stated that,

Teaching students how to write a statement of purpose for admission to an American university requires teaching them not only how to write correct grammar and spelling, but how to use culturally appropriate phrases such as setting and achieving goals, overcoming adversity, showing leadership skills. (p. 44)

For language learners to reach this level, developing their communicative competence (CC) is required, which was a concept first coined by Hymes (1966, 1972) to account for sociocultural competence or the social and cultural dimensions of language use.

To establish a general model to account for accurate and appropriate language use, Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995), Celce-Murcia (2007) have developed and evolved the concept of CC to include essential components, namely, linguistic competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, strategic competence, interactional competence, and formulaic competence. As for the formulaic competence, she asserted that,

Formulaic competence has grown in importance; it is now acknowledged that fluent speakers of a language draw on formulaic knowledge of the target language as often as they use systematic linguistic knowledge… Much language pedagogy has yet to catch up with this fact. (p. 48)

The CC model also emphasizes that knowledge of the rules of language use is as important, if not more important, as the knowledge of the rules of grammar, suggesting that a knowledge of grammatically accurate language is not enough because language learners also need to develop sociocultural competence to be able to use the FL in different social and cultural communicative settings based on agreed native-speaking rules of use. Rueda (2006) by citing Thomas (1983) confirmed that the adoption of the Communicative Approach to FL teaching prioritized “understanding and producing language that is appropriate to communicative situations in
accordance with specific sociocultural parameters” (p. 170). To further emphasize the importance of appropriate language use, Celce-Murcia (2007) developed a CC model that included both “sociocultural competence” and “formulaic competence” components to account for the culturally appropriate language use defined by native speakers, with “formulaic competence” being defined as “those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in everyday interactions” (p. 47).

The Importance of Grammatical Competence in Translation Students

Several studies have sought to determine whether language learners have the same correct English Language Tense and Aspect (ELTA) function and forms competencies and stated that knowledge of the correct ELTA functions and meanings may not be as high as their knowledge of acceptable ELTA forms or structures.

Abu-Joudeh, Assasfeh, Al-Shabou, and Alshboul (2013) found that Arab “students tend to overuse the simple past tense whenever they translate the Arabic bare perfect form into English” (p. 44); this aspect was further explained by Gadalla (2017) who concluded that understanding the exact ELTA meanings was a source of difficulty for Arabic language translators. This is congruent to Shamaa's (1978) argument who stated that “Another area of Arabic which occasionally gives the translator some trouble is the temporal and aspectual reference of a sentence” (p. 32).

Gadalla (2017) also argued that the difficulties associated with understanding the aspectual functions of grammatical ELTA structures could be the reason why Arab translators tended to use the past simple structures when translating present perfect structures. He stated, “Whereas the Arabic verb has two aspectual forms, the English verb has 16 tenses. It follows that each Arabic form must substitute for several English tenses, which creates a problem for the Arabic-English translator” (p. 10). Walker (1967) had previously attributed this difficulty to a lack of understanding of the function and meaning of the present perfect, and in accordance with Walker’s viewpoint, Mattar (2001) believed that Arab students may not yet have “established proper form-meaning associations” (p. 151). Gadalla (2017) claimed that if translators lack knowledge of the semantic properties of English tenses, they will face difficulties in determining the appropriate tense structure when translating from English to Arabic and vice versa and argued that knowing the exact ELTA meaning could assist translators in using “clues” in the target text to accurately translate the exact meaning and the ELTA structure. Most recently, Al-Qahtani (2020) argued that the exact timing of an English language utterance would not be accurately translated into Arabic if the translation students were unaware of the ways that tense and aspect are perceived and used in English. Another study that reveals the difficulty of recognizing the progressiveness and perfectiveness was done by Toma and Saddiq (2019). They studied tense and aspect differences between English and Behdini and concluded that, "Behdini learners were unable to differentiate simple tenses and progressive tenses on one hand, and simple tenses and perfective tenses on the other" (p. 81).

Developing Sociocultural Competence in Translation Students

Celce-Murcia (2007) stated that “sociocultural competence refers to the speaker’s pragmatic knowledge, i.e., how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication” (p. 46). Therefore, based on this definition, FL learners need to develop FL sociocultural competence to avoid difficulties when communicating with native speakers; this
notion was also emphasized by Spinelli and Siskin (1992) who claimed that as different cultures have different perceptions of reality, the native speakers in different cultures have different sets of meaning.

Developing sociocultural competence is also a key focus in translation studies. “To translate two languages involving two different cultures, the translators should cultivate the profound and comprehensive culture knowledge as well as the full familiarity with the language symbols so as to obtain the deep comprehension of the cultural differences” (He, 2012, p. 74). Translation students who fail to develop FL sociocultural competence would not be aware of different cultural communication contexts and therefore could possibly attach contextually inappropriate meanings to the TL text. This was confirmed by Marinetti (2011) who commented on Bassnett and Lefevere’s (1990) cultural approach to translation, stating that “for Bassnett and Lefevere, translation is primarily contextual” (p. 26).

To fully understand how the TL is used in different cultural communication contexts, it is essential to have a strong awareness of the TL culture. Similar to Kramsch (2000), Jukko (2016) argued that full meaning could only be delivered if translators were aware of the connotative meanings of the words and utterances in different contexts of communication. Kramsch (2000) referred to this as “cultural coherence” knowledge of the TL text and confirmed that “one of the greatest sources of difficulty for foreign readers is less the internal cohesion of the text than the cultural coherence of the discourse” (p. 59), i.e., if a non-native speaker lacked TL sociocultural competence, they would find it difficult to understand the cultural referents in a foreign text although they might understand the linguistic structures. To this end, Kramsch (2014) stressed that to fully realize the cultural referents of an FL text, it is necessary to learn the current connotative meaning used by native speakers. According to her, what makes a significant difference in meaning between two languages is not the denotative meaning but rather the current connotative meaning “relative to the context of the utterance” (p. 252).

Other studies have viewed translation as a form of cross-cultural communication and have emphasized the importance of viewing translation as a cross-cultural mediation or transfer rather than a cross-linguistic substitution (Eyckmans, 2017; Olk, 2009; Snell-Hornby, 1995). Guo (2012) believed that translators need to develop both TL sociocultural and linguistic competencies, as translation is not “merely translating the words, sentences or articles from the source language into the target language but indicate a transfer between cultures” (p. 343).

**Failure to Develop Sociocultural Competence**
The failure to develop sociocultural competence is probably due to the fact that EFL instruction places more importance to the teaching of grammar than teaching about the TC. Rodríguez (2013) stated,

Byram (1997), Lázár (2003), and Dogankay-Aktuna (2005) assert that the attainment of ICC has been poorly developed because EFL instruction continues giving more importance to the study of the grammatical level of English than to the cultural implications involved in language production. (p. 96)
The failure to develop sociocultural competence has been highlighted in several studies. If sociocultural competence is not developed, “even fluent speakers can seriously misinterpret the messages they hear or read, and the message they intend to communicate can be misunderstood” (Pesola, 1991, p. 331). In agreement with Celce-Murcia (2007), Konishi (2016) affirmed that “a speaker’s social or cultural error would be far more problematic than a linguistic error made during oral communication” (p. 40). The sociocultural error is more problematic because failing to use contextually appropriate language or failing to transfer the appropriate cultural meaning by a non-native speaker who has a good command of the language form might be misunderstood or taken as an offense by native speakers (Bennett, 1997; Catford, 1978; Marsh, 1990; Mizne, 1997; Nida, 1964; Rueda, 2006; Sun, 2007). Being unintentionally offensive or a “fluent fool” (Bennett, 1997) can make matters worse as argued by Mizne (1997) who stated that with a high level of grammatical competence, "the language learner’s sociolinguistic errors are not perceived he [sic] native speaker as language errors at all, but as flaws in the speaker’s character” (p. 9). Sun (2007) also argued that while native speakers tolerate the grammatical mistakes made by foreigners, they might not be “aware of the potential cultural differences; they may interpret violations of rules of speaking as bad manners” (p. 192). The reason is that native speakers expect that “command of a second/foreign language in structural terms assumes a corresponding ability to use the language efficiently in interaction” (Marsh, 1990, p. 182). On this point, Rueda (2006) concluded that native speakers would consider this behavior by non-native speakers as “insensitive, rude, or inept” (p. 170).

Similar arguments have been advanced in translation studies. Translation students who fail to develop sociocultural competence often lack the ability to produce culturally appropriate meanings for texts or utterances and consequently produce incoherent translations that might be viewed as machine translation. Nida (1964) argued that the “Differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure” (p. 130) and lead to translation fails or “untranslatability” (Catford, 1978). Catford claimed that not being aware of the cultural coherence of an FL text could result in “untranslatability,” arguing that

Translation fails—or untranslatability occurs—when it is impossible to build functionally relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of the TL text. Broadly speaking, the cases where this happens fall into two categories. Those where the difficulty is linguistic, and those where it is cultural. (p. 94).

Therefore, an FL speaker who has a high level of FL grammatical competence is often assumed to also have a high level of sociocultural competence, and can unintentionally offend native speakers through inappropriate language use (Marsh, 1990).

**Relationship between Learners’ GPA Scores and Their Linguistic and Sociocultural Competencies**

Several studies have investigated the relationships between language learners’ GPA scores and their language proficiency (Sahragard, Baharloo, and Soozandehfar, 2011). Sahragard et al. (2011) found that there was a significant relationship between Iranian EFL student GPAs and their academic success: "The analysis of the data proves a profound relationship between students’ language proficiency and academic achievement which indicates that those who are more proficient in English can achieve academically better” (p. 1747). Also, another study by
Pishghadam, Noghani, and Zabihi (2011) found that the learners' GPA scores can be used as an indication of their linguistic competence:

The prediction of these four dimensions of foreign language achievement (speaking, reading, writing, and grammar) by students’ diploma GPA may be due to the predominant role of the educational system in providing schools and universities with the necessary educational capital which helps students speak, read and write efficiently and grammatically. (pp. 154–155)

However, a few research studies have examined the relationships between language learners’ GPAs and their FL sociocultural knowledge. Pishghadam and Zabihi (2011) found that English language learners’ higher knowledge level of the target culture was predictive of a higher GPA: "Moreover, having conducted the regression analysis, the researchers found out that literacy and cultural competence were predictive of higher GPA (p. 50)". Chiang (2013), however, claimed that “Few studies were developed to examine the relationship between cultural competence and GPA. Few data were found to explain why researchers did not intend to include the factor of GPA into their study” (pp. 84 - 85). However, these few studies are important because they reveal that higher GPA scores could indicate higher grammatical and sociocultural knowledge.

Chiang (2013) investigated the relationships between learners’ sociocultural competence and their GPA scores and demonstrated that the “GPA was not considered as a strong factor because the statistical results indicated the scores on GPA were not statistically significantly different” (p. 84). Chiang, however, also reviewed the results from previous studies that had exhibited a significant relationship in “7th, 8th, and 9th grade students from two secondary schools in Finland” (p. 100).

Research Methodology

This was a descriptive research study that sought to determine the relationship between respondents’ GPAs and their knowledge level of linguistic and sociocultural competences. To do this, a questionnaire instrument adapted from Alqahtani (2020) was designed to collect the quantitative data. The questionnaire instrument was distributed in Fall 2019 and administered by the researcher himself to assure full understanding of the instrument.

Instrument Description

A five-sectioned questionnaire was designed, with Sections two, three, four, and five each having 10 multiple-choice questions for which there was only one acceptable answer. Section one collected the respondents’ demographic data and their current GPA; Sections two and three examined the respondents’ knowledge level of the English language grammatical competence, and Sections four and five examined their knowledge level of the English language sociocultural competence (American culture).

Particularly, Section two examined the respondents’ knowledge level of the functions of the key elements of English language tense and aspect (FELTA), and Section three examined their knowledge level of the grammatically acceptable forms of key elements of English language tense and aspect (AFELTA). In Section two, the respondents read statements that stated the functions or definitions for certain key elements of ELTA, and thereafter, they had to select the acceptable
option for the stated functions or definition (present simple, present perfect, etc.). In Section three, the respondents had to select the acceptable grammatical form for filling the gap in the sentences.

Section four examined the respondents’ knowledge level of certain aspects of the Target Culture (TC) that related to TC practices, perspectives, products, persons, and communities as defined by Moran (2001). Section five examined the respondents’ knowledge level of contextually appropriate English language use and their knowledge of formulaic language use as specified in Celec-Murcia’s (2007) CC framework. The “TC” in this study was the American culture.

Section two contained questions having five answer choices, whereas Sections three, four, and five each had four answer choices, and one point being assigned for each correct answer; therefore, the total points for all four sections was 40. The Education First website and Azar (2003) were used as the main sources for language accuracy to provide the items for Sections two and three.

Participants
A simple random sampling was employed to select respondents from different courses representing different college levels where each student has equal chance to volunteer to participate. The 75 respondents were randomly selected from the target group, the male translation students from different college levels from the English and Translation Department at King Saud University. They were all Arab native male students majoring in English/Arabic translation at the college of Languages and Translation in King Saud University between Level three (first year) and Level 10 (fourth year) because Levels one and two are preparatory years. Only male students were selected for this study, as the female students studied on a separate female campus. The Department of English and Translation provided the permission to conduct this study and collect data, and the students participated voluntarily and were instructed not to write their names or university identification numbers on the questionnaire to safeguard their privacy.

Pilot Study
The final draft of the questionnaire was emailed to two EFL experts, namely, a native EFL instructor with a considerable EFL teaching experiences in Saudi Arabia and other countries, and a Saudi college professor of applied linguistics, to review and examine the clarity, relevance, and plausibility of the questionnaire items, and then, modifications were made on the basis of their recommendations and suggestions. The questionnaire was then piloted on a group of 20 students. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 was employed to calculate the Cronbach’s alpha that was used as a measure of internal-consistency, and it reliability was established on the basis of the pilot study data. The questionnaire had an adequate level of reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.74.

Data Analysis Procedures
The data obtained from the questionnaire were summarized using descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations). The responses were coded and analyzed, and the frequency summation and percentage calculations were tallied using SPSS v. 25.

To determine the relationships between the respondents’ GPA scores and their overall performances in the four sections of the questionnaire (Sections two, three, four, and five
correspond to FELTA, AFELTA, AspCNS, AppLU, respectively), Pearson’s correlations were calculated and reported. The answers were then coded as either (1) for correct choice or (0) for wrong choice.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

In all, the respondents had GPAs ranging from 2 and above (3%) to 4 and above (40%), with the majority (56%) having an average of 3 and above. All respondents reported that they had various authentic language input, such as watching American TV shows (series and comedies) and movies, and most had been EFL learners for more than four years (87%).

While 57% reported that they had visited a foreign country at least once, only 29% had visited an English-speaking country. The nature of these visits may need to be explored in future studies, as the results may give more insight into the respondents’ questionnaire performances.

**Results**

In relation to Research Question one, it was deduced that the grammatical knowledge of the respondents was based on their answers to specific questions related to FELTA and AFELTA in Sections two and three of the questionnaire.

**FELTA Performances**

In all, 10 multiple-choice questions each with five answer choices were used in Section two to determine the respondents’ FELTA, each of which assessed a specific English tense or aspect grammatical function, as exemplified in the following:

The ………………………… describes an activity that was in progress at a particular time in the past.

- a. Past simple
- b. Past continuous
- c. Past perfect
- d. Present perfect
- e. Not sure

The following English tenses and aspects were included in Section two of the questionnaire:

- present tense and its aspects, including simple present tense, present continuous, present perfect, and present perfect continuous;
- past tense and its aspects, including simple past, past continuous, past perfect, and past perfect continuous; and
- future tense and its aspects, including simple future, future continuous, future perfect, and future perfect continuous.

Table one shows that less than half of the respondents (41.45%) succeeded in selecting the correct answers.
Table 1. *FELTA knowledge*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Number of correct answers (N = 75)</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean number of correct answers</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>41.45</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AFELTA Performances**

In all, 10 multiple-choice questions with each containing four answer choices were used in Section three to examine the respondents AFELTA performances. In this section, respondents had to select the correct grammatical form for the same English language tenses addressed in Section two, as exemplified in the following:

He…………………… the TV when I called.

a. watched  
b. was watching  
c. have watched  
d. Not sure

Table two illustrates that the majority of respondents (75.87%) succeeded in selecting the correct options.

Table 2. *AFELTA knowledge*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Number of correct answers (N = 75)</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean number of correct answers</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>75.87</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question two examined the respondents’ sociocultural competence. Sections four and five each had 10 multiple-choice questions with four possible answers, only one of which was correct, to measure the respondents’ AspCNS and AppLU performance.

**AspCNS Performance**

The respondents’ AspCNS knowledge was tested in Section four using 10 multiple-choice questions with blanks followed by four possible choices, as exemplified in the following:

The ………………………….. is an American federal holiday that is also referred to as the “Fourth of July.”

a. President’s Day  
b. Memorial Day  
c. Independence Day
d. Not sure

Selected examples of basic aspects of American culture (including history, special days, shopping, political system, sport, and daily-life practices) were the cultural issues addressed in this section. Table 3 reveals that less than half of the respondents (45.6%) selected the correct answers.

Table 3. AspCNS knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Number of correct answers (N = 75)</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean number of correct answers</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AppLU Performance

To examine the respondents’ AppLU knowledge, Section five had 10 examples of common American language utterances followed by four possible options, as exemplified in the following:

In the United States, a person who performs manual labor is described as

- a. a blue-collar worker
- b. a white-collar worker
- c. a green-collar worker
- d. Not sure

This section examined the respondents’ knowledge of basic language forms, structures, phrases, and common sayings used in daily American communication, such as “What do you do?,” “Would you like a gift certificate.” Celce-Murcia (2007) labeled such utterances as “prefabricated chunks of language.” Table four illustrates that only 34.39% of the respondents selected correct answers.

Table 4. Knowledge level of AppLU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Number of correct answers (N = 75)</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean number of correct answers</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>34.39</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>2.075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In case of Research Question three, to determine the relationships between the respondents’ GPA scores and their questionnaire performances, Pearson’s correlations were calculated, from which it was found that there was a correlation between the respondents’ GPAs and their overall scores for all the questionnaire sections (r = 0.325**), as shown in Table five.
Table 5. Pearson’s correlation coefficients between GPA and performance on FELTA, AFELTA, AspCNS, and AppLU (N = 75)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pearson’s correlation</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 2: FELTA</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3: AFELTA</td>
<td>0.292*</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4: AspCNS</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>0.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5: AppLU</td>
<td>0.339**</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.325**</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Note. FELTA refers to Functions of Key Elements of English Language Tense and Aspect.
AFELTA refers to Acceptable Forms of key Elements of English Language Tense and Aspect.
AspCNS refers to Aspects of Culture for native American English speakers.
AppLU refers to Appropriate Language Use for the American English speakers including prefabricated utterances.

Table five demonstrates that there was a statistical significance between the respondents’ GPAs and their performance in the questions related to AFELTA (r = 0.292*) and AppLU (r = 0.339**); however, there was no significant relationship observed between the GPA scores and the knowledge of FELTA (r = 0.058) or AspCNS (r = 0.180). Although the majority of respondents failed to select the correct AppLU answers, the highest correlation was observed between the GPA and respondents’ performance for AppLU questions (r = 0.339**), with the correlation being significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed) and a p-value of (0.00).

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was then conducted to determine if the differences were statistically significant between the respondents’ GPA score means for the four different competency scales, as shown in Table six.

Table 6. One-way ANOVA test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANOVA</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FELTA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between-Groups</td>
<td>9.982</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.991</td>
<td>0.802</td>
<td>0.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-Groups</td>
<td>448.018</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>6.222</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>458.000</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFELTA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between-Groups</td>
<td>14.989</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.494</td>
<td>3.883</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-Groups</td>
<td>138.958</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.930</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>153.947</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table six reveals that there were statistically significant differences between the respondents with respect to their AFELTA knowledge ($F = 3.883, p < 0.05$) and AppLU knowledge ($F = 5.137, p < 0.05$). However, there were no significant differences observed between the respondents’ FELTA knowledge ($F = 0.802, p > 0.05$) or AspCNS knowledge ($F = 1.766, p > 0.05$).

To particularly identify the differences between the three GPA groups (GPAs: 2 and above, 3 and above, and 4 and above), a post hoc (Scheffe) test was conducted, and its results are shown in Table seven.

**Table 7. Differences between the three GPA Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable (Scores on sections)</th>
<th>(I) GPA</th>
<th>(J) GPA</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFELTA</td>
<td>4 and above</td>
<td>2 and above</td>
<td>1.82796*</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 and above</td>
<td>2 and above</td>
<td>0.72227*</td>
<td>0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AppLU</td>
<td>4 and above</td>
<td>2 and above</td>
<td>2.52688*</td>
<td>0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 and above</td>
<td>2 and above</td>
<td>1.26672*</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.total</td>
<td>4 and above</td>
<td>2 and above</td>
<td>8.26882*</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 and above</td>
<td>2 and above</td>
<td>3.39890*</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicated that the respondents with GPAs of four and above performed better in the AFELTA and AppLU Sections and that this was statistically significant. However, those with GPAs of two and above and three and above were similar for the AFELTA and AppLU Sections. Table seven also indicates that there were differences between the respondents’ performance in both sections because of the variations in their GPA scores. Compared to the other respondents, those with a GPA of four and above overall had a higher performance in the AFELTA and AppLU Sections. However, there were no significant differences found for the FELTA and AspCNS performances between the respondents regardless of their GPA scores, that is, all respondents performed more or less the same in these two sections, as the differences in their GPA scores did not result in any differences in their answers given for these two sections.
Discussion

This study examined the relationships between GPA scores and grammatical and sociocultural competencies. Particularly, it attempted to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the respondents’ GPA scores and their performance in a focused questionnaire.

Correlation Analysis

GPA Relationship with Overall Performance

Although it was difficult to establish a cause–effect relationship, the overall analysis indicated that the respondents’ GPA scores had a positive and significant correlation \((r = 0.325**)\) with their overall performance in the four sections of the questionnaires (grammatical competence: FELTA and AFELTA and sociocultural competence: AspCNS and AppLU).

However, the statistical analysis revealed that less than half of the respondents (41.45%) succeeded in selecting the correct answers for FELTA, and the GPAs \((r = 0.058)\) appeared to have no significant relationship with their FELTA performances. This finding might indicate that there had been more emphasis placed on teaching the correct forms of tense and aspect than on helping students recognize the meaning and functions of these tenses and their aspects.

The relationships to the GPA scores were more obvious for the questions related to AppLU knowledge although less respondents (34.39%) managed to select the correct options in this section. However, as only those with the highest GPAs managed to answer these questions correctly, it could be surmised that high GPA scores predict better AppLU knowledge.

Overall Performance of all the Four Sections

To measure the overall grammatical and sociocultural competencies, they were subcategorized into two sub-knowledge levels, namely, knowledge of the rules (FELTA and AspCNS) and knowledge of the use (AFELTA and AppLU).

The study analysis indicated that the respondent’s GPA had a significant relationship with their AFELTA knowledge; however, no significant correlations were observed between the respondents’ GPAs and their scores on the questions related to FELTA knowledge. If language learners or translators lack knowledge about the accurate function or meaning of tenses and aspects, knowledge of the correct forms would be insufficient. This was confirmed by Gadalla (2017) who insisted that translators from English into Arabic need to identify the Arabic verb form and particles that can combine with it to convey the intended English tense is a major difficulty that can face translators. Gadalla (2017) felt that this issue could lead to difficulties in knowing the exact language forms to use when translating from English to Arabic.

With respect to the respondents’ sociocultural competence, Table five suggests that the respondents had more developed knowledge on how to use the language appropriately, as there were significant correlations found between the GPA scores and AppLU knowledge. However, the respondents’ TC competence appeared to be less developed, as there were no significant relationships found between the GPA scores and the AspCNS knowledge.

The results of the one-way ANOVA test indicated that there were statistical differences between the means for the respondents’ GPAs and their answers to the AFELTA and AppLU
questions, and the post hoc test revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the scores for those with a GPA four and above and those with GPAs of two and above and three and above for the AFELTA and AppLU questions, which also clearly revealed that those with a GPA of four and above tended to perform better in the AFELTA and AppLU questions. However, regardless of their GPA scores, all respondents performed more or less the same in the FELTA and AspCNS questions.

Respondents with high GPA scores of 4 and above seemed to have a better understanding on how to use the language both accurately (AFELTA) and appropriately (AppLU) than they seemed to know the functions (FELTA) that governed the correct forms or the cultural knowledge of native speakers (AspCNS). This may have been because of the general tendency of language teachers to focus on correct and appropriate language use rather than teaching the functions of the English language tense and aspect or teaching about the native speakers’ cultures. However, this needs further investigation.

The results of this study appeared to agree with previous studies (Byram, 1997; Dogankaya-Aktuna, 2005; Lázár, 2003; Rodríguez, 2013) in that teaching acceptable language forms is more common in English language classes. Previous studies have also found that non-native English language teachers focus more on teaching language forms than on teaching about the TC or culturally appropriate language use for several reasons. Al-Qahtani (2003) found that non-native teachers of English did not feel socioculturally competent to teach TC or appropriate language use as defined by native speakers. This could also be due to FL teaching policies as noted by Pishghadam et al (2011). Translation professors, therefore, need to develop their own grammatical and sociocultural competencies for FL to be able to assist their translation students determine the proper grammatical equivalence and, more importantly, the equivalences that can appropriately convey the intended cultural referents in the target text or utterance (e.g., Catford, 1964; Bassnett, 2002; Nida, 1964, 1994; Jukko, 2016; Kramsch, 2000).

As opposed to Chiang’s (2013) study which "did not find statistically significant differences in student cultural competence levels according to GPA" (p. 100), the current study managed to find a significant relationship between the GPA scores and the knowledge of culturally appropriate language use.

Delimitations and Limitations

The study questionnaire was administered to 75 male translation students from the Department of English Language and Translation at King Saud University (KSU) who were randomly selected from different levels. No female students participated in this study, as they study on a separate campus.

The diversity of the respondents’ backgrounds (EFL learning experience, GPA scores, experiences related to traveling a board, etc.) may have limited the generalizability of the results of this study. The small sample could have also been a limitation because the respondents may not have been representative of the target population, as there are 521 male translation students in the Department of English Language and Translation.
The questionnaire instrument could have also been a potential limitation; however, to minimize this risk, the questionnaire instrument was validated by two experts in the field. Then, the instrument was piloted with a small group to minimize any misunderstandings of the questionnaire instructions and eliminate the use of ambiguous words or phrases.

**Conclusion and Pedagogical Notes**

This paper attempted to investigate the relationship between the respondents' GPA scores and their knowledge level of linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. This study found that the GPAs scores could be a good indicator of learners' linguistic ability with respect to recognizing the acceptable language forms of the English tense and aspect (AFELTA), and appropriate language use (AppLU). However, the GPAs could neither predict their performance on recognizing the functions of the English language tense and aspect (FELTA) nor the on recognizing the cultural aspects of the native speakers (AspCNS). Similar to Foreign Language Learners, this study confirmed that translation students need to develop more than their knowledge of FL grammar, as they also need to know how the FL is used accurately and appropriately by native speakers in different contexts of communication. The lack of FL sociocultural knowledge suggests that non-native translators who only have a high level of grammatical competence can be “fluent fools” (Bennett, 1997), as their translations would violate the rules of common communication (Sun, 2007), would fail to “build functionally relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of the TL text” (Catford, 1978, p. 94), and would result in translation failure or “untranslatability” (Catford, 1978) or, as Nida (1964) puts it, “severe complications” for the translators.

Therefore, educators need to be aware of the importance of developing language learners’ sociocultural competence including what Celce-Murcia (2007) labeled as “formulaic competence”. Celce-Murcia emphasized the importance of developing learners' formulaic competence as a crucial component of their communicative competence. Translators who lack this competence can fail to use appropriate language forms common to native speakers, and accordingly, can fail in communicating the intended contextual meaning.

Language learners, in general, and translation students, in particular, need to be more aware of the grammatical complexity of the key elements of English language tense and aspect in accordance with the sociocultural factors. This aspect was highlighted by Canale and Swain (1980) who stated, “It seems that factors such as grammatical complexity should be considered in the process of specifying the grammatical forms and communicative functions that relate to learners’ sociolinguistic needs” (p. 24). Moreover, it is very important to note that the sample used in this study was small, and therefore, a larger sample with a more rigorously designed test would probably yield more reliable results.

**Acknowledgments**
The author thanks the Deanship of Scientific Research and RSSU at King Saud University for their technical support.

**Declaration of Interest**
The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.
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Effects of Task Repetition on Saudi EFL Learners’ Reading Comprehension

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Abstract
Recent developments in English language teaching and learning have heightened the need for the use of tasks to foster second language (L2) learning. Central to task-based interaction is the repetition of the same task. Task repetition (TR) stimulates cognitive skills for speech learning and functionality. It has been emphasised in research and practice how task repetition boosts learner processing tools by fortifying form-meaning correlations, facilitating lexicon integration, and providing practical expertise. This study aims to examine the impact of TR on reading comprehension of EFL learners, focusing on individual reading performance and group differences in familiar and recycled tasks. A total of 50 students participated in the current study. The participants were divided into two sample groups (25 male and female respondents). A quantitative research method was utilised in the data analysis. Data management and analyses were performed using IBM SPSS 24.0 (2019). Results indicated that content familiarity and TR significantly impact participants’ reading skill. In addition, this study provides insights into how teachers may utilise TR within L2 lessons to support learners’ language production. The findings observed in this study mirror those of the previous studies which have reported TR as being an effective tool for enhancing reading comprehension. The study concludes by discussing pedagogical implications on the role of TR in L2 learning within EFL contexts.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, Saudi EFL learners, second language, task complexity, task repetition

Introduction

Task-based instruction is a fundamental property of today’s communicative teaching. Task activity has long been employed as the unit of performance in most curriculum projects, and task-based methods view such activities as milestones in the learning process. The task-based method is particularly useful in enhancing learner communicative competence. This is particularly true in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context, where task engagement exposes the learners to interactive language practice (Kassim, Rehman & Price, 2018). Thus, it is imperative to understand what degree of learning is encouraged through learner task engagement. From a psychological standpoint, it has been theorised that learners prioritise the significance of form when they are exposed to task engagement (Tabari, 2016). Surveys such as that conducted by Kassim et al. (2018) showed that specific task forms support learners to take part in cognitive procedures that improve reading comprehension. In this regard, task repetition (TR) enhances cognitive competences for speech learning and functionality.

Previous studies have reported that repetition improves oral performance by easing learners’ memory recovery of their mental demonstrations that represent previous readings or utterances. In a recent article, Bui, Ahmadian and Hunter (2019) asserted that experience creates complex, eloquent or precise speech functionality. Learners apply cognitive functions to adopt, organise and verbalise information during TR. Therefore, the ability for cognitive procedures or attentional resources is discharged (Bayat, 2018). Based on the assumptions about TR, this study aims to shine new light on this aspect of language learning through an examination of the effect of TR on Saudi EFL learners’ reading comprehension. A case study approach was adopted in this research to allow a deeper insight into the role of TR in the observed EFL classes.

Justification for the Study

The rationale for task repetition efficacy depends on its influence on learner cognitive development, called the Working Memory (WM). WM is described as a succession of mechanisms involved with progressive information handling (Cho, 2018). Although extensive research has been carried out on WM, the issue has its focus limited capacity. Researchers believe that WM stores a small amount of data per time (Hopp, 2014). Whenever there are lexical problems, verbal recognition controls more resources than syntactic processing (Hopp, 2014). This assumption affirms the suggestion that cognitive tools are limited and primarily utilised to learn unfamiliar data. However, as repeated activities stimulate understanding and familiarity with the elements of cognitive benefits, this process overcomes the effects of restricted or limited capability. Such hypotheses are examined through activity repetition studies, and most of these studies have sought to determine if replicating similar activities influenced learner L2 learning (Bayat, 2018; Cho, 2018; Dawadi, 2019; Hopp, 2014). For example, a study conducted on college students examined whether replicating a story and meeting a task after a 10-week interval would help them perform better in most complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) regions (Bayat, 2018). The research engaged all procedures according to T-units and reasoned that complexity and fluency improved significantly. In terms of accuracy, the T-unit step might have been too conservative and thereby neglected to discover significant improvements.

Given the number of investigations on TR, researchers need to be cautious about study outcomes, particularly its impact on learner performance. Results found in most works of relevant
literature lack generalisability because of their small sample size (Ellis, Li & Zhu, 2019; Hsu 2019; Jung 2018; Iizuka 2019; McDonough & Crawford 2018). Therefore, among the novelties of the current study is the fact that the activities are part of the customary classroom curriculum, which considerably lessens the artificiality of the events. Few researchers have examined the impact of TR on learners’ reading comprehension or any difference of learners’ reading comprehension on TR.

**Purpose of the Study**
This research aims to examine the impact of task repetition (TR) on EFL learners’ reading comprehension. The study is conducted on individual reading performance and group differences in familiar and recycled tasks. In particular, this study examines two main research questions:
1. What is the impact of task repetition on EFL learners’ reading comprehension?
2. Is there any substantial correlation between TR and CAF?

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical Background**
The first activity, known as pre-task action, is a preliminary activity that enables learners’ successive performances. The reason for the facilitative function of TR relies on Levelt's model, which postulates that in an oral presentation, learners undergo three distinct phases. Based on this theory, learners conceptualise, plan and articulate oral presentations (Ellis, Li & Zhu, 2019). Under the conceptualisation phase, the intended significance of the speaker's presentation is created. The pre-verbal information is delivered to the formulation phase, where it is transformed into a phonetic strategy by using suitable punctuation and lexicon rules. Under the articulation phase, the learner analyses the linguistic components to create sounds.

**Content Familiarity**
Content familiarity is described as the information associated with the content domain, which is applied to oral or reading discourse. Although the impact of content familiarity and reading ability has been studied in many works of literature, its impact on the learner’s comprehension has not been explored (Ahmadian, Tavakoli & Dastjerdi, 2015; Ellis, et al., 201; Hsu, 2019; Phung, 2017; Qiu & Lo, 2017). A study conducted on Iranian learners tested the influence of text familiarity on classroom activities, specifically the impact on text reading and language (Sample & Michel, 2014). The findings showed that text familiarity significantly influenced the learner’s listening pattern. Another survey on content familiarity investigated its impact on the CAF of L2 learners (Qiu & Lo, 2017), with the researchers highlighting the need to study content familiarity as a task in the classroom curriculum and learner development.

**Task Repetition**
TR involves restructuring the measures from which learners must complete tasks. L2 learners are mandated to repeat similar activities for a specified period (Reynolds & Shih, 2019). TR is often claimed as an execution process of oral tasks since it improves their L2 operation by replicating similar actions and patterns (Jung, 2018). TR could be procedural or replicating related content material (Jung, 2018). Based on these assumptions, TR describes repeating similar activity and content. Thus, TR integrates knowledge and functionality and can facilitate changes in the way learners conceptualise and plan the stages of production.
TR and content familiarity enhance reading performance. Bozorgian and Kanani (2017) investigated the impact of TR on the precision and fluency of the learner's language ability. The outcomes suggested that learners who complete repetitive tasks performed better than the other learners in the management group. Besides, the findings showed that TR improved the intermediate learner's precision and fluency in reading comprehension. Qiu and Lo (2017) explored the influence of familiarity in oral reading. The findings revealed that TR negatively affected the learner's behavioural and cognitive reasoning. However, the researchers observed that learners were more relaxed during the TR sessions. The authors suggested that participants were interested in replicating unfamiliar subjects, though they showed noticeable declines in their learning curve.

**Task Engagement**

Task participation has been discussed in L2 studies, such as learner participation in corrective criticism. Researchers believe that task participation stimulates the learner's learning curve (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Despite its function in enhancing the learner's performance, task engagement studies have been unexplored in much task-based language teaching (TBLT). Thus, instructors should design and execute different classroom activities to engage and improve cognitive learning development, as student classroom engagement is a multidimensional construct that in turn enhances performance.

This multidimensional construct could be thought of as behavioural, cognitive, affective and social. The behavioural construct describes the learner's attentiveness, attention and determination towards class activities. This construct is measured by time and commitment. The cognitive construct describes the learner's mental input and conceptual knowledge during class activities (Sanajoo, 2016). Therefore, the learner's attention and self-determination are a few components of cognitive engagement (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Just as cognitive and behavioural participation is evaluated with language skill, psychological commitment involves a learner’s affective reaction in classroom activities. In addition, emotional engagement is a component of the learner's involvement in L2 activity (Lambert, et al., 2017). Social participation reflects the societal aspect of the discussion, which includes back channels and shared goals (Takashima & Verhoeven, 2019). However, the researcher will exclude social engagement from the present study.

TR influences the cognitive and behavioural engagement of L1 and L2 learners. Mayo, del Pilar & Agirre (2016). studied the impact of TR among novice learners. The authors selected 120 students and divided them into two groups, with age range serving as the dividing element. Each dyad was invited to play a 'spot-the-difference' activity. The analysis noted a significant influence of TR on dyadic patterns. The authors also observed a shift in the collaborative pattern of the sample groups. Azkarai and Oliver (2019) tested the influence of TR on learners' feedback, and their results showed differences between the culture and control groups. These research findings were consistent with the reports in some works of literature on TR (Ahmadian et al., 2015; Ellis, et al., 2019; Mayo, et al., 2016; Hsu, 2019; Qiu & Lo, 2017). Azkarai and Oliver (ibid) studied the influence of TR on L1 and L2 learners. The authors engaged 42 participants in the procedural and content activity, and their research findings showed that L1 use significantly influenced L2 events.
**Reading Comprehension**

Researchers agree that reading is the main language ability. Reading is not an inherently natural procedure in precisely the same manner as talking and listening are at a primary language level (Van de Guchte, Braaksma, Rijlaarsdam & Bimmel, 2017). The availability of distinct text materials such as journals and magazines prove that language skills could be fostered from educational prospects and instructional settings. Reading comprehension is decoding and constructing meaning through interaction with text language. TR enhances fluency and accurate reading performance because the cognitive function utilised to internalise, arrange and verbalise information remains accessible (Van de Guchte et al., 2017). Grammatical accuracy seems to gain from procedural repetition because the attentional resources and systematic memories are present in morphology rather than in task procedures.

The phrase ‘decoding and constructing meaning’ highlights the value and the inadequacy of text used as a determinant of reading comprehension. Reading training must consider different learners and their needs. Many learners do not understand foreign language texts because of their inadequacy in acquiring the reading ability. They appear to read with less comprehension and more slowly than they could in their original language. The research on reading relies on the fundamental premise that studying involves understanding what we read. The development of the meaning to understand a text depends on word-level abilities, proper background knowledge and comprehension strategies (Webster, 2019). These variables require attention in academic backgrounds and early phases of learners’ reading ability (Wang, 2019). From the perspective of language learning and communication, reading skill occupies a place of inherent significance. Text reading is a challenge of cognitive discipline. Comprehension can be described as being conscious of the communicative function and settings within the text. Reading comprehension is a creative, complicated and dynamic ability involving many procedures that have become the focal point of classroom orientation and psychological research (Webster, 2019). The significance of understanding the practice of language acquisition or learning has been accepted in most current theories of education, as authors have asserted that understanding is a mutual collaboration of textual features and learner knowledge. Text comprehension is an intricate cognitive ability where the reader must build meaning by using available tools from the text and related lessons. However, related knowledge provides support for understanding in several contexts.

**Reading in Task-based Language Teaching Context**

Task-based language teaching facilitates learning in the conventional classroom environment. Webster (2019) maintained that an engaging and interactive reading pattern improves learners’ reading skills. Ho (2017) conducted research on the potency of the applications as executed in classroom settings or perhaps the theoretical problems regarding ESP design. The author emphasised the need for extensive reading design and TR in college courses (Ho, 2017). The findings imply that studying for information has a beneficial impact on learners’ reading capability. Ahmadian et al., (2015) examined reading skills in web learning, and their findings showed that studying abilities, such as browsing and surfing, are essential to Internet education. The authors reasoned that assigning activities conveys the value of studying to extract the message and affects comprehension. They also believed that excellent readers within an academic context orientate themselves into the particular needs of reading and engage in the practice of studying (Ahmadian et al., 2015). Fukuta (2016) said that the essence of classroom activities must be
directly associated with the reading materials because it is a foundation for additional tasks. Given that language learning is affected by the intricate interactions of many factors – to include substances, actions and evaluative opinions – TBLT has a positive influence on these factors (Fukuta, 2016). By implication, TBLT offers learners the natural resources of purposeful materials that create perfect situations for real-life activities.

**Methodology**

The study focus is on the impact of TR on reading comprehension used a quasi-experimental design because it controls extraneous factors and lacks randomisation. The number of participants was not sufficient for this study. However, the research is a case study on the influence of TR on EFL learners. Based on the constraints of time and data collection procedures, the researchers measured the effect of TR on the learners' complexity, accuracy and fluency during reading comprehension. Since the study observed two related samples, T-tests and ANOVA (analysis of variance) were used to analyse the encoded data. To measure complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) in this study, the researchers used equal-length samples from the study subjects including temporal units as well as syntactic and lexical productions. Ratios and indices were employed to quantify the gleaned CAF segments for the purposes of the study analysis. Subsequently, L2 performance in reading comprehension has been examined.

**Participants**

A total of 50 students participated in the current study. Recruited randomly from classes across the English Language Department at Taibah University in Saudi Arabia, participants were divided into two sample groups, each comprising 25 male and female respondents. The population in the first course was assigned to perform repeated tasks. In each activity, individuals whose reading comprehension formed the basis of the analysis were randomly chosen (Noble & Smith, 2015). The participants were given a pre-test experience on IELTS to allow them to understand the structure of the current study.

**Instrumentation**

The research used distinct opinion gap tasks because they involved learners in moving beyond the information supplied by providing personal thoughts. The opinion gap activities offered variations for language use. Participants were asked to complete verbal and pictorial tasks to eliminate the challenges with complex activities. For the pictorial opinion gap, participants were requested to discuss the challenges of each topic as it affects people’s lifestyles and culture. The reading task provided the opportunity to assess the impact of TR on learners’ reading comprehension. Intercoder reliability measures have been taken into consideration during the data collection and analyses phases of the current study. Two raters agreed upon the tasks used in this study. This has been measured using Cohen's kappa coefficient, with rater A = 0.532 and rater B a kappa = 0.575 respectively.

**Experiment Procedure**

The researchers divided the participants into two groups of experimental and control samples. The reading task began and lasted for 10 hours of class lessons and instruction. Based on the treatment procedure, the control team worked on some brief discussions and the grammar lesson, and new vocabulary words were added during the class lessons. They were asked simple, open-ended
questions during the second phase of the experiment. A new vocabulary was provided for the experimental group. Participants were given simple grammar and distinct, illustrated lessons. The demonstration was conducted on the white classroom board to avoid ambiguities. The researchers asked students to make sentences with the new vocabulary and to pronounce the words individually. During the second session, the instructor reviewed some new vocabulary and grammar lessons. The subject was introduced to the learners, and clear directives as to what they needed to do were provided. The participants were asked to recall some lexicon. The pre-task phase frequently contained a similar activity to give learners a clear view of what to expect. The participants completed the task independently and in pairs with the language tools, while the researchers tracked their progress and offered encouragement.

After performing the class activities, the participating students were requested to prepare a brief written report to inform the class about what had occurred during their experiment session. The researchers were accessible for the learners to ask questions and to explain any language issues they may have encountered. The instructor tested each task according to the test design and scored their performances. The scores obtained for each task type were used to test the effect of activity form on the participants’ reading comprehension. The students in the experimental group were unaware of the test and were excluded from the results process.

**Data Collection Process**

During the first phase, two classes of participants were assigned to TR activities. After the pre-test, a variant of the IELTS reading test was administered to understand the context of the research experiment. The researchers had informed knowledge of IELTS learning, having years of teaching experience. Participants completed the reading tests as part of the routine work, and their performance and comprehension were recorded. Their next operation was repeated and recorded at the end of the course.

The instructor, particularly in the very first performance to avoid reading familiarity during the second session, supplied no corrective comments, either explicit or implied. Towards the end of the course, participants were requested to replicate the tasks from the communication objectives and rubrics. Though there was anxiety that the second activity generated artificiality, it should be emphasised that the tasks used in this research were part of the course’s syllabus. Classroom instructors must integrate repetition in the curriculum because it is a feature of normal discourse. Participants did not practice for the second task because the next operation was unexpected. At the end of every reading session, the researchers transcribed and coded the values of students’ performance. The frequency and CAF analysis were computed in each category of the experiments to test the significance between task duplication and activity recycling.

**Data Analysis**

Participants’ reading demonstrations on all task repetitions were transcribed. For this function, two analysts analysed the samples. The researchers were experienced teachers with informed knowledge in the classroom curriculum. The data were analysed, and the inter-rater consistencies for the CAF values were assigned (Yin, 2014). Based on the study questions, the researchers performed ANOVA and $T$-test analyses.
Results

Phase I
Since the study investigated the impact of TR on the reading performance of the experimental group, T-tests were used to compare the averages of the sample population. The researchers conducted a statistical analysis to test the performance of all groups; ANOVA was applied to investigate the significance of TR on the test scores. The first phase showed the reliability index for the test results; Table one below presents the performance distribution of both groups. The reliability index was 0.876.

Table 1. *T*-test results for reading comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leven’s test for equality of variance</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>df Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td>Mean dif.</td>
<td>Std. error of differences</td>
<td>95% confidence interval of difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>12.093</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>5.746</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>4.8000</td>
<td>.7013</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>5.737</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>4.8000</td>
<td>.7013</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>6.0910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase II
The researchers compelled the students to repeat the reading session to test the impact of content familiarity. The test scores were graded and coded for the analysis. The results of the reading sessions are summarised in Table two below.

Table 2. *ANOVA* results of final scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>df.</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>84.002</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24.651</td>
<td>26.456</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>96.045</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>.969</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two shows the results of the *F* (26.456) at a significance level of .000 showed a higher value as the critical value of 2.47. The results indicate a positive impact of TR on learner’s reading comprehension and CAF. During the second phase of the experiment, most students were familiar with the text and showed positive signs of fluency and accuracy. However, students who made errors during the first reading phases tried to avoid similar errors during the second experimental session. The results showed a significant impact of content familiarity and TR on learners’ reading skill. The Tukey test was used to analyse differences with the sample groups.
Table 3. *Tukey test results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) VAR00007</th>
<th>(J) VAR00007</th>
<th>Mean difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Lower-bound</th>
<th>Upper-bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1.13000*</td>
<td>.26849</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-1.8581</td>
<td>-0.5219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1.46000</td>
<td>.26849</td>
<td>.570</td>
<td>-1.2881</td>
<td>.3481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.13000*</td>
<td>.26849</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.4319</td>
<td>1.8881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.29000*</td>
<td>.26849</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.6619</td>
<td>3.0181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.16000*</td>
<td>.26849</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.1319</td>
<td>1.4981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>-1.42000*</td>
<td>.26849</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-2.2481</td>
<td>-0.8619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.46000</td>
<td>.26849</td>
<td>.570</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-0.67000*</td>
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<td>.012</td>
<td>-1.2981</td>
<td>-0.1319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.62000*</td>
<td>.26849</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.7919</td>
<td>2.2481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* 2, reading task 2; 3, reading task 3; 1 and 4, reading task 1 = reading task 4.

The analysis presented in Table three demonstrates the Tukey test values of the students’ reading performance. The findings showed that TR has a positive impact on EFL learner’s reading comprehension.

**Discussion**

In applying task-based language teaching, learners are exposed to reading skills through naturalistic language. Most educators or teachers have tried to integrate the learning design for L1 and L2 processes. TBLT considers TR an essential and adequate motivation for speech and reading development (Ellis et al., 2019; Jung, 2018). The illation of this study describes TBLT as a practical, functional and innovative teaching system. The findings show that task-based approaches can improve the reading comprehension of EFL learners. In this study, task-based reading helped EFL learners gauge their reading performance and development. The investigations and findings validate the relevance of the TR technique for active and passive learners. By implication, the approach can be used in a classroom environment with conventions and knowledge-oriented designs. Thus, TBLT is an effective method for reading comprehension. Teachers offer learners a much better understanding context through executing activities in their lesson plans because they can control the variables facilitating the reading skill.

Based on these findings, teachers should combine the emphasis on form and meaning to provide an effective strategy in task-based teaching. In answering the research question, the researchers seek to test the impact of TR on reading performance. The findings showed that TR stimulates the learners’ drive to fluency and better reading patterns. Thus, task familiarity influenced the reading pattern during the second activity. During TR, the cognitive burden of these
tasks is considerably reduced, as learners are acquainted with the content and instructions. By implication, learners can show accuracy and sophistication, and create utterances that are more eloquent.

Regarding precision and complexity, EFL learners can draw lexical and syntactic details either independently or in groups. Finding a positive effect of TR on learners’ reading performance was consistent with the recommendations of Bayat (2018), who suggested that repetition enhanced the learners’ usage of the language program, reading fluency and consciousness. Findings on CAF were consistent with those of previous works in preserving the reading form and meaning (e.g. Ahmadian et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2019; Hsu, 2019; Jung, 2018; Iizuka, 2019; McDonough & Crawford 2018). Because of content familiarity, learners were confident in addressing the reading form. The researchers investigated the individual and collaborative impact of TR on the learners' reading performance. Collaborative task activity creates intermittent breaks in the reading pattern, which affects fluency; in addition, the pauses related to turn-taking raised the number of fractures that affect fluency. In answering the second question, the researchers tested the impact of TR on CAF. The results confirmed that TR influenced the results of CAF (see Table three). The results were consistent with other findings, which suggested that learners concentrate on text content and language (Ahmadian et al., 2015; Ellis, et al., 2019; Hsu, 2019; Jung, 2018). It is a common belief among language educators and practitioners that language rehearsal is a tactical plan that enhances task performance (Ellis et al., 2019). Language rehearsal solves the challenges of text complexity. It inspires learners to apply thorough content mining and draw inferences from the language rule system.

Conclusion
TR is a study tool as opposed to a teaching apparatus, which explains the research gaps in its utilisation. This study was carried out to examine the impact of TR on the reading comprehension of EFL learners. The classes were performed under similar conditions such as classroom space, reading directives, time allotment and corrective comments. The class participants were asked to repeat the task under the pretext that they failed the first reading session. No elaboration or corrective feedback was offered regarding their syntactic, lexical or pragmatic errors. Participants did not prepare themselves for this experiment because the likelihood of another activity was unexpected, and learners’ performances were captured through sequential data collection procedures. The findings demonstrated a substantial effect of TR on accuracy and complexity as well as a significant impact on fluency and functionality, in addition to a considerable gap between TR and activity recycling. Based on the current research findings, teachers are encouraged to integrate TR in the course curriculum in order to improve learners’ oral and reading performance. That is, course syllabi should be reviewed based on learners’ performance. In addition, teachers should observe classroom settings and adopt effective strategies that may enhance behavioural and cognitive engagement and content familiarity.

Study Recommendations
The results of this study may well be beneficial to researchers, curriculum designers, class material creators and language teachers because it highlights the techniques that embody a better way to enhance reading abilities. Among the significant criticisms of TBLT, the impact of TR on learners’ reading comprehension has been challenging. This study proves that TR and recycling are vital
options for improving reading comprehension. In general, the findings of this study suggest several courses of action.

As for classroom material creators and curriculum designers, the outcome of this study provides a springboard for enhancing the decision-making process. Material developers can choose from a variety of activities based on the findings of this research to improve the students’ reading comprehension. Given the originality of this investigation of TR, class activity designers and developers may integrate such actions into the syllabus. For instance, TR is suitable and appropriate for L2 learners as it could improve their reading accuracy and fluency. Additionally, language teachers may use the findings of this research because of its outcomes. Test instructors can also gain insight from the results, as they can forecast learner behaviour and assemble activities to enhance learning. The outcomes of this research reveal certain ambiguities about TR in second language acquisition. Numerous possible future studies using the same experimental set up are apparent. In particular, future studies could focus on the correlation between TR and CAF variables in light of learners’ levels based on The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

**Study Limitations**

Regardless of the attempts to control many factors in this study, there were limitations that arose at distinct phases of the investigation. These variables may impact the outcome of the study. Thus, it is crucial to mention these limitations so they can be taken into account on prospective research. English proficiency of the participants has not been tested and this may have affected the results of this analysis because the learners had different levels of formal English education. The participants were given a three-week lecture before the experiment to enhance their grammatical and vocabulary mastery so as to convey their thoughts via the typical fluency rate. Since errors are numerous in nature, it makes error-free instruction too conventional, as an error of any type would prevent a task from being error-free. In future research, less-conservative precision and fluency levels that provide a much better account of progress with time would be recommended.

Another limitation that acted as a crucial factor in achieving the task was the brief amount of pedagogical intervention. The learners had three weeks of English lessons, and the number of TRs was not enough to outperform the management group. The sample had a limited capability to express themselves, and it influenced the outcomes of the experiment. Despite the efforts to ensure all learners had the same ability throughout the pre-test phase, the material per group exhibited rates which were considerably reduced compared to the controlled groups. The participants chosen for the experiment have been part of a program where the age gap was not a factor for selection. Investigations based on simple past or alternative task activities should incorporate a phonological precision rate. This study did not clarify the pronunciation criteria utilised to disseminate accurate or inaccurate phrases; however, it is pivotal to investigate pronunciation precision and grammar rating and to create measurements that could be used across disciplines. The sample population for this study was small; although the statistical technique could accommodate larger sample sizes, the researchers could not obtain the required number of participants due to logistical difficulties (e.g. time, resources, consent and research procedures).
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Saudi EFL Teachers’ Identity Formation in Saudi Schools: A case Study

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Abstract
This study aims to explore the influence of contextual factors on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers’ professional identity formation in the context of Saudi Arabia. More specifically, it aims to examine how the participants’ educational background, life experiences and professional setting influence their professional identities as EFL teachers in Saudi secondary schools. This study involved three EFL teachers who are based in Riyadh. Employing a case study method, the data collection techniques of this qualitative study included in-depth interviews and observations. Drawing upon Wenger’s (1998) concept of communities of practice, the data analysis reveals several factors affecting the EFL Saudi teachers’ professional identity. This study found that the Saudi teachers’ educational background and life experiences act as formative elements which influence their EFL professional identity formation. Moreover, the participating teachers agree that practical experience and teaching community played a more significant role than their educational background in terms of shaping their teacher’s identity construction and their classroom practices. The results have many implications for Saudi Arabia’s development of current teacher education programme. If teacher education curriculum is aimed at improving the professional identity building of EFL teachers, then the policymakers might need to review the curricula of English language teacher education and incorporate some improvements within the programme.

Keywords: EFL teacher, identity formation, professional development, Saudi Arabia

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.27
Introduction
With globalization, English has become a global lingua franca, and there is a demand for the mastery of English language skills. As in many parts of the world, Saudi Arabia has shown an increasing interest in teaching and learning of English (Abahussain, 2016). English is the only foreign language in the school curriculum of Saudi Arabia. Learning and teaching English became an official policy of the government since 1932, and consequently, in 1958, English has become a separate subject in the general education curriculum (Alkhuzay, 2016). The growing demand for learning English in Saudi Arabia is visible in the political, financial and legislative incentives given by the Saudi government. The government allocated 25 per cent of the national budget to the educational sectors in which learning and teaching of English receive great importance (Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, 2015).

EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia are normally graduates of arts, particularly English language and literature. They enrol for an intensive course for one semester. Upon completion of their first semester, they study English linguistics, English literature, teaching methods, translation and some other elective courses (Al-Seghayer, 2014). During the four-year program, they study courses like curriculum studies, evaluation, school administration and educational psychology and they study only one course on EFL methodology of teaching; which is fairly inadequate in contrast to the high expectations and demands of the EFL teachers. To overcome this, the Ministry of Education, in 2000, in collaboration with the British Council and the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia, drew up plans for an all-around teacher training, which aimed to equip 600 EFL teachers with the latest teaching methods and to help them enhance their efficiency as English teachers. In 2002, the government organised another English training programme to enhance EFL teaching (Al-Hazmi, 2003). All these actions indicate the seriousness of the Saudi government to improve English language learning.

Part of the process of becoming a language teacher involves the development of a teacher identity and identifying with language teaching as a profession. The identity that teachers attach to themselves and the identity others give them are central to the subject they teach and their relationships with the students, and the teachers in their professional community (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000). This implies that teachers’ identities are central to their effectiveness as teachers, their decision-making concerning their teaching profession and how they approach their teaching practices (Anwaruddin, 2016; Arends, 2014; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Thus, understanding teachers’ identities would provide insights into how teachers form the images that they use to reflect on their teaching practices in the classroom (Mieto, Barbato & Rosa, 2016).

Literature Review
Starting from the last century, a teacher’s identity has become a significant factor that determines a teacher’s knowledge and consequently, their professional development. Many researchers have revealed different types of influence that shape teachers and their identities, which also affect their professional knowledge and practice, among them, for example, are Donato (2017) and Berger and Lê Van (2000). Contemporary scholars agree on the fact that the teachers’ perspectives regarding the nature of learning and teaching and their role influence their sense of well-being, their work behaviours and work effectiveness (Gu & Day, 2013, Farell, 2015; Donato, 2017). This emphasises a paramount significance on the prototype of an educator with whom teachers identify.
themselves (Hanna, Oostdam, Severiens & Zijlstra, 2019). According to Hanna et al. (2019), a good teacher is defined as one who helps his or her students to learn. He or she also contributes toward the mission of teaching in some way. The teacher’s role is not only limited to giving information, but he or she also has many roles in the education process. Understanding the notion of good teaching depends on a person's conception of teaching (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Studies on non-native teacher identities indicated that the identity formations are influenced by sociocultural context (Gu & Benson, 2015; Trent, 2012; Widodo, Fang & Elyas, 2020). The influence of the contextual factors on teacher identity is an issue that also has been noted by Wenger (1998), who argued that teacher identity develops depending on the environment one finds himself/herself in. Teacher identity is situated, varied and shifting according to the sociocultural contexts in which a teacher works and lives. This is because teacher identity is constantly being renegotiated during their professional life (Wenger, 1998), which makes identity both dynamic and fluid.

There are various ways in which teachers’ professional identities and professional decisions are influenced by the teaching contexts. Pennington and Richards (2016) suggest that teachers’ identity normally reflects the “apprenticeship of observation and participation when they were students”. In other words, teachers’ identity develops through their autobiographical identity and educational experiences, including teacher education background. Studies (Gu & Day, 2013; Donato, 2017) have shown that the teachers’ beliefs regarding the nature of learning and teaching and their role seem to influence their sense of identity and their instructional practices.

Despite numerous studies which examined the influence of sociocultural context and formation of teachers' identities, there are very few studies on EFL teachers’ identities in Saudi Arabia (Elyas & Badawood, 2016; Khan, 2011; Ahmad, Latada, Shah & Wahab, 2017; ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). There is a particular concern with how the identities of these EFL teachers in Saudi schools affect their professional practices. Studies on the Saudi context mainly focused on the non-native EFL instructors in Saudi Arabia colleges and universities. To our knowledge, there has not been a study conducted on Saudi EFL teachers professional identity formation in Saudi Arabia secondary schools. The awareness on the importance of providing and developing competent and well-qualified English language teachers motivates the researchers to examine the role of professional setting in the process of teacher identity construction. Thus, the findings of this study could contribute to the body of knowledge in EFL teachers’ professional identity formation by filling the gaps in the existing literature.

Among the few studies conducted on the Saudi Arabia context, is the study of Elyas (2011) who carried out in-depth semi-structured interviews with one male Saudi teacher, Ali, teaching in a college in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to investigate the way this teacher views his identity and the way he sees himself enacting his identity. The finding shows that Ali embraces his role as a Muslim person rather than an English teacher. That is, his values and beliefs play a main role in his professional identity. Ali feels insecure about his identity as a teacher because he is uncomfortable with the values promoted in the English textbook, which he viewed as opposed to Islamic teaching. In another study by Elyas and Badawood (2016) report that the English curriculum in Saudi Arabia is viewed as directly linked to the faith of Islam. They add that the role
of English teachers is to teach their students to integrate knowledge and interact in keeping with Islamic values. Furthermore, Ahmad, Latada, Shah & Wahab (2017) explore the factors that develop the professional identity of 41 Pakistani EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Their findings reveal several factors such as the decision to become EFL teachers, social factors such as their overseas EFL experience, their professional futures, interaction with other EFL teachers and being non-native English speakers seemed to have an impact on their professional identity.

A strong teacher identity is crucial for EFL teachers to develop personally and professionally so as to improve their teaching practices and job satisfaction. Hence, this study attempts to address this gap in research by exploring the identity formation of three EFL teachers in the Saudi secondary schools in Riyadh, focusing on the influence of sociocultural factors on the professional identity formation of the teachers within the framework of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). Viewing identity as part of socialization, Wenger (1998) considers it as “an integral aspect of a social learning theory and separable from issues of practice, community, and meaning” (p. 145). The link between identity and practice is central within the context. Engagement in practice, according to Wenger (1998) “gives us certain experiences of participation, and what our communities pay attention to reifies us as participants” (p. 150), suggesting that identity is socially constructed through participating in communities of practice (CoP). According to Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder (2002), the communities of practice are “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in their area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4). Individuals develop mastery identities as they shift their way of engaging in a (CoP) through the various social interactions and roles that they encounter.

While the community of practice construct provides insight into the teacher's involvement in their professional settings, specific teacher identity dimensions are lacking in this framework. This limitation is resolved by the use of the reconceptualised notion of teacher identity by Pennington and Richards (2016), in particular the competencies needed for language teaching and how language teachers incorporate their own professional identity building attributes and experience. Two areas of professional identity building are defined based on the reconceptualization; foundational competence of language teacher identity and advanced competence of language teacher identity. Foundational competences of language teacher identity include language related identity relating to the background and language skills of teachers; disciplinary identity defined by the disciplinary knowledge of teachers and the knowledge of pedagogical content; context-related identity influenced by contextual factors; self-knowledge and awareness which refers to teacher’s capacity in identifying their strengths and weaknesses; as well as student-related identity which are greatly influenced by teachers’ knowledge and awareness about students.

Pennington and Richards (2016) argue that teachers build their language teacher identity during their teaching experience and by actively engaged in practices of lifelong learning and professional development. We argue that these aspects of the identity of language teachers are crucial in determining the professional identity knowledge of ESL teachers.
Research Objectives
This research aims to study factors which influence three EFL teachers’ professional identities formation and their classroom practices. The following research question guided this study: How do the contextual factors influence the Saudi EFL teachers’ professional identities and classroom practices?

Significance of the Study
As there are relatively only a few studies in Saudi Arabia examine the influence of contextual factors on EFL teachers’ professional identity construction, it is then essential to examine this process. Besides, we believe that it is important to examine how the EFL teachers draw on their educational backgrounds during their classroom practices and how contextual factors influence their professional identities. This understanding is relevant as it provides a practical contribution to the English language teaching by serving as a guideline that informs future professional development for English teachers in the Saudi Arabia schools.

Methodology
As the purpose of this study was to gain insights into the Saudi EFL teachers’ professional identity formation in the context of secondary schools in Saudi Arabia, we employed a qualitative case study design (Merriam, 2009). The case study offers insight into the phenomenon being studied, teacher learning, as it exposes real-life situations. Within the qualitative approach utilized for this study, the emphasis was placed on the understanding and interpretation of data during the process of data gathering and analysis.

Data Collection Method
In this qualitative study, the methods of data collection included in-depth interviews and observations. For in-depth interviews, an interview protocol was developed based on the existing literature (Farrell, 2015; Senom, 2016). The study adopted what Cohen, Manion & Morrisson (2011) and Kvale (1996) called 'semi-structured interview' to be conducted on the research participants. Kvale (1996) defines this type of interview as one which has a structure of themes to be conveyed and questions to be posed. It allowed researchers to have access not only to the verbal data but to nonverbal data as well (Cohen, Manion & Morisson, 2011). The primary aim of using interviews in this research depends on the nature of the phenomenon under study. Knowing the formation of professional identity of EFL teachers includes engagement and a deep understanding of the perspectives of the teachers. Semi-structured interviews were used because these offer consistencies in the sequencing of questions to researchers (Denscombe, 2010) and open a gate for other questions to arise during the interview. The participants were encouraged to describe and evaluate their own practicum experiences thoroughly and freely from their perspectives. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face and audiotaped for transcription purposes. The interviews were transcribed immediately and the researchers reviewed each transcription with written notes from the interview while listening to the corresponding tape.

Moreover, the study employed classroom observation where two classes for each of the three teachers were observed. The significance of employing classroom observations was well explained by Marshall and Rossman (2006) who argue that this method for research data collection allows the researchers to write down and describe actions and interactions through observing, following
and identifying the behaviour of subjects in certain classroom settings. This means that the observations made while visiting the schools in general and conducting the interviews in the staff rooms in particular, allowed the researchers to observe how the participants interacted with their colleagues, the kinds of topics they choose to discuss which influenced their relationship with each other to some degree. Given that this study considers the role of the practising communities in shaping professional identity, class observations were considered significant and recorded in field notes. The data collection was completed within 12 weeks and until data saturation as a prolonged engagement to ensure trustworthiness.

Participants
To obtain rich and comprehensive data from EFL teachers in Saudi secondary school in Riyadh, a purposive sampling strategy was adopted to recruit the participants for this study. Teachers are expected to have a minimum level of English language proficiency, making it an essential component in teacher’s identity construction process. The selection of the school in Riyadh was made based on having three novices.

Table 1: Participants’ profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Educational background</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turki</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree, English Education</td>
<td>4 years in Saudi School in Riyadh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majdeh</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree, English Education</td>
<td>4 years in Saudi School in Riyadh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree, English Education</td>
<td>5 years in Saudi School in Riyadh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turki is a 32 years' old English teacher at the Riyadh secondary school. His first language is Arabic. English is his foreign language which he has studied at school since the age of thirteen when he was in grade seven. He graduated from the English language department at Umm al-Qura University in Saudi Arabia. He has been teaching English for four years. English was Mr Turki’s favourite subject which he loved too much because of his English teacher Mr Ali who treated him as if he were his son. Despite his love to English, Mr Turki did not acquire English well because he merely used English during English class (four classes per week) and that English is not spoken in his city outside English class.

Majdeh is a 29 years' old English teacher at the Riyadh secondary school. Her first language is Arabic. English is her foreign language which she studied at public schools in Saudi Arabia for twelve years and then for four years at university. In 2011, she graduated with a bachelor’s degree.
in English from Umm al-Qura University in Saudi Arabia. She has been teaching English for four years.

Ahmed is a 30 years' old English teacher at the Riyadh secondary school. His first language is Arabic. English is his foreign language which he studied at school at the age of thirteen when he was in grade seven. He spent a total of ten years in learning English in which six years were at the intermediate and secondary schools and four were at the university level. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in English from Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia. He has been teaching English for five years.

Data Analysis
Marshall and Rossman’s (2006) seven analytical stages were chosen to guide the data analysis of this study. This involves 1) organising the data; 2) immersing in the data; 3) generating categories and themes; 4) coding the data; 5) offering interpretation; 6) searching alternative understandings, and 7) writing the findings. To synthesize the data, the researchers identified some major patterns or themes that are linked together and collectively described the Saudi EFL teachers’ teaching experience.

In constructing teacher identity in language teaching, Pennington and Richard (2016) proposed foundational competences and advanced competences. The foundational competences are language-related identity, disciplinary identity, context-related identity, self-knowledge and awareness and student-related identity. Under the second theme, the categories of practiced and responsive teaching skills, theorizing from practice and membership in the community of practice and profession were proposed.

However, for this study, only the five foundational competences are discussed, i.e. language-related, disciplinary, context-related, self-knowledge and awareness, and student-related competences.

Findings
Saudi EFL teachers’ professional identity formation is reflected through the data presented in this study. The construct of professional identity is depicted through the teachers’ foundational competences, i.e. language-related, disciplinary, context-related, self-knowledge and awareness, and student-related competences. Through the accounts of the teachers’ experiences, their construction of the EFL teachers’ identity can be understood. The teachers’ foundational competences are discussed as follows.

**Language-related Identity**
Language-related identity is structured by a person’s language proficiency and background, which developed over the years of learning a language. In this regard, the three teachers revealed during the interview that they started learning the English language from the intermediate school and went on to study English language at the undergraduate bachelor’s degree level at a local university in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the three teachers claimed to have studied the English language for a combined ten years. While Turki and Majdeh did not complain, Ahmed argued that he faced challenges during his bachelor’s degree studies due to having a poor background in the English language, but his degree program helped and made him interested in the English language. Moreover, all the three teachers did not undertake any language proficiency test yet. On the scale
of ten, Turki rated himself between seven to eight, Majdeh rated her English language proficiency seven and Ahmed rated his English language proficiency at eight.

Another important aspect under the category of language-related identity is the use of Arabic in teaching English. The teachers were asked whether they use Arabic while teaching English or they refrain from using it. All the three teachers claimed that they use Arabic to a minimal extent. These claimed proven correct during class observations. In explaining the use of Arabic language, Turki stated:

> Sometimes you need to use Arabic to make a point or meaning of a word clear by giving examples and adding extra explanations or explaining difficult concepts. [Turki, recall interview]

This implies that the teacher did not want to be judged as ‘deficient’, but real classroom practices obligate the use of Arabic to ensure full understanding of the lesson by the students. Furthermore, on the development of language-teacher identity, Turki makes use of his peers and available sources to develop his language proficiency. While Majdeh did not discuss the development of her language-teacher identity, Ahmed argued that practice makes perfection, adding that:

> Practising English spoken and written inside classrooms has been an essential element in developing my English as well as listening to native speakers. There are different media, of course. To become a better language teacher, you have to consider language as a part of your life. That is the more you use the English language the more you become a better speaker of it. [Ahmed, Interview]

On the relationship between teachers’ learning experience and their identity construction, Turki stated that his experience of reading materials in English and watching English movies exposed him to English culture. Similarly, Ahmed mentioned that his experience with the English language helped to shape his professional identity through exposure to Western culture, particularly the English-speaking Western world.

It can be concluded that the teachers believe the significance of their English language learning experiences on their professional practices of teaching the English language, as supported by the observations of their classroom practices.

**Disciplinary Identity**

Disciplinary identity is the knowledge of the content of the field (disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, whether gained through experience or formal education) that contributes to the overall identity of the language teacher. In this aspect, the teachers were asked about the English-related courses that they studied during their bachelor degree. While Turki studied applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, curriculum planning and assessment, Majdeh studied teaching methods, critical pedagogy and linguistics, and Ahmed studied English teaching methods, applied linguistics and translation. This means that the teachers were exposed to an array of different English-related courses.

Moreover, the teachers claimed that practical experience of teaching has been more influential than the knowledge gained through the bachelor’s degree program in shaping their EFL identity.
and facilitating their role as EFL teachers at the Saudi school in Riyadh. In this regard, Majdeh elucidated that:

*By applying different styles of teaching, I was able to deal with the difficulties I face in classroom practices.* [Majdeh, interview]

Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a limited impact of the disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge on the teachers' disciplinary identity. Nevertheless, teachers' practical experiences are found to have more contributions. This finding matches with the finding of Elyas (2011) where his respondent reported that his teacher education did not prepare him to implement the English language curriculum in his classroom practices.

**Context-related Identity**

Context-related identity illustrates how different teaching contexts create different learning and identity development environments. It is divided into the favouring conditions that support teaching and learning and the disfavouring conditions that limit the teaching and learning.

As EFL teachers, teachers mediate between the cultures of English and Arabic. The three teachers agreed that while the English curriculum was adapted to suit the Saudi Arabia culture, they have to draw examples from the English culture in explaining culturally-specific English vocabularies at some points. In this regard, Turki discussed:

*S pleasant we need to carry something to move from one side of the river to the other side. Whenever we carry something across the river, we have to begin to think about the nature of the landscapes we will encounter on the other side and you have to do the same with different cultures.* [Turki, Recall Interview]

In discussing some teaching and learning supportive facilities in their school, teachers argued that they have excellent facilities and equipment as well as skilled administrators. During classroom observations, it was found that the number of students in one classroom is about 35 students. However, the class was equipped with a whiteboard, LCD monitors and projectors, which the teachers used to display their PowerPoint presentations.

Nevertheless, the teachers stated that the negative factors inhibiting teaching and learning are the limited resources, the large number of students in a classroom and the lack of an English room (or English club) where the teacher and his students interact better in English. These factors were reflected in the poor participation of the students in English conversations and activities.

Moreover, the context of teaching English as a foreign language in Riyadh is found to significantly form the identity of the teachers. From Turki’s point of view, it helps him to establish contact with English native speakers, get the opportunity to attend the classes of many native English expert teachers. He added that in Riyadh there are many workshops which unfortunately he has no time to attend on weekdays. Majdeh claimed that teaching in Riyadh helps her in understanding students’ needs and increases her teaching abilities. She added: “I have to be more patient with students’ lack of interest in the English language”. [Majdeh, Interview]. Besides, Ahmed believes that teaching in a big city like Riyadh makes teaching easier due to the availability of facilities which is in contrast with teaching in rural areas where facilities are limited, and the
students need more efforts from the teacher to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

It can be concluded, therefore, that context-related identity contributes to the teacher’s identity by providing context-based situations and experiences. The challenges that teachers’ face varies, allowing the teachers to apply different teaching methods and styles. However, although teaching at the same school would implicate the same challenges, teachers have unique experience reflected in their diverse identity construction.

**Self-knowledge and Awareness**

Self-knowledge and awareness focus on the awareness of teachers to their role as EFL teachers and how such awareness shapes their identity and development. To understand how the teachers are aware of themselves as EFL teachers and their teaching profession, the teachers were asked to state their views on their job, including his teaching and non-teaching duties. In this regard, Turki discussed that despite his love of the profession of teaching, it has its share of challenges. He furthered:

> Well. It is not an easy job, as an EFL teacher you will need to plan, prepare, and deliver lessons to an array of classes and age groups. You also need to prepare and set tests, examinations papers and exercises. An EFL teacher needs also to mark and provide appropriate feedback on oral and written work. The teacher needs to write and produce new materials including audio and visual resources, organise and get involved in social and cultural activities such as sports competitions, school parties and excursions. [Turki, Interview]

For Majdeh, as an English teacher, she needs to be experienced enough to teach different levels of students from the beginner to the advanced levels. She also added that she gets involved in various other activities outside her teaching duties that include general activities in Arabic as well as monitoring students during breaks.

Similarly, Ahmed discussed that in addition to his typical English teaching duties, he also has to participate in extra-curricular activities as well as monitor the students during break and prayer times, and supervise them when writing their examinations. He then added that as a teacher, he is also responsible for a particular classroom and students as a class master.

Moreover, to understand how exhaustively self-knowledge and awareness contribute to the construction of the EFL teacher’s identity, the teachers were asked about their plans and goals. Turki responded by saying that he needs to keep on studying to obtain further qualifications and he hopes in five years he can be able to have a master’s degree in TESOL. Turki added:

> I aim to keep myself up to date with the latest methods in education. I would use technology in my classroom and my work to the maximum extent. I would also design my website so that parents and students are always aware of what is happening in term of homework, test, events and holidays. Students and parents will also be able to communicate with me via my website. [Turki, Interview]
However, Majdeh gave a short response mentioning that she hopes she will still be teaching in a better way which will help her reach her goals. The teacher aims to make her students better in the English language.

Nevertheless, Ahmed claimed to have no specific plans, but he will continue his job as an English teacher and continue improving himself. He then added that he would try to take more professional courses that will help him develop his English language. The teacher aims to improve himself by obtaining more training. Hence, his own goal is to make himself a better teacher in the future.

To better understand the teachers’ perceptions of themselves as EFL teachers, the teachers were asked to explain how they see themselves as EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. On this, Turki opined that:

*Being an EFL teacher promoted my creativity, enabled me to find different solutions for problems and helped me become more patient and understanding.*

[Turki, Interview]

Yet, Majdeh claimed that she feels happy when she can help her students to learn the language and be able to determine their weaknesses.

Differently, Ahmed sees himself in the eye of his society. He explained:

*I think our society looks at teachers in an equal eye, but for English teacher, I think they look at him as a distinctive one because sometimes we need him to help us in some cases which need his language expertise.*

[Ahmed, Interview]

Furthermore, the teachers were asked to describe the kind of teachers they are. While Turki sees himself as a big brother teacher, Majdeh views herself as a kind, patient, acceptable and funny teacher, and Ahmed regards himself as normal, trying to be diligent, optimistic by positively looking at things, dealing with his students in a good way and trying to fulfil their learning goals.

To follow up on the teachers’ descriptions of the type of teacher they are, the teachers were then asked to describe an ideal EFL teacher in their views. Turki opined that an ideal EFL teacher needs to attend a TEFL course that will allow the language teacher to better understand the profession of teaching English. Yet, Majdeh thinks that an ideal EFL teacher would be an acceptable and patient to face many difficult problems like students’ weakness, students’ laziness and students’ individuality.

In conclusion, although the three teachers have different perspectives and understanding of the self, they agree on the fact that they need to improve themselves as EFL teachers, hoping for better classroom practices. This finding matches Widodo, Fang & Elyas’s (2020) suggestion that English language teachers professionals should be informed of the most recent development in theories of teaching English as a foreign language via in-service education programs.
Student-related Identity

Student-related identity is concerned with the teachers’ focus on students and their learning needs and developments. The main aspect of student-related identity is teachers’ classroom management styles. In this respect, Turki stated that he makes the students active and gives them the option to either carry out their assignments in the classroom or take them home. He also added that he changes his tone to make the students pay attention.

Majdeh argued that she employs motivation and group competition. However, during both observation sessions, the teacher did not use any group activity and the class remained more teacher-centred. The teacher was asked during a recall interview as to why some students were not participating. She justified that some students find English a difficult subject or they do not find English an interesting subject.

Meanwhile, Ahmed, he claimed to work in his class as a facilitator. However, during observation sessions, Ahmed’s class was managed in a traditional passive style in which the students listen whereas only the teacher speaks. The teacher explained during a recall interview that some students do not have the desire to participate.

It can be concluded that the three teachers have different perspectives on classroom management styles. Nevertheless, while they all agree theoretically that the classroom should be student-centred, they all practically apply teacher-centred classroom approaches.

Conclusion

This paper discussed three English language teachers in Saudi secondary school teachers’ identity development in the context of EFL setting. It is argued in this paper that contextual factors play a role in shaping Saudi EFL teachers’ professional identity formation.

First, this study found that the Saudi teachers’ educational background and life experiences act as formative elements which influence their EFL professional identity formation. Moreover, the participating teachers agree that practical experience and teaching community played a more significant role than their educational background in terms of shaping their teacher’s identity construction and their classroom practices.

Secondly, the findings showed that language-related, disciplinary, context-related, self-knowledge and awareness, and student-related competences have an impact on the teachers’ identity construction. However, competences such as ‘self-knowledge and awareness’ contribute more to teachers’ identity construction than the others.

The findings of the present study have several implications for improving existing teacher education program in Saudi Arabia. If teacher education program aims to develop EFL teachers’ professional identity construction, then we may need to review the English language teacher education curricula to implement some changes within the program. Programs can address the notion of teacher identity explicitly through methods or professional courses.
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References


Saudi Students’ Perceptions of Schemata and Poetry Comprehension

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Abstract
In teaching poetry, one of the first problems to be addressed is the lack of appropriate schemata when studying English and American poetic texts. The current study inquires about the students’ perception regarding how Saudi students perceive the relationship between the lack of appropriate schemata and the comprehension of English and American poetry to explain how they read and interpret poems in English and how they respond to the culturally loaded texts by writers with different cultural schemata to provide a greater understanding of the challenges they face in the poetry classroom. The study also examines students’ openness to schema activation techniques within the poetry classroom. A qualitative and quantitative research study has been conducted in three undergraduate classrooms at King Saud University. The research included open questions and questionnaire data obtained over a one year period (2018-2019) from 51 students. The results show that Saudi students’ are very much aware of the problematic issues in their reading and believe social and cultural ideologies have a significant influence on comprehension based on their individual experience. Only a third of the respondents do not find social and cultural ideologies and references to be problematic. Furthermore, 49% of the respondents feel that having a different background affects their ability to identify with the poems. The study also showed that students are open to incorporating schema activating techniques to improve their comprehension of English and American poetry.

Keywords: Comprehension, English and American poetry, Pedagogy, Saudi students, Schemata, Saudi students

Introduction
The majority of the teaching of poetry at KSU is based on the traditional critical literary approach. This approach focuses on the ‘literariness of the texts’, including features as the setting, themes, plot, characterization, motivation, value, psychology, and background (Maley, 1997). This approach can be practical for Saudi students if they already grasped ample knowledge of English and American conventions and ideologies. Thus, a search for innovative pedagogy for the poetry classroom is necessary. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need for culturally appropriate teaching. The present study draws on such research since it focuses on the particular issue of teaching poetry in English to Saudi students and the recognition of schema knowledge as an impeding factor. It explores students’ perceptions to understand to what extent is poetry and schema theory directly relevant to text comprehension.

Cultural schemata offer for the reading process the existing cultural knowledge that one has obtained, are formed with all related cultural experience within one’s reach, from schools, families, and communities (Chang, 2004). As different languages possess disparate culture-specific inventories of linguistic items for expressing universal concepts, the consequent diversity of these expressions often disrupts the comprehension of culturally underlying meanings as far as a non-native reader is concerned.

Anderson, R. C., Osborn, J., & Tierney, R. J (1984) comment on this point: “the schemata a person already possesses are a principal determiner of what will be learned from a new text” (p. 439). They state that this is a hindrance in the case of students with different background knowledge and means additional teaching techniques are essential. The role of schemata in reading comprehension is referred to as schema theory, as stated by Carrel and Eisterhold (1983).

The term “schema” is often used as a superordinate label for a broad range of knowledge structures, including frames, scenarios, scripts, and plans, as described below. “Schema” is also used as a synonym for “frame” (Dijk, T., 1985, p. 78) to refer to mental representations of objects, settings, or situations. A schema (plural schemata) is a hypothetical mental structure for representing generic concepts stored in memory. It is a sort of framework, or plan, or script. Schemata are created through experience with people, objects and events in the world. When we encounter something repeatedly, such as a restaurant, we begin to generalize across our restaurant experiences to develop an abstract, generic set of expectations about what we will encounter in a restaurant (Cook, 1989).

Schemata are the underlying connections that allow new experience and information to be aligned with previous knowledge. When one reads a text, he or she usually uses all his levels of schemata. Schemata enable us to make sense of what is perceived and experienced in the world. In poetry, readers usually examine carefully and deeply what they are reading in comparison with other sorts of discourse. Coherence is achieved when a reader perceives connections among schemata. It is a connection between linguistic and textual features of the text, and reader's mental expectations as well as stored knowledge of the world (Cook, 1989). In teaching poetry, one of the first problems which need to be resolved is the lack of appropriate schemata in English or American texts. This lack caused Saudi students’ inability to comprehend the significant implications of a poem and was a recurring theme in the teaching of many of my poetry classes.
Some researchers state that the inter-relation between schema knowledge and other knowledge (e.g., expert, autobiographical, and text world knowledge) needs to be explored further and built into an overall model with empirical testing of texts which are more complex than traditional psychological and Artificial Intelligence materials. (b) More psychological research is needed to establish how generic knowledge derived from the real world is utilized in building counterfactual worlds since the findings from current empirical work are not consistent (Ferguson & Sanford 2008; Nieuwland & Van Berkum 2006).

This idea was also supported by Wallace (2003), who argues that “the first part of a text activates a schema... which is either confirmed or disconfirmed by what follows” (p. 33). In reading poems, the title can be the beginning of comprehending the meaning. This argument suggests the need to help the reader and put him on the right course in his reading.

The significance of this paper lies in its attempt to understand Saudi students’ reading of poetry in English and the challenges they face as non-natives, especially since it involves both pre-existing linguistic and cultural knowledge, which form one’s linguistic and cultural schemata. Students from different cultures have different schemata since they receive different education; their knowledge has been greatly influenced by their religion, social conventions, social behavior, ideology, and language. As such, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Saudi students perceive the relationship between lack of appropriate schemata and comprehending English and American poetry?
2. How do Saudi students perceive the activation of students’ schemata for improving their comprehension of English and American poetic texts?

Most of the studies in the literature recognise the complexities involved in the language of poetry, the immense experience it carries, and the worldly experiences a reader brings to it. However, very few studies address Schemata or the lack of appropriate schemata as an obstacle to the reading and comprehension of English and American Poetic texts in Saudi universities.

**Review of Literature**

Poetry and schema theory seem to be directly relevant to text comprehension. Betjeman and Gardner (2005) propose that when we begin to analyse a poem, we try to understand what the poem evokes in us and “what the implications of the sensations derived from the poem mean. The interpretation of literary texts is dependent on responses to “linguistic devices within a poem” (p. 1). Semino (1997) explains how this process occurs, “It is one of the basic tenets of cognitive psychology that comprehension crucially depends upon the availability and activation of relevant prior knowledge” (p. 123), so “we make sense of new experiences and of texts in particular by relating the current input to pre-existing mental representations of similar entities, situations, and events” (p. 123). One of the reasons for Semino’s use of schema theory in the analysis of poetry is her increased interest in the “[cognitive] process [es] of literary interpretation” (p. 152).

One of the examples which Betjeman gives is Semino’s explanation of Blake’s *The Tyger*, According to Semino (1997), the poem contains the following keywords that target the readers’
schemata: “TIGER, FOREST, NIGHT, BLACKSMITH, ARTIST, GOD, SPEAR THROWER, TEARS” (p. 153). She further explains that:

these schemas are connected in the text through ‘deviations, patterns, and ambiguities in the language of the text. The overall effect of [a] poem, then, is to bring together these schemata either by choosing elements that they already have in common or by establishing new links between them. (p. 154)

In summarizing his theory, Cook (1989) pointed out that: The idea of 'schema refreshment' through discourse deviation is essentially the Russian formalist concept of defamiliarization restated in the light of discourse analysis. In other words, the theory builds on the notion of defamiliarization by using tools that were not available to its original creators.

Comeaux (1994) argues that the study of schemata and comprehension in poetry can be supplementary. The language of poetry is exemplary in its utilisation of the skills of reading, comprehension, writing, speaking and, listening, so Comeaux suggests that the performance of poetry should become “the center of a language arts program” (p. 77). Comeaux states that, while “the most tightly structured form of language” (p. 77) uses metaphor and rhythm to achieve its impact, it is the performance of poetry which “emphasizes the inseparability” (p.79) of those elements. “In performing poetry, students are actively using language in its fullest, and perhaps most significant, sense as they experience the capability of language to evoke feelings, to suggest images, and to describe the essence of things” (p.79).

Scollon (1995) continues this argument, adding that different cultures use different rhetorical structures. While some foreign students might use a “topic-comment order of presentation” when speaking or writing, a native English speaker would use a “comment-topic” order of presentation (p.2). This might confuse or mislead a reader about what the essential part of a message is. For example, some international students, when reading an English text, will expect the primary information to come at the end, rather than at the beginning. Thus, international students may misinterpret the main argument of a text.

Anderson, C., Osborn, Tierney (1984) also argue that activating schema knowledge can provide a bridge for the reader and the text. Bacigalupe and Cámara (2012) further support these ideas about schemata and poetry. His C-schema suggests that a lyrical subject can be created in the reader’s mind by his own will when the situation necessitates its construction. Bacigalupe and Cámara say that “lyrical subjects can be described as complex bundles of personality traits, conjured up in the reader’s mind, which possess intrinsic properties that make them somehow attractive and, for that reason, part of the artistic creation” (p.158).

Quindos (2007) also shares this theory. He believes that:

The perception of a persona behind the poem is nothing strange to our everyday cognitive interpretation of discourse. Every time we come across a text, we assume it must have been produced by somebody trying to communicate something or to express himself or herself. (p.157)
The ideal example of this discourse is poetry, which “seems to be a prototypical case of subjective discourse, which makes readers have the feeling that there is a subject speaking” (p.157). Quindos uses this as the basis for an analysis of Sylvia Plath’s poem ‘I Am Vertical,’ which focuses on allowing the reader to explore the persona speaking behind the poem’s words. The aim is “to study how the mention of body position contributes here to the reader’s mental construction of this persona” (p.157). Quindos believes the motor-sensory imagery and the conceptual metaphors suggested by the words of the poem, together with the long term memory of the readers’ knowledge, “intermingle in a multi-connection holistic game that helps the reader construe the persona behind the words” (p.158).

Therefore, there is a link between schema theory and the understanding of poetic texts. Thus it recognises the complexities involved in the language of poetry, the immense experience it carries, and the worldly experiences a reader brings to it. Schemata are an important issue that must be addressed if the obstacles to the reading comprehension of Saudi students studying English and American poetry with cultural themes dissimilar to their own are to be understood, and teaching approaches are formulated to support their needs. For the purpose of this research, I will therefore apply culturally-relevant pedagogy as a framework for this case study to explore students’ perceptions regarding schemata and studying English and American poetry.

“Culturally-relevant teaching” is a term used by Ladson-Billings (1994). It refers to teachers creating a bridge between students’ home and school lives in order to integrate the students’ culture with the syllabus while continuing to meet the expectations of the curricular requirements of the district and the state. There are many other terms used to denote this type of pedagogy, including “culturally responsive,” “culturally respectful,” “culture-sensitive,” “culturally rooted,” “culturally relevant,” “culturally appropriate,” and “culturally congruent” (Campbell, 2004; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Culturally-relevant teaching uses the background, knowledge, and experience of the students to formulate teachers’ lessons or teaching methods. Gloria Ladson-Billings first introduced this teaching approach to make teachers aware of the reality that many of their students would come to their classrooms with different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds. One crucial example found in American classrooms is when African American and other minority children face difficulties in America’s public schools because of cultural reasons. The need for this form of education is based on a sense of care and responsibility from the educators themselves. Gay (2010) identifies the power of caring as one of the essential components of culturally relevant pedagogy, “The cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective…. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 29).

The study provides insight into the individual nature of difficulties with different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds, and students’ and teachers’ experience in the context of pedagogy. Gay (2010) defines social and cultural significance to highlight their role in the understanding of the text. He explains that a social perspective acknowledges that a “reader’s social role and perceptions of the social context” may shape the literary transaction, while a cultural perspective recognises that the “reader’s cultural role, attitudes, contexts” (p. 8) may also shape transactions with the text. Equally important is a textual perspective, which brings to the fore the
“reader’s knowledge of conventions” (p. 8), that is, the reader’s “knowledge of narrative conventions, literary elements, genre conventions and other aspects of text” (p. 61). This study recognises perspectives that shape the pedagogical transaction for improving the reader’s role involving a capacity for self-directed development. Eisenhart’s (2001) view of cultural pedagogy is that culture can empower people. Still, it can also hold them back because there are real “social, economic, and power differences that separate people and their experiences,” and each individual’s “perception of the world can be constrained by culture and the enduring social structures that culture mediates” (p. 215). Eisenhart’s point is relevant for this study because it shows that it is essential for researchers and educators to understand and work with culture and its needs if they are to improve teaching circumstances. Many researchers have developed and supported theories of culture-centred pedagogy, which believe that “since how one thinks, writes and speaks reflects the culture and affects performance, aligning instruction to the cultural,” concepts of different students “can improve student achievement” (Gay, 2010, p. xv-xvi).

The present study draws on such research since it focuses on the particular issue of teaching English and American poetry to Saudi students. These issues are of significant concern for this study because they can provide a greater understanding of the challenges facing Saudi students.

Methodology
Participants
This study is to measure the Saudi undergraduate students’ experience of studying English and American poetry and to establish the validity of the students’ opinions, three poetry courses participated in the questionnaire and open questions. The participants were 51 female students from the English Department at King Saud University. The students were chosen based on convenient sampling and their willingness to participate. All of the students had studied at least two courses, which include the teaching of English and American poetry before enrolling in the poetry course they were taking at the time of the study. All the students have taken the Introduction to Literature courses, which focus on introducing students to the necessary techniques for appreciating an extensive range of poems. Additionally, the majority of the students have studied at least one of the more advanced poetry courses. These are the Romantic and Modern poetry courses, which cover the major characteristics and techniques that define these periods of poetry. This shows that the participants are appropriate for this study since they have a reasonable basis in English and American poetry. The participants in this study studied a survey of The British Literature course and completed 11 weeks before they were given the questionnaire and open questions. To conduct the influence of schema activation on students’ reading comprehension of poetry in English, participants received two tests on selected poetic texts; the difference is that the first exam was conducted without receiving activating techniques for their background knowledge on the topic. While, the second exam was conducted after they received pre-reading activating techniques to improve their background knowledge and lack of appropriate schemata.

Data Collection Instruments
The study adopted a triangulation design to collect the data. Triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach to enhance validity. Bryman (2004) explains that triangulation is one of the several principles for multi-method research 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 collected was through questionnaire and open questions. It involves the use of qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a complete set of findings to assess the perceptions of students at King Saud University to learning English and American poetry, with a focus on any hindrances to reading and interpretation due to the lack of appropriate schemata.

**Instruments**

**The Questionnaire**

The issues raised in the questionnaire are various factors that hinder Saudi students’ reading and comprehension of English and American poetry, all of which are based on my teaching experience and my research for this study. The discussions of issues in the questionnaire are divided: interference and misunderstanding of background knowledge, problems due to different rhetoric, and examining students’ openness to schema activation techniques within the poetry classroom.

The questionnaire uses closed questions that are answered on a dichotomous scale so that the research could obtain feedback and concentrate on the particular problem or problems that are perceived to be having the most substantial effect on students’ reading of English and American poems. The second stage of the data collection is open questions, which allow students to discuss issues regarding schemata and the poetry classroom freely. Tashakkori and Teddle (2003) explain that close-ended items indicate the participants’ views on the usefulness of a particular program or study. The use of the open-ended questions reveals their views on its benefits and limitations. The questionnaire is given to three classes to ensure a large number of respondents, and it comprises nine questions.

The first category deals with interference and misunderstanding of background or cultural knowledge. From my teaching experience, some Saudi students lack the appropriate schemata for reading and analysing English and American poetic texts. This category attempts to discover the students’ perceptions of these issues. It goes to inquire about the differing English and American social and cultural references and religious ideologies as they are constructed in the text and whether they can relate to the topics formulated in the poems. Thus addresses the problem of students’ inability to identify with English and American poems and poetic conventions and how this may prevent them from understanding the thematic implication or main idea of the poem.

The second category examines problems associated with the lack of appropriate schemata regarding the differences in the Arabic and English language. This results in different rhetoric. For example, students will have a problem finding a starting point when reading an English poem due to the differences in sentence structure and composition between Arabic and English. Arabic is a Semitic language that is read from right to left and relies heavily on grammar and syntax, making it extremely complex, allegorical, and structural. In contrast, English is direct and values simplicity and individualism compared to the more social topics that are common in Arabic discourse. The questionnaire addresses students’ failure to understand a poem’s main idea as a result of the different word order in English and Arabic. For example, the usual word order in English is SVO (subject then verb then object), while the usual word order in Arabic is VSO, and the Arabic sentence does not have to contain a verb, whereas the English sentence must (Kanso, Karim Sinno, & Adams 2001). These factors look at problems of comprehension that prevent
students from fulfilling their potential when they are reading and analysing English poems independently.

The third category examines students' openness to schema activation techniques within the poetry classroom. This is proposed to maximize comprehension of the poems. For instance, to introduce some common knowledge about English and American conventions, customs, habits, historical background, and so on aimed at improving and guiding the students’ reading.

The last category in the questionnaire is an open question that gives participants space to express any problems or weaknesses in their comprehension of English and American poems due to lack of appropriate. Data collected through the open questions enables the researcher to see which of the recognised factors that impede the reading of English and American poems coincide with students’ own opinions and views. It also shows whether students hold any other ideas that contribute to this research, adding further dimensions to the study.

Also, because qualitative and quantitative methods are used as data sources, there are two different forms of data coding, which offer the opportunity for triangulation. The qualitative data from the open questions are analysed using labelling of the major themes and concepts identified from my teaching experience. The quantitative data is analysed using the appropriate corpus or program to measure the extent of the problems the students encounter and their awareness of these problems. This will be presented using percentages and charts. The two methods are conducted concurrently on the same group and campus, yet the results are independent of each other. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data is that doing so brings together the strengths of both forms of research in order to validate the study.

The categorisation of the responses was necessary for the data analysis. The questions in the questionnaire are divided into different categories based on the students’ answers as follows:

1- Positive responses mean that students agree with or are aware of the obstacles and difficulties in reading English and American poetry.
2- Negative responses mean that the respondents do not agree with or are not aware of the existence of any obstacles and difficulties.
3- The open questions allow students to comment and to give their personal input.

The results of the questionnaire are divided into two sections, one for the closed questions and the second for the open questions. This research involves the use of multiple methods, and I present the results according to the research method; the findings of the questionnaire are presented first. The remaining results from the open-questions are presented afterwards.

**Students’ Perceptions**

This part of the study describes the findings of the Saudi students’ perceptions, based on a dichotomous scale. The findings are presented in tables that show the total number of students who responded to the question and the category, which is based on the coding of the closed questions: Yes-1 and No- 2.
Background Knowledge
The second category includes the students’ responses to three questions concerning background knowledge and comprehending the main topic of the poem. Table 1 summarises the participants’ responses to questions 1-3.

Table 1. Background knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION 1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION 2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION 3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The first question in this section (question one) is, “Do you have a problem comprehending the implications or associations evoked by the title of the poem in the English or American poem?” This question is based on the researcher’s previous teaching experience: students’ lack of appropriate schemata had problems linking the title of the poem to the main idea of the English and American poem. The results reveal that the majority of the students find it a hindrance: 71% answered ‘Yes’ to the question, and only 29% do not believe that this was a problematic factor.

The second question (question two) is, “Do images and illusions as they are constructed in the English, and American poem cause a problem with the comprehension of the poem?” The question is particularly relevant to Saudi students because they are all Arabic and Muslim and have different background knowledge. Without the appropriate cultural schemata, it is natural for Saudi students to fail in obtaining the appropriate meanings. Hence, they are not likely to form relevant images in their mind.

Thus, it was not surprising to find that the majority of the students’ responses agreed that different cultural, religious ideologies and references could impede their configuration of the images and illusions in the poem. 61% of the students answered ‘Yes’ and only 39% do not believe this to be a challenge to comprehension.
The third question (question three) asks, “Do you have a problem identifying with the author or persona, his life, his background?” This question investigates students’ ability to identify with English and American poets and the personas constructed in the poem that have different social, cultural, and religious ideologies. 47% of the students agree that this is an obstacle, while 53% do not believe that this was a problematic factor.

Social and cultural ideologies and references seem to have more of an influence on comprehension. The students’ beliefs appear to be based on their individual experience of studying English and American poetry and the extent of their exposure to English and American ideologies. Only 41% of respondents do not find social and cultural ideologies and references to be problematic in their reading of English and American poetry. Furthermore, 59% of the respondents feel that having a different background affects their ability to identify with the poems. This percentage, although lower, suggest that a large number of students face problems as a result of the difference in the cultural context and are at a disadvantage compared to students who have appropriate social, cultural and religious schemata for English and American poetry.

**Language Differences**

The first category includes the students’ responses to three questions pertaining to one issue. Table two shows the participants’ responses to questions 4-6, which investigate problems concerning language differences in the questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>QUESTION 4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION 5</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION 6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first question shown here (question four) is, “Do you find a problem with reading the English and American poem due to the different linguistic deviation and sentence structure?” The results show that less than half the students (37%) had problems, and 63% of the participants said that they had no problems due to language variation.
The second question in this section (question five) is, “Do you find a problem reading and understanding the English and American poem due to differences in the Arabic and English rhetoric?” This question is asked because Arabic is a Semitic language that reads from right to left and relies heavily on grammar and syntax, making it extremely complex, allegorical and, structural; in contrast, English is direct and values simplicity and individualism rather than Arabic’s more social topics. The figures reveal that 35% of the students have problems reading the poem due to the differences in Arabic and English rhetoric, while 65% indicate that this was not an obstacle to their reading and comprehension.

The third question in this section (question six) is, “Do you find a problem comprehending the English and American poem due to linguistic choices in the poem?” This question is asked to understand the correlation between the poets’ core vocabulary and the Saudis students’ schema. Do they comprehend the poets’ voices? 41% of the students feel that this hinders their comprehension, while 59% do not believe it to be a problem in their reading of English poems.

This problem is observed by Scollon (1995), who suggests that different cultures use different rhetorical structures. While some foreign students might use a “topic-comment order of presentation” when speaking or writing, a native English speaker would use a “comment-topic” order of presentation (p. 2). This can actually confuse or mislead a reader who is searching for the most important part of the message.

**Students’ Openness to Schema Activation Strategies**

The third category is dedicated to investigating students’ openness to Schema activation strategies as a process to improve reading comprehension of the poetic texts. Table 3 summarises the participants’ responses to the three investigated issues.

<table>
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<th>Table 3: Students’ openness to schema activation strategies</th>
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<td>QUESTION 7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>QUESTION 9</td>
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The first question in this section (question seven) is, “Would you want an elaborate discussion about the title or topic of the poem to build or guide your reading?” The result shows that the majority of the students (88%) approve, and only 12% do not.

The second question (question eight) investigates students’ perception of improving core vocabulary through a schema activation process: “Would you want to discuss and explore key words in the poem related to necessary background knowledge?” The responses show almost complete agreement with 82% in favour of the idea, and only 18% disagree.

The third question in this section (question nine) is, “Would you want schema activation classes for the history part in the poetry class to provide you with information which fills in your lack of social, cultural, and religious knowledge necessary for understanding the English poem being studied?” 69% of the students agree that supportive teaching techniques for historical information would be beneficial, while 31% disagree.

This section investigates students’ perception of the present teaching approach and to see whether their opinion supports the researchers’ perspective that there is a need for the implementation of activation techniques tailored to their needs and their schemata. A large majority believe that there is a need for such a change in pedagogy, with 124 of the 153 responses indicating that they find the traditional teaching approaches problematic, only 29 of 153 found them useful. According to Anderson, R. C., Osborn, J., & Tierney, R. J. (1984), pre-reading activities function as a way to access the reader’s prior knowledge and “provide a bridge between his knowledge and the text” (p.610).

Open Questions
This section presents an analysis and discussion of the findings of the open questions. The following are the questions asked:

1- Has the lack of appropriate schemata limited your comprehension of an English or American poem? State your experience by giving an example of a poem you’ve previously studied and had difficulties with due to any cultural, religious, or ideological issues.

2- Do you find that with the more texts you study, your schema develops? Please give examples if you can from previous studies.

3- Please leave a comment suggesting ways you would find helpful in the development of your own schemata.

The purpose of the first question is to explore the Saudi students’ beliefs about the lack of appropriate schemata and the role they play in hindering the comprehension of English and American poems. The second question asks the students to explain if there is a development in their schema with the more text they study or is the situation the same due to the lack of schema intervention techniques. The third question allows the researcher to hear Saudi students’ voices and lets them suggest any problems I did not take into consideration. The results are presented according to the students’ answers to each question. All the students answered the questionnaire, but not all gave their opinion in response to the open question. Of the 51 students, 20 state their opinions. This number is considered more than sufficient to allow me to gather data for this section.
of the study. To facilitate the presentation of the beliefs of the students, five answers that are representative of each particular question are shown, since some were similar in answers.

**Question One**

*Has the lack of appropriate schemata limited your comprehension of an English or American poem? State your experience by giving an example of a poem you've previously studied and had difficulties with due to any cultural, religious, or ideological issues.*

In the first extract, student one relates her experience with poetry and the lack of appropriate schemata:

> As a Saudi, there is a gap between us and the west, especially in that we perceive things differently. I remember reading a poem for Sylvia Plath, “Getting There” and being asked to analyse it. It talked about a person that was in a train and he was describing things he was seeing. My friends and I thought it was just a trip a person was enjoying, and from past experience, I was always mesmerized by the view outside during car rides. Thus, it only made sense that he was enjoying the view outside and that was merely it. It turned out that he was seeing his life. He was about to die and go to the other side. Another thing that I found very interesting was the use of incense in different cultures. For Saudis, it usually means a guest is coming over or something close to that, but for instance reading a play like “Medea” by Euripides it meant something else or like Family or Life. Ultimately, incense has got to do with one’s culture or in the case of Family Life or religion. (Shahad)

Student two also believes that she needs to have the same background knowledge to understand the main idea of a poem because she lacks the appropriate schemata to understand the references in the poems:

> It is evident that my background knowledge differs from that of the poets I study, and most of the times this presents itself in the limitation of my analysis and interpretation. It is hard for me to resonate to the deeper meaning of most texts and poems because I lack the experiences and emotions the works are based upon. Maybe as I grow and face different things in life, I am able to grasp the concepts of these works better and I find that I can pinpoint certain words and phrases that indicate an underlying meaning. For example, when studying the works of William Wordsworth, I perceived the recurring mentions of nature as the author’s deep fascination of the world. Upon reading more about Wordsworth’s life, I came to the understanding that nature was the friend to him that he could not find, which explained the repeated use of personification in his work. On the other hand, my schemata limiting me has helped me find the simpler and more stripped meanings of many works, it helps me overlook all the minute details and focus on the main idea the author is trying to communicate. (Danah)

Student three states that cultural differences are a hindrance to the comprehension of English and American poems:

> First, my schemata limited my comprehension of English poem in several ways. For example, the poems by William Shakespeare were too difficult to be understood when I started studying them in course Eng. 318. I think because I was not familiar with those types of literary works. Some of his poems were about the Elizabethan age and their
customs, and I did not know anything about their society or about the whole age. Once I started learning the age, I understood his poems and why he wrote them. I think my schemata developed a lot once I studied the ages because without studying them I think I will never be able to analyze works such as poems or any literary work. (Amani)

Student four also supports the idea that different cultural and historical backgrounds cause the students to be unable to relate to the poem:

The first poem I studied was Sonnet 116, by William Shakespeare. To me it was very easy to understand because it resembles so many Arabic poems that I read. It talks about love and describes it as a special feeling and so on. On the other hand, “Death Be Not Proud” by John Donne was a little bit hard to understand. Because I had to focus more on the experience and background of the poet in order to understand his message. (Razan)

Student five also shows an awareness of religious differences hindering her comprehension:

It limited my comprehension when it came to the “periods”. For example a certain time period has a set of characteristics that can mostly be applied to that time period’s texts, as a result I generalised those characteristics to all the texts from that period not knowing that some text do not necessarily have those characteristics. Another example would be that I see the western world, and mostly American works and news, nowadays tend to be violent and savage which developed a certain pattern in my mind about them, however, from what I studied they are completely different.

The perceptions for this question highlighted ideas which I, as an educator, did not consider. They emphasised lack of appropriate schemata gained through life experience and age. This can be very helpful when considering schema activating techniques. Furthermore, from the participants’ responses, media was also an influential factor which may or may not be a trustworthy source to base their analysis of the works they study

**Question Two**

*Do you find that with the more texts you study, your schema develops? Please give examples if you can from previous studies.*

In the first extract, student one relates her experience with the development of her schemata:

The more I read, the more I start to become aware of how things go in different cultures. I started reading books about racism and how Hitler treated people of different colour, religion, and background. At first I was oblivious of what went on. To illustrate, I often heard about concentration camps, but only knew that it had to do with Hitler, and that he only put people that did not match his criteria. Later on, it turned out those concentration camps was a process with different phases. It meant gas chambers, death, torture, isolation, suicide, labor, and the list goes on (Man’s Search for Meaning). Another example that would fit with what’s going on today is how Black people were treated during Apartheid.
I knew there was racism but was not aware of the fact that they had to live in certain places, could not associate with different colours and so on (Born a Crime). (Shahad)

The second stresses the importance of developing one’s schemata so that they can understand symbolism and references in the poem.

Yes, it develops because the brain absorbs more knowledge and in result it enhances the experience I get when reading new texts. For example when I read T. S. Eliot’s “The Wasteland”, I thought it is difficult but I knew it is a Modern text which helped me understand the poem more because Modernism has distinctive features and it was applied in “The Wasteland”. (Nora)

Student four touches upon an important issue related to the differences in rhetoric and the internal struggle Saudi students face when studying English and American poems.

I do find that the more I read, the easier it is for me to make sense of more works. With the right guidance, I can tackle more difficult poems and styles of writing. For example, when studying Emily Dickinson’s poems I had difficulty understanding her method of writing and why it was effective, the more I read, the clearer it became to me that it was indeed effective. (Danah)

Student four shows that Saudi students are at a disadvantage when it comes to understanding English and American poetry when compared to English and American students who can relate to their own theory and history.

When I was studying criticism we were discussing the Marxist theory which explains the struggles between social classes. Schemata helped me to link the theory with a poem I read in the poetry class. I had enough knowledge to write my final paper and link the Marxist characteristics. (Ghoid)

Student five in the fifth extract clearly states that the basic problems related to the comprehension of the English and American poetry are the differences in rhetoric:

At first, I barely ever understood what the poet is talking about. Now, I'm able to look deeper into every line, and find the meaning behind it. For example, I would look more into the cultural, religious, personal background of the poet and try to relate it to his poem, or I would even look for the Era in which the poem was written. (Razan)

The perceptions for the second question support the belief that the students’ schemata develops with more exposure to various forms of literature and poetry from all ages. Furthermore, from the participants’ responses, there is a shift towards independent learning, analysis to develop their critical powers and thus their schema knowledge.
Question Three:
Please leave a comment suggesting ways you would find helpful in the development of your own schemata.

The participants’ agreed that reading is a major factor for improving their schema knowledge in the poetry classroom. Their beliefs also suggest that experience allows them to understand and learn differing background knowledge. These are some of the suggestions:

1- The only way, for me, is through reading. The more you explore, read, and research, the more you will come to know the cultures, religions, and beliefs in general of different people from different places and backgrounds. (Shahad)

2- Personally, I find studying the author’s history and lifestyle helps me relate to their work the way they intended it to be read. This aspect is commonly overlooked, but I find it immensely valuable when analysing specific lines and phrases talking about the author’s feelings and emotions that majority of time, are the biggest keys and indicators when trying to analyse the poem as a whole. (Danah)

3- Being educated and well-read will develop a great deal of my schemata, because schema is your background knowledge ex: the vocabulary you know movies you have watched, books you have already read with the ability to link your previous knowledge and experience with a brand new one. (Ghoid)

4- I always find generalization helps because many cultures share common ways. Although, it can be wrong, bias, and prejudices sometimes. Therefore studying and reading is essential.

5- I think the best way to develop a schema is reading. Read and explore the world as much as you can. (Amani)

6- We should read more about the English and American culture and history and try to look deeper into the lines by understanding all the main words. (Razan)

Discussion
Predominately, the results demonstrate that students’ schemata play a significant role in their reading and comprehension of poetic texts in English. It is notable that the results of the current study are in line with those of Bacigalupe and Cámara (2012); Cook (2001); Comeaux (1994); Quindos (2007); Scollon (1995) who point out the significance of background knowledge in the interpretation of texts and highlight the importance of the concept of schema as a theoretical construct in reading comprehension. The results for the questionnaire and the open questions suggest a need for the implementation of activation techniques for their schemata tailored to their needs because the content of the topic in the poems became more accessible. In this regard, Anderson, C., Osborn, Tierney (1984) suggest, activating schema knowledge as a way to access readers’ knowledge can "provide a bridge between his knowledge and the text" (p. 610).

The students highlighted their need to understand some keywords from the poetic text to improve their comprehension. They also perceived experience, reading, and all forms of studying to be a helpful tool that assists them to understand other cultures and thus comprehend the main idea of the poem. Thus, the students’ recognized the need for schema activation tasks to recompense for the absence of a lack of appropriate cultural knowledge and possible vocabulary deficiencies. This claim is supported by Compaore (2004), who claimed that a language is not detached from the socio-cultural milieu in which it evolved and that it is imperative for non-native
speakers to have some degree of immersion or exposure in that milieu. It is worthwhile concluding from the outcome of the questionnaire that only a third of the respondents do not find social and cultural ideologies and references to be problematic while 49% of the respondents feel that having a different background affects their ability to identify with the poems. This percentage, although lower, suggests that a large number of students face problems as a result of the difference in the cultural context and are at a disadvantage compared to students who have appropriate social, cultural and religious schemata for English and American poetry. This evidence, in turn, confirms my hypothesis that helping learners activate their cultural schemata successfully reinforces their reading and comprehension of poetic texts in English.

**Conclusion**
The present study concludes that a lack of appropriate schemata affects the reading process and comprehension of English and American poems. If students are familiar with the main ideas in the poem in relation to religion, social conventions, social behavior, ideology, they will comprehend the poetic text easily. Furthermore, activating students’ background knowledge can improve their comprehension of English and American poetic texts. Thus, the use of schema activating techniques supports students for the content of the text. Summarily, the results of this study validate the topic addressed. The outcome of this research study suggests that lack of the appropriate schemata can be an obstacle to the reading and comprehension of English and American poetic texts. The researcher suggests that more efforts to be taken to improve teaching techniques to develop students’ comprehension in the poetry classroom. This study supports the need for ongoing research to create a framework for teaching poetry to non-native students that reduces stress and provides students with teaching techniques to support their reading and comprehension of American and English poems.

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**References**


Integrating Project-Based Learning Strategies in the Design of an ESP Dental Vocabulary Course for ESL Malaysian Majors

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Abstract
The current paper investigates the effectiveness of integrating Project-based Learning (PjBL) strategies in the design process of an English for Specific Purposes Course (ESP) to develop dental vocabulary at the Dentistry College, Al-Azhar University- Cairo- Egypt. The study sampled fourteen ESL dental Malaysian students whose native language is English. This process required a needs analysis to assess the students’ academic and professional needs, wants, and lacks to create a course that responds and satisfies their requirements. The study adopted a quantitative methodology where participants were exposed to a dental vocabulary pre-test/ post-test to assess their dental vocabulary background. An interview with academic experts in the field of dentistry also helped in the design of the course. In light of the needs analysis, interviews, and the vocabulary test, an ESP project-based learning strategies course was designed. The results of the study revealed the effectiveness of integrating project-based learning strategies in the ESP course to develop dental vocabulary among ESL Malaysians. It proved that employing innovative strategies in the dental vocabulary classroom fostered the learners’ self-autonomy, problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity.

Keywords: Dental vocabulary, English for specific purposes (ESP), ESL Malaysian majors, needs analysis, project-based learning (PjBL)

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.29
Introduction

Developments in the fields of business, science, medicine, and technology have called upon educators and researchers to shift attention from General English Courses that are widely offered to EFL learners all over the world to develop their linguistic and communicative competencies, to teaching and learning environments based on the language used for specific target situations (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Kennedy, 2001). General Language Courses are no more supplying either the learners or the employers with the language required for communicating, and accessing necessary information relevant to the context and situation of their specialist target fields (Coffey, 1985; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Strevens, 1977; Strevens, 1980). Many researchers, Ewer and Latorre (1969) and Hutchinson and Waters (1987), called upon the designing of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Courses to satisfy the different specific needs of learners in their specialized fields of study. Henceforth, a demand for ESP courses has increased throughout the world drawing its techniques and methodologies that suit various disciplines (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

As a result of the growing demand for huge commerce trading in the oil-rich countries, and the need of billions of people around the world who are currently learning English for different and specific purposes and needs, a massive demand for ESP courses emerged in the late 1060s (Beare, 2012; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Thus, ESP has been divided into English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) such as vocational and professional purposes, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Anthony, 1997). This means that ESP courses may vary in their methodologies to include all learners’ needs and purposes necessitating the conduct of a needs analysis to determine aspects of language features that learners need to acquire in specific educational settings (Anthony, 1997; Richards, 2006).

Though learning a language necessitates learning its vocabulary, acquiring vocabulary knowledge of that language is a complex multidimensional process, especially for those who need to acquire it for specific needs such as major students (Schmitt, 2000). Vocabulary acquisition allows learners’ to understand the world around them and participate in social and academic activities as it affects their reading performance and communicative skills (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2005). Poor knowledge of English vocabulary may result in, among many other things, students' lack of participation in academic learning environments, comprehension of instruction, and lack of understanding as a part of content area teaching. Taking into consideration the importance of ESP vocabulary knowledge and the difficulties that learners may face in their workplace settings due to lack of this knowledge, high demand was raised to choose a teaching procedure that makes instruction effective and facilitates learners’ vocabulary acquisition (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2005). Henceforth, Richards (2006) and Dovey (2006) declared a dramatic change in the history of language teaching from traditional approaches of lesson formats into more innovative ones such as task-based, problem-solving, and project-based approaches that prepare the learners for their field of study and workplace with objectives dedicated to this aim which differ from other general course plans. Such methods provide vivid explanations to contextualize and elaborate word meanings, using computers, simulations, authentic materials, illustrations, and other visuals that can help vocabulary acquisition (Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000).
As it has been pointed out that most of the information on the scientific, engineering, and medical levels throughout the world is communicated in English, the significance of ESP in vocabulary teaching programs is a must to enable learners to understand and develop the knowledge of the jargon in question (Zengin, Erdogan, & Akalin, 2007). Henceforth, there was a growing need for ESP dental courses that consist primarily of dental terminologies and abbreviations for dental learners at the university level. Therefore, this study aims to develop an ESP dental vocabulary project-based learning (PjBL) course providing teachers and students a systematic way to incorporate it into ESP learning.

Educators have long valued the necessity of putting learners in real-life scenarios to help them gain a better understanding and knowledge of their learning. PjBL is considered an urgent resurgence of redirecting the instructional methods of teaching general language skills to raise students’ interests, critical thinking, and experiential learning and inquiry of learning important skills on the level of education, technology, industry and medicine (Bell, 2010; Gut, 2011; Markham, 2011; Stanley, 2012).

PjBL is considered a strategy that declares the decline of students’ passive learning and that promotes the importance of increasing students’ motivation to enrich more profound knowledge and acquisition of a more skilled workforce on the technological, engineering, mathematical, and scientific levels (Jackson, 2015; Ritz, 2014). The underlying constructivism theory of PjBL promotes better learning through active participation in real learning situations. Lots have been written about PjBL as a teaching strategy that gets students involved in learning knowledge and skills in the framework of an experiential inquiry process that revolves around real authentic and carefully designed tasks. Teaching students theories and principles is not enough to arm them with the competencies necessary to confront workplace complexities, intricacies, and uncertainties. They need to learn how to solve a problem, think critically, and develop practical knowledge. Henceforth, it became important to link theoretical knowledge of a specific profession and the actual practice of it. In this way, PjBL links factual knowledge, skills, and principles to their practical application within a job (Jones, Ramussen & Moffitt, 1997).

With this rationale, the current research sought to answer the questions of "what are the specific English language needs of ESL dental Malaysian students at the College of Dentistry, Al-Azhar University?”, “How would the proposed ESP project-based learning strategies course impact the development of dental vocabulary acquisition?"

**Literature Review**

**ESP definition, background, and importance**

Rapid changes and developments in the different fields of medicine, technology, science, and business have resulted in radical calls for changes in the learning/teaching process (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Strevens, 1977). Employers and market forces are demanding employees with specific knowledge and capabilities that satisfy the needs of market labor. It requires learners with additional English and communication skills in the field of their study. Therefore, English courses for general purposes (EGP) are no more providing learners with the required knowledge for their professional careers. Henceforth, great calls for the design of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses have emerged to meet the needs of the learners and the
requirements of the market forces (Coffey, 1985; Strevens, 1980).

As the goal of ESP differs from EGP in the sense that the latter seeks to train the students to communicate in the context of their profession, all undergraduate dental programs sought to design courses and syllabi to provide the students with a broad knowledge base of the dental knowledge as well as a set of other skills such as problem-solving, self-reliance, group work, projects work, and self-autonomy. Moreover, students’ oracy and literacy skills are equally important in the globalized context as they ensure their adaptability in a global work culture that requires success in teamwork and personal skills. Therefore, vocabulary building is very important as it helps improve students’ communication skills and fosters their self-confidence. Henceforth, ESP connects the effectiveness of dental education by teaching students’ dental terminologies with communication skills required in their profession through acquiring them some personal skills of understanding, thinking, synthesizing, evaluating, analyzing, and applying what they learn in the classroom to the outside world of their profession. Here come the importance of ESP courses in general, and in the dental field of ESL students in particular (Rajeswaran, 2018).

Though there have been great arguments concerning the features and components of ESP courses, however; a considerable consensus is reached regarding the fact that ESP courses are not only confined to teaching the language, but it extends to include learners' needs, wants, lacks, materials, teaching strategies and educational policies (Belcher, 2006; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Anthony, 1997), (Fortanet-Gomez & Raisanen, 2009). Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), Johns and Price-Machado (2001) suggested a categorization to ESP courses as it is considered a broad umbrella that has underneath it sub-different branches: English for Academic Purposes (EAP), is mainly needed for business English, technology, and science. English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) is primarily needed for English for Professional Purposes (EPP), like English for doctors and lawyers, and English for Vocational Purposes (EVP), like English for tourism, nursing, and aviation.

The main feature that all these sub-fields share is the focus on learners’ academic and professional needs and wants. The different sub-fields of ESP courses are designed to include among many different things the specific needs and demands of colleges, universities, and the market forces. Hutchinson and Waters (1987), henceforth, defined ESP as “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). This means that the primary focus of an ESP course design is investigating the reason behind it; why do we need it? In addition to the importance paid to the content and method in the design of an ESP course, suitable selection of pedagogical materials would help achieve the goals and needs of the students, as Villalobos and Diaz-Ducca (2017) put it “ESP is the teaching of English to the pupils who have specific goals and purposes”, and “ESP can be differentiated from general ELT by its concern with specialized language and practices” Javid (2015).

**Characteristics of ESP**

Based on the work of Strevens (1980) in ESP, Dudley-Evans, and St. John (1998) used some absolute and variable characteristics contribute to the design of an ESP course. With absolute
characteristics, an ESP course is designed to:
• Satisfy the specific needs, wants, and lacks of the learners;
• Make use of the underlying methodologies and activities of the field that ESP serves; and
• Focus on the skills, language, discourses, and genres appropriate to these activities that an ESP course serves.

With variable characteristics, an ESP course is usually designed for a specific field, so that the methods of teaching English in the field of mechanical engineering, for example, are different from those used in teaching English in the field of medicine. However, some researchers (e.g., Belcher, 2004; Lorenzo, 2005) added that ESP courses require to be addressed with a “tailored-to-fit instruction” (p.135), so they require a needs analysis that distinguishes them from (EGP) courses as they concentrate on preparing learners for specific communicative environments using language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures (Mohan, 1986; Flowerdew, 1990). The primary pedagogical assumption behind ESP teaching is that the language is taught as a crucial part of the learners' needs and wants, and not introduced as a disconnected subject from their needs and wants (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001).

**Project-based learning strategies**

Ramussen and Moffitt, (1997, p.11) defined Project-based learning as “a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks”. In this sense, PjBL is a system or pedagogy that prepares the students for the real world through developing some personal and educational skills. Dewey (1986) and Vygotsky (1978) laid the foundations for PjBL as they encouraged learning through discovery and experience. Recently, Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) and Lave (1990) emphasized that learners learn best and create meaning when they get engaged with the environment, people, and technologies. Moreover, cooperative learning environments are very useful in the learning/teaching process as they trigger learners' interests in learning and motivate them to learn from each other (Brush and Saye, 2000). In this way, PjBL is considered a pedagogical alternation from teacher-centered instruction to learners' self-regulation and thorough engagement with peers, resources, and technologies. The pedagogical approaches and strategies of PjBL have proved very effective with other pedagogies like science, problem-solving learning, self-directed learning, and discipline inquiry (Blumenfeld, Guzdial, Krajcik, Marx, Soloway, & Palinscar 1991; Barton, & Levstik, 1997; Hall, Hannafin, Hill, & Land, 1994; Hannafin, Land, & Oliver, 1999; Dodge, 1997, 1998; Hannafin, & Land, 2000; and Yetkiner, Anderoglu, & Capraro (2008).

Bransford and Stein (1993) found the PjBL approach as both a comprehensive and sustainable instructional approach that engages learners in a compact, consistent, and cooperative assessment. Grant, (2002) added that PjBL focuses mainly on fostering learners’ skills through an in-depth investigation of a specific learning situation that allows students to get engaged in the topic till they acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to their academic and career progress and success.
The fact that teaching communicative skills to students may go through tough processes of forgetting the vocabularies needed in certain situations and using them in their inappropriate contexts, raised the issue that learning vocabulary cannot be done through rote learning. This implies that showing words to the students does not necessarily imply that they have reserved them in their long memories. Therefore, learning vocabulary can be a tough task if students are not provided with strategies that enable them to use these vocabularies and construct a network of interrelated vocabularies. PjBL strategies provide students with the opportunity of inductive learning through group work and project-based activities. Moreover, vocabularies in ESP are easily remembered than in GE as students use them frequently in their workplace (Salazar and Carballo, 2010).

**Integrating PjBL strategies with ESP**

In this sense, ESP and PjBL share the same purpose of achieving proficiency and promoting language learning through enjoying the same components and characteristics. Henceforth, ESP, and PjBL are integrated and implemented in the present study to make a relaxed learning environment that guarantees successful language learning. In this sense, The Autodesk Foundation (1999) proposed ten useful steps for teachers to follow for developing and sequencing with the PjBL into their classroom:

1. Discovering learners’ interests and desires to build on them,
2. Facilitating the teaching/learning process by providing an exciting context for learning,
3. Engaging students in authentic, real-world problems without helping in their solutions,
4. Allowing students to think creatively and take decisions towards their choices,
5. Engaging students in real-world situations and issues related directly to their lives,
6. Demanding learners to show essential skills and knowledge,
7. Training students to problem-solving to deepen their understanding,
8. Creating environments of self-regulation, co-operation, and self-assessment,
9. Demanding students to demonstrate what they have learned, and
10. Applying their skills and knowledge to authentic situations.

**Context of the Problem**

Dentistry College of Al-Azhar University- Cairo branch- Egypt, offers two separate courses for its dental students. One for native students who learn English as a foreign language (EFL), and the other for Malaysian students who study English as a second language (ESL). Malaysian majors receive four credit hours in both preparatory and first year through their academic instruction. As Malaysia was colonized by the British, English became their second language taught in their schools, and universities, and they used to use it in their daily routine life.

Reviewing the course taught to dental natives of the dentistry College, the researcher found that the course depends mainly on developing the students’ linguistic background (grammar, writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills), the reason for separating them.

Contrary to EFL dental natives; ESL dental Malaysians hardly speak Arabic, and have a good command of the English language. Therefore, it seemed impossible to teach them the same course taught to their dental native counterparts. A needs analysis
questionnaire was presented to them to decide upon a course design that satisfies their needs and purpose of the study; ESP. Moreover, the course would be introduced in an attractive framework appealing to the students' needs employing strategies that pinpoint their capabilities and reflect an experiential application of the syllabus.

Structured interviews were conducted with the dental staff in which many questions regarding ESL Malaysians' English background, wants, needs, lacks were addressed. The results of the interviews came in line with the initial observations of the researcher. A dental vocabulary test was also administered to the ESL Malaysian majors to determine their background in vocabulary dentistry, and to build on it the ESP program. This comes in line with Bradley- Levine et al. (2010) and Little (2009), who stated that an ESP should meet the needs and interests of the students and should also be suitable to the requirements of their specialized workplaces. The course would also adopt innovative student-centered approaches that prepare them for professional development to avoid non-involvement in the class, (Baumgarther & Zabin, 2006; Noom- ura, 2013; Sysoyev, 2000).

Statement of the Problem
Based on a close analysis of the previous studies and after concluding the findings of the needs analysis questionnaire and feedback from the interviewees, the following issues have emerged: the EFL course offered to the native students at the College of Dentistry, Al-Azhar University is not compatible with the Malaysian dental students studying in the same College; secondly, it was also evident that the course would not help develop English dental vocabulary of the ESL Malaysian majors. Therefore, an ESP course along with PjBL techniques was chosen to come at the English language needs of ESL dental Malaysian students, feature the components of the course in the light of PjBL teaching strategies, and to investigate the extent to which the proposed course would impact the development of the English dental vocabulary of the ESL dental Malaysian students at College of Dentistry, Al-Azhar University.

Hypothesis of the Study
The hypothesis for the current study is stated as:

- **Ho**¹ There are statistically significant differences between the mean value of the pre and post-tests in the English dental vocabulary test in favor of the post-test.

Research Methodology

**Research Design**
A pre-test/post-test design was utilized in the present study. The dental Malaysian students were exposed to a dental vocabulary test before the start of the experiment. At the end of the experiment, a post-dental vocabulary test was introduced to the same students to measure their progress, if recorded.

**Sample of the Study**
Fourteen ESL Malaysian students in preparatory year at the College of Dentistry, Al-Azhar University, participated in the experiment. Subjects received a three-month ESP course presented in the framework of PjBL techniques. All students were equivalent in terms of
English language proficiency as a prerequisite for admission to the College. The participants’ native language is English, so all classroom teaching, discussion, and activities are done in English. As English is their native language, they had no difficulty with their general English skills, however; they suffered from the poor limited vocabulary in the dental field which results in insufficient self-confidence on their sides to communicate.

**Instruments**
The following instruments were used to achieve the objectives of the research:

*Needs Analysis Questionnaire*
The questionnaire consists of three domains. The first domain covers the learning needs of ESL dental students. The second one covers ESL students learning preferences in PjBL. The third explores the topics covered in the dental ESP course. The questionnaire was submitted to a panel of TEFL experts to determine its validity and reliability. Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient was employed to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items with a score of 0.699.

*Vocabulary Test*
The pre/post vocabulary tests were conducted with the view to measure the extent to which the ESL dental Malaysian students acquire the prerequisite of dental vocabulary to accomplish good grades in their study. Each test examined a few vocabulary items and comprised five sections: Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ), Completion, Matching synonyms, Giving antonyms, and Picture description. The reliability of the test employed Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient and measured as 0.755. A self-validity approach was established by calculating the square root of the reliability estimate scoring 0.87, which is considered acceptable (El-Bahi, 1979). As the validity and reliability of the test were estimated, it was ready to be used as the assessment tool of the experiment.

*Structured interview*
Structured interviews were conducted with ten female instructors. These informants held Ph.D. degrees in Dentistry, Microbiology, and Physical Medicine. Their ages ranged between 40 and 55 with teaching experience between 13 and 19 years. Each interview lasted for 20 minutes. The emphasis in the interview was given to questions related to the benefits of a dental ESP course, introduction of new teaching methodologies, and current and expected learning levels of the students.

The content validity of interview questions was evaluated using the factor analysis for examining construct validity and reliability by Cronbach’s Alpha. The values for interview questions, scored as 0.74, are considered a genuine value.

The interview results revealed that English language needs are significant in medical fields, as English is the lingua franca of medical sciences. All respondents agreed to the suggested innovative methods of teaching ESP courses in medical fields. All respondents appreciated the idea of doing experiments and devising new ways of English language teaching based on project work and problem-solving approaches. They agreed that
Instructors in universities should avoid traditional methods of teaching, such as grammar and translation methods. They also accepted that teaching the ESP course to medical students would bring a transformation in their knowledge of the English language. Hence, they urged and encouraged a similar change in EFL education offered to medical students.

**Procedures**

Before the start of the experiment, a needs analysis questionnaire was distributed among the students to determine their needs, wants, and areas lacking. The items were ranked on a Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Not Important At All) to 4 (Highly Important) and 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent), and 1 (Not Helpful At All) to 4 (Very Helpful).

Also, a pre-test dental vocabulary test was introduced to the students to stand at their current level. Due to the results of both tools, the experiment was carried out during the academic year 2016-2017 and lasted for a full academic semester (4 hours a week). The total number of the students was 14 ESL Malaysian majors in dentistry. They were divided into three groups. The ESP integrated PjBL course was planned to execute as weekly projects whose titles were based on the outcome of the needs analysis questionnaire.

Each project covered a specific topic related to the students’ field of study. A variety of innovative techniques, i.e., co-operative learning techniques, peer and group coaching, role play, jigsaw, problem-solving strategies...etc., were employed. The students were, therefore required to work together on their projects. The teacher's role was to guide, coach, and mentor students. The teacher guides students to ask questions, collect data, debate, discuss, take notes, write reports, think critically, and solve problems. The students learnt in a cooperative learning environment where they worked collaboratively in their projects to solve their problems. The teacher acted as co-learners as they shared learning the projects. The students showed great enthusiasm for sharing their knowledge and learning to work independently. Formative and summative assessment methods in the form of monthly quizzes, class assessments, oral discussions, and final term exam, were used during and after the experiment.

**Procedures for integrating PjBL with ESP in a dental classroom**

In the light of the findings of the needs analysis, interviews, and tests, an integrated PjBL dental vocabulary ESP course was designed to meet the ESL learners’ needs, wants, and lacks. The dental course was introduced to the students within project-based learning strategies. The following is an example of a unit and task designed for the dental course:

1. **Project’s title:** Fixing an appointment with the dentist
2. **Duration:** Two consecutive weeks. Classes were held every Wednesday and Thursday at 10.00 am (2 hours a day).
3. **Objectives:** After the completion of the project, students would be able to:
   i. Recognize new dental vocabularies in reading passages.
   ii. Use them in writing assignments.
   iii. Communicate using dental vocabularies.
   iv. Practice self-learning and co-operative learning.
   v. Foster their roles in a PjBL classroom.
3-Techniques: Innovative techniques applicable in the PjBL approach included co-operative learning, problem-solving, peer and group coaching, etc. were used throughout the program. Other techniques experimented included individualized learning and activity-based learning methods. Under these techniques, the students worked individually as well as collaboratively to accomplish their projects.

4-Students’ and teachers’ roles in a PjBL classroom: A PjBL approach requires a cooperative learning environment, with the change in the role of both the teacher and the students. Instead of being dominant and aggressive, teachers guide, coach and mentor their students and teach them how to ask questions, collect data, debate, discuss, take notes, write reports, think critically, and solve problems. The students showed great enthusiasm for sharing their knowledge and learning to work independently.

5-Assessment: Assessment methods in the form of monthly quizzes, class assessments, oral discussions, and end of term exam, were used.

**Results**

Data of the questionnaire are shown in table one, appendix one, using the frequency of responses and weighted percentages.

According to the results of the questionnaire, items that received a higher weight percentage than others expressed the participants' needs and wants, therefore, are the main corpus of the ESP course. Participants showed an interest in learning dental vocabulary through PjBL techniques that would facilitate authentic and contextualized learning. Moreover, it would foster group and self-learning as well as develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Statistical differences between the scores of the pre-and post-application of the vocabulary test are analyzed by using “t Independent Samples Test.” Results are interpreted to the research hypothesis. Table two shows the statistical value of the mean scores of the pre and post vocabulary tests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Tab. T</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>17.32</td>
<td>2173.55</td>
<td>20.21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two shows that the calculated ‘t’ (20, 21) is more significant than the tabulated ‘t’ (237) at the degree of freedom (39), and this is significant at 0.03 level. This proves the validity of the research hypothesis. “There are significant statistical differences between the scores of the pre and post-tests in the English dental vocabulary test in favor of the post-test.” Results indicate that participants’ performance improved after participating in the proposed ESP PjBL course.
To investigate ESL students' needs, wants, and lacks, and the benefit of the ESP course in improving their dental vocabulary acquisition, structured interviews were conducted with their instructors. Analysis of the interviews indicates that almost all respondents agreed that the course meets the students' language needs in respect to their academic studies. Tables three and four, appendices b and c, consecutively, show the instructors’ responses concerning ESL students’ needs, lacks, and the benefit of the ESP course. The instructors’ responses to the students’ needs and lacks showed high agreement on the students' needs to a specialized course with an innovative teaching strategy. Results, as indicated in table three, show a consensus among instructors that the current sample requires an ESP course that provides them with the knowledge needed provided that it is presented in the framework of updated techniques that keep the students motivated. Moreover, due to the nature of the current sample as ESL learners, general English language skills would be automatically communicated but without teaching them. K-W test and the Mann-Whitney test were used to analyze the results of the interviews.

Moreover, table four shows high percentages for dental vocabulary acquisition skills, which proves tangible improvement achieved on that level. Improvements were identified equally on the four language skills of dental reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This also proves the effectiveness of the ESP integrated course in improving dentistry features on the level of these skills. Grammar came last in rank since the ESP course focused mainly on dental vocabulary, and any improvement in this skill may be attributed to the solid background of the participants.

From the above results, it can be concluded that the ESP integrated course is essential for the students’ academic and professional careers. Moreover, the students have developed not only, dental vocabulary acquisition, but also other language skills through using dentistry vocabulary. Therefore, students became capable of understanding a passage written with dental vocabulary. They became capable of using dental vocabulary in their speech. They became capable of writing passages using dental vocabulary. Finally, they became capable of construing all this through a good command of English grammar.

Discussion
The present study aimed mainly at testing the extent to which integrating PjBL strategies into an ESP course may affect the instruction of dental vocabulary for ESL Malaysian majors. First of all, a needs analysis questionnaire was distributed among the students to come to their needs, wants, and lacks. After classifying the students’ needs and lacks, a dental vocabulary test was introduced to them to assess their current level in the skills in question. Supported by interviews with their instructors in the department, the researcher provided features to the ESP course. The course did not address the theoretical syllabus that introduced to the students in a silly, annoying manner. However, with the technological and scientific demands of the current century, innovative strategies, represented in PjBL techniques, were integrated into the instruction of the ESP course. Based on the fact that the sample of the study, ESL Malaysian students, has a good command of the English language, no efforts exerted in the field of improving their general English skills. The ESP course introduced to them was in the form of activities that required their involvement in
collaborative-project work to develop their dental vocabulary acquisition.

The findings of the study showed the effectiveness of integrating PjBL techniques in the instruction of dental vocabulary instruction. Such strategies created an atmosphere of cooperation and creativity among the students that stimulated them to work together to reach one final result for each project they share. Moreover, they promoted autonomously and self-motivated learning in which students learn at their pace without teacher dominance or traditional methods of teaching. This comes in line with (Brush and Saye, 2000) who found that project-based learning activities create co-operative spirits among the students as well as encourage their self-direction learning. Teachers also get positive attitudes towards incorporating PjBL techniques in the instruction process as they promoted "hands-on" experience.

These findings also come in line with Grant, (2002), Bransford and Stein (1993); and Vygotsky (1978) who stated that incorporating project-based learning activities in learning help students to understand concepts fully, connect ideas, apply their learning to real situations, deeply analyze concepts, and arrange their thoughts. Finally, it is a process of learning that enables students to give meaning to real-life situations.

Yetkiner, et al. (2008) affirmed the positive impact of incorporating PjBL as a model of teaching in the instruction of mathematics and other courses to develop concept analysis and connection of ideas through the promotion of a creative problem-solving atmosphere.

**Conclusion**

The findings of the present study conclude the importance of using innovative teaching methods in the teaching/learning process. New generations are wanting to a positive climate to work co-operatively to generate ideas and to promote self-learning (Hackett 1985; Hall & Ponton 2005; Pajares and Miller 1994). Techniques used in the classroom to distribute the work, divide the students into groups, select the materials, make discoveries and solve problems contribute to the actual learning process, and add more positive attributes to the students’ characters in the classroom. Therefore, incorporating PjBL techniques in teaching dental vocabulary fostered student- to- student and student- to- teacher’s relationship. In this way, they are achieving the objectives of the study, encouraging the students to work in an enjoyable atmosphere that leads automatically to raise their academic performance.

Therefore, current streams in teaching highly support the attention paid to improving curricula, high-quality instruction, content area, students' assessments, and evaluation in the light of innovative teaching pedagogical methods. 21st-century learners are aspiring to a type of education that addresses their curiosity, promote their creativity, and provide them with inquiry-based approaches that answer their questions and lead to unique discoveries. Equipping learners with that type of education would lead to economic, technological, and scientific growth of the whole universe.

Therefore, students’ spirits of discovery and research should be cultivated in all learning climates. Portraying, planning, role-distribution, and implementing projects are dual responsibility of both the teachers and the students. Also, their desire, readiness, and
willingness to work out such projects are their responsibilities (Gordon, 2000).

Acknowledgment
This Publication was supported by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University.

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Gordon, T. L. (2000). Identifying Ekvall’s creative climate dimensions in an elementary school classroom setting. Unpublished Master’s project, Buffalo, NY, Buffalo State College, Center for Studies in Creativity,


Appendix A

Table (1). Percentages of students’ responses to the needs analysis questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Items needed.</th>
<th>ESP dental skills needed.</th>
<th>Not Important at all (NIAL)</th>
<th>Less Important (LI)</th>
<th>Important (I)</th>
<th>Greatly Important (GI)</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Use the new dental terms in all four language skills.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Use the dental terms in professional communication.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Write short situations using the dental terms.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exchange questions and answers about dentistry.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Use vocabulary related to dentistry correctly.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Predict and brainstorm new vocabulary related to dentistry.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Act the role of dentists using new vocabulary items.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Analyze a dental text for specific information.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Recognize the names of organs related to dentistry with their names and descriptions.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Experience the connections between the theoretical and practical application of dental vocabularies.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Make inferences from a text.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Make learning authentic.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Foster co-operative learning.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Contextualize projects.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B

Table (3). *Weighed percentage of the instructors' responses to ESL students' needs, wants and lacks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Not Important at all (NIAL)</th>
<th>Less Important (LI)</th>
<th>Important (I)</th>
<th>Greatly Important (GI)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Develop critical thinking and creativity.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Simulation and role-play.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Take notes.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Topics covered in the ESP course.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Not Important at all (NIAL)</th>
<th>Less Important (LI)</th>
<th>Important (I)</th>
<th>Greatly Important (GI)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Fixing appointment with the dentist.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Dental advices.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Teeth complains and dental vocabulary.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Dental Check-up.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Tooth decay.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Preventing tooth decay.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Health and Sickness.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Importance of a healthy mouth.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Teeth structure and types.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Brushing and flossing.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Dental Hygiene.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Dialogues; questions by the patients and advice by the dentists.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Word formation; nouns and verbs.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Opposites; prefixes and suffixes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Word association; mind maps.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Reading comprehension passages.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To what extent do you think the ESP course is essential for the students' academic study?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To what extent do you think the ESP course is essential for the students' professional careers?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To what extent do you think the ESP course is essential for improving the students’ four language skills?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>To what extent do you think it is crucial that the ESP course should focus mainly on dental vocabulary?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>How important do you believe is the use of innovative teaching/learning methodologies in the current ESP course?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>How important do you believe is the use of supplementary materials in ESP English classes?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>To what extent do you think it is crucial that students be allowed to work collaboratively in ESP classes?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>To what extent do you think it is crucial that students be fluent in both oral and written dental English?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C
Table (4). *Instructors’ responses to the benefit of the ESP course in improving their students’ ability in the mentioned skill/area (frequency & percentage)*

<table>
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<th>Rating levels</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>General Vocabulary</th>
<th>Dental Vocabulary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fre q.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Fre q.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Fre q.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Fre q.</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Helpful</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Abstract**  
This paper depicts how exiles are psychologically damaged by language loss and how the latter engenders identity crises that affect the characters and destabilize their identity constructs. Linguistically speaking, although expatriates living outside their home countries master English more than their native words, they can circulate both locations comfortably. However, both languages fail to provide them with an efficient means of expressing their identity. The main question raised is whether language contributes to the understanding of the self or complicates the maturation process and engenders an identity crisis. It is for this particular reason that the researcher has chosen Cristina Garcia *Dreaming in Cuban* (1990) to portray how both languages are simultaneously used, creating a third language structure, this narrative that blends English with Spanish without making the reader notice the shift and enabling both the writer and the protagonist to express their bicultural identities. The aim of the current study is to investigate how linguistic meaning is used as a vehicle for constructing identity through a critical stylistic analysis of Christina Garcia’s *Dreaming in Cuban* (1990). The study concludes that this novel cannot be classified as either nostalgic or creative, but blends nostalgia with creativity so as to give birth to a new category of exile writing. The latter preaches hybridity as a remedial reconciliation capable of healing the emotional shock caused by exile.  

**Keywords:** critical stylistics, culture, exile, Garcia’s *Dreaming in Cuban*, home, language

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.31
Introduction

The history of exile writing is as old as the history of literature itself. Together with themes of alienation, detachment, diaspora and distance, exile has been one of the most productive issues in literature. Exile and its border-crossing experience is as a rite of passage that marks the life of an exile in different ways. On the one hand, the exile is detached from all sources of national sentiment and belonging. On the other hand, the exile is cast into a new “ethnoscape” that requires the adoption of the original language/culture in order to avoid the devastating condition of alien hood. Scholars discuss the issue of exile, stating its relation to numerous features: gender, sexuality, nationality, language, race, ethnicity, culture, among many other features. Exile has often been studied in relation to home, place, border, and frontier. Exile, may refer to geographical areas, political or religious ones, occupational categories, and linguistic or cultural traditions delimiting a nation. Therefore, in exile discourses, the question that interests researchers is how one does represent oneself? Shall identity, single, hybrid, or multiple, be classified through linguistic, cultural or national attachments?

Literature Review

This part discusses the related literature concerning the topic under investigation. Exiled scholars wrote about their experiences, the losses of exile, and their sufferings. It is argued that exile as an experience either fosters creativity outside the homeland or causes nostalgia and various crises for the displaced so that his life is consumed in his nostalgic memories. To put it otherwise, “Criticism of exile writing has tended to analyze these works according to a binary logic, where exile either produces creative freedom, or traps the writer in restrictive nostalgia” (McClennen, 2004, p.2). Said (2002) describes exile writing as contrapuntal since contrary to most people [who] are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of visions gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal (p.186).

Seen from this dialectic vision, exile writing is hybrid and transnational since the writer is aware of two homes, two cultures, and two settings. Conceived in a dialectic manner, but from a different perspective, Guillén, (1976) distinguishes two kinds of exile writing: exile as nostalgic and counter exile as creative. Later, in Múltiples Moradas, Guillén, (1976) suggests “Exiled writers can be described as solar (referring to Plutarch) if they tend to look up towards the sun and the stars, or they can look within (like Ovid) and focus on loss” (as cited in Mcclennen, 2004, p.7).

From this, it follows that what Guillén, (1996) called “the literature of exile” stresses that exile is not only physical but spiritual as well and thus nostalgic insofar as this category of literature is linked to feelings of nationalism. What he names, “the literature of counter exile” (p.9), however, insists that exile is physical and that this physical displacement is transcended by creativity in exile. While Guillén, (1996) described the literature of counter exile as solar, he remained silent over providing a label for the writing of exile, a task McClennen, (2004) accomplished instead by characterizing the literature of exile as terrestrial because the exile “gaze[s] down at the ground, contemplating his material existence far from his native land” (p. 32). It follows, thus, that exile writing is either nostalgic or creative.
The feeling of nostalgia while in exile is not a new phenomenon. The word “nostalgia” comes from Greek roots *nostos* meaning “home” and *algia* meaning “longing”. Nostalgia, therefore, is the feeling of longing to home.

The nostalgic disorder was first diagnosed by seventeenth-century Swiss doctors and detected in mercenary soldiers. This modern contagious disease of homesickness – *la Maladie du pays* – was treated in a seventeenth-century scientific manner with leeches, hypnotic emulsions, opium, and a trip to the Alps. (Boym, 1998, p. 241.)

Exiled writers, exiled characters, or simply exiles falling in this category tend to be local. Moreover, the feeling of attachment to the motherland among them, although affected by physical displacement, grows stronger and traps them into a self-destroying journey when return to the homeland becomes an obsession. In this case, nationalism becomes a cause.

Other exiles, however, tend to be global, rather than emphasizing the sense of loss, they find solace and empathy among other expatriates of different nationalities and thus avoid the torturing effect of nationalism. These exiles are creative and there is a tendency amongst them “to transmute their own bitter experience into an affinity with others in distress” (Hanne, 2004, p. 9). Therefore, instead of reminiscing about their past and living in a nostalgic atmosphere that idealizes home away from home, exiles, in this case, develop a sense of universal empathy.

Like McClennen, Abani, (2004) sees the condition of exile and its discourse as a chiaroscuro between at least two dominant binaries. On the one hand, according to him, are those who regard exile as positive and redemptive, on the other hand are those who consider it harmful. Commenting on those who see exile as positive, Abani, (2004) writes:

On the one hand are those who celebrate exile as redemptive. Homi Bhabha and Arjun Appadurai speak to the possibilities that displacement and exile offer. Salman Rushdie, C.L.R James, and George Lamming believe exile to be a vital condition for writing, a form of alienation that produces a useful double-mindedness. (p.22)

Many other writers have romanticized the position of exile. Even though Said, (2002) described exile in “Reflections on Exile” as a

Crippling and unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place”; he pointed out a romantic benefit of this condition when he argues, “If true exile is a condition of terminal loss, why has it been transformed so easily into a potent, even enriching motif of modern culture? (p.173).

It should be stated that even with the plethora of books and authors examined so far, there is a much more generous number that had to be left out. The argument advanced in this work, however, pivots neither on an exhaustive catalog of texts dealing with exile and related concepts nor upon a demarcated set of books, authors, and ideas that together make up the exile canon. Instead, this argument depends on a different methodological alternative whose concern is to facilitate a sociological understanding of exile as a life condition and as a person. These are the notions that need to be covered now in more analytical detail throughout Garcia’s *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992).
The Discourse of Nostalgia in *Dreaming in Cuban*

Many characters are affected by nostalgia in *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), although for different losses. The narrative involves not only personal but cultural dimensions of nostalgia for the damage of self, the loss of the past, or the loss of a culture.

For Pilar, Cuba represents the geographical equivalent of memory – the place where the past is housed and from which it continues to exert its complex influence. Pilar’s nostalgia lies in her longing for her past. Being cut off her birthplace Cuba, Pilar is not privy to the history of Cuba, albeit through the few stories her father narrates to her from time to time. Pilar’s longing for the past in *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) is explained by her deduction that history is partial, if not wholly, responsible for her deplorable present-day experience as a Cuban being raised in New York City. Pilar feels nostalgia for Cuba since her knowledge of her birthplace is rudimentary and causes nuances concerning her sense of belonging as she tells the reader, “But every once in a while a wave of longing will hit me and it’s all I can do not to hijack a plane to Havana or something” (pp.137-138). The ambiguity surrounding Pilar’s sense of belonging is the cause justifying her nostalgia for the past. Pilar expresses her dilemma in these words, “Even though I’ve been living in Brooklyn all my life, it doesn’t feel like home to me. I’m not sure Cuba is, but I want to find out” (p.58).

The absence of an episode of one’s existence or the inability to reach it, in this case, one’s past, calls into question a nostalgic discourse vis-à-vis the past. Pilar’s journey back to Cuba, here representative of the past, is thus a consequence of nostalgia. Worth citing at this level is that Pilar was incapable of finding a sense of home in terms of place. Pérez’s use of metaphor in *Next Year in Cuba* to explain losses of exile is relevant to the understanding of Pilar’s nostalgia for the past that substitutes her nostalgia for a place:

Refugees are amputees. Someone who goes into exile abandons not just possessions but part of himself. This is true, especially of children, who leave before achieving a durable, portable identity. Just as people who lose a limb sometimes continue to ache or tingle in the missing calf or hand, the exile suffers the absence of the self he left behind. (1994, p.7)

The question that may be raised at this level is the following: what is there in the past that Pilar is looking for since she claims, “Shit, I’m only twenty-one years old. How can I be nostalgic for my youth?” (p.198) Since *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) deals with the sense of dislocation and fragmentation at the level of identity, Pilar’s nostalgia is best viewed as a quest for roots and connection.

**Language Loss**

The thematic issue and portrayal of language loss in *Dreaming in Cuban* are legitimate since it is the biggest sacrifice exiles, immigrants and displaced people make as soon as they are transplanted into a new culture. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, language loss is portrayed as confusion that exacerbates exiles’ feelings of alienation, more precisely, hyphenation.

The loss incurred by exile is evidently manifested through the metaphor of language loss. Pilar Puente, a member of the third generation, is chosen by Cristina Garcia to reflect on the issue of language loss. Celia tells the reader that her grandchild Pilar writes to her, “In a Spanish that
is no longer hers. She speaks the hard-edged lexicon of bygone tourists itchy to throw dice on a green felt or asphalt” (p.7). Pilar herself conceives of her language loss as a plight when she admits, “I envy my mother her Spanish curses sometimes. They make my English collapse in a heap” (p.59). Therefore, Pilar reveals throughout her reflections on language that one of the most critical losses incurred by exile is the loss of one’s mother language. In the same vein, Pilar further thinks, “English seems an impossible language for intimacy” (p.180) that is; why she and her boyfriend Rubén favor the Spanish language when they make love.

Spoken language seems to fail Pilar, Celia as well as other characters in Dreaming in Cuban (1992), causing them further turmoil. For this particular reason, other characters try to find alternative modes of expression other than the linguistic variable that is, according to them, fraught with handicaps.

Pilar and her grandmother Celia, for instance, communicate not through spoken language but through what Leonard called “semitics of image” (p.194). In retrospect, Pilar’s saga demonstrates a continual movement back to Cuba and reunion with Celia throughout dreamwork and telepathic communication with the latter. This might be viewed as a kind of modus operandi, responsible for Pilar’s idealization of Cuba. Pilar describes one dream, for instance, in which she is on a throne and is lifted up by the people who walk with her toward the sea. Pilar explains that those people “are chanting a language I don’t understand. I don’t feel scared, though. I can see the stars and the sky and the moon and the black sky revolving overhead. I can see my grandmother’s face” (p.34). The fact that Celia appears in Pilar’s dream indicates that the two communicate better through a pictographic order rather than through a verbal or linguistic mode of signification. Although Pilar cannot decipher the chanted language she hears, she recognizes her verbally expressionless grandmother, which suggests, “In the dream space the potential for pictographic communication is privileged over oral or spoken forms” (Leonard, 2004, p. 194).

In this sense, language loss or its dysfunctional aspect explains characters’ choice of other modes of communication, or as Brameshuber, (1999) writes the images “witness the insufficiency of regular language” (p.54). By its very ethereal nature, dreaming can transcend the space between Cuba and the United States that sets Celia and Pilar apart. It allows them to connect with each other despite the geographical distance. Repeatedly, images are the most resonant, and efficient mode of communication between Pilar and Celia. Pilar reveals in another scene, I have this image of Celia underwater, standing on a reef with tiny chrome fish darting by her face like flashes of light. Her hair is waving in the tide, and her eyes are wide open. She calls to me, but I can’t hear her. Is she talking to me from her dreams? (Garcia, 1992, p.220).

Such shared moments of imagery are necessary for both characters who strive to combat the collapse of communication through linguistic modes. Once and again, the inefficiency of language into conveying messages is stressed throughout this passage that highlights how Pilar fails to hear her grandmother but identifies her glowing face. In this particular sense, the inability to communicate through language renders the latter a motif of severance rather than connection. Although Pilar expresses her preference for the Spanish language that is part of her past and thus herself, she has grown up speaking English. Her skepticism over which style best dovetail with,
and in the process, satiate her thirst to shape a stable identity continues until the end of the novel when back in Cuba, she starts dreaming in Spanish. Pilar reveals, “I have begun dreaming in Spanish, which has never happened before. I wake up feeling different, like something inside me is changing, something chemical and irreversible. There’s a magic here working its way through my veins” (p.235). In this sense, Pilar’s rediscovery of the Spanish language enables her to generate a vital link with her past.

Similarly, Celia conceives of her relationship with Pilar in imagistic terms that help both characters bridge the gap caused by the second generation. Celia “closes her eyes and speaks to her granddaughter, imagines her words as slivers of light piercing the murky night” (p.7). Celia’s statement sheds light on the challenge posed by dream-work and telepathy to defy language handicaps altogether with the physical and geographical separations they might entail. In fact, the novel locates the global market as a space dominated by the English language as a lingua franca. Following this line of understanding, achievement and prosperity require learning English and leaving Cuba behind. Thus, it is no surprise that when Celia drowns herself at the end of the novel, she recites a Lorca poem using English for the first time in the story. Previously in the novel, Celia quotes poetry in italicized Spanish with no interpretation. García’s literary translation of Lorca’s poem from Spanish into English at the moment of Celia’s death hints at Cuba’s bleak future. It, furthermore, adds one more exile to the Puente family, i.e., Celia, who willingly alienates herself from Cuba and linguistically self-exiles into the global world dominated by the English language. Celia’s choice of a new “linguistic home” for Lorca’s poem equals, albeit partially, García’s choice of a new linguistic home for Cuban culture and Cubanness. Critics such as Valenzuela classify Dreaming in Cuban as inauthentic because Cuban culture is not expressed throughout its original language: Spanish.

Sus trabajos terminan regresando al castellano... Bless Me, Última, la gran novela chicana de Rudolfo Anaya... está siendo traducida estos días a la lengua de Cervantes, vuelve a su hogar cultural.

[Their works end up returning to Castellano ... Bless Me, Última, Rudolfo Anaya’s great Chicano novel ... is being translated these days to the language of Cervantes. It is returning to its cultural home]. (as cited in Ween, 2003, p.133)

Although Valenzuela’s statement concerning the authenticity of texts may be well-grounded, one would disagree entirely with the classification of Dreaming in Cuban (1992) as inauthentic. This is mainly because the novel as text blends the two languages to report exile as a world experience and not only a Cuban one. Thus, Garcia may be in line with Abani (2004), who opines that the experience of exile allows writers and novelists, in particular, “to explore an international/human identity.” Henceforth, García’s use of the English language as an original language for Dreaming in Cuban (1992) does not necessarily exile Cuban culture into the English language. However, it allows for the ethnicization and internationalization of the theme of exile.

Moreover, the theme of language loss is portrayed in an equivocal narrative. Understandably, it is suggested in this work that Dreaming in Cuban (1992) cannot be synonymous with dreaming in Spanish for a variety of reasons. First, Spanish is a part of Cuban heritage, and hence Pilar’s dream-work is more of a cultural process than a linguistic one. Second,
although English is the language that reminds Cubans of “the Platt Amendment, of the way the Americans have interfered in our affairs from the very beginning” (Garcia, 1990, p.207), Celia explains in one of her letters to Gustavo, Spanish is more so. Spanish is also the language of an old colonizer. Thus, Garcia blends the two styles in one richly linguistic narrative reflecting on both influences on Cuban culture: the Spanish and American ones. *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) is not a result of being able to dream in Spanish only, but also refers to the ability to reveal the past and moor it to the present.

Like Celia, Ivanito, Felicia’s son, links success with the English language and confirms his position by learning English, “I pick up radio stations in Key West. I’m learning more English this way, but it’s a lot different from Abuelo Jorge’s grammar books. If I’m lucky, I can tune in the Wolfman Jack show on Sunday nights. Sometimes I want to be like the Wolfman and talk to a million of people at once” (p.191). Ivanito’s wish to be able to speak to a million people at once, like Jack Wolfman indicates and explains his eagerness to learn the English language that provides him with the opportunity of speaking to the mass of people given its international aspect. Moreover, Ivanito pairs the Wolfman’s radio show success with the use of English. In fact, Ivanito’s last wish is only achieved in the last section of the novel entitled “Languages Lost.” It is at the Peruvian embassy, en route to beginning his new life in exile, that Ivanito shouts, “Crraaaazzzzy!” and finds himself “talking to a million people at once” (p.241). Following this line of understanding, when the occasion is provided to Ivanito to speak to a crowd he favors English over Spanish, a choice explaining his language loss and stressing the advantages of English, especially in communicating worldwide.

Language loss in *Dreaming in Cuban* does not refer only to the loss of one’s mother tongue but also refers to the way it cracks family bonds. Davis (2002) best put it when he explained, “When Garcia entitles the last section of her book “The Languages Lost,” she refers to much more than just Spanish, widening the reference to include the breaking of familial bonds between Cubans living on the island and those residing abroad” (p.60). Thus, because of Language loss characters in *Dreaming in Cuban* turn to other modes of communication. Celia and Pilar, for instance, communicate telepathically. Pilar explains how vital the process of telepathy is for her. It alleviates her sense of estrangement as a Cuban living in America and lacks first-hand contact with Cuba, something Celia provides her with throughout their evening telepathic conversations. Pilar explains, “Abuela Celia and I write to each other sometimes, but mostly I hear her speaking to me at night just before I fall asleep. She tells me stories about her life and what the sea was like that day. Abuela says she wants to see me again. She tells me she loves me” (Garcia, 1990, pp.28-29).

In Cuba, Celia “knows that Pilar keeps a diary in the lining of her winter coat, hidden from her mother’s souring eyes… This pleases Celia. She closes her eyes and speaks to her granddaughter, imagines her words as slivers of light piercing the murky night” (p.7). In this sense, telepathy is not the only means that helps Celia and Pilar surmount the hindrances brought about by the collapse of verbal communication. However, writing is also an outlet for both characters and is portrayed as an alternative mode of expression for repressive verbal communication. Celia’s haunted love affair with Gustavo, for example, is not narrated verbally but in an epistolary form that protects the secrecy of her love for Gustavo.
Thematically, Pilar’s concern with losing the language of her motherland is displayed through her mania for painting that has become an idée fixe. Pilar finds that images convey meanings more efficiently than words do, as she believes:

> Painting is its own language, I wanted to tell him. Translations just confuse it, dilute it, like words going from Spanish to English … Who needs words when colors and lines conjure up their own language? That’s what I want to do with my paintings, find a unique language, and obliterate the clichés. (p. 139)

In fact, Pilar conveys her view about the USA to the reader not through her verbal communications but through her painting of the Statue of Liberty. Pilar’s punk version of the Statue of Liberty expresses her contempt for U.S. policy towards immigrants and helps Pilar transcend the incapacitating verbal communication. It is for this particular reason that Pilar believes that “a paintbrush is better than a gun” (p.59).

Garcia successfully depicts how exiles are psychologically incapacitated by language loss and how the latter engenders an identity malaise manifested throughout the various diseases that affect the characters and destabilize their identity constructs.

**Conclusion**

This paper began with a ruminative reflection on exile writing that has hitherto fluctuated between nostalgia and creativity. This analysis was built on the work of Guillén (1996), who in his work *On the Literature of Exile and Counter Exile*, distinguishes two divergent paths an exile subject might take. As explained by Guillén, (1996) an exile chooses either to live by the nostalgic memories of the homeland (like Ovid) or to forget about the past and counter the losses of exile with creativity (a remedy preached by Plutarch).


Garcia’s creation of Pilar’s character is a way to picture the hardship of dwelling at the borderlands of cultures, and bridge two different cultures and speak to both cultural groups concomitantly. Garcia’s choice of Pilar to be the holder of the torch of hybridity is grounded in the new language structure she created.

Moreover, Ochoa argues that *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) is a hybrid text where hybrid technical devices are used, “first-person accounts (i.e., through diaries, letters, etc.) mixed with the rest of the narration in the third person” (p.114). Being the arbiter of the past helps Pilar in piecing together her fragmented identity. The stories Pilar gathers narrate the harsh realities of a family split between two countries because of Castro’s regime. Pilar records the family’s stories in a diary she preserves “in the lining of her winter coat, hidden from her mother’s scouring eyes” (p.7). Pilar’s diary eventually becomes the reader’s text as Alvarez (1994) indicates, “The novel is sometimes told in Pilar’s first-person voice (when she narrates events related to her own life in the U.S.) and sometimes in her omniscient voice, as in the stories of Celia, Lourdes, and Felicia” (p.46).
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References
A Cognitive-Semantic Analysis of Preposition on: An Experimental Study at University of Baghdad

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Abstract
This study is descriptive quantitative research by using a test to collect the data needed. Iraqi English as a foreign language (EFL) students face difficulties in differentiating between using prepositions correctly. This study has been performed in the Department of English at College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad, to diagnosis the difficulties of English prepositions that face Iraqi first-year students at the University since multi-uses and meanings of prepositions. For Iraqi EFL students, prepositions regarded as a problematic criterion. This study aims at examining the problems that EFL students commit mistakes in using English prepositions of place on. It also highlights the causes of those problems. Correct handling proposition is not because most of them have different functions straightforward, and different prepositions have the same uses. For this reason, the researcher adopted pre and post-tests to evaluate the output of the means of the students' results. The researcher used SPSS to analyze data.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, Iraqi EFL students, preposition, preposition on.

**Introduction**

Prepositions considered significant challenges and hard to understand for Iraqi EFL students and sometimes misuse prepositions. That's because the Arabic language has its own rules, James (2007) and Jie (2008) affirm that prepositions are hard to understand for English language learners EFL because words have their constructions and regulations so that there are interference points while learning a second language. Nasser (2019) believes that English considered a big problem for non-native learners, especially to Iraqi EFL learners repositions are the core of one of these interference marks. Thus, grammatically prepositions do not use the same rule for each language. Shakir and Yassen (2015) assure that Iraqi EFL students based on their native language for translation before producing English language patterns. Aajami (2019) The perplexity faced by Iraqi second language learners (L2) due to the multi-usages of this preposition has motivated the researcher to conduct this study.

Clece-Murcia and Larsen (1999) mention that prepositions cannot behave in the same way for each language. They confirm that the L2 students find difficulty and feel confused by using English prepositions. There is a perceived contradiction in English itself (Clece-Murcia & Larsen, 1999; Evans & Tyler, 2005). There are some certain prepositions that can be used in one form but not to another, for instance: *I will meet you on Friday at 5:30*, but *I will meet you at Saturday on 10:00*. One can delete the preposition *on* but cannot delete at (*I will meet Saturday at 10:00*). Iraqi students faced problems in understanding why the temporal prepositions applied with certain words. Iraqi students can not recognize why changing spatial prepositions can change the meaning of a sentence.

**1-2. The objective of the Study**

This study aims at:
- Revealing specific difficulties that Iraqi students face in using English prepositions correctly.
- Examining the Iraqi students' ability to differentiate and produce correct prepositions.
- Investigating how cognitive linguistics help EFL students' ability to understand the English preposition *on* in their writings and speech context.

**1-3. Limitation of the Study:**

The participants were 30 female first-year students in the Department of English, College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad. The study was conducted during the academic year 2018-2019.

**1. Literature review**

**2-1. What is Cognitive Linguistics**

English language in Iraq considered second language. To use preposition in correct way is one of the big challenge faced by Iraqi EFL students Tyler and Evans (2003) suggest a new approach for understanding prepositions called cognitive linguistics (CL). Mueller (2016) describes cognitive linguistics as a tool that is used to treat those difficulties out of studying the English prepositions and their semantic networks according to spatial sense, spatial relations, and figurative sense. The cognitive linguistic approach gives a full investigation of English prepositions and other languages. Tyler and Evans (2003) assert that CL can generate the meaning of prepositions as schematizing the spatial arrangement between two structures, i.e., an abstract concept and a functional element.
Aajami (2018) affirms that the CL approach concentrates on examining language, mind, and sociocultural knowledge. It is shown clearly by its close relation of meaning and form within the study of language. Moreover, Evans (2012) identifies that language depends on two general fields of analysis: cognitive grammar, which deals with the study of language organization, and cognitive semantics, which considers the language as a means of exploring fields of conceptual structure. Tyler et al., (2011) assert that CL shows a different perspective, indicating that the many different meanings related to a specific preposition are connected in systematic ways.

The cognitive linguistics (CL) considered the central part of meaning and function in the use of language. CL has produced a pedagogical understanding of foreign language teaching. Tyler and Evans (2003) assure that the traditional teaching method of prepositions is the hardest side of the English language for EFL/English as a second language (ESL) teachers to teach and second language (L2) students to control and understand. For instance, Tyler and Evans (2003) discovered that such theory focuses on the partial homonymy modal, where usually shows different meanings of the preposition by supporting a general connection between the spatial sense and the non-spatial extensions. Song (2013) examines an experimental group by using the CL approach through learning prepositions comparing to the control group using the traditional method, containing the use of pictures and images to describe the various meanings of prepositions. The study concluded that the experimental group achieved better in using prepositions. Tyler et al., (2011) concentrate on the involvement of the cognitive semantic approach within CL for the teaching of English prepositions. Tyler et al., (2011) assert that the CL-inspired approach showed significance in teaching the semantics of English prepositions on 14 advanced Italian students of English, whom they show notable acquisition between the pre-test and post-test. This study shows the cognitive semantic approach gives intuitive teaching and learning cases supporting students to evaluate the cross-linguistic variation that would be critical to first language (L1) interference.

2-2. What is preposition?

To use preposition properly is one of the critical problems faced by Iraqi EFL students. Correct handling of a preposition is not easy because most of them have different functions, and different prepositions have the same uses. Prepositions considered the most regularly used linguistic classification in English because they behave as relations between two unites, most commonly producing preposition phrases and supposing many semantic functions. (Quirk, 1985; Kenndey, 2003; Biber et al., 2002). Similar to Parrot (2000), when he assumed that prepositions are "major problems" for learners. Koffi (2010, p. 233) argues that prepositions are polysemous, which have semantic properties of words that have multiple meanings. He confirms that most prepositions in English have different purposes relying on context. That's why Iraqi EFL students feel confused when trying to decide the prepositional meaning and use them correctly. Cele-Murcia (2001) affirms that non-native speakers of English commit many mistakes in using prepositions by choosing incorrect prepositions, deleting needed preposition, and using extra prepositions were not required. Like Alkhotaba (2013), when argued that Arab ESL learners make mistakes while using the prepositions in and on correctly. This indicates why and how prepositions are applied in English, and a few of the sources preposition cause problems for Iraqi students.

AL-Bayati (2013) assumes that EFL Iraqi students face two troubles in using prepositions. Iraqi students cannot understand if a preposition is required in a structure, and which preposition
should be used where one is needed. EFL students depend on their mother language in learning English prepositions; this has happened since the EFL students try to join the prepositions in the English language with the prepositions that found in their mother language.

Ibrahim et al. (2018) mentioned that as SL users, prepositions are always misused, especially those showing time, place, and the relation between two unites within the context transference. Parrot (2004) considered prepositions as a piece of the smallest word, which named them relational words. According to Mus (2012, p. 3), prepositions are words that show the connection between the words in one sentence. Prepositions have an essential role in teaching and learning English. Mus (2012, p.3) argues that it is not easy to use prepositions properly in a foreign language cause each English preposition has different uses, and these may agree to several different prepositions in any other language. Also, different prepositions have the same applications, for example, (on Friday evening at night/ in the evening).

2-3. Semantic Analysis of the Preposition on

This section highlights the semantic analysis of the preposition on as developed by Tyler and Evans (2003). The cognitive semantic analysis may help to control the confusion that happened because of the polysemous quality of the preposition on and acquire correct comprehension of its uses and items.

Prepositions are polysemy elements, the various senses of which develop from prototypical sense,"the semantics of English prepositions are arbitrary." (Tyler, 2011, p.182 ). Moreover, Evans and Tyler (2006, p. 329) define polysemy as a phenomenon where lexical material has two or more meanings. For example, the cat is on the table; I will meet you on Monday. Each of these examples has different meanings or senses, while these senses are though reasonably very related. This means that on shows polysemy. This demonstrates that the different reasons of prepositions are systematically connected rather than arbitrary. (Tyler & Evans, 2003). So that CL view that various senses of prepositions are systematically connected and related to a prototypical sense can help EFL students understand the various senses of prepositions. In addition, students can form conceptual relations between multiple users of a given proposition. Sotiloye et al., (2015) mention that the Proto-Type Approach dealing with "teaching words in an explanatory and semantically-based manner." This shows that in the case of prepositions, especially the spatial, physical meaning is going to be the prototype. The preposition on has multiple meanings, while the prototypical meaning is "contact of an object with a line of the surface." In other words, this theory confirms that the polysemous quality of preposition depending on the analysis of the prototypical meaning, but all non-prototypical meanings can be connected to the prototype during metaphorical expanding. (Lindstromberg, 1996: 228).

Evans and Tyler (2005) assert that prepositions have central meaning, which leads to the mental view of spatial relation. When the central meaning of preposition occurs, it can be said that the diversity of the different meanings in a polysomic network called by Evans and Tyler (2005) semantic network This leads to the view that different meanings can be produced within the central meaning and are consistently related to that meaning. Those various meaning will be organized in a web, or network, dividing from the central meaning.
Prepositions are usually hard as polysemous factors with various but close meanings and senses. According to Yunns and Auwab (2012), cognitive semantics shows the figural senses of preposition, which is expanded from its spatial sense during conceptual metaphors and idiomatic expressions.

Spatial connections are mainly used with prepositions, that clarified a conceptualized spatial connection between a focus element (F) and a locating or ground element (G) (Tyler et al., 2011, p. 184). This connection called the trajectory (TR) and the landmark (LM) connection by Langacker (2008), which creates abstract spatial views which "presuppose the normal horizontal/vertical dimensional grid… calculated in relation to the surface of the earth". (Tyler & Evans, 2003, p. 109). In other words, spatial preposition shows 'vertical and lateral movement in space' or it can be adopted to form an abstract connection. For example, the cup of the tea is on the desk. The spatial sense in this sentence shows that there is a link between the container (cup) and the desk. This creates other senses that can be explained as the is in the cup. Those connections play an essential role since, without the cup, the tea will drop. Thus, Tyler et al., (2011) argue that the spatial sense contains a secure connection between "the desk and the cup" and "the cup and the tea". The human interactions reply to the sense of "the cup of tea is on the desk" can vary according to the viewer's primary focus. Therefore, one focuses on the connection between the desk and the cup while others focus on the connection between the cup and the tea inside the cup. So that one can draw a conclusion that there are not any similar advantages figures. Hence Tyler and Evans (2003) assume that the technique a viewer examines the physical vantage items of spatial sense can be identified the technique that one can clarify due to one's conceptualization.

Tyler and Evans (2003) realize that the central meaning of on produces a spatial sense between two close objects as in the following example: the pen is on the chair. Here, functional sense occurs when the Focus (F) element is a human. Where there is a human performing on an inanimate object, so this human is performing for a particular reason. That means there is a co-location for the person and the inanimate object. But the focus element F (the person) deals with the Ground (G) element. For instance, Tom is on the table; here the prototypical configuration contains a functional connection between Tom and the table. Spatial connections are indicating with prepositions that explained a conceptualized spatial connection between F and G.

Semantic difficulty causes confusing for Iraqi students through they are directed by word meaning. For example

Table 1. sentences of the polysemy of preposition on (set by the researcher)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentences</th>
<th>Meaning of preposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The picture is on the wall</td>
<td>On expresses surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Dana is going to meet her brother on Friday</td>
<td>On expresses day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Your friend is on the phone right now</td>
<td>On expresses machine or device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The ball hit him on his head</td>
<td>On expresses a part of the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 My cousin's house is on fire</td>
<td>On expresses the state of something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicating these examples, involving the preposition on, whose prototypical meaning is "contact with surface", furthermore, these examples are not participating in the same meaning.
2. The Experiment
The experiment of this study aims at identifying the difficulties faced by Iraqi students. Also, to perform the preposition *on* in the light of CL insights. The researcher guided an experimental group design of pre-test and post-test to evaluate the experiment. To achieve this aim, the researcher follows the following steps:

1- Clarifying and explaining the meaning of English preposition more regularly.
2- Graphic cards, visual aids, and pictures with exercises and examples used to clear and explain the spatial sense of the preposition.
3- Answering a test to evaluate the students' correct choice of preposition.
4- Results of pre-test and post-test were quantitatively achieved by using the statistical program SPSS.

3. The Research Instrument and Procedure
Written tests were employed in this study, to collect reliable data. Pre-test and post-test were constructed to measure students' performance. The tests contain images to be analyzed twenty multiple-choice sentences.

4. The population of the study
The participants were thirty female first-year students in the Department of English, College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad, Iraq. The study was conducted during the academic year 2018-2019.

5. Pre-test
The focuses on measuring the students' efficiency in using the preposition *on*, to recognize the difficulties faced by the students of the Department of English, College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad, in using correct English preposition. Results of pre-test were thirty marks collected by the researcher. The score showed that the students failed in differentiating among the usage of *on* and other prepositions. The score exposed that the participants unable extremely exploring the spatial sense or even giving the spatial relations or figurative sense of the preposition within a sentence. The concluded score shows that the participants based on their former concept of the preposition and its uses. Besides, the participants do not succeed in recognizing the spatial sense or discover the structures entities in the sentences or pictures. They also make a mistake in choosing the correct choice in the multiple-choice question with the correct preposition.

6. Post-test
Six weeks of discussion and explanation were spent to discuss and clarify the meaning of preposition and cognitive linguistic approach. During this period, the students watched some videos which define the cognitive linguistic approach, worked in groups and were asked to give examples and explain them. The researcher shows the participants pictures and asks them to interpret these pictures and identify the spatial sense and connections noticed in each picture. Then, when it was time for the test, the participants achieved the same task but separately. The results of the post-test showed noticeable progress in analyzing the spatial senses. They were able to recognize *on* among other prepositions; they were able to choose the correct choice in multiple-choices questions.
7. Discussion

The following table shows a comparison between pre-test and post-test results. The marks are not mentioned here to save space. SPSS statistical editor was used to analyze the collected data in both tests.

Table 2. The difference between the pre and post-tests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Statistics</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretest</td>
<td>9.1667</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.35037</td>
<td>.97684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>posttest</td>
<td>14.4333</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.99727</td>
<td>.72980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paired Samples Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.825</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: If the differences between both tests are less than (0.5), then the study is invalid if the differences are more than (0.5) then the study is valid.

Table 2 presents the number of students which is thirty, and their average in the pre-test is 9.1667, and the post-test, which is 14.433. The students show progress of 5.266 marks. Hence the difference between the two means of both tests showed a progress which was more than (0.05), so, this study is valid.

Progress in identifying the spatial sense and connection formed by this preposition, and identifying pictures and images that have the preposition in questions. The participants also performed a remarkable realization of the meaning and uses of on. Further, the participants were capable of relating between the entities and their connections. The students were able to formulate the figurative sense to get from the spatial sense.

8. Results and Findings

The findings of this study after the analysis of data collected from thirty participants showed that Iraqi students face difficulties in using English preposition in general and the preposition on in particular. As shown in Table 2 for the use of on, the number of the students is 30, and their average in the pre-test is 9.1667, and in the post-test is 14.433. Progress has been noticed on students thirty marks. The distinction between the two means of pre and post-tests expresses a development that was more than (0.05); thus, this study is valid. Therefore, the results of this study are in correspondence with the research of Evans and Tyler (2003).

On the other hand, the cognitive-linguistic approach suggests a noticeable positive change within students' understanding of English prepositions. The experiment tries to change the students' view in recognizing the preposition on. On this view, it enhances their information to

Arab World English Journal
www.awej.org
ISSN: 2229-9327
understand the meaning of English prepositions in various ways. It can develop the students' ability to use the schema diagram and recognize the entities, spatial and non-spatial connections. It can be said that the CL approach can reinforce the conceptual way of thinking.

The results of both tests showed that the cognitive linguistic approach has an important role and significance effectiveness. It can be considered a new approach, unique, and convincing with new trends in clarifying the meaning. The cognitive linguistic approach shows a better account during learning English prepositions than that of the traditional methods while acquiring the second language. In other words, CL expresses the individual conceptualization of senses.

9. Conclusion

This study concludes that:
1- English prepositions cause EFL learning difficult and consider problematic for Iraqi students.
2- Using CL approach in explaining the meaning of the English preposition on shows effectiveness.
3- Cognitive linguistic aims to raise awareness of preposition and SL acquisition.
4- Cognitive linguistic cannot be denied or disregarded.

About the Author

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A Cognitive-Semantic Analysis of Preposition on: An Experimental Study

Nasser


Nasser, Sura, M. 2019. Iraqi EFL Students’ Difficulties in Writing Composition: An Experimental Study (University of Baghdad). International Journal of English Linguistics. 9; (6); 178-184. DOI:10.5539/ijel.v9n1p178


The Effective Role of Learners’ Self-Assessment Tasks in Enhancing Learning English as a Second Language

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Abstract
Learners’ Self-assessment is a supportive and learner facilitating task, as a genuine part of the learner-centered approach, and Task-Based Teaching. It highlights the importance of giving freedom to the learners and is impactful on learner performance. This study aimed at exploring the advantages of Learners’ Self-Assessment Tasks (LSATs) by B.A. English-major students, University of Bisha. The data collected through a questionnaire and informal interviews with the students who experienced LSATs during their classes. The study indicated that LSATs create awareness and dynamic progress in enhancing the students' learning process. In the data procured, around 75% of participants found LSATs helpful for improving their English skills. It strengthens the factors related to a learner's skills, motivation, and engagement in the development of learning English as a Second Language (ESL). Learners were also able to achieve and receive constructive and indirect feedback. The results showed that LSATs fosters the students' autonomy in learning ESL. Few significant shortcomings of LSATs highlight that quite a few students were hesitant to get involved and engage themselves in specific self-assessment tasks and activities; lack of the desired proficiency in ESL is and could be one of the few important reasons. Productive and successful self-assessment tasks can be aimed at following requisite guidelines, which this study shows and explores. For instance, teachers need to design LSATs well-tailored to the student proficiency and level of knowledge. The study concludes by giving suggestions and recommendations for further studies in this domain.

Keywords: Learner Self-Assessment Tasks (LSATs), Task-Based Teaching, English as Second Language (ESL), Learner-centered Approach

1. Introduction
Self-assessment task-based teaching is a very dynamic process that engages the learners to be active in the classroom and makes the motivation to learn to grow better. Various studies existing in the literature have looked at self-assessment from different perspectives, such as the relationship between self-assessment and student-centered approach or the task-based approach. Self-assessment is a useful and influential process which engages learners more and simultaneously, indirectly improves their language skills and helps them to figure out their own weaknesses. Self-assessment for Boud (1995) has two main elements, (a) making decisions and (b) making judgments. The former includes the standards of performance expected, and the latter looks at the quality of the performance concerning the standards and learners should get involved in both standards. Andrade and Du (2007) looks at self-assessment as part of formative assessment which is the process of formative assessment during which learners reflect and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning and judge and identify strengths and weaknesses in their work. Klenowski (1995) looked at self-assessment as to the evaluation or judgment of one’s performance and the identification of one’s strengths and weaknesses and has a substantial impact on improving one's learning outcomes. McMillan & Hearn (2008) looked closely at the self-assessment as a way to develop learners' critical thinking and evaluation. They indicated that self-assessment does not mean only that learners simply check off answers on a multiple-choice test and grade themselves. It also involves a process by which learners could (1) monitor and evaluate the quality of their thinking and behavior while learning, and (2) identify strategies that improve their understanding and skills. They found it as a critical skill which enhances learners' motivation and achievement.

The Purpose of the study
Teachers need many strategies and techniques to keep their learners engaged and motivated in classrooms to learn L2 effectively. This research paper aims at investigating the significant role and the advantages of the Learners' Self-Assessment Tasks and activities in enhancing Learning ESL by the undergraduate B.A. English-major learners, University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The study aims at exploring the shortcomings while conducting the learners’ self-assessments tasks and activities on the learners of ESL in the classrooms. The study also highlights the importance of implementing the self-assessment tasks and activities and gives some guidelines and hints which lead to successful, productive, and effective self-assessment tasks and activities inside classrooms, which leads to successful learners’ engagement, motivation, and autonomy in learning ESL.

2. Related-literature Review
Self-assessment and peer-assessment are useful to enhance the learning process. Though, self-assessment is better than peer assessment as learners will be more secured and less threatened to assess their tasks and activities. However many remarkable studies in the literature highlight the significant importance of both, self and peer-assessment and how they lead to an excellent environment to learn L2 productively, Boud (1994), Boud & Feletti, (1998), Spiller (2012).

Learner-Centered Approach and Learner’s Self-assessment
Since the decline of teacher-based approaches, the new era of the Learner-centered approach has brought us great techniques to develop the learning and teaching processes. Looking at the foundations /basis of learner-centered approach we find that Learners self-Assessment Tasks
(LSATs) has a strong relationship with the learner-centered approach as they both serve the learner development similarly in many ways directly or indirectly. The common objectives and characteristics of learner–centered approach are shared to a great extent with the ones of the learner’s self-assessment and peer-assessment activities and tasks. For instance, the main principles of learner–centered learning for Brandes and Ginnis (1986) are:

1. The learner experiences confluence in his education (affective and cognitive domains flow together).
2. Involvement and participation are necessary for learning.
3. The relationship between learners is more equal, promoting growth, development.
4. The learner sees himself differently as a result of the learning experience.
5. The learner has full responsibility for her/his learning.
6. The teacher becomes a facilitator and resource person.

The student-centered approach includes active learning is flexible as it gives more choice in learning. It is a change of power in the teacher–student relationship, O’Neill & McMahon (2005). In the same way learners’ self-assessment makes the learning active and makes the learners participate more in the learning process. Oscarson (1995) showed the relationship between student-self assessment with learner-centered approach and state that it appears as a result of the increased demands for needs-oriented, learner-centered education, there is a growing feeling that tests ought to be integrated into the learning processes chiefly to provide feedback on progress to the learner and need to be controlled.

**Formative and Summative Assessments**
There are two common types of assessments, formative and summative assessments. The formative assessment has to do with the assessment process for learning and gaining knowledge of the subject matter, which occurs during the learning and learning process. The assessment aims at improving learners’ proficiency and enhancing their performance by giving feedback. On the other hand, the summative assessment has to do with the formal evaluation aims at measuring how much learners know and decides the learners’ completion of the course, Tessmer (1993;1994), O’Malley and Pierce (1996), Spafford, Pesce, and Grosser (1998), Black and Wiliam (1998), Boston (2002), Yorke (2003), Chappuis, Stiggins, Arter, and Chappuis (2004), Race (2009), Cauley and McMillan (2010). Recent and related studies in the Saudi EFL context have been done which confirmed the importance of and the advantages of formative assessment though such type of assessment not implemented more in Saudi classes, Kariri, Cobern and Bentz (2018), Alotaibi (2019).

This study matches the goals of the formative assessment, which aims at enhancing and engraining learners in the learning process through the learners’ self-assessment tasks and activities. Several studies in the literature on self-assessment were conducted on self-assessment and peer-assessment in ESL or EFL context to explore the pros and cons and the self-assessment Task-based Teaching. Alabelwahab (2002), in an exploratory study investigated the self-assessment portfolio as a method of EFL assessment practices at an intermediate level. The results revealed that most of the learners enjoyed using the self-assessment portfolio, and they found the process helpful and reflecting in their learning. Li (2010) explored how portfolio-based writing
assessment (PBWA) can promote EFL writing development of Chinese university English majors. PBWA class was compared with a non-PBWA class to see the difference between the writing products of the two classes. The results revealed that the portfolio program enhanced the EFL learners’ writing ability in many dimensions, including accuracy and coherence, which was noticed in the data of PBWA group. El-Koumy (2010), based on many studies, gave various ways of assessing learners to motivate them in establishing their knowledge and improving their language skills and to be successful in academic and social life. Spiller (2012) looked at the engagement of learners based on the formative assessment and self-assessment tasks and how the tasks can help the learners in shaping their insights. The study discussed how the learners could reflect and evaluated the quality of their works and identify the strengths and weakness.

Alshammari (2016) also investigated the importance of integrating peer- and self-assessment in teaching English as a second/foreign language in Saudi Arabia. The study highlighted how the integration of peer- and self-assessment in teaching can improve the learners’ English writing skills. The researcher divided the learners into two groups: (a) learners in group A (the treatment group) engaged in peer- and self-assessment regularly throughout the whole term of teaching, while the learners in group B (the controlled group) did not. The results indicated that group A performed well in the pre-test and post-test better than group B. The results reveal that group A outperformed their group B counterparts on the post-test. Albayram (2017) found how self-assessment could be one of the innovative methods to improve the learners’ writing. The study confirmed the self-assessment’s efficiency based on literature review and an experiment of 36 secondary school children, Georgian learners of EFL, for one semester. The results also confirmed that self-assessment enabled the experimental group learners to develop their writing skill better than the control group student.

3. Methodology
The broad aim of this study is to bring to the notice to the teachers in the EFL environment the importance of self-assessment which is, to quite a great extent, absent in many classes. The advantages of self-assessment are given and reflected during the researcher/teacher’s interactions and discussions with learners after the self-assessment tasks and activities. Secondly, the research aims at exploring the views and attitudes of the learners about self-assessment tasks and activities of Second Language in a new environment to compare it with the existing studies in previous literature. The third aim of the research is to highlight the various advantages of student-self-assessment tasks and activities that help teachers make their classes interesting and the important role and dimension of learners self-assessment tasks in enhancing and engaging the learners in the learning process of L2. Fourthly, the study aims at showing the shortcomings of the LSATs and give crucial steps and suggestions for dynamic and fruitful learners’ self-assessments.

The participants
In this study, the participants were mainly college learners of the English Department at the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. They were 90 learners from different levels and classes who were studying their Bachelor of Arts in English. They all have experienced the self-assessment Tasks/activities based teaching. They all learn English as a Second Language. The data has been collected from the participants in many semesters to get a larger sample as the number of learners were less in some classes.
The Research Questions
The study aims at addressing and answering the following questions:

1. What are the advantages of the Learners’ Self-Assessment Tasks and activities in enhancing Learning ESL by undergraduate B.A. English learners, University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the shortcomings of using LSATs during teaching ESL?
3. What are the practical and effective ways of using learners’ self-assessment tasks and activities to motivate, and engage the learners of ESL?

Procedure and activities
To make learners assess their performance and work inside the classroom, the instructor used to design and develop specific tasks and activities. Most of the tasks were carried out inside classrooms, and very few were outside classrooms. After finishing the task, learners are allowed to open their materials or access the internet to check whether their answers are correct or incorrect. The aim was not only to help them assess the tasks but also to help them develop and enhance their knowledge of the subject matter and to avoid making similar mistakes again or, in general making mistakes repeatedly. The teacher did sometimes take upon the task of showing the learners the sample of the correct answer, either written in sheets or through the digital screen, to compare their answers and assess themselves. The LSATs aim here is to develop learners’ knowledge and enhance their performance as it is the case with informative assessment not summative assessment that includes assessment, for learning not of learning. Tessmer (1993;1994), O’Malley and Pierce (1996), Black and Wiliam (1998), Boston (2002), Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, and Chappuis (2004), Cauley and McMillan (2010). Such self-assessment tasks also could help in classroom engagement which leads to a dynamic learning process.

There were also two tools used by the researcher to get the learners’ views on LSATs, (a) a questionnaire and (b) informal interview with the learners. The questionnaire has been translated into L1 and distributed to the learners to get their attitudes after the self-assessment tasks/activities carried out in the classrooms. The questionnaire consists of various variables to get the learners’ views on the advantages and the disadvantages of the LSATs. In the coding process, each variable and question is identified by a name, and is defined by a number of acceptable codes or by a range of valid values. The variables are categorized and given values, (Agree=1, Disagree=2, and neutral =3) as in example (1) included in the questionnaire.

1. LSATs helps learners improve their thinking skills.
   a. Agree = 1
   b. Disagree = 2
   c. Neutral = 3

Any variable represents an input to form the desired output in the analysis phase. The dataset also used various independent variables, and they are discussed further in Table one, Table two, and Table three and Figure one to Figure two in the results section 3. The feedback taking through the informal interview with the learners about the LSATs, were given in L1 or in L2 depending on the learners’ level of proficiency. Some tasks which were carried out inside the classrooms include, for instance:
A. *Word transcription:* The learners were asked to transcribe some words or sentences they heard.

B. *Open-ended questions on the subject matter:* The learners were asked to write short notes on the differences between language acquisition and language learning.

C. *Writing paragraphs and short essays:* The learners were asked to write on topics discussed previously with their teacher.

D. *Word power understanding:* The learners were asked to put a group of words in English in sentences.

4. **Results and Discussion**

In this part we report the learners’ views on self-assessment tasks. Table one confirms clearly that learners preferred Student-Self-Assessment Tasks (LSATs) and activities. The majority of learners (80%) agreed that The LSATs are helpful in understanding the entire course and the lectures where LSATs are applied. Around 76.78% said that LSATs are useful to help learners understand the textbook questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages of LSATs in understanding the entire course.</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages of LSATs in understanding the lecture.</td>
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<td>81.12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSATs helps in understanding the textbook questions.</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>76.78</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSATs motivates the learners to learn English.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67.77</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSATS motivate learners attend classes regularly.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54.44</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, the learners found LSATs, as interesting activities, would motivate them to learn English and know their gaps, and to great some extent, motivate them to attend classes regularly as it seen in Liang (2006), McMillan & Hearn (2008). Some studies in similar context where English Taught as L2 or as Foreign Language (FL) have come up with a similar results where applying student-self assessments activities would be beneficiary in many ways for the learners of English in tertiary and higher levels, as in Bound (1995), Hanrahan and Isaacs (2001), Brantmeier (2005), El-Koumy (2010). Some learners (Around 10-30%) did not agree that LSATs are helpful as they found self-assessment is challenging and embarrassing when they assess themselves. Some learners felt reluctant to assess themselves. After the discussion with such type of learners, the reason was due to less proficiency in the SL.
Figure one reveals that LSATs, to a great extent, helps in developing the learners’ English skills. It is found that around 73.33% of the learners agreed that LSATs is useful to improve the English skills of the learners. The learners found the tasks and activities of student-self assessment are fruitful in developing the productive skills, writing and speaking (62.23% – 75.56%), more than the receptive skills, reading and listening (54.45 – 57.77%).

In a same context, Alshammari (2016) found that integrating the peer-assessment and self-assessment contributed to developing the EFL learners’ English writing skills and supported and recommended the idea of applying the self-assessment studies in various contexts. This study also supported the findings of many similar studies that explored the importance of learners self-assessment in developing all language skills and improving learners’ vocabulary competence and learners’ autonomy Oscarson, M. (1989), Sheerin (1991), Brown (2005), Brantmeier (2006), De Saint Leger (2009), Baniabdelrahman (2010), Naeini (2011), Brantmeier, Vanderplank and Strube (2012), Sharma, R. et al., (2016), Micán and Medina (2017), Ratminingsih, Marhaeni, and Vigayanti, (2018), Mazloomi and Khabiri (2018), Wong and Mak (2019).

Many studies demonstrated that learners’ self-assessment in the classroom contributes significantly to develop the learners personal and cognitive thinking skills in learning English. Table two shows similar to a great extent (63.33) that LSATs helped in improving the thinking skills of the learners. The study showed that LSATs helped more in developing learners’ confidence (51.12%) though some learners (31%) still felt shy to assess themselves in some activities. Similarly, Zohar (2004) and Logan (2009) found that the self and peer assessment increased the learners’ confidence though some learners were worried regarding the level of their achievement.

Table 2. Thinking Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 LSATs helps learner improve his thinking skills</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>63.33</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 LSATs helps learner be confident in learning English</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51.12</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 LSATs helps learner be active in the classroom</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 LSATs develops a learner's autonomy in learning English</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57.77</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. LSATs role in Feedback and Learning Shortcomings
As shown in Figure two, the majority of the learners (between 63%-77%) agreed that LSATs are useful to get positive feedback, identify their learning shortcomings, and help them overcome their learning shortcomings. During the discussion with the learners, they said that they could get ‘constructive feedback’, and they could remember the information, and LSATs helped them avoid making errors. Similar and interesting studies have shown how learners get feedback and improve and know learning gaps as in, Taras (2003), Liang (2006), Chen (2008), Taylor (2014).

Table 3. The Disadvantages of LSATs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The statements</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 LSATs do not help in understanding the skills of English</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.22</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 LSATs do not help in improving the thinking and personal skills</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.44</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 LSATs do not motivate learning English as a language</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 LSATs do not help get sufficient feedback.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table three shows that most of the learners (around 72%) found LSATs are useful in many aspects in understanding the skills of English, developing their thinking skills such as being confident and self-autonomous in learning. Many learners (between 78% to 85%) also said that LSATs motivated
them to learn English better, and they got good feedback. Through discussions, interviews, it was observed that most of the learners liked LSATs and found the tasks interesting and engaging. However, few learners gave some negative views about LSATs who were mostly reluctant and hesitant to adapt to such novel ways of tasks due to less ESL proficiency’s competence. It can be observed that this approach was mainly built out of their own lack of faith in their language skills, feeling less proficient getting themselves involved, Mitrovic (2001) Liang (2006), El-Koumy (2010).

5. Conclusion
Learners of ESL/EFL should incite themselves in exploring recent methods and techniques used in teaching; this will motivate, encourage, and create eagerness in them while learning. This study highlights the value of learners’ self-assessment as a medium to improve their skills and channel constructive outcomes in learning English as a Second Language. LSATs can help the student understand better their knowledge of English skills. The sequence in the study of LSATs revealed how the students receive strong feedback and proper guidelines, thus invariably promoting in students' learning autonomy in ESL. Based on various variables, the data results outline the several advantages and shortcomings in learners’ Self-Assessment tasks. It approved of similar results in the existing literature of learners’ self-assessment, Boud (1989), Taras (2003), Liang (2006), (El-Koumy (2010), Thomas, Martin and Pleasants (2011), Warchulski, (2015), Sevilla and Gamboa (2016). LSATs also came in useful for the teachers where they get chances to implement newer methods in the learning of English as Second Language (ESL)/English as Foreign Language (EFL). The findings of the study indicate the following definite advantages of LSATs:

1. Considerable and desired improvement in language skills.
2. Motivation in the learners for efficient learning.
3. Maintaining the enthusiasm and engagement of the learners by involving them actively in the process of learning.
5. Facilitating ‘autonomy’ in a learner of L2 by the natural boost of confidence while performing LSATs.
7. Witnessing conscious learning and participation in learners.

The consistent need for training such activities can produce effective outcomes from the tasks. Certain specific, repetitive shortcomings of LSATs as observed, (1) Few students feel shy and reluctant about LSATs, this is mainly because of less proficiency in ESL. (2) Lack of significant training before LSATs for almost all of their courses. (3) The unaddressed causes of negativity in learners towards self-assessment.

Suggestions for Productive Self-assessment
Based on the study and the interaction with participants, I recommend some guidelines for better student-self assessment process and most of them exist in the literature itself. Some of them are concerned with the teachers and some others are limited to the learners. A few of these are: (a) Teachers need several workshops on how to be trained to conduct good learners’ self-assessment
The Effective Role of Learners' Self-Assessment Tasks

Qasem

Tasks and activities. (b) Teachers have to good plan accordingly and design their tasks and activities before going to the classrooms to engage the learners in the self-assessment tasks. (c) Teachers also need to be active and pre-determine what patterns and skills of language to assess and in this regard, design their tasks and activities. This will lead to more successful tasks and the teachers can achieve interesting results and learning outcomes. (d) Teachers need to motivate the learners by allotting scores/ marks/credits, or likewise by rewarding with gifts/prizes to make learners enthusiastic in the participation of the activities. (e) Teachers are required to build upon trust amidst themselves and their learners while conducting the self-assessments tasks.

This study can be a starting point for similar yet variant, explorative studies in the area of self-assessment with a larger sample from various universities and institutions in ESL and EFL contexts. Having two different and separate groups, controlled and uncontrolled, would be very beneficial and supportive to bring more transparent and plausible findings and results.

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The English Verb See in Fiction Writing: A Cognitive Semantic Analysis

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Abstract
The study aims at unraveling the conceptual metaphor underlying the English verb of visual perception see in fiction writing. It has two research questions: 1) What are the conceptual metaphors underlying the linguistic expressions of the English verb of visual perception see in fiction writing and 2) What are the theoretical implications of MIND-AS-BODY theory on the motivation of conceptual metaphors underlying the English verb of visual perception see. This study adopts a qualitative approach and is situated within the field of cognitive semantics. A corpus of English fiction writing between the period of 2010 and 2017 was compiled from different sources comprising one million words. Specifically, a sample consisting of 1,000 examples of the English verb of visual perception see was randomly extracted from the corpus using the AntConc 3.5.0 concordancer. The Metaphor Identification Procedures (MIP) were used to identify the metaphorical linguistic expressions in the corpus, and Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) as well as Sweetser's (1990) analytical frameworks were adopted for data analysis. The data analysis revealed various conceptual metaphors underlying the English verb see. These conceptual metaphors are related to the domains of knowledge, intellecions, and understanding which support Sweetser's claim regarding the primacy of vision in motivating metaphors of cognition in human speech and thought. Thus, this study contributes to the literature on verbs of perception, particularly verbs of visual perception, as it is the first to address the conceptual metaphors underlying the verb see in English using a real authentic corpus of fiction writing.

Keywords: MIND-AS-BODY conceptual metaphor, conceptual metaphor theory, verbs of perception, verbs of visual perception, vision metaphor, fiction writing

Introduction

Verbs of perception, which have been defined in the literature as a class of verbs to express verbal expressions related to human sensory cognition, sight (visual), smell (olfactory), hearing (auditory), touch (tactile) and taste (gustatory), have received the attention of various scholars in the area of cognitive semantics (Al-Asmer, 2007, Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2019, 2013a, 2013b). Semantically, these verbs have been classified under five different fields of perception, namely, vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell, and different verbs are linked to these perception fields, such as see, hear, touch, taste, and feel in English.

Amongst these verbs of perception, verbs related to vision, which are referred to as verbs of visual perception in this study, have gained a particular interest of scholars in the field as they are connected to the primary sensory organ, the vision that is used in gathering information about the external world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). For instance, according to Sweetser (1990), the information gathered by the sense of sight is considered more reliable and accurate compared to other senses, such as hearing, taste, and smell. In this regard, some studies have shown that the primacy of vision over the other senses is attributed to human biological construction (Blendea, 2015; Paradis, 2015a; Spence, 2009).

Studies on verbs of visual perception have also focused on cross-linguistic studies on verbs of visual perception, such as English and Vietnamese (Oanch, 2016), English and Spanish (MacArthur, Krennmayr, & Littlemore, 2015), and English and Chinese (Li, 2013). Such studies have shown that the verbs of visual perception denote two general types of meaning: physical and non-physical (Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2013a; Essa, 2010). While the first type of verbs manifests the meaning related to “a simple activity of perceiving an object by the eye” such as ‘I can see the moon’ the second denotes the meaning of “a careful and detailed activity of perceiving an object by the eyes” (Fulk, 2018, p.147). As such, the second type is a case of metaphor, a phenomenon that has only, in recent times, been systematically investigated (Gunnersdotir, 2013).

Similarly, the English verb of visual perception see also denotes a variety of metaphorical meanings connected with knowledge and intellection, such as ‘I see your point’ in which the verb see denote the meanings of knowing and understanding. In fact, verbs of visual perception, in particular, and the sense of vision, in general, have received special attention by cognitive-linguistic such as Sweetser (1990) in which she postulated that the sense of vision motivates metaphors of higher intellection, such as 'to know' and 'to understand' and that these metaphors are universal in human thought and speech.

Statement of the Problem

One of the major topics that have received the attention of many scholars in cognitive semantics is sense perception, which has been a focus not only in linguistics but also in other disciplines, such as psychology (Goldstein & Brocke, 2016; Sekular & Blake, 2005) and anthropology (Pink, 2015; Serres, 2016). In cognitive linguistics, sense perception and its conceptual structure have sparked the interest of many scholars working within the area of cognitive semantics because of the productivity of its conceptual domain and its motivation of the various conceptual metaphors. In this respect, Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2013a) states that conceptual motivation is the
outcome of "our physical, sensory-motor universal experiences shifted through the complex and socially acquired particular beliefs, knowledge and worldview(s) intrinsic to…cultures" (p. 110).

The relationship between perception and other conceptual domains such as cognition has been established first by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who proposed a general metaphor 'THINKING IS PERCEIVING' (p. 50) but emphasized the significance of vision for cognition over other senses. Based on this conceptual metaphor, Sweetser (1990) further advanced the conceptual metaphor MIND-AS-BODY and posited that there is a systematic metaphorical connection between the vocabulary of physical perception and that of internal self and internal sensations. Accordingly, she stressed that these correspondences are not random, but highly motivated associations between comparable areas of physical and internal sensation. In a further examination of these metaphorical correspondences between the five physical senses and their abstract target domains, Sweetser (1990) found a whole systematic network of metaphorical connections between the physical domain of senses and other abstract domains of experience: vision> knowledge, hearing> head/obey, touch> feelings, taste> likes/dislikes, smell> dislikeable feelings.

Sweetser (1990) further argued that vision is the prime sense organ that motivates metaphors of higher intellect, such as 'knowing', 'understanding' and 'thinking', whereas hearing verbs, such as hear or listen, would not motivate these metaphors as they are more associated with the particular communicative aspects of understanding rather than with intellect. This claim is supported by many psychologists and psycholinguists such as Winter (2019) and Schwartz and Krantz (2017) who look at vision as an essential sense, which suggests a natural link between vision and thinking/knowledge.

Accordingly, the majority of Sweetser's research relies on the meaning change in reconstructed Indo-European languages, and her theory is derived from the fields of cognitive, historical, and semantic linguistics. Sweetser further hypothesizes that the metaphors of verbs of perception are cross-cultural, and universal in human thought and speech. In this regard, some cross-linguistic studies in Indo European languages seem to support Sweetser's hypothesis regarding the systematic mappings between the physical domain of perception and abstract domain of the mind and universality of visual perception in motivating metaphors of the intellect. However, such studies tended to rely on frozen data such as those extracted from dictionaries and electronic corpora. For example, in a study utilizing a cognitive semantic analysis of English, Spanish and Basque verbs of perception taken from monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and two electronic corpora, Ibarretxe-Antuñano (1999) showed that the semantic field of verbs of perception is highly metaphorical and these metaphors are not specific to one language only but are shared by the three languages used in the study.

Additionally, the findings of Gunnarsdottir's comparative study (2013) of English and Icelandic metaphoric uses of verbs of perception, which relied on selected examples from dictionaries, revealed a clear association between the physical domain of perception and the abstract domains of the mind and internal sensations. Gunnarsdottir explained that since the two languages are closely related, the huge number of metaphorical correspondences signifies that the association is not whimsical, which thus provides support for Sweetser's theory of a systematic, semantic development within verbs of perception.
In the same vein, a study by Neagu (2013) examined the polysemy of verbs of perception in English, French, and Romanian, which were extracted from dictionaries. showed that the verbs of perception in the three languages also seem to convey similar metaphorical meanings from different domains of experience, such as 'to understand' (I see your point of view), ‘to obey’ (Listen to your father), ‘to affect emotionally’ (Patrick touched me very deeply), ‘to guess’ (Jill can smell trouble a mile off), and ‘to experience’ (He has tasted the sweetness of success). Such a similarity in metaphorical meanings across different languages is also evident in a study by Rylina (2013).

On a slightly different stance with a focus on the syntactic and semantic features of the English verb feel and its Russian counterpart and depending on examples taken from dictionaries and thesaurus, Rylina (2013) provided a contrastive semantic map of the verbs feel and čuvstvovat’ and explained the similarities and differences between the two verbs. Findings of her study indicated that the two verbs in both languages seem to denote sensory and cognitive meanings, albeit the sensory meanings being varied in Russian because čuvstvovat’ signifies not only the perception by the sense of touch, but also the senses of smell and taste.

The tendency of the aforementioned studies on verbs of perception to rely on frozen unsystematic data, recent studies have taken a different methodological approach, that is using a corpus-based approach to investigate the use of English verbs of perception in naturally occurring data. For instance, De Grado (2016) conducted a syntactic-semantic study based on a corpus of 656 examples manually extracted from the spoken and academic sections of the British National Corpus. However, the sample was considered small and unreliable to examine four verbs of perception (Deignan, 2017), and its method of manual extraction of citations might be subject to bias.

These reviewed studies on Western languages seem to indicate a similar tendency in their findings, that is they are in support of Sweetser's (1990) hypothesis regarding the systematic mappings between the physical domain of perception and the abstract domain of the mind and the notion of the universality of visual perception as the main sensory organ in motivating metaphors of knowledge and intellection. However, to date, the review of the literature shows that there is a lack of systematic studies that have examined the conceptual metaphors related to the use of the English verbs of visual perception in fiction writing. Specifically, the reviewed studies on the verbs of perception seem to lack in providing systematic comprehensive research in English that focused on Sweetser's hypothesis regarding the MIND-AS-BODY conceptual metaphor and the primacy of visual perception in motivating metaphors of knowledge and thought.

Considering the inadequacies of the aforementioned studies such as basing their evidence on intuitively made-up examples by the researchers themselves and from dictionaries, the present study, therefore, aims fills in the gap in the literature by focusing on the conceptual metaphors underlying the English verb of visual perception see using authentic naturally occurring data produced by a variety of writers in fiction writing.

**Objectives of the Study**
The study has two specific objectives as follows:
To unravel and discuss the conceptual metaphors underlying the metaphorical expressions related to the English verb of visual perception see in fiction writing.

2- To examine the theoretical implications of the findings related to the MIND-AS-BODY theory as posited by Sweetser.

**Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts the framework of cognitive semantics, namely, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory for data analysis, (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) which regards metaphor as "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 5). Specifically, a conceptual metaphor involves mappings of certain elements from a source domain to a target domain: TARGET IS SOURCE whereby the source domain is usually concrete. In contrast, the target domain is usually more abstract, and it is understood through the metaphor (Kövecses, 2002).

In essence, metaphor is a basic imaginative cognitive mechanism. It is the “means by which it is possible to ground our conceptual systems experientially and to reason in a constrained but creative fashion” (Johnson, 1992, p. 351). As Barcelona (1997) puts it, this mechanism is a “complex mental mapping of our knowledge of one domain of experience (the source domain) to structure our knowledge of a different domain of experience (the target domain)” (p. 12). In brief, conceptual metaphor is perceived as an association between two conceptual domains by which the abstract is understood in terms of the familiar knowledge of the concrete and easy one (Alshunnag, 2016; Kövecses, 2002).

The conceptual metaphor theory has been used by Sweetser (1990) in order to examine the metaphorical and polysemic meanings of verbs of perception in Indo-European languages, from a diachronic and cognitive perspective. She argues that there are systematic metaphorical relations between verbs of perception and meanings associated with internal sensations. In fact, Sweetser (1990) took up the interface between perception and other conceptual domains and expands it further into the so-called ‘MIND-AS-BODY’ metaphor. She applied this metaphor to English verbs of perception and demonstrated that the relation between the body and the mind is not limited to just one sole metaphor such as UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING. In fact, there is an entire organized and consistent group of metaphoric mappings that utilizes the body as the source domain and the mind as the target domain. According to Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2019), the MIND-AS-BODY conceptual metaphor is structured when the mind is conceptualized in a bodily sense. i.e., the mind is regarded as a distinct entity that has certain functions and needs. One of these bodily functions is perception, which is a biological operation whereby the brain draws interpretations of events and objects in the external world, utilizing data collected via the senses. These two aforementioned theories, the CMT and MIND-AS-BODY theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Sweetser, 1990) were applied to unravel the conceptual metaphors underlying the English verb of visual perception see as illustrated in Figure one as shown in the diagram, the mapping of the conceptual metaphors underlying the verbs of visual perception takes place between the physical source domain of sight and abstract target domain.
Verbs of visual perception have been the main core of Sweetser's (1990) etymological study on English verbs of perception and other Indo-European languages. Sweetser claimed that the relationship between the physical domain of sight and the cognitive domain of knowledge is universal in all Indo-European languages because vision is "our primary source of objective data about the world" (1990, p. 39). Sweetser also referred to the importance of the sense of hearing in the domain of intellect and communication. She, however, disregarded the other senses of taste, touch, and smell as they are connected with personal, subjective experience and their contribution to the cognitive domain is rather small in comparison with the senses of seeing and hearing.

It seems that the supremacy of vision over the other senses is attributed to human biological construction. As Paradis (2015b) aptly pointed out "humans, like other primates, display considerable visual specialization including high visual acuity, stereoscopic vision, trichromacy, and large visual cortices" (p.140). Some experimental studies on the biological system of human senses provide support for the dominance of vision over the sense of hearing. Their findings suggest that 50% of the cortex is utilized in the visual operations (Carello & Turvey, 2019; Franchak, 2019)

Sweetser’s (1990) universal hypothesis of the primacy of vision was also applied to non-Indo European languages in two studies on Chinese (Li, 2013) and Vietnamese (Oanch, 2016). The first study by Li (2013) in which he carried out a comparative analysis of the metaphors of visual perception in Chinese and English within the framework of the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The data of the study were extracted from the online corpus database: Sketch Engine www.sketchengine.co.uk. The data consisted of 400 sentences carrying metaphors of visual perception (200 sentences for each language). The data contained 48 conceptual metaphors underlying terms of visual perception (25 in Chinese and 23 in English). The comparative analysis of the data has shown that despite the data displayed some commonly shared metaphors of visual perception in both languages, the differences between the two languages
cannot be escaped. The data showed some instances of language-specific metaphors that can only be found in one language rather than the other. Such diversity is rooted in the differences between the values and living conditions that English and Chinese people experience. The differences in the Chinese and English metaphors of visual perception are related to differences between the Eastern and the Western culture that each language belongs to.

Li (2013) concluded his study by stating that culture affects people's experience and cognitive schemas and ultimately leads to the convergent conceptualization of terms related to visual perception. Therefore, language diversity is, in fact, a representation of cultural conflict. Moreover, the different living conditions that people encounter may generate different experiences, which in turn, influence the conceptualization process of structuring metaphors to understand the world. Moreover, Li (2013) stated that the metaphor of visual perception "is the main mechanism through which human beings comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning. These conceptual metaphors are grounded in our basic human experiences that may be universalities to all human beings" (p.1241). However, Li admitted that his research was not exhaustive and not all-inclusive and that the studies presented in his article are still very limited in scope (Li, 2013).

However, Li’s (2013) corpus-based study on the metaphor of visual perception seems to be limited in scope because selecting 200 citations only for the visual perception terms is far from being sufficient. According to Tissari (2017), to order to conduct a thorough analysis of highly polysemous lexemes, one needs at least 1000 citations. Choosing any less than 1000 citations may put the researcher in danger of missing important information about the various senses of the given lexeme. Putting this in mind, the previous studies show lack of comprehensive and systematized corpus-based study about English verbs of perception specifically the verb see since it never stopped from causing controversy and conflicting claims starting from Viberg typological study (1983) and Sweetser’s (1990) universal claims of the primacy of vision over other senses.

The comparative quality of the metaphor of visual perception in Vietnamese and English was also examined by Oanch (2016). Similar to Li's (2013), differences were detected in the sample of analysis in terms of conceptualization of metaphors of visual perception, which can also be attributed to different cultural values and living conditions. However, this study seemed rather fuzzy and lacked a clear description in terms of data and methodology. This thing strongly emphasizes the need for serious studies in non-western languages to reach more conclusive results about the universality claim of metaphors of visual perception.

Viberg (2015) investigated the semantic extensions of Swedish and English verbs of perception from a cross-linguistic perspective by employing data from translation corpora. Viberg focused on verbs of visual perception which he described as 'nuclear verbs' as they have dominated in the data with respect to their syntactic constructions and meaning extensions. Viberg attempted to establish a typological profile of Swedish verbs of perception as he found that unique characteristics are present only in this language. For example, it is possible to use both verbs see and hear to express activities, while such thing is not possible in English as it uses two different words look and listen instead to indicate active and passive perception. Moreover, the Swedish verb känna ‘feel’ can be extended to cover cognitive meanings. In contrast, the English verb feel covers only the internal
feelings related to emotions and sentiments. Finally, the association between vision and knowing is present in Swedish, although it is not as prominent as in the case of English.

Employing a corpus-based discourse approach, MacArthur, Krennmayr, & Littlemore (2015) explored the usage of the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING in academic discourse. The data of the study consisted of 27 samples of academic conversations in English between teachers and students at five European universities. The size of the corpus consisted of 62,792 words, of which 42,183 were uttered by teachers and 20,609 by undergraduate students. The study included only three verbs: see, look, and focus. The findings of the study show that the metaphorical linguistic expressions underlying UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING as expected were used to a great extent by all participants in the process of seeking and giving advice about academic matters. More specifically, it was revealed that lecturers who used English as a means of giving instruction employed the verbs of visual perception as a way of describing the academic challenges faced by undergraduate students. As for the metaphorical uses of the terms of visual perception, the analysis showed that using expressions of visual perception to talk about knowledge and learning is firmly established discourse practices by the English speaking academics (McArthur et al, 2015). However, these discourse conventions are not reflected in the same way in Spanish academia as the analysis has demonstrated underuse of metaphors of visual perception by Spanish students (and one lecturer) in their talk.

To explain the reasons behind the differences in discourse conventions of different communities of speakers, it would be essential to investigate other discourses that deal with topics such as knowledge and understanding. Such topics are more likely to occur in the analysis of academic discourse in universities or other educational centers, instead of general corpora. The analysis of face-to-face interaction between teachers and students in different countries, conducted in different languages, may provide a deeper understanding of the relative primacy of visual metaphors across different cultures.

It has been postulated that the connection between mental processes and visual perception is considered ‘primary metaphors’ (Sweetser, 1990). However, if this claim is indeed true, then one would expect that both English and Spanish academics to use the metaphorical expressions underlying UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING in the same way. The analysis clearly indicated that such a claim did not hold true for Spanish academics as they remarkably underused the visual terms and with different meanings. In contrast, English speaking academics used visual terms to a great extent to refer to knowledge, learning, and understanding. Finally, it was concluded that despite the fact that the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING "might be available as a way of reasoning about learning and knowledge to people from different cultures, discourse practices influence how salient it is for different groups of speakers" (McArthur et al, 2015, p.41).

Using the same corpus-based approach, San Roque et al. (2015) investigated the usage of verbs of perception in face-to-face conversations, which are a major medium for manipulating and negotiating the experience of perception via language. Data derived from ordinary conversations provides new substantiation to the continuous discussions related to the way universal elements
structure the lexicon of perception. San Roque et al.'s study contributed to the branch of quantitative comparative studies on neglected languages by employing conversational corpora.

The major aim of San Roque et al.'s study was to measure the frequency of verbs of perception and see whether they correspond with the assumed universality of vision. The strong version of the primacy of the vision hypothesis predicts that speakers in all languages will use expressions referring to vision more than hearing, touch, taste, or smell (Sweetser, 1990). Data of the study comprised 13 samples of video recordings; each video is about 60- minutes in length. The data were drawn from 13 languages which are: Avatime, Cha'palaa, Chintang, Duna, English, Italian, Lao, Mandarin, Semai, Siwu, Spanish, Tzeltal, and Whitesands. The findings of the study have shown that the forms of the verbs of visual perception constituted the highest number in terms of frequency in all languages, excluding Tzeltal language whereby the multi-sense verb a’y was notably higher (San Roque et al., 2015).

Depending on general corpora, Kuboto (2016) attempted to investigate the possible literal and figurative meanings and usages of the verb see and look in Modern Standard American. The theoretical framework of the study was set within the framework of cognitive linguistics depending heavily on Langacker's (2015) theory of mental images. The data were extracted from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). However, despite the fact that this study is a doctoral dissertation, it did not contain a clear description of the methodology nor of the size of the corpus used. Moreover, the study did not employ corpus linguistic techniques to analyze the data nor any metaphor identification procedures to unravel the figurative meanings of the verb see and look. This study proposed that the figurative quality of the verb depended on the type of object that follows. If the verbs see and look are followed by concrete objects, they carry literal meanings. In contrast, if they are followed by abstract objects, then, they carry figurative meanings.

Having reviewed the major studies that dealt with verbs of visual perception, the next section explains the method and data collection procedures that underwent the present study.

Methodology
This study is non-experimental and descriptive in nature. It focuses on unraveling the conceptual metaphors underlying the metaphorical linguistic expressions of the English verb of visual perception see which necessitates the use of an interpretive qualitative approach. The nature of the study requires a description of the conceptual mappings of the physical domain of vision onto the different domains of experience.

Data of the study comprised a corpus of English fiction writings gathered from large numbers of computerized corpora which enabled the researcher to identify patterns of uses more quickly than relying on individual texts or intuition. The corpus-based approach used in this study offered a more objective analysis of language because the researcher approaches his/her data without having any pre-conceived judgments about their semantic/pragmatic content (Deignan, 1997).

Corpus of English Fiction Writing
The description of the corpus of English fiction writing used in the present study is summarised in Table one.
Table 1 Information on the comparable corpora of English and Arabic fiction writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the corpus</th>
<th>Corpus of fiction writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corpus name</td>
<td>Corpus of fiction writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size in words</td>
<td>one million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of texts</td>
<td>5000 texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts type</td>
<td>Fiction writing (novels and short stories)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time frame</td>
<td>2010 - 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one shows that the size of the corpora is one-million words. Also, the present corpus includes samples of fiction novels and short stories of the five major fiction categories, namely, fantasy, romance, mystery, thriller, and science fiction (Peterson, 2016) as shown in Tables two. Every effort was exerted to compile fiction writing from balanced categories of fiction. Notably, the present corpora contain 60% of novels and 40% of short stories. The English fiction corpus contains an equal proportion of the five categories mentioned above as they are all widely available online and easily obtained. The following table shows the categories and their distribution in the corpus.

Table 2: Fiction categories in the English corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiction category</th>
<th>No. of texts</th>
<th>Type of texts</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mystery</td>
<td>100 texts</td>
<td>Short stories and novels</td>
<td>200,040</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>100 texts</td>
<td>Short stories and novels</td>
<td>200,022</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>100 texts</td>
<td>Short stories and novels</td>
<td>200,080</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Fiction</td>
<td>102 texts</td>
<td>Short stories and novels</td>
<td>204,032</td>
<td>20.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriller/action</td>
<td>98 texts</td>
<td>Short stories and novels</td>
<td>19,600</td>
<td>19.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>500 texts</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000,181</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedures involved three steps. The first step was to retrieve the files of the corpus of English fiction writing using a concordance program. The use of the concordance enabled the examination of the verb see by studying its numerous occurrences in their contextual environment (Weisser, 2016). The English corpus of fiction writing was processed using AntConc as it is considered an excellent tool for analyzing English corpora (Alfaifi & Atwell, 2016). After data retrieval, the second step was to search for the keywords in the concordance software. The search process of the English keyword see and its different morphological forms resulted in 3023 occurrences.

Finally, the third process involved extracting a sample from the total number of occurrences of the keyword see. A sample of 1000 examples of the keyword see was extracted from the corpus of English fiction writing. The sample was extracted randomly by using a research randomizer (https://www.randomizer.org/) which generated random numbers after the required information was entered. A set of 1000, sorted number with a range from 1- 3023 was generated for the verb
see. The 1000 example identified was saved in a Microsoft word file in order to be prepared for analysis. The number of 1000 examples was proposed by Deignan (1997) who stated that a large sample of 1000 examples is considered sufficient and satisfactory to examine the different senses of any lexical item.

**Data Analysis**

The Metaphor Identification Procedures (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) was adopted to identify the metaphorical linguistic expressions of the English verb see. The entire procedure comprised four steps which include the following points: 1) reading the entire text, 2) determining the contextual meaning of each verb in the text, 3) finding out if the verb has a basic meaning in another context, 4) if there is a contrast between the contextual meaning and the basic meaning of the verb, then it is a metaphor. To achieve accuracy in the identification of the metaphorical meaning, English dictionaries were used to decipher the basic meaning of the verb see such as Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2015), Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell, 2007) and Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Walter, 2008). After the stage of identifying the metaphorical linguistic expressions related to the verb see, the next step was inferring the underlying conceptual structure from the linguistic expressions using the CMT (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) as the framework of analysis. As explained earlier, a conceptual shift is stimulated by conceptual similarities between two domains: source domain and target domain, in a way that certain elements of the former are mapped into the latter. In this case, the two domains must be properly interpreted and then categorized.

**Results and Discussion**

This section answers research questions one and two regarding the conceptual metaphors underlying the English verb of visual perception see and the theoretical implications of the MIND-AS-BODY theory proposed by Sweetser (1990) with regard to the conceptual metaphors underlying verbs of visual perception in English.

**Conceptual Metaphors Underlying the English Verb of Visual Perception See**

This section first reports the frequency of the conceptual metaphors of the English verb see followed by subsections that discuss each conceptual metaphor. The metaphor identification procedure (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) revealed that the verb see has a vast number of metaphorical meanings comprises, which is 390 metaphorical linguistic expressions out of the total sample of 1000 examples. The analysis in this section includes the most salient conceptual metaphors that underlie the identified metaphorical linguistic expressions manifested by the verb see as shown in Table three.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Metaphors</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINDING OUT IS SEEING</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table three shows, the most frequent conceptual metaphor in English is UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING which constitutes 62% of the corpus, followed by FINDING OUT IS SEEING (19%) and then CONSIDERING/THINKING IS SEEING (7%). The analysis also unraveled other conceptual metaphors. However, these are not reported in this study as they are considered less salient. The conceptual metaphors shown in Table 1.1 are explained in detail in the upcoming subsections.

UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING

The conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING is salient in the English corpus. The saliency of the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING is pervasive in English and is in line with MacArthur, Krennmayr, & Littlemore's (2015) study on the usage of the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING in academic discourse. Their study showed that this conceptual metaphor, as expected, was used to a great extent by all participants in the process of seeking and giving advice about academic matters. More specifically, their study revealed that the lecturers who used English as a means of giving instruction employed the verbs of visual perception as a way of describing the academic challenges faced by undergraduate students. As for the metaphorical uses of the verbs of visual perception, the analysis showed that using expressions of visual perception to talk about knowledge and learning is a firmly established discourse practice by the English speaking academics.

The conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING involves a mapping between several elements of the source domain of physical vision and the target domain of the mental process of understanding and knowing. Such systematic correspondences are in line with Sweetser's (1990) proposed MIND-AS-BODY metaphor as a conceptual one because this metaphor is motivated by interrelations between people's external experiences and their internal cognitive and emotional experiences. Such correspondences involve the conceptualization of bodily physical experiences in terms of perceptual experiences of the mind.

Specifically, the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING is instantiated in certain linguistic expressions, such as 'see no point' which means 'to realize that there is no use or no benefit in doing something' as in example one:

(1) "and there is no worthy adversary, I see no point in expending energy and spending time."

The linguistic expression ‘see no point’ in the example has a metaphorical meaning because of its abstract concept. According to Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Cobuild, 2018), the word ‘point’ means “a detail, aspect, or quality of something or someone” (p.661).
Generally, any details or aspects denote abstract and immaterialistic concepts that are not perceived directly by the physical eye but perceived by the mind.

The conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING/ KNOWING IS SEEING is also realized in the linguistic expressions 'See something/anything wrong', which is illustrated in the following examples:

(2) **He looked at the data closely and could see nothing wrong. But then, he probably wouldn't recognize a problem if he did see it.**

The linguistic expressions 'see nothing wrong’ in example two means 'understanding or realizing that there is no harm in doing a certain action'. The word 'wrong' in the expression 'see nothing wrong' represents an abstract idea or thought that cannot be detected directly by the eye but perceived and identified by the mind. It means something that is incorrect and not in accordance with the facts. For this reason, the linguistic expression 'see something/anything wrong' is regarded as metaphorical. In sentence two, the perceiver is described as someone who would not be able to recognize anything wrong even if he did see it. This suggests that the possession of a pair of eyes is not enough for one to detect a problem. The expression that follows 'wouldn't recognize a problem if he did see it' suggests that the process of detecting problems relies on a human's mental ability to grasp and fully understand abstract things.

Another linguistic expression that manifests the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING is 'see things in a particular way' which means 'to realize or understand things/situations or events in a particular way according to one's own perspective' as shown in the following example:

(3) **“You have to understand; we’re trained to see things as logically as possible,”**

The verb see in example three above means 'to understand and analyze situations in a particular way'. The verb see is followed by the word ‘things’ which refers to ideas or concepts. These ideas or concepts are “mental representations, abstract objects or abilities that make up the fundamental building blocks of thoughts and beliefs and they play an important role in all aspects of cognition” (Mather, 2016, p. 256). In the given example three, it can be seen that the linguistic expressions 'see things as logically as possible' refers to the perceptual ability that is performed by the mind's eye and not the physical eyes, which explains the metaphorical meanings of the verb see.

In other metaphorical linguistic expressions, the eyes are considered as a means to penetrate the human mind. They are regarded as a window into people's real thoughts and souls, which are illustrated by the following example from the English corpus:

(4) **“I couldn’t see any hints of remorse in his eyes. He was as cold as ice.”**

In example four, the verb of visual perception see does not refer to a physical act of seeing because abstract concepts such as remorse, love, and fear cannot be seen by the physical eye, rather
they are realized by the mind based on certain clues in the physical environment. In example four, the verb *see* is used metaphorically denoting the meaning 'to realize or understand'. In this case, the perceiver realized that the other person described in the sentence did not show any sign of remorse as indicated by the looks of his eyes. Generally, the eyes are regarded as a window into the human soul and mind. In the mind, there are specific areas that are occupied by feelings, emotions, and thoughts. This mental aspect is subtler than the physical body and concerns people's awareness of inner feelings and the ability to relate to events from the outside world. At this level, the eyes could transmit the reaction of the soul, whether showing discontent, rebel, happiness, love, as well as enmity and sorrow.

Moreover, understanding people's feelings can also be achieved by looking at people's facial features. This meaning is realized in the English corpus through the following linguistic expressions: 'see the expression of concern on his face', see the expression of love on her face', 'see expressions of pain on his face', 'see the expression of contempt on his face'. Some illustrative examples are:

(5) Clary could *see* the expression of concern on both their face.
(6) I *see* all the expressions of love on her face.

Furthermore, the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING is realized in the English corpus in the linguistic expression *see sense* (example seven). This expression seems to have a rather negative connotation, which is 'if someone tries to make people see sense or see reason, he tries to make them realize that they are wrong or are being silly', as shown below:

(7) “Demeter or Hestia would make the two brothers *see sense*. But your arrival has inflamed Zeus's.”

The linguistic expression 'see sense' described in sentence seven designates the meaning of "the ability to make good judgments and to behave sensibly". The metaphoricity of this linguistic expression is similar to that highlighted by Deignan and Cameron (2009) in their discourse analysis of the metaphorical uses of the verb *see*. Their study showed that 'see sense' is a semi-fixed figurative expression that is associated with understanding.

Another specific-metaphor subsumed under the general UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING IS SEEING unraveled in the English corpus is ENCOURAGING SOMEONE TO UNDERSTAND IS ASKING THEM TO SEE'. This metaphor is realized in the linguistic expression 'you see' and it is used when someone is explaining something to someone, to encourage them to listen and understand his idea as shown in the example below:

(8) “… a new statue set. Children are so popular, you see. Everyone loves children.”
Annabeth.”

In example eight, the linguistic expression 'you see' is used in order to invite the hearer to the conversation and appeal to him to understand the idea raised by the speaker. Generally, the linguistic expression 'you see' is used commonly in everyday conversation. Fedriani and Šansó (2017) state that the expression 'you see' is a pragmatic marker which has certain functions, such as claiming the speaker's attention, marking a transition between information or arguments in the discourse, providing an explanation for a previous claim, or negotiating with speakers to accept
their arguments. Moreover, the fact that the linguistic expression 'you see' reflects the meaning 'to understand' is in line with the findings of Deignan and Cameron (2009). In their study, the linguistic expression 'you see' denotes the meaning of understanding. It is mainly used by a speaker in order to convince the other party in a conversation to agree with him/her and understand him/her point of view. The occurrence of 'you see' functions as a persuasive element encouraging the hearer to perceive events in a particular way.

**FINDING OUT IS SEEING**

Another conceptual metaphor that underlies the English verb *see* is FINDING OUT IS SEEING. This conceptual metaphor is significant in the data whereby it is the second most frequent conceptual metaphor unraveled in the English corpus (19%). Within this conceptual metaphor, the source domain vision is mapped onto the act of discovering something whereby the faculty of vision enables people to study a case or a situation in order to attain information. This mapping concurs with the finding of Ibarretxe-Antunano's (2019) study on verbs of perception in English, Spanish, and Basque which highlights that human beings regard sight as the most reliable sense when it comes to gathering information about the external world. In this regard, it is plausible why verbs of visual perception convey meanings such as 'to ascertain', 'to find out', 'to make sure', and 'to take care'. According to Ibarretxe-Antunano (2019), visual perception is an exact and objective means of uncovering the reality about the surrounding world and that it provides recordable and tangible evidence through the images captured by the eyes and transmitted to the mind. This led Ibarretxe-Antunano (2019) to hold the opinion that only what a person could see with his/her eyes is true which suggests the primacy of the sense of sight over the other senses of hearing, touch, taste, and smell.

The conceptual metaphor FINDING OUT IS SEEING is instantiated in certain metaphorical linguistic expressions as in example nine:

(9)  *I am Dr. Norman. This is a pilot program to see if we can get at some of the root causes of your difficulties.*

The verb *see* in example nine-means 'to find out' whereby the perceiver 'the doctor' is trying to find out if he can use the pilot program to discover the root causes of difficulties of the patient described in the sentence. The example involves the meaning of finding out about people's activities, processes, and plans.

Moreover, other examples in the English corpus show that the verb of visual perception *see* is used to signify the meaning ‘to find out about future events’ as shown in the following example:

(10)  *She waved away my concern. "It'll turn out all right in the end. You'll see. As long as you did your best."*

In sentence ten, the verb *see* means 'to find out' in which the expression 'It'll turn out all right in the end. You'll see' means 'you will find out that future events will be favorable'. The fact that the verb of visual perception *see* in sentence ten denotes the meaning ‘to find out about future events’ is in line with Gunnersdotir (2013) findings in his study about the perceptual metaphor in
the verbs of perception. The study revealed that the verb *see* signifies the meaning of 'seeing things that have yet to happen.'

In addition to example ten, there is another specific metaphor in English subsumed under FINDING OUT IS SEEING which shows different uses of the verb *see* which is FINDING OUT ABOUT PEOPLE'S TRUE CHARACTER. This metaphor is manifested in particular examples that signify the meaning of 'finding out about people's true character'. The following example from the English corpus shows how the verb of visual perception *see* manifests the metaphorical meaning:

(11) "I catch sight of Paylor, who's watching me so closely, waiting to *see* what I am made of..."

For example (11), the expression 'waiting to see what I am made of' means 'to find out about my true personality'. Here, the act of seeing is metaphorical, it does not entail an actual physical act of seeing. Instead, it involves a mental process of finding out or discovering something'. The true self of people is not something that can be seen by the physical eye. The act of discovering the true self of people takes time. In order to judge the true character of people, one needs to keep an eye on them in certain situations; observe how they react and listen to what they say. Only then one will be able to judge and truly see people’s real character.

**CONSIDERING/THINKING IS SEEING**

The conceptual metaphor CONSIDERING/THINKING IS SEEING is the third most frequent conceptual metaphor unraveled in the English corpus (7%). The conceptual metaphor involves a mapping of the physical domain of vision and the mental process of thinking and it is instantiated by the linguistic expression 'see somebody/something as' in English. This linguistic expression suggests the following meaning "if you see someone or something as a certain thing, you have the opinion that they are that thing" as seen in the following example:

(12) “Possibly my crippling clumsiness was seen as endearing rather than pathetic,”

The verb *seen* in example (12) means 'to consider' in which the act of clumsiness of the person described in the sentence was considered as endearing. In this case, the linguistic expression 'clumsiness was seen as endearing' in example (12) does not reflect an immediate direct perception of the act of clumsiness but reflects a characteristic of the things that are not immediately detectable by the sense of sight. The expression is actually an evaluative opinion about the things (stimulus of perception) that presuppose some mental activity on the part of the perceiver. In this case, the verb *see* is used to describe mental perception, and the given cases of perception cannot be immediate and direct, for they are not based upon the functions of the individual's physical senses. The verb *see* in the sentence (12) is meant to convey a perception that is more inferential or intellectual rather than sensory and can have a similar meaning to the verbs of cognition such as consider (Ibarrexte-Antunao, 2019).

More illustrative examples (13 to 14) are given below to explain the specific metaphors JUDGING AND EVALUATING PEOPLE IS SEEING. In sentence (13) below, the perceiver produces judgments about people based on their subjective evaluation:
Beetee nods. “So scary that he’d see her as life-threatening. That he might try to kill her.”

The example above involves an act of judging and evaluating people in a certain way whereby the verb see means ‘to consider’ in which the perceiver considers the other person as dangerous and life-threatening in such a way that he must eliminate her to remove the threat on his life. The judgment was based on his own conception of danger. The act of evaluating and judging people in the sentence above is metaphorical as the perceiver is using his eyes as a tool to send images to his mind in order to process and understand the outcome of these images. Here the human eye works as a scanner that scans all the parts of something carefully. The perceiver does not only depend on the immediate image of the person in front of him, but he/she also conjures up past memories, experiences, and events on which basis a final resolution of ‘this woman is dangerous’ as in sentence (13) is achieved.

Furthermore, besides judging and evaluating people as shown in the previous examples, the specific metaphor JUDGING AND EVALUATING OBJECTS/SITUATIONS IS SEEING is manifested in certain examples which suggest the meaning ‘to judge and evaluate objects, situations and events in a particular way’ (Deignan & Cameron, 2009) as in the following example:

“Well, then. I don’t see that as a problem,”

For example (14), the verb see means 'to consider' whereby the perceiver contemplates about or evaluates a certain situation and then decides not to consider it as a problem. This decision made by the perceiver in the sentence cannot be achieved only by a physical act of seeing; there must be some pre-thinking and pre-contemplation that forced the perceiver to think the way he/she does. Through the mental process of thinking, people are able to manipulate information to form concepts, to solve problems, reason, and make decisions. The act of thinking produces thought, which could be an idea, a sound, an image, or even an emotional feeling that originates from the brain. As a result, the verbs see sentences (14) cannot possibly refer to a physical act of seeing rather it refers to the metaphorical meaning of ‘to think’ or ‘to consider’.

Theoretical Implications Related to the MIND-AS-BODY Theory

The conceptual metaphors unraveled in this study show a systematic correspondence between the source domain of vision and the target domain of knowledge and understanding. Such systematic correspondences are in line with Sweetser's (1990) proposed MIND-AS-BODY metaphor as a conceptual one because this metaphor is motivated by interrelations between people's external experiences and their internal cognitive and emotional experiences. Such correspondences involve the conceptualization of bodily physical experiences in terms of perceptual experiences of the mind. Sweetser (1990) added that these associations between physical and cognitive domains are moving in one direction: they shift from the body-related vocabulary onto the vocabulary of mind. Specifically, the metaphorical shift in English verbs of visual perception moves from the source domain of physical visual perception to the target domain of cognition and knowledge.
Above all, Sweetser (1990) stated that this correspondence between vision and intellection is attributed to the fact that vision is the prime channel of collecting objective data about the world. It is the major source in providing humans' with the largest amount of data than any of the other senses, and it seems that children depend to a great extent on the sense of vision in their early years. Moreover, the sense of vision gives humans the ability to focus on minute details in the immediate environment as well as concentrate on one single object at a time. Also, different people can have the same point of view depending on the sense of sight. As a result, it appears to furnish a foundation for mutual public knowledge.

Moreover, Sweetser (1990) speculates that the metaphorical extensions that occur in the verbs of visual perception are not random but motivated and grounded in the perception and sensory experiences of people. Moreover, the metaphorical mappings that occur between the physical domain of visual perception and the abstract domains of knowledge and understanding are established in the humans' visual experience, that is, in the way people interact, understand, and use their perceptual visual capacity. For human beings, the sense of sight is the means to collect information about the world. Human beings are biologically restrained by the physiology of the sense of sight whereby it possesses its own receptors (eyes), a passageway to the brain, and stimuli (light).

Findings of the present study support two major aspects of Sweetser's (1990) MIND-AS-BODY hypothesis. First, the study revealed that all the conceptual metaphors unraveled in this study show systematic correspondences between the physical domain of vision and the abstract domain of the mind. In this light, these conceptual metaphors are regarded as a sub-part of the general MIND-AS-BODY conceptual metaphors proposed by Sweetser. Second, this study supports Sweetser's (1990) hypothesis regarding the universality of the primacy of vision in motivating metaphors of knowledge, understanding, and cognition. These findings provide further evidence for the claim of the primacy of sight for motivating metaphors of intellection and knowledge within the field of cognitive semantics. Currently, in the literature, there are opposing views about the claims of the primacy of sight in motivating metaphors of higher intellect. On one hand, scholars such as Sweetser (1990) and San Roque et al. (2015) emphasize the universality of the primacy of vision as the sensory modality used for metaphors of knowledge and thought. On the other hand, typological studies by Evans and Wilkins (2000) and Vanhove (2008) propose the verb hear as the prime verb in motivating metaphors of cognition. The findings of this study are in agreement with the views of the scholars who propose that the verbs of visual perception hold the premium position in motivating conceptual metaphors of knowledge and intellection.

Conclusion

This paper aimed at unraveling the conceptual metaphors underlying the linguistic expressions of the English verb of visual perception see in fiction writing and to examine the theoretical implications of MIND-AS-BODY theory on the motivation of conceptual metaphors underlying the English verb of visual perception see. The findings of the study indicate that there are three salient conceptual metaphors underlying the English verb of visual perception see in fiction writing, namely, KNOWING/UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, FINDING OUT IS SEEING, and CONSIDERING/THINKING IS SEEING. These three conceptual metaphors are motivated by a conceptual mapping between the physical domain of sight and the abstract domain of the mind.
this light, these conceptual metaphors are considered a sub-part of the general MIND-AS-BODY conceptual metaphors as proposed by Sweetser (1990). The findings suggest— that there are systematic correspondences between the physical domain of perception and the abstract domain of cognition and intellection. These findings support Sweetser’s (1990) hypothesis regarding the universality of metaphors of visual perception in all human thought and speech. An important contribution of the present study is that it contributes to the literature on verbs of visual perception, specifically, 'see' in English, from the perspective of cognitive semantic analysis, in terms of data which were extracted from a corpus of fiction writing. This study has paved the way for further studies on metaphoric uses of verbs of visual perception in using an authentic corpus of fiction writing. The usefulness of utilizing authentic corpus as a data source is the possibility of identifying new metaphoric uses not discovered by previous studies (Sweetser, 1990) which depended on frozen data such as dictionaries or random examples.

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What to Choose Amongst Dictionaries for the Linguistics Student: A Review of The American Heritage College Dictionary and the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary

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Abstract
This article compares and contrasts two dictionaries: The American Heritage College Dictionary and the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. This review is written to provide English language learners – and others – who are taking undergraduate-level courses in linguistics, with in-depth advice on how to best support and augment their previously assigned textbooks. Specifically, the author seeks to make a case for how these two dictionaries are the most constructive for students taking courses that focus on semantics and pragmatics. Both of these texts contain extensive and detailed knowledge for students majoring in English. The reviewer examines key aspects of the two volumes in this comparison, including: front and back matter, range of contents and illustrations, and the organization of the entries. Other areas that are explored are how each dictionary deals with connotational meaning, collocational information, expressions related to the headword, and controversial usage issues. The findings of this author reveal that both texts are valuable additions to the library of any undergraduate student studying linguistics and the English language. Each volume has its strong points, making both dictionaries beneficial and essential to students of English. However, these particular texts are strongly recommended for the student for whom English is not the native language.

Keywords: Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (CALD), connotational meanings, collocations, EFL learners, lexicography, pragmatics, semantics, The American Heritage College Dictionary (AHCD)

Introduction

This review analyzes the content of two dictionaries commonly used to support the study of linguistics: The American Heritage College Dictionary (3rd ed., AHCD) and the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (3rd ed., CALD). Specifically, the goal of this work is to provide those taking undergraduate students taking linguistics courses with detailed insight on how to best support their existing textbooks. Connotational meanings, collocational information, fixed expressions longer than a single word, and controversial usage issues are key elements in semantics and pragmatics, as both of these branches of linguistics represent the study of meaning communicated and conveyed through language. Instructors of linguists teaching semantics and pragmatics to students taking their first steps into the field of linguistics, are often asked by their students for recommendations on a dictionary that is appropriate for understanding how native speakers of English are able to give appropriate interpretations to word strings. As these EFL students indicate, they encounter problems with meaning when they analyze utterances semantically and pragmatically. Furthermore, “most of them pay attention only to the definition or meaning of a word while neglecting the pragmatic aspect of the word, collocations as well as word formation knowledge” (Hamouda, 2013, p. 277). Even though intonation and situational context have their effect on meaning, students still need a dictionary that can provide them an entry into their analyses in terms of the use of authentic language and the presentation of the full range of possible meanings that many words comprise. As Fan (2000) stated, dictionaries are an oft-relied upon source for data and information related to vocabulary, which makes them invaluable and life-long tools. Hence, this research paper is designed to provide an in-depth review to English language learners and others taking undergraduate-level courses that focuses on semantics and pragmatics to help them determine which dictionaries would be most useful to them.

Herein, The American Heritage College Dictionary and the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, are compared in terms of topics associated with learner’s dictionary research, including: front and back matter; range of content and illustrations; entries and the depth of the information that is introduced in entries; and, ways of organizing meanings. This review also investigates how these dictionaries deal with connotational meaning, collocational information, expressions related to the headword, fixed expressions longer than a single word, and controversial usages. After presenting these explanations, this review will also note the target groups the publishers indicate the works are designed for and, based on the author’s analysis, judge whether these dictionaries are indeed well-designed and appropriate for the stated target groups. The types of corpora employed will also be discussed.

EFL Learners and the Use of Dictionaries

When individuals begin to learn a language, their first purchase is typically a dictionary. Here, the goal should be to locate the most appropriate and powerful tool that will enable them “to gain further understanding of a range of a new language, leading eventually to accurate production and comprehension” of said language, which can then be applied to a variety of activities (El-Sayed & Siddiek, 2013, p. 1744). Monolingual and bilingual dictionaries are considered by many, but especially language learners, to be the main authority on the use of any language. As Stein (1989) stated, while monolingual dictionaries “provide access to the world of meaning discriminations made by the target language; and provide definitions which distinguish subtle differences in meaning,” bilingual dictionaries are useful “for providing ready translation
equivalents for common words, and exact translation equivalents for technical terms” (Stein, 1989, p. 36).

Due to their value, “dictionaries have found their place and been included as an essential part of [the] language learner’s [sic] indispensable equipment” (El-Sayed & Siddiek, 2013, p. 1744). In some ways, the dictionary can be viewed as a menu of words, where we access the word in question and choose from among the definitions offered for the one that best suits our tastes and needs at the time. While it is established that dictionaries connect the definitions of words to the “sense” of those words, map the meaning behind words (Čermák, 2010), and show how words work together to form sentences, it is essential to also understand what specific target group the publisher had in mind for a specific publication as well as what corpora the particular dictionary was constructed upon, when making an appropriate recommendation regarding dictionary choice. EFL students enrolled in linguistic classes, such as those taking courses in semantics or pragmatics, are assumed to have a high level of proficiency. Hence, they require sophisticated dictionaries that do more than simply provide definitions of words, because:

A definition is indeed just a string of words. It is unsatisfying, therefore, to say that the meaning of a word is a definition, because that would be to say that the meaning of a word is just more words. (Elbourne, 2011, p. 13)

Advanced dictionaries cover a wide range of linguistic aspects, including; phonological, syntactic, stylistic, and semantic information (Leech, 1981). Among the best choices are *The American Heritage College Dictionary* and the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, which are designed for advanced learners and native speakers of English. These works both have many distinguishing features and are roughly of the same length. Furthermore, they are directed toward similar populations and aim to satisfy very similar needs. These factors are important as it makes this analysis meaningful in that it compares and contrasts two similar volumes. However, this work does not endeavor to identify either of these dictionaries, or any other for that matter, as “perfect” for all leaners. As noted by Herbst and Popp (1999), it is possibly not correct to ascribe the characteristic of “perfection” to any such work. Instead, the goal here is to make recommendations on the most appropriate texts for the needs of this identified target audience.

**Comparison of the Components of the Two Dictionaries**

**Front and Back Matter**

Given that both volumes exceed 1,500 pages, the *AHCD* and *CALD* present as possessing both variety and depth. To begin, the author explored the *AHCD* in terms of its front matter. The “Usage Panel” and “Usage in the AHCD,” are the first sections users of the dictionary should look to, because they introduce necessary information about controversies over usage. These are followed by a guide that explains how information is presented in the dictionary, such as the fact that the entry words are alphabetized overall and then, for each entry word, the dictionary presents items such as: variants, part-of-speech, etc. All of this is followed by a thorough explanation of the various and distinctive notes that are introduced in this dictionary.

To make everything comprehensible and clear, the style manual presented at the beginning of the *AHCD* clarifies the dictionary’s system of capitalization, italics, and punctuation. This is followed by lists of the abbreviations and labels utilized in the dictionary. The system of
pronunciation is clarified by an explanation of pronunciation symbols and stress. Possibly of more use to readers interested in the history of words, the roughly 95 pages of back matter begin with an easily understood section about Semitic language materials, such as an analogous appendix of roots, including “Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans,” followed by “European sound correspondences,” “Indo-European roots” and “The Indo-European family of languages.”

The same degree of importance is placed upon the text that comprises the front and back matter of the CALD. The front matter is an example of how well-designed this dictionary is. This work opens with lists of parts of speech and then goes on to the “common grammar labels” and “style and usage labels” used in the dictionary. This is followed by an introduction, which gives information on new words, the Cambridge International Corpus, avoiding common mistakes, frequency information, thesaurus panel, spoken language, guidewords, pictures and photographs, the CD-ROM, and the Cambridge Dictionary online extra (CALD, 2008). Next are a “Guide to use the dictionary,” “Finding and understanding the right meaning,” “Using words and phrases correctly,” and a section titled “Other useful information” that describes the symbols and text boxes used in the dictionary. The front matter also includes, “Pronunciation,” “Frequency,” and an explanation of “Numbers that are used as words.” In its back matter, the Cambridge dictionary begins with a section titled “Let’s talk,” which includes “Conversation” and “Common mistakes.” The CALD also provides a list with accompanying definitions of “New words and phrases,” followed by lists of “Geographical names,” “First names,” “Suffixes and prefixes,” “Irregular verb forms” and “Units of measurement.” In addition, the text provides a guide to the regular verb tenses. These are followed by a guide to symbols, which explains the names of common symbols that are seen in English writing, symbols for other languages, and symbols commonly used in mathematics. The "Idiom finder" of the CALD is a comprehensive listing of common, longer idioms designed to help language learners find idioms. The volume also includes a listing of punctuation symbols as well as an explanation of the punctuation system employed by the dictionary, to better facilitate learners’ use of the text. To further support learners, this work provides useful explanations and tips on writing letters and essays. The back matter here ends with an explanation of which items are included in the book version that are not available on the included CD-ROM.

**Range of Content and Illustrations**

The AHCD provides a wide range of illustration types for certain content, including the entries for categories such as famous people, animals, plants, maps, famous buildings, and more. These illustrations are usually located on the left of the left-side pages (the verso) and on the right of the right-side pages (the recto). Proper names in the AHCD are listed according to their most important element, such as a surname shared by a number of important people. Similarly, the CALD provides a wide range of content, such as illustrations, proper names, maps, and photographs. This type of content is provided throughout the dictionary, with some presented after or to the right of the relevant entry; and, in the middle of the dictionary, in a section of 25 pages. In this supplementary section of the CALD, pictures and drawings are classified according to certain themes, including: in the kitchen, fruit, vegetable, food, body positions, sports, clothes, study and work, travel, planes, ships and boats, cars and trucks, houses, flowers and plants, and music. Then, there is also a seven-page section of maps of the world, which specifically represents
regions where the English language is primarily spoken, as in: the British Isles, the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Australia, and New Zealand.

Entries

In the AHCD, the headwords are arranged alphabetically. Pronunciation is provided in parentheses after the headword. AHCD uses ordinary English letters, letters with diacritics, joined letters, and the non-alphabetical symbol “ə” (schwa) from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), to represent pronunciation. It also provides an illustrative list of reference words for the vowel phonetic symbols and stress marks at the right bottom of each right-side page. Syllabication is provided by dividing entry words and their derived forms into syllables using centered dots, as: (a•lone). Syllabification of the pronunciation is presented by dividing the word into its spoken syllables using a full stop mark and a stress mark, which indicates both a syllable boundary and a stress. For example, the pronunciation of ranchero is given as (rán-chârʹō). Syllabifications and syllabications are not necessarily the same: syllabication of entry words is used to break words down at the end of a line, while syllabification of pronunciation follows phonological rules. The conventional spelling is given by the entry word; if the word has more than one acceptable spelling, it is shown after the entry word. Variant spellings in AHCD may be equal variants, such as online or on-line; unequal variants, such as halloo and also hallow; and, British variants, such as defence and defense. At the end of most entry words, AHCD provides the relevant etymologies as a brief sketch of the history of the word. For example, at the end of the entry for arrow, the AHCD adds [ME arwe < OE.]. This indicates that the word arrow originates in the Middle English word arwe, which in turn originated from Old English. For some entries, AHCD provides “Word History Paragraphs,” which distinguishes the AHCD from the CALD, because the latter does not provide such detailed etymological information.

In CALD, again the headwords are arranged alphabetically. To present the pronunciation of words, the text also uses the IPA. If a word has two pronunciations, both are presented and separated by a comma. British and American pronunciations are provided after the headword, where the British pronunciation is presented first, followed by the American pronunciation, as: storehouse /ˈstɔːr.haʊs/ US /ˈstɔːr-/ If only one pronunciation is provided, it means that it is both the accepted British and accepted American pronunciation. Both kinds of stress, i.e., the primary that has the symbol /ˈ/, and the secondary that has the symbol /ˌ/, are shown. Syllabification is identified by stress marks and full stops at the center of words, as gaiters /ˈɡeɪtərz/. The conventional spelling is given by the entry word; if the word has more than one acceptable possible spelling, it is shown at the headword, such as “Halloween also Hallweʹen.” If the word has a different spelling in American English and British English, this is shown — for example, “honourable UK, US honorable.”

In both the AHCD and the CALD, the pronunciation of the headword is followed by its part of speech. Parts of speech in AHCD include: adjective, adverb, article, conjunction, interjection, noun, preposition, pronoun, and verb. Furthermore, AHCD differentiates definite and indefinite articles, transitive and intransitive, and auxiliary verbs. Some singular and plural nouns are marked, and some entries fulfill more than one grammatical function where the different parts of speech are defined with a single entry, called a combined entry. CALD uses the following parts of speech: adjective, adverb, auxiliary verb, comparative, conjunction, determiner, exclamation,
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modal verb, noun, phrasal verb, plural noun, predeterminer, prefix, preposition, pronoun, short form, suffix, superlative, and verb. Parts of speech in both dictionaries are shown in italics. In CALD, common grammar patterns are given next to examples that show their use and the pattern is shown within brackets in capital letters, for example: allot... [+TWO OBJECTS] They allotted everyone a separate desk. In AHCD, these are included for some entries in the usage notes.

Shifts in grammatical function are preceded by the symbol “❖” in AHCD. If the shift has a different syllabification or pronunciation, that is also introduced. For example, “radiate (rā’dē-āt’) v....”, after explaining its meaning as a verb, the adjective meaning and pronunciation are introduced like this: ❖ adj. (-it) to indicate the change that occurs when the word functions as an adjective. Inflected forms are introduced in boldface type after the part of speech label. They are divided into syllables and pronunciation is given, as necessary. These are preceded by a boldface hyphen if they are shortened, such as “contain (kon-tān’) tr.v. –tained, -tain•ing, -tains.” Irregular inflected forms are entered separately when they occur more than 10 entries away from the main entry words. They are introduced with their pronunciation and part of speech, as necessary. On the other hand, inflection forms in the CALD are provided for verbs, plural forms, comparative, and superlative – but only if they are irregular. It is notable that the CD-ROM that accompanies the CALD features the inflections of every verb.

AHCD and CALD vary in terms of the labels that are used with entries. AHCD uses labels to indicate subjects and status. Subject labels indicate lexical fields of the entry where the dictionary uses the separation of senses to separate fields to which an entry word or definition applies. For example:

trimmer (trĭm′ər) n. 1. One that trims: a hedge trimmer. 2. One who changes one’s opinion, esp. political opinions, to suit the needs of the moment. 3. Electronics A variable component used to make fine adjustment to capacity or resistance. 4. Architecture A beam across on opening, such as a hearth, into which the ends of joists can be fitted. (AHCD, 1997, p. 1445)

Some entries in AHCD have status labels that indicate the limitation of using that word or definition. These labels indicate the usage problems, nonstandard, offensive, vulgar, slang, and informality of an entry, such as “gonna (gŭn′ə) Informal contraction of going to.” Other labels include temporal labels that apply to some words or senses whose use in modern English is uncommon, such as the sixth sense of the entry word entertainment (i.e., employment), which is labeled as obsolete to indicate that it is no longer in active use. Some words are labeled with dialect labels, such as: “bow•dacious also bow•dious or bar•dious Southern & South Midland US.”

Labels in CALD include grammar labels, for example, [AFTER N] for an adjective that only follows a noun; and, usage labels that include APPROVING, DISAPPROVING, FORMAL, INFORMAL, OLD USE, and SLANG.

One label that distinguishes CALD and makes it useful for learners is the label of “frequency,” where many words appear in blue and have the labels: “E” for essential, “I” for improver, or “A” for advanced. It is not only words that are marked by these labels, but also meanings and individual phrases. They are arranged according to the importance of learning them. For example, the label “E” indicates that everyone needs to know the word, while the “A” label
means that advanced learners should aim to learn them. “I” means that a learner should learn the word to improve their English.

Marking words with these labels is a practice based in the *Cambridge International Corpus*. The dictionary states that this corpus is a collection of more than a billion words of written and spoken language from different sources. According to the Cambridge University Press website, this corpus includes the *Cambridge Learner Corpus*, which is a bank of exam candidate papers. The authors of the dictionary examine the corpus to obtain a better understanding of how native speakers actually employ their language. In this way, they can better identify the mistakes non-native speakers tend to make.

**Ways of Organizing Meaning**

The manner of arranging sense and meaning seems to be shared by the two dictionaries. Definitions in both dictionaries are presented according to their frequency. In *AHCD*, definitions associated with the entry word are arranged “with [the] central and often the most commonly sought meaning” indicated first. In some entries, subsenses are indicated with boldfaced number/letter combinations to show that the definitions are related. Consider the following example:

**bight** (bīt) *n.*
1a. A loop in a rope. b. The middle or slack part of an extended rope.
2a. A bend or curve, esp. in a shoreline. b. A wide bay formed by such a bend or curve. (*AHCD*, 1997, p. 136)

The same is true with *CALD*, where each meaning of a guide word is preceded by a number in boldface type and the various meanings are ordered from the most frequently used to the least frequently used meaning.

**Connotational Meanings**

The two volumes differ in how they present connotations. Specifically, they are just presented in the Usage Notes in the *AHCD*. For example, in the *AHCD* usage note for the entry *lady*, this statement is made: “The use of *lady* as an attributive with an occupational title, as in *lady doctor*, is widely condescending and inappropriate. When the sex of a person is relevant, both *woman* and *female* are acceptable” (*AHCD*, 1997, p. 758). In *CALD*, negative, positive, or neutral senses of words are given in the definitions of headwords and are ordered by the frequency of the first meaning in the group. If the meaning is not an idiom but is always used in a specific phrase, the phrase is given at the beginning of the meaning of the headword. Again, using the example of *lady*, in *CALD* it is defined in the following way:

**Lady** / *leɪ də/ *noun* 1... a polite or old fashioned way of referring to or talking to a woman... 2. OLD-FASHIONED a woman who behaves in a certain way that is traditional considered to be suitable for a woman... 3. OLD-FASHIONED sometimes used before a job done by woman: a *lady doctor* 4. [AS FORM OF ADDRESS] US used to talk to a woman in a way that is not polite and is considered offensive by many women ..... (*CALD*, 2008, p. 801)
Usage labels are also given to denote whether a way of using the word is “approving” or “disapproving.” For example, the phrase *Lady Bountiful* is labeled as DISAPPROVING.

**Collocational Information**

Both dictionaries emphasize the importance of collocations, but present them differently. Collocations in *AHCD* are shown in separate entries. For example, *student, student union,* and *student teacher* are all separate entries. On the other hand, collocations in the *CALD* are called “word partners,” and in this work are presented in “Word partner” boxes, which show the relevant and/or common partners for a given word. Words that collocate with the headword are shown in boldface type, while the headword is not bolded. For example, after the word *heat,* a box is presented containing the following: “**Word partners for heat:** feel/ generate/ give out/ withstand heat • great/intense searing heat • a high/low heat” (CALD, 2008, p. 668). Because the *CALD* is a dictionary for learners, the value of putting collocations in a special box is clear, as this makes them easily accessible to the reader so as to avoid the risk of learners collocating words incorrectly. Furthermore, providing such collocations and word partners is beneficial, not just to learners, but for native speakers as well. However, possibly because the editors predict that users of the dictionary have a greater grasp of English, *AHCD* presents collocations in separate entries.

**Expressions Related to the Headword and Fixed Expressions**

In the *AHCD,* derived words are presented as run-ons at the end of headwords if they have meanings directly inferable from the meaning of the headword and its forms. An example of this would be how *descriptiveness* and *descriptively* are presented as run-ons of *descriptive.* If the meanings of run-ons are not directly predictable from the meaning of the headword, they are presented in separate entries. In the *CALD,* derived words have their own entries without reference to their roots if they have different meanings from the headword.

In both dictionaries, compound words have separate entries. After some definitions, phrasal verbs are set in boldface type and introduced by the heading *phrasal verb;* these precede idioms if they are included. Some idioms are presented without phrasal verbs and they are introduced in the same way. An example from *AHCD* of an entry that has phrase verbs and idioms is, “**feel (fěl)** v….

**phrasal verbs:** feel out To try cautiously or indirectly to ascertain the view point or nature of. Feel up… **idioms:** feel in (one’s) bones To desire. feel like (oneself)…” (AHCD, 1997, p. 500). In both dictionaries, fixed expressions longer than a single word are provided and usually labeled as idioms. An example from *CALD* is, “**sudden /ˈsʌd.ən/ adjective. …… idiom all of a sudden**” (CALD, 2008, p. 1456).

Synonyms in *AHCD* are presented in paragraphs that are introduced by the heading “SYNONYMS” and antonyms appear at the end of these paragraphs. Since homographs have unrelated meaning, they are introduced in separate entries in *AHCD,* where they are distinguished by superscript numerals, such as:

- **Bank** \(^1\) ……1. A piled up mass, as of snow or clouds.
- **Bank** \(^2\) …… 1. A business establishment ……
- **Bank** \(^3\) ……1. A set of similar things……… (AHCD, 1997, p. 111)
In *CALD*, synonyms are presented in special boxes labeled “Other ways to say…” with the synonyms in italics immediately after. The exact meanings of each synonym are then introduced in these boxes with some examples. Homographs that have one pronunciation have one headword. The previous example of *bank* is shown in the *CALD* as:


If homographs have distinct pronunciations, they are introduced in *CALD* in a way similar to that employed in the *AHCD*, by being given separate entries and being distinguished by superscript numerals.

To save space and time and to avoid the repetition of information, both dictionaries provide cross-references to indicate that additional information about one entry can be found at another entry. The entry that is referred to is shown in boldface. An example of this from *AHCD* is: “**Aalborg** (ôlʹbôrg ´) See **Ålborg**” (AHCD, 1997, p. 1).

### Controversial Usage Issues

The area of controversial usage is another point where the two volumes diverge. For example, while *AHCD* employs a variety of notes, such comments on controversial usage are absent from the *CALD*. This omission in *CALD* might prevent learners who are only using this dictionary from becoming familiar with controversial usage issues. Conversely, *AHCD* provides the usage notes, which are critical, paragraph-length notes that describe controversial words, as well as points of diction and grammar that are controversial. This includes the qualification of absolute terms such as *unique* and the meaning of *disinterested*. In the usage note of the word *disinterested*, it is mentioned that there was agreement among most of the members of the Usage Panel that this word means “having no stake in an outcome or issue.” To clarify the meaning, an example is given: “Since the judge stands to profit from the sale of the company, she cannot be considered a disinterested party in the dispute” (AHCD, 1997, p. 145).

Then, the *AHCD* proceeds to show that the Usage Panel favors this position and rejects the use of *disinterested* to mean “uninterested.” This is followed by a short historical background of surveys on this perception of the word, which showed that those rejecting “uninterested” as a sense of *disinterested* had the following percentages over the years: (a) 89% disapproved in a 1988 survey; and, (b) 93% disapproved in a 1980 survey. So, these notes are helpful in clarifying some controversial issues and enable the user of *AHCD* to understand and evaluate how such perceptions evolve over time. *AHCD* usage notes include: information about the use, summaries and analysis of the arguments, and observations about the opinions of writers and critics. Thus, these notes show the historical continuity of some controversial issues. Furthermore, they also provide dictionary readers with useful points of reference and show the change in opinion over time, this allows these readers to better understand that while a usage might be acceptable, it might be necessary to take care in certain situations.

Although *CALD* does not provide any explanation regarding controversial usage issues, it does sometimes refer to these through cross-references, such as “**Disinterested** ……… Compare
to uninterested” (CALD, 2008, p. 404) Cross-references refer users to words connected with the word they are looking for. In some cases, these provide conventional meanings for some examples without explaining that they are controversial, such as “Hopefully ……1. used, often at the start of a sentence, to express what you would like to happen: Hopefully it won’t rain…” where it means “it is hoped” not “in a hopeful manner” (CALD, 2008, p. 695).

Target Groups of the Dictionaries

When we review and compare entries in these two dictionaries, we find they both provide information on pronunciation, parts of speech, different meanings, collocations, fixed expressions, and irregular forms. However, after looking at the detailed information provided, it is clear these two dictionaries are not designed for beginning language learners. The publishers of each do specify their target user. AHCD is for native speakers of English, primarily American English, while CALD is designed for advanced English learners. Although the target groups are different, since both volumes require that the user have some degree of mastery of English, both represent good references for use by semantics and pragmatics students who are in the beginning levels of linguistics. In fact, this author would assert that these two dictionaries are among the best reference works available for students in lower level semantics and pragmatics courses. CALD is particularly helpful in terms of its idiom finder, which enables the user to use keywords to look for longer idioms. Similarly, AHCD is very useful due to its unique usage notes that aid students in answering different questions they might have about words. Students taking the types of courses described can rely on the AHCD as almost a mini-encyclopedia due to its: given its usage notes; synonym entries; paragraphs on word histories; provision of regional American English terms; and notes on “Our Living Language,” that contain background information on how certain factors influence the way speakers use certain words.

Corpora of the Dictionaries

Although the corpora used by AHCD is not directly referenced, according to the dictionary’s website, the usage panel for this volume is a group of “prominent scholars, creative writers, journalists, diplomats, and others in occupations requiring mastery of language. The Panelists are surveyed annually to gauge the acceptability of particular usages and grammatical constructions” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2020, p. 1). The contributions of these panelists are considered both critical and meaningful, as one editor described the contributions to the dictionary of one panelist (Edwin Newman) after his passing, these individuals imbue the work with, “accuracy, precision, concision, coherence and grace in written and oral use of our language” (Soukhanov, as cited in Zimmer, 2010, para. 4).

The CALD is based on the Cambridge International Corpus and the Cambridge Learner Corpus. According to the Cambridge University Press website, the Cambridge International Corpus is a multi-billion word corpus of the English language, containing both text corpus and spoken corpus data for British and American English. The Cambridge Learner Corpus contains 40 million words taken from English exam responses written by English language learners. This makes the dictionary more valuable to such English learners because, according to the Cambridge University Press (n.d.), it helps them find authentic, real-life examples that enables learners to understand English in appropriate environments.
Conclusion

Choosing the most appropriate dictionary can be a daunting task for the student just beginning their studies in English linguistics. Moreover, it is often complicated to relate one's unique needs for a dictionary to a native English-speaking instructor when trying to obtain the data to make an appropriate decision. There are a number of exceptional volumes available to EFL students. However, in this researcher's experience - as both a student who studied in the United States and as a professor of linguistics in Saudi Arabia - these two works are the most comprehensive for meeting the needs of Arabic-speaking students enrolled in English language semantics and pragmatics courses. Both AHCD and CALD present a vast range and depth of information on the English language that would support any student of linguistics, but particularly those for whom English is a second language. In addition, the CD-ROM that accompanies the CALD is very useful to the modern student. Therefore, this author and professor of linguistics feels very confident in recommending that students studying semantics and pragmatics acquire both of these dictionaries.

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Efficacy of Role-Play in Teaching and Formative Assessment for Undergraduate English-Major Students in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract
This study aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the role-play as the teaching and formative assessment strategy for the undergraduate English major students from the Riyadh region of Saudi Arabia. To find the effectiveness and the impact of role-play as a teaching strategy, a quasi-experimental method was employed by using a pretest-posttest design wherein the pre and posttest results of 70 EFL students from experimental and the control groups were compared. The experimental group was taught some new areas of grammar, functions and vocabulary using role-play; simultaneously, the control group was taught the same items using the traditional method of teaching. The pretest revealed no significant difference in the knowledge level of the students between the two groups. On the other hand, the posttest results showed that there was a significant difference in the knowledge level of the students in favour of the experimental group. Further, a structured questionnaire was used to understand the perspective of the teachers on the efficacy of role-play in the assessment of students in the English language classes. A sample size of 20 teachers was used where it was found that role-play had a significant impact on the formative assessment. The findings of the study suggested role-play as an effective technique for the undergraduate English-major students in Saudi Arabia to solve the classroom interpersonal troubles, and it would help the students to imbibe the human-relation along with increasing their proficiency in the English language.

Keywords: English major students, English language teaching, formative assessment, teaching method, role-play, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

Formative assessment is used for the purpose of monitoring learning style as well as the ability of pupils, providing continuous feedback, and allowing the teachers to enhance and modify their strategies and methods of teaching and helping the students in developing their knowledge. Formative assessment methods are less time-consuming than other methods and fit impeccably into the teaching procedure of institutions (Crow & Nelson, 2015). The information collected using formative methods is used to reflect on a student’s extent of learning by using different techniques as they help in defining learning goals, increasing rigor and motivation of students and improving their academic achievement. It also helps recommend the students additional practice required in their knowledge regarding the English language. These formative methods of an assessment provide valuable insights into the learning possessed by people before taking a test. It is mostly used during the development of try-outs by monitoring the level of learning of students by providing feedback. A formative method assessment also assesses the quality of study material along with helping in the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of students (Baruch, 2016). The formative assessment methods help the teachers in modifying their design of lesson and speed, selecting appropriate strategies, distinguish, and provide feedback individually to the students which enables them to propel their own learning forward (Wiliam, 2011).

The learning atmosphere of English in Saudi Arabia is not inspiring for the students for many grounds including the traditional teaching strategies, incompetent instructors, tedious learning materials, and cultural issues (Keezhatta, & Omar, 2019). The education system in Saudi Arabia needs to adopt new techniques and methods of teaching English to students in higher education in order to improve their skills in the English language. However, it has been found that the universities and the schools still depend on conventional strategies of teaching such as memorization and rote learning, which causes disengagement of students from the subject, eventually resulting in a lacklustre performance in academics. The present study examines and proposes role-play as an effective contemporary English-teaching and assessment strategy for Saudi undergraduate English-major students.

The present study provides a substantial perception into an effective teaching and formative assessment strategy that can be adopted while teaching English to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in the classroom setting. The results of this study may help EFL teachers in identifying their own teaching style as well as the best learning style that matches the capabilities of the students, thus, leading to a balanced teaching approach. Furthermore, the findings of this study are beneficial for students in helping them improve their concentration, attentiveness and overall performance in the classroom.

Based on the broader objective of the study that is to explore the use of role-play in teaching and formative assessment at undergraduate English-major students in Saudi Arabia, certain research questions have been prepared as follows:

1. What is the effect of role-play on teaching English at undergraduate English-major students in Saudi Arabia?
2. What is the impact of role-play on the formative assessment of the undergraduate English-major students in Saudi Arabia?
3. What are the possible difficulties or the challenges an institution can face while adopting this strategy?

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses were formed to test the effectiveness of the role-play as a teaching strategy at the undergraduate English students:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the achievement scores of the pretest of the students who are taught using role-plays and the students who are taught using the traditional method of teaching.
Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the achievement scores of the posttest of students who are taught using role-plays and the students who are taught using the traditional method of teaching.

Next, in order to understand the perspective of the teachers regarding the effectiveness of the role-play as the formative assessment tool, two more hypotheses were framed, which are as follows:

Hypothesis 3: The role-play does not have a significant impact on the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students.
Hypothesis 4: The role-play does not possess significant challenges in the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students.

Literature Review

Advantages of role-play and its process of implementation

Role-play is an effective technique used widely for the purpose of solving classroom interpersonal troubles and imbibing human-reations skills in the students (Kilgour, Reynaud, Northcote, & Shields, 2015). It is also used to assist subject-matter learning by dramatizing the literary and historical works along with current or past events. Role-play helps the students with a vivid altercation and elucidation of their relationship with others, their expectations from the society, their own evaluation and the ways in which academic material is important for the completion of their daily errands (Ahmad, Shafie, & Latif, 2010). It is employed in universities providing higher education for stimulating learning and creating improved understanding amongst other students, members of faculty, and administration by presenting domestic and global problems in front of them and allowing them to experiment with new policies and strategies (Al-harbi, 2011).

Implementation of a new assessment strategy involves a lot of planning, as the idea of a new method of assessment needs to be communicated to the students well. This requires that role expectations and roles need to be explained to students along with determining the appropriate group size (Zaidi, Rani, & Rahman, 2017). For successful implementation, students need to be allowed to give their preferences regarding their group members (Hidayati & Pardjono, 2018). It needs to be communicated that the observers shall only provide feedback, and the lecturer would be providing feedback as well as allocating marks. It is important to incorporate marks in this assessment method as it leads students to take their work seriously to enable them to perform roles expected in future careers. An evaluation form needs to be filled by the students after completing the entire exercise (Adams & Mabusela, 2014). The application of different strategies in learning
the target language has become an indispensable activity relevant to motivational drivers to acquire a specific language (Alsudais, 2017).

Academic role-play can be regarded as one of the most efficient, interactive and recurrently used learning strategies in higher educational institutions in the process of preparation of future educators. Researchers have assessed the benefits of role-play as being the best strategy to improve the skills of initiative, self-awareness, problem-solving, communication, working collaboratively in groups (Kaovere & Mbaukua, 2018; MacDonald, 2012). This strategy may help the students in overcoming their inability to speak in English in real-life situations. In meeting the learning objective of the English language, the use of role-play may allow the students to practice the English language writing as well as speaking skills in a mentored and prepared to learn the background. It may improve confidence to speak in English in the real world. It encourages the learners to generate their own reality, develops the skill to interact with other people, increases motivation of students, encourages shy students to be engaged in activities, increases self-confidence, and makes them aware regarding the complexity (Adams & Mabusela, 2014; Rashid & Qaisar, 2017).

**Challenges in the application of role-play**

The play-acting, the lack of grammar work, chaos in the classes, and lack of chances to play a part are the major challenges in applying role-play in language classroom. One of the main challenges in the application of role-play in higher education includes the lack of availability of ample class time with students (Zaidi et al., 2017). Limited access to resources can also act as a challenge in the successful application of role-play as it requires access to resources including photocopies, access to computers and the internet. The role-play activity should be clearly tied to the learning objectives of the course in order to be aligned to the demand of the curriculum. Moreover, certain students may not be willing or possess the skills to participate, while more charismatic students are more skilled in role-play and not in the learning engagement. Students need to be allowed to exercise their free will with respect to the direction in which the roles will evolve (Yen, Hou & Chang, 2015).

**Use of role-play in English language teaching**

It is regarded as an effective strategy for animating the atmosphere of teaching and learning in the classrooms by spiking the interests of the learners and making the understanding of the English language easy. It is also used as the preferred method to study the pragmatic competence of the learners (Liu & Ding, 2009). Implementing role-play has a substantial influence to boost EFL learner’s speaking skill (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018). Roles are determined as a way of identifying as well as labelling a combination of appearances and behaviours. Students are encouraged to form expectations on the basis of a person’s appearance, behaviour, and characteristics and they need to predict how this person shall behave or act in a given situation. Holt and Kysilka (2012) were of the opinion that role-play techniques could be entertaining and aid in developing learning as these techniques help in improving the communication level amongst the students. The students learning the English language in particular need to understand the significance of collaboration, and to have a curiosity in learning the nuances of the language. Role-play is regarded as a perfect method for the purpose of teaching the English language as it helps in preparing the students with respect to the erratic character of real-life communication, teaches them the correct usage of the
language and augments their self-confidence (Krebt, 2017). It has also been argued that role-play aids the learners in being prepared for practical communication, introducing their own emotions, ingenuity, as well as increasing the ability of the listeners to learn the language (Woodhouse, 2011). It also leads the students to understand the context in which the different words of English are used and provides the student with an opportunity to have informal routines and educational debates. As a final point, it can be seen that role-play provides the students with instantaneous confirmation of the correct usage of their language, fosters preservation, and stimulates participation in a comparatively free environment (Davies, 2009).

**Empirical review**

Alabsi (2016) examined the effects of role-play as a strategy for teaching vocabulary and improving lexical skill of EFL students. The result positively reinforced the useful effect of integrating role-play in EFL education. Rawlusyk (2015) addressed one of the major academic concerns related to assessment practices in higher education with respect to their support for student learning using web-based survey method with the employment of questionnaire as a data collection tool. Data was collected from 1195 academics from 12 postsecondary institutions across Alberta using a random sampling method. It was found that teachers had conflicting views related to student use of feedback and the use of dialogue. Role-play was identified as one of the most popular methods used for measuring students’ performance and was regarded as an authentic activity. Zaidi et al. (2017) aimed to address the challenges faced by students during a task of role-play by using quantitative survey research. The survey collected information from 200 participants in Malaysia regarding students’ insight on the possible challenges that they might face while performing a role-play. The respondents were selected using a purposive sampling method on the basis of the requirements of different groups in the study. An analysis of the data provided useful information for language educators in developing curriculum, assessments, and methodology of teaching. Hidayati and Pardjono (2018) collected data from 54 students using a questionnaire, and giving the test and the collected data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The result stated that role-play helps in improving the understanding of students with respect to learning models. Also, the collected responses from the students showed that the role-play was regarded as an exciting activity by providing the students with an opportunity to be creative, and easy to be applied.

Figure 1. displays a conceptual framework in which formative assessment and its advantages are connected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formative assessment methods:</th>
<th>Advantages:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Role-play</td>
<td>• Solving classroom interpersonal problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Test banks</td>
<td>• Dramatizing events and works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hot seat questioning</td>
<td>• Imbibe relationship building skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All-student response</td>
<td>• Constant feedback to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• WALT &amp; WILF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework
Research methodology

To find the efficacy of role-play as the teaching strategy for the undergraduate English-major students in Saudi Arabia, a quasi-experimental method was employed by using a pre and posttest design. The study has used two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group for this purpose. The experimental group was taught some new areas of grammar, functions and vocabulary using role-play; simultaneously, the control group was taught the same items using the traditional method of teaching. Further, to make sure that the results were biasness free, a t-test was conducted at the start of the program just to make sure that there was no difference in the prior knowledge of English among the students from the control group as well as the experimental group. In order to eliminate bias in data, both groups were taught by the same teacher.

To evaluate the effectiveness of role-play as the formative assessment strategy for the undergraduate English major students, the researcher used a structured questionnaire which was given to 20 teachers in order to understand their perspective towards the usage of role-play. Some questions related to the efficacy of role-play as a teaching strategy were also included.

Sampling

The sample of the study consisted of 70 EFL students and 20 teachers from the departments of English at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Students were randomly divided into two for each group, experimental and control. They belonged to the age group 17-20 years and were pursuing their second-year bachelor course in English language and literature. Although students belonged to different socio-economic backgrounds, their mother tongue was Arabic. The data was collected in the months of January and February 2020.

Teaching Materials

The material used for the experimental group involved eight role-play activities. Each of these activities comprises different types of grammatical, functional and vocabulary items. The following role play activities (Anderson, 2017) were used: 1. Checking into a hotel: Guest and hotel receptionist, 2. Fast Food restaurant: Customer and assistant, 3. Telephone phone-around: Groups of students make plans for an evening out, 4. Meeting old friends: Class meet up again 10 years into the future, 5. Phoning for a job interview: Job applicant and human resources manager, 6. Job interview: Applicant and interviewer, 7. TV chat show: Whole class role-play on the subject of rising crime, 8. Enrolling at an English school: New student and school receptionist. Altogether, some items from grammar, functions and vocabulary were taught using role-play method. On the other hand, the role-play was not used for the participants in the control group; instead, they were taught the same items using the traditional method of teaching.

Instruments used

A pretest question paper, a posttest question paper and a close-ended/structured questionnaire were used in the study. The pretest question paper comprised of some basic items of grammar, functions and vocabulary. The posttest question paper was divided into three sections and contained a total of 42 items which were designed in the way to check the grammar, functions and vocabulary improvement among the students. All the three-section contained 14 questions. The first, second and third sections are used to check the level of students in grammar, functions and vocabulary respectively. In order to do that, fill in the blanks, multiple choices and match the
column questions were used in all three sections. The structured questionnaires were distributed among 20 teachers. It comprised of 27 questions in which 16 questions were used to find the impact of role-play on formative assessment of students and 11 questions to know the challenges associated with role-play.

**Validity and reliability/ Data analysis**

In order to confirm that the test was appropriately designed and accurately measured what it was designed for, the test was evaluated by the panel of experts in the English language teaching. The Cronbach’s alpha method was used to check the reliability. To calculate and analyze the scores, SPSS was used. The t-test was used to compare the results of the two groups.

**Analysis**

The following section of the study focuses on analyzing the data collected i.e. pre and the post scores of the students and the data collected from 20 teachers through the structured questionnaire. The first section represents the analyses of the pre and the posttest scores of the students and thus checks whether the role-play is an effective strategy of teaching English or not. In the two groups, the experimental group was taught using role-plays and the control group was taught using the traditional method. For this purpose, two hypotheses have been framed which are as follows:

**Pretest performance of students**

H₀: There is no significant difference in the achievement scores of the pretest of the students who are taught using role-plays and the students who are taught using the traditional method of teaching.

H₁: There is a significant difference in the achievement scores of the pretest of the students who are taught using role-plays and the students who are taught using the traditional method of teaching.

First to state that the knowledge level of the students in the experimental group and of the students in the control group was the same before the method of role-play was adopted. The knowledge of students of both the group was tested using basic grammar, functions and vocabulary items in English and after that, the mean scores of the students of both the groups were compared. To compare the score of the students, the researcher adopted the technique of T-test. The results of which are presented in the table one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest E</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28.0286</td>
<td>3.51037</td>
<td>.59336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27.6857</td>
<td>3.26092</td>
<td>.55120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table represents the results of the descriptive statistics of the pretest. As shown in the above, table the mean score of the experimental group was 28.02 with standard deviation equal to 3.5, while the mean average score for the control group was equal to 27.68 with a standard deviation of 3.2. These results indicate that the two groups were alike in their knowledge levels
before conducting the treatment with the role-play strategy. However, in order to derive the
significance of this testing further Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances and t-test for equality
of means was done. The result for the above test is stated below in table two:

Table 2. Pretest performance (Levene’s Test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the above table, pretest scores had unequal variance since the significance value
.799 was greater than the set criteria significance value of 0.05. Thus, the T-Test for equality of
means will be conducted at the level of unequal variances. In this case, also the significance 2-
tailed value (.673) was greater than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, the researcher was unable
to reject the null hypothesis. Hence there is no significant difference in the average scores of the
students who will be taught using a role-play method and the students who will be taught using
the traditional method of teaching.

Posttest performance of students

H₀: There is no significant difference in the achievement scores of the posttest of students who
are taught using role-plays and the students who are taught using the traditional method of
teaching.

H₁: There is a significant difference in the achievement scores of the posttest of students who
are taught using role-plays and the students who are taught using the traditional method of
teaching.

Next, to check the effectiveness of the role-play, the researcher again conducted the test post the
treatment. In order to compare the score of the students who belonged to the experimental group
and the students who belonged to the control group, the researcher adopted the technique of the T-
test. The results of which are presented in the table three.
Table-3: Posttest performance (T-Test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POSTTEST</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34.2571</td>
<td>3.68896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27.4000</td>
<td>2.91245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table represents the results of the descriptive statistics of the posttest. As shown in the above table, the mean score of the experimental group was 34.25 with standard deviation equal to 3.6. while the mean average score for the control group was equal to 27.40 with a standard deviation of 2.9. These results indicate that the two groups were not alike in their knowledge levels post conducting the treatment with the role-play strategy. However, in order to derive the significance of this testing further, Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances and t-test for equality of means was done. The results for the above test are stated below in table four.

Table 4. Posttest performance (Levene’s Test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>2.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>8.631</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the above table, posttest scores had unequal variance since the significance value .090 was greater than the set criteria significance value of 0.05. Thus, the T-Test for equality of means will be conducted at the level of unequal variances. In this case, the significance of 2-tailed value (.000) was less than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, the researcher was able to reject the null hypothesis. Hence there is a significant difference in the average scores of the students who were taught using a role-play and the students who were taught using the traditional method of teaching. The results came in favour of the experimental group.

Demographic profile of teachers

To analyze the responses gathered from the 20 teachers through the help of a structured close-ended questionnaire, hypothesis testing was carried out. This was done so as to understand the perspective of the teachers on the effectiveness of the role-play on the formative assessment for the undergraduate English major students. But before that, the first part shows the demographic profile of the teachers through the help of figure two:
The following section provides the inferential analysis of the responses gathered from 20 teachers. The following hypothesis was framed.

**Impact of role-play on formative assessment of students**

H<sub>0</sub>: Role-play does not have a significant impact on the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students.

H<sub>3</sub>: Role-play does have a significant impact on the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students.

The correlation coefficient is used to measure the association between the two variables; it ranges from one to one. A correlation that is close to 0 shows little relationship between the two variables, correlation close to one indicates the positive relationship, on the other hand correlation close to -1 indicates a negative relationship between the variables. The results for the following hypothesis are shown in table five:

**Table 5. Correlation results of hypothesis one**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think role-play has a significant impact on student formative assessment?</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role-play is interesting.</td>
<td>.723**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other activities and role-play are different from each other.</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.683</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It improves the speaking skill of the students.</td>
<td>.687**</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps us communicate with others easily.</td>
<td>.736**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps to reduce stage fear and nervousness.</td>
<td>.704**</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It enhances the fluency among the students.</td>
<td>.683**</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Efficacy of Role-Play in Teaching and Formative Assessment**

Keezhatta

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| It is the best way to express emotions easily. | .763** | .000 | 20 |
| The feedback immediately after role-play is very effective | .632** | .003 | 20 |
| It gives a scope to show innovation. | .683** | .001 | 20 |
| Group activities in role-play share the ideas effectively. | .020 | .923 | 20 |
| Raise students’ motivation and interest | .038 | .874 | 20 |
| Give an opportunity for students for practice and test their language level | -.154 | .518 | 20 |
| Improving academic learning. | .250 | .287 | 20 |
| Studying contemporary issues and problems. | .630** | .003 | 20 |
| Integrating action and reflection. | .818** | .000 | 20 |
| Emulating empathy. | .066 | .783 | 20 |

Pearson correlation was used to assess the relationship between the role-play method and its effectiveness on student assessment. The results were quite varying. Although there were variables whose significance value came out to be less than the set criteria value of 0.05, there were some variables whose significance value exceeded 0.05. These variables were: other activities and role-play are different from each other; group activities in role-play share the ideas effectively; raise students’ motivation and interest; give an opportunity for students for practice and test their language level; improving academic learning and emulating empathy. Since these variables had significance value greater than 0.05, these variables will not be considered further for regression testing. The remaining variables will now be used for further test. Out of the remaining variables that showed the highest correlation includes Integrating action and reflection (818). It gives an opportunity to express emotions freely (.763). It is an easy method to communicate with others (.736). Role-play is interesting (.723).

Next, regression analysis was performed with the variables that had a significance value greater than 0.05. The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table six.

**Table 6: ANOVA of hypothesis 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>34.339</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.434</td>
<td>35.893</td>
<td>.000b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35.200</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table six above presents the model summary for the regression analysis for the framed hypothesis. The researcher first used the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in order to
determine whether there is any statistically significant difference between the means of the dependent and independent variables. Firstly, the null hypothesis that is Role-play does not have a significant impact on the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students is rejected, since the p-value is coming to be .000 which is less than the significance value of 0.05. In addition to this, the F value is quite high (35.893), so the probability of accepting the alternate hypothesis is quite high and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Moreover, the variance as shown by the regression sum of square (34.339) is quite high in comparison to the residuals or the error variance.

Table 7: Model summary of hypothesis 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.988</td>
<td>.976</td>
<td>.948</td>
<td>.30930</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following this, the regression analysis was conducted for the following hypothesis; the results are shown in Table 7. The results of which are as follows the value of R was .988. This value is used for examining the relationship between the dependent and the independent variable. The value of R Squared is .976 which tells how well the data fit to the regression line. Finally, the value of adjusted R squared came out to be .948 which tells how much the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable; here, 94.8% variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable which is quite high.

Next in order to understand the extent of influence role-play has on the English majors’ student’s assessment the coefficient of regression was calculated. The result of which is presented in table eight below.

Table 8: Regression of hypothesis one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-.564</td>
<td>.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-play is interesting.</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td>.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It improves the speaking skill of the students.</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps us communicate with others easily.</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps to reduce stage fear and nervousness.</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It enhances the fluency among the students.</td>
<td>-.365</td>
<td>.180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is the best way to express emotions easily.  

The feedback immediately after role-play is very effective.  

It gives a scope to show innovation.  

Studying contemporary issues and problems.  

Integrating action and reflection.  

As shown in the above table, variables that had significant value less than 0.05 includes: it helps to overcome nervousness, studying contemporary issues and problems, and Integrating action and reflection.  

Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected; role-play does have a significant impact on the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students.  

Challenges associated with role-play  

$H_0$: role-play does not pose significant challenges in the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students.  

$H_1$: role-play does pose significant challenges in the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students.  

The results of the correlation analysis are shown in table 9.  

Table-9. Correlation of hypothesis 2  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of professional and theoretical preparation on the part of teachers.</th>
<th>.763**</th>
<th>.000</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of classroom space.</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.491</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost a lot of classroom time.</td>
<td>.858**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaos in the classroom.</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of enough opportunity for all the students to participate equally.</td>
<td>.816**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of grammar work on the part of the student.</td>
<td>.784**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher losses control over what is learned.</td>
<td>.790**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Efficacy of Role-Play in Teaching and Formative Assessment

Keezhatta

May not be taken seriously  .727**  .000  20
Might make some uncomfortable  .138  .563  20
Difficult for the teacher to evaluate student individually  .063  .791  20
Big failure if the group participating does not understand the topic  .737**  .000  20

Pearson correlation was used to assess the relationship between the role-play method and its challenges on student assessment. The results were quite varying. However, there are variables whose significance value came out to be less than the set criteria value of 0.05. But there were some variables whose significance value exceeded 0.05. These variables were lack of classroom space, chaos in the classroom, might make some uncomfortable, difficult for the teacher to evaluate students individually. Out of the variables remaining variables, the variables that showed the highest correlation includes Cost a lot of classroom time (.858), Lack of enough opportunity for all the students to participate equally (.816), The teacher losses control over what is learned (.790), Lack of grammar work on the part of the student (.784).

The next step in the process is regression analysis. The regression analysis was undertaken with the variables that had the significance value greater than 0.05. The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 10 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>40.844</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.835</td>
<td>33.248</td>
<td>.000b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>2.106</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42.950</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table-10 above presents the model summary for the regression analysis for the framed hypothesis. The researcher first used the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in order to determine whether there is any statistically significant difference between the means of the dependent and independent variables. Firstly, the null hypothesis that is role-play does not possess any significant challenge on the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students is rejected since the p-value is coming to be .000 which is less than the significance value of 0.05. In addition to this, the F value is quite high (33.248) so the probability of accepting the alternate hypothesis is quite high and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Moreover, the variance as shown by the regression sum of square (40.844), is quite high in comparison to the residuals or the error variance.
Following this the regression analysis was conducted for the following hypothesis, the results are shown in Table 11. The results of which are as follows the value of R was .975; this value is used for examining the relationship between the dependent and the independent variable. The value of R Squared is .951 which tells how well the data fit the regression line.

Finally, the value of adjusted R squared came out to be .922 which tells how much the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable; here 92.2% variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable which is quite high.

Next in order to understand the extent of challenges role-play has on the English major students’ assessment the coefficient of regression was calculated. The result of which is presented in Table 12.

### Table 11: Model summary of hypothesis 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.975&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.951</td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>.41892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 12: Regression of hypothesis 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-1.442</td>
<td>.331</td>
<td>-4.352</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of professional and theoretical preparation on the part of teachers.</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost a lot of classroom time.</td>
<td>.732</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.535</td>
<td>4.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of enough opportunity for all the students to participate equally.</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>-.071</td>
<td>-.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of grammar work on the part of the student.</td>
<td>.147</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher loses control over what is learned.</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>1.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May not be taken seriously</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>2.766</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Big failure if the group participating does not understand the topic  |  .163 |  .175 |  .129 |  .930 |  .371 

As shown in the table above, the variables that had a significant value less than 0.05 include Cost a lot of classroom time (.001), May not be taken seriously (.017).

Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected; role-play does possess significant challenges in the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students.

Discussion
As highlighted by the various studies on role-play as a beneficial strategy, has proven to be very effective in increasing students’ enthusiasm, their self-confidence, empathy, critical thinking abilities, vocabulary and language skills (Alabsi, 2016; Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018, Kaover & Mbaukua, 2018; Zaidi et al., 2017, MacDonald, 2012; Krebt, 2017; Hidayat & Pardjono, 2018; Rashid & Qaisar, 2017). Moreover, role-play as a teaching strategy is a cost-effective and a fun way for both the students and teachers to exchange knowledge, thus positively impacting the students’ academic performance (Crow & Nelson, 2015). The similar pattern can be traced from the present study as well, where it was found that the role-play method tends to improve the average scores of the students as compared to the students taught using the traditional method. In terms of its impact on the student, role-play helps in increasing student motivation, develops their creativity, adds variety, brings a change in pace and opportunity for the English major students. Thus, it helps the teachers critically evaluate the individual student performance and provide solutions to their problems. Thus, role-play proved to be beneficial when it comes to the strategy for teaching and formative assessment. Altogether, discussing with the research questions of the study, role-play has a significant effect on teaching English and formative assessment of the undergraduate English-major students in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, it faces significant challenges in the formative assessment of the undergraduate English major students.

Conclusion
The present study highlighted the effectiveness of the role-play as a tool of teaching and formative assessment of the English major students of Saudi Arabia in the Riyadh region. The implementation of role-play has shown in attaining proficiency in the target language. Saudi Arabia has always been regarded as the country that has an innovative outlook in terms of education and has also recognized the English language as the vehicle for social and economic progress. However, it is seen that irrespective of the great achievements, the proficiency level of the students in terms of the English language still remains below the required standards and inadequate. The atmosphere of learning English is not influencing the students for several grounds including the traditional teaching strategies, incompetent instructors, and tedious learning materials. Thus the present study suggested role-playing as an effective technique that could use widely in order to solve the classroom interpersonal troubles, and it would help the students imbibing the human-relation skills among the students along with increasing their proficiency in the English language. Also, it helps the students with the vivid altercation and elucidation of their relationship with others. However, irrespective of the importance of the role-play technique in English teaching and assessment, the educational system of Saudi Arabia is still not able to completely apply the following technique in their teaching environment. Thus, the teachers should...
encourage working in the small group and facilitating dialogues and role-play in the English Language classrooms.

Acknowledgement
The researcher would like to thank Deanship of Scientific Research at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia for all the support it has provided towards the fulfillment of the current research.

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References


A Validity-Theoretic Approach to Interdiscursivity in Theresa May’s 2019 Resignation Speech

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Abstract
The present study seeks to propose Habermas’s (1976, 1992, 1998, 2001) validity-theoretic approach as a method for conducting political interdiscursive analysis. The approach is predicated on the methodological correlation between the three validity claims of truth, truthfulness, and rightness, on the one hand, and the respective speech acts of constatives, expressives, and regulatives, on the other. The data used for analysis is the resignation speech delivered by the ex-Prime Minister of the UK, Theresa May, on 24 May 2019 in Downing Street, following her political failure to deliver Brexit. The study derives its significance from attempting to uncover the pragma-argumentatively motivated interdiscursive patterns in May’s speech. In other words, the explanatory power of traditional interdiscursivity can be enhanced through integrating the pragma-argumentative component of validity-claim theory into the current form of political interdiscursive analysis. The study’s main finding is that, with the presence of pragma-argumentative links, there are four rationally oriented interdiscursive relations in May’s speech: (a) practical-aesthetic, (b) practical-theoretical, (c) theoretical-aesthetic, and (d) aesthetic-theoretical. Two crucial implications have emerged from this finding: (i) the dominant interdiscursive pattern in May’s speech is the practical-aesthetic interdiscourse, where May justifies her validity claims to truthfulness through the normative context of what best serves the UK’s political interests; (ii) both cases of theoretical-aesthetic and aesthetic-theoretical interdiscourses proved to have a dialectically interdiscursive meaning on the rational basis that two discourses are reciprocally justifying – and at some point, legitimating – each other.

Keywords: Brexit, interdiscursivity, Jürgen Habermas, resignation speech, speech acts, Theresa May, validity-theoretic approach

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.37
Introduction

Interdiscursive analysis has been methodologically established with Fairclough (1992) accentuating Foucault’s two insights of (i) “the constitutive nature of discourse” and (ii) “the primacy of interdiscursivity and intertextuality.” Taking Foucault’s latter insight further into the realm of textually oriented discourse analysis, Fairclough concludes that any discursive practice both derives its definition from “its relations with others” and “draws upon others in complex ways” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 55). Probably this led Fairclough (1992) to view the concept of interdiscursivity as being extensional to that of “intertextuality,” with the former described as being “the constitution of a text from a configuration of text types or discourse conventions” (p. 10); therefore, interdiscursivity can be described as being “constitutive intertextuality,” and thus as being distinct from “manifest intertextuality,” which represents “the heterogeneous constitution of texts out of specific other texts” (p. 85). Indeed, Fairclough’s argument is understandable should one consider the complex history of intertextuality in both the linguistic and the literary theories of Saussure (1916/1959), Bakhtin (1981), and Kristeva (1986).

There is yet another different discourse-analysis approach to interdiscursivity, notably recognized in Reisigl and Wodak’s (2001, 2009) Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as an established form of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The DHA broaches interdiscursivity in view of the nature of a discourse:

A “discourse” about a specific topic can find its starting point within one field of action and proceed through another one. Discourses and discourse topics ‘spread’ to different fields and discourses. They cross between fields, overlap, refer to each other or are in some other way socio-functionally linked with each other. (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, pp. 36-37; 2009, p. 90)

The DHA seems to characterize a discourse with topical aboutness, whereby the principle of interdiscursivity can be governed by how topics belonging to different discourses (that fall in distinct fields of action) overlap in texts.

It is rather unfortunate that the above two discourse-analytic approaches have not properly demonstrated the potentially pragmatic and argumentative dimensions to interdiscursivity as a textual phenomenon. The same holds for the recently conducted research on interdiscursive analysis (see below). Indeed, integrating the pragmatic and argumentative dimensions of speech acts into interdiscursive analysis can be methodologically productive: adducing significant insights to the process of revealing the boundaries of overlapping discourses that are argumentatively employed by text producers, and thereby rhetorically serving the communicative functions intended through the validity-based illocutionary forces of the producers’ utterances.

As shortly explained, Habermas (1992) demonstrates that each of the three communicative functions of representation, expression, and appeal are textually marked by three typical speech acts, respectively, constatives, expressives, and regulatives; these three speech acts potentially thematize three respective discourses, viz. theoretical, aesthetic, and practical. Given the fact that all textual practices are actions of communication, all three types of discourse are likely to emerge in any text wherein the producers utilize different speech acts for the sake of serving different
communicative functions, which would in turn be more liable to associate with a specific discourse – theoretically, aesthetically, or practically.

Thus, the present study hypothesizes that an ontologically rich model of interdiscursive analysis can be secured if Habermas’s (1976, 1992, 1998, 2001) validity-theoretic approach is adopted towards undertaking this form of analysis; with this approach, interdiscursive analysis can be conceptualized as a form of rational argumentation where the validity claims of truth, truthfulness, and rightness prominently figure in relevant speech acts in the claim-reason validating process. Habermas’s validity-theoretic approach to interdiscursivity is argued here to be capable of demonstrating how different discourses in one textual practice functionally intersect, to serve the overall communicative action, which brings together necessary aspects of communication, viz. topic, speaker/addresser, and recipient/addressee, as well as their corresponding functions of representation, expression, and appeal.

The data used for testing the preceding hypothesis is Theresa May’s resignation speech, delivered on 24 May 2019 in Downing Street at the critical timing following her political failure to deliver Brexit. It was initially observed that, whereas the main topic of May’s speech is her announcement to resign as the then Prime Minister of the UK and Leader of the Conservative Party, the many and various speech acts used by May have thematized different discourses with a rational basis of different validity claims; such validity claims have been brought in text with these speech acts; after all, then, as demonstrated below, the same discourses have become forms of argumentation linked through some of May’s speech acts, which assume the pragmatic roles of reasons for validating other speech acts.

It can be said, then, that both the rationale for and the significance of current research derive from its potential for enriching traditional interdiscursive analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 1992, 2010; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009) through integrating Habermas’s validity-theoretic approach into such a form of analyzing political discourse. With this methodological integration, a political interdiscursive analysis is likely to benefit from the pragma-argumentative association between the three main language functions and their corresponding speech acts, whose chain of reasoning ideally appears in the interrelationship between different discourse types; hence validity-claim interdiscursivity.

Thus, the present study addresses one overarching research question: What are the pragma-argumentatively motivated interdiscursive patterns in Theresa May’s 2019 resignation speech? For this question to be addressed, three sub-questions need to be answered: (1) What are the salient validity-bound speech acts produced by May in her speech? (2) How do such speech acts specify the different discourse types that May draws on in producing her speech? (3) Why are these speech-act-bound discourse types interconnected in the speech? Addressing all three sub-questions may well bridge the research gap encountered in the previous studies that have already undertaken different kinds of interdiscursive analysis – as presented in the coming section.

**Review of Literature**

suggested that “orders of discourse have primacy over particular types of discourse, and that the latter are constituted as configurations of diverse elements of order of discourse” (p. 124). Consequently, he defined interdiscursivity as “the constitution of a text from diverse discourses and genres” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 96).

By way of illustration, Fairclough (1992) has utilized the media discourse of *The Sun* to show that this discourse type has been constituted through a particular co-articulation of discourse types, which have been ordered by what Fairclough described as “a militarized discourse of criminality.” As Fairclough’s analysis demonstrated, such a discourse type in *The Sun*’s reports of news has been built around “the metaphor of criminals being ‘at war’ with society, and the society having to ‘mobilize its forces’ to fight them off” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 130).

Several studies have employed Fairclough’s method of interdiscursive analysis in examining different types of discourse. For example, Candlin and Maley (1997) examined texts that manifest interdiscursive relations between therapeutic and legal genres. Scollon (2002) undertook the methodological synergy of interdiscursive analysis and ethnography in a way that revealed how the news discourse and identity positions have been realized in the social context of family relations in Hong Kong. Additionally, the same form of interdiscursive discourse analysis was conducted by Bhatia (1995, 2004) on a variety of discourse types, e.g., news reporting and business advertising as well as public and bureaucratic communications.

Drawing on a discourse-historical approach (DHA), Reisigl and Wodak (2001) have proposed a different perspective to interdiscursivity as being “both the mutual relationships of discourses and the connection, intersecting or overlapping, of different discourses ‘within’ a particular heterogeneous linguistic product” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 37). Using an analytic strand of interdiscursivity, Reisigl and Wodak (2001) focused on the racist speech produced by Jörg Haider, the leader of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ). They concluded that the speech might be deemed “a hybrid mixture that contains both elements of an election speech and of an alehouse conversation” (p. 38).

Wu (2011) utilized Verschueren’s (1999) Linguistic Adaptation Theory (LAT) towards an interdiscursive analysis of data sets that bring together literary form and non-literary content. For instance, taken as a practical medium of interdiscursivity, a typical computer advertisement has been drawn from a newspaper published in China. Applying LAT to the advertisement has demonstrated the interdiscursive amalgamation of three essential components: (i) a unique feature consisting in locating a “beautiful and thought-provoking picture” at a salient position; (ii) the computer-specific verbal message below the picture, composed in a poetic form; and (iii) a photograph in the computer and its icon in the same advertisement. All three components have shown “the mixing of verbal message and visual art, and the blending of information and persuasion” (Wu, 2011, p. 96).

Focusing on the reproduction of three African National Congress (ANC) documents, Moloi and Bojabotsheha (2014) attempted a critical discourse analysis of the intertextuality and interdiscursivity in the ANC’s 1999, 2004, and 2009 national election manifestos. The study demonstrated that the ANC texts include multiple texts and voices, involving the Reconstruction
and Development Programme, the Freedom Charter, and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The texts and voices have been proven to be reproduced and invoked at relevant places in the ANC texts, with a view to lending credence to the ANC and investing it with an authoritative voice.

Abdul Rahman, Habil, and Osman (2017) investigated the interdiscursivity functions underlying professional communication, focusing on fifteen incident reports drawn from an oil and gas company. Findings from the analysis of these incident reports suggested that such reports contained three main interdiscursive functions, viz. descriptive, informative, and instructional. More recently, drawing on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as a form of critical discourse analysis, Muwafiq, Sumarlam, and Kristina (2018) explored the question of how intertextuality and interdiscursivity in the comments of Facebook users are a source of discrimination and repression to others. These comments amounted to responses to news updates under the topic of “Paris Tragedy by Kompas.com on its fans page.” The final analysis demonstrated how users’ comments imported overlapping discourses on religion, terrorism, law, and Middle-East conflict.

Feng (2019), using a genre-analysis method, analyzed a corpus of universities’ recruitment posts on WeChat in China. The study identified eight moves serving five different communicative functions. The corpus-data analysis demonstrated the WeChat recruitment posts to have had an “interdiscursive mix,” with one, *inter alia*, function: the co-presence of both policy discourse and promotional discourse. Very recently, Rajandran (2020) undertook an interdiscursive analysis on “earnings videos” in different languages (English, French, and Spanish) from corporations in the global finance industry. The analysis revealed how the genres (interview and presentations), styles (formal and casual), and discourses (financial accounting) have been intertwined to create an “interdiscursive mix” whereby the discourses in earnings videos have been tailored for marketization.

Now, having reviewed the relevant literature applying the notion of traditional interdiscursivity, it is time to propound the current study’s theoretical framework, which integrates the validity-theoretic approach into interdiscursive analysis, in the coming section.

**A Validity-Theoretic Approach to Interdiscursivity**

Influenced by Bühler’s (1934/2011) tripartite schema of communicative functions, Habermas (1976, 1992, 1998, 2001) developed his speech act theory. Therefore, before presenting Habermas’s theory, it is worth elucidating Bühler’s schema, which is predicated on the traditional communication model comprising three necessary elements: topic, sender, and recipient. For Bühler, language is an “Organon,” or a medium that serves, simultaneously, three interrelated functions corresponding to the previous three elements, viz. representation, expression, and appeal, respectively. Thus, based on Bühler’s Organon model, every act of communication, with its three necessary elements, is ideally supposed to involve three communicative functions: (i) with the topic of communication, the representational, referential, or descriptive function is highlighted; (ii) the sender or addresser is amenable to the expressive or emotive function of communication; and (iii) the recipient or addressee renders the appellative or conative function the explicit focus of communication.
Habermas (1976, 1992, 1998, 2001) has proposed a validity-theoretic interpretation of Bühler’s functional schema, with the former stipulating that a successful utterance should satisfy three validity claims: (i) “it must count as true for the participants insofar as it represents something in the world,” (ii) “it must count as truthful insofar as it expresses something intended by the speaker,” and (iii) “it must count as right insofar as it conforms to socially recognized expectations” (Habermas, 1998, p. 49). This can obviously be recognized in Habermas’s account of the three types of validity claims, which systematically correspond to the three components of communication and their relevant communicative functions. Thus, Habermas (1992) contends, the first dimension of validity is “truth conditions” (objective correctness or truth) in the “objective world,” relating to the topic of communication and its corresponding representational function; the second dimension of validity is “subjective truthfulness” (subjective correctness) in the “subjective world,” as corresponding to the speaker and the expressive function of communication; the third (validity) dimension is “normative rightness” (intersubjective correctness) in the “social world,” concerning the addressee and the appellative function (Habermas, 1992, p. 75).

The validity-theoretical interpretation of Bühler’s schema is intended by Habermas as “a way out of the difficulties of speech-act theory because it does justice to all three aspects of a speaker coming to an understanding with another person about something” (Habermas, 1992, p. 73). Consequently, Habermas has argued for a formal-pragmatic analysis of speech acts as a universal basis for explicating the nature of communicative action (Habermas, 1976, 1998). This is clear from Habermas’s correlation of the three validity claims and their typical speech acts, which are argued to be “thematical linked with one validity claim”; or the validity claims of truth, authenticity, and rightness are typically thematized in different kinds of speech acts (or “three basic modes”): constative, expressive, and regulative, respectively (Habermas, 1992, p. 77).

Indeed, based on the foregoing correlation, Habermas (1998) intended his speech act theory to be a form of universal pragmatics that differs from other theories of meaning (e.g., Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976) in one essential respect: the meanings of linguistic expressions are relevant insofar as they are used in speech acts that “satisfy the validity claims of truth, truthfulness, and normative rightness,” indicated above; further, to him, such a form of universal pragmatics is distinguished from “empirical pragmatics” (e.g., sociolinguistics), in that the meanings of linguistic expressions are determinable by “formal properties of speech situations in general, and not by particular situations of use” (Habermas, 1998, p. 52). Thus, Habermas views speech as having a systematic structure of its own, with speech acts as the elementary units of speech itself, precisely the same as language owes its structure to grammatical sentences as the elementary units of language itself.

Crucially, Habermas (2001) has offered a more detailed classification of the three primary speech acts of constatives, expressives, and regulatives. First, he explains the nature of constative speech acts as typically expressed in the meaning of “to assert,” and thereby giving expression to the cognitive use of sentences; this type of speech acts is divided into two subclasses (p. 83): (a) “To assert” as “representing the assertoric use of propositions”: “to describe, to report, to inform, to narrate, to illustrate, to note, to show, to explain, to predict, etc.”; (b) “To assert” as denoting the specific pragmatic meaning of the truth claim of propositions”: “to affirm, to aver, to contend, to deny, to contest, to doubt.” Second, Habermas (p. 83) highlights expressives as expressing the pragmatic meaning of “the speaker’s self-presentation to an audience,” with the speaker bringing
to expression his/her “intentions, attitudes, and experiences”; examples of expressive speech acts are “to know, to think, to believe, to hope, to fear, to like, to wish, to want, to decide, and so on” as well as other related verbal instances: “to reveal, to disclose, to betray, to confess, to express, to hide, to conceal, to pretend, to obscure,” and so on. Third, Habermas employs his term of “regulatives” to describe a special class of speech acts that expresses “the normative meaning of the interpersonal relations that are established”; examples of this class are legion: “to order, to demand, to request, to require, to remind, to forbid, to allow, to suggest, to refuse, to oppose, to commit oneself, to promise, to agree upon, to apologize, to forgive, to propose, to decline … and so on” (Habermas, 2001, p. 83).

At this point, then, as demonstrated in Table 1, Habermas’s (1998) speech act theory can be said to rest on a complex web of correlations that involves different parameters of (i) domain of reality (external nature, internal nature, society), (ii) modes of communication (cognitive, expressive, interactive), (iii) validity claims (truth, truthfulness, rightness), and (iv) general speech functions (representing facts, disclosing speaker’s subjectivity, establishing legitimate interpersonal relations). Significantly, as Habermas (1992) argues, in order for these correlations to obtain, the speech acts of constatives, expressives, and regulatives need to have what he describes as “manners of referring” that are distinctive of three ontological worlds: respectively, the “objective world” of the communicated topic, the “subjective world (of the speaker),” and the “social world (of the speaker, the hearer, and other members)” (Habermas, 1992, pp. 75-76).

Table 1. The complex web of correlations underlying Habermas’s speech act theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains of reality</th>
<th>Modes of communication</th>
<th>Validity claims</th>
<th>General functions of speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The&quot; world of external nature</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Truth</td>
<td>Representation of facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;My&quot; world of internal nature</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>Truthfulness</td>
<td>Disclosure of speaker’s subjectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Our&quot; world of society</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>Rightness</td>
<td>Establishment of legitimate interpersonal relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1. Adapted from Habermas (1998, p. 92)

According to Habermas, validity claims, which are thematized in their corresponding speech acts (constatives, expressives, and regulatives), thematize three discourse types. Alexander (1991) argues that, based on Habermas’s theory of communicative action, the three validity claims are thematized by three respective discourses (p. 54): First, the discourse that thematizes the validity claim to objective truth is “theoretical,” with constative or assertive speech acts being dominantly used in a way that accentuates the representational function describing the topic of communication; second, the discourse that thematizes the validity claim to subjective truthfulness is “aesthetic,” with expressive speech acts dominating communication in a way that stresses the emotive function expressed by the speaker or addressee; third, the discourse that thematizes the validity claim to intersubjective rightness is “practical,” with regulative speech acts becoming the explicit focus of
communication in such a way that foregrounds the appellative function directed towards the recipient or addressee.

Perhaps, now, it has become clear that Habermas’s tripartite validity-theoretic approach opens up the possibility of how the three different – albeit pragmatically reconcilable – types of discourse (theoretical, aesthetic, practical) can overlap through communication in a way that can explain speech-act-bound interdiscursivity. But, interestingly, it can be argued that this is possible because Habermas’s approach is oriented towards argumentation and its discursive realization in different text types or genres. Of course, this is understandable from the point that the communicative actor is obliged to “provide reasons for the validity of the claims he raises with his utterances”; and this would, in turn, entail “demanding forms of argumentation,” which can be called “‘discourse’” (Cooke, 1998, p. 4).

On this point, following Kopperschmidt (2000), Reisigl (2014, p. 73) maintains that all speech-act types can fulfill the argumentative function of “justifying or questioning validity claims that have become problematic or have been questioned”; and therefore, for example, through Habermas’s distinction, “we can state that truth and normative rightness relate to argumentation in various theoretical and practical contexts of social life.” Thus, at an interdiscursive level, the practical discourse linguistically marked by regulative speech acts towards fulfilling the validity claim of normative rightness can argumentatively be utilized in justifying or questioning the theoretical discourse marked by constative speech acts towards the validity claim of objective correctness or truth; and so is the case with the aesthetic discourse that is linguistically marked by expressive speech acts towards the validity claim of (the speaker’s) subjective correctness or authenticity.

**Methodology**

This section discusses the data used for conducting a form of validity-theoretic interdiscursive analysis in terms of its textual and contextual details as well as the methodological procedure followed towards undertaking this form of analysis.

**Data**

The current study is dedicated to analysing a single set of data; that is, the resignation speech delivered by the ex-Prime Minister and Conservative Party Leader in the UK, Theresa May. The speech was given on Friday, 24 May 2019, in Downing Street. The speech’s significance can be ascribed to May’s seminal declaration that she would step down as the Conservative Party Leader on Friday, 7 June 2019, due to her failure to deliver Brexit. Speaking of the speech’s political context, it can be said that May’s failure to deliver Brexit has been the sole reason for announcing her official resignation, and thus for the production of the speech as a whole. Indeed, May’s announcement followed immediately after she met with Graham Brady, the chair of the backbench Tory 1922 Committee; the committee was then intent on launching a second vote of no confidence in May’s leadership in case she declined to resign.

**Procedure**

The methodological procedure followed in the present study proceeded at two stages. The first stage is mainly descriptive, and it has been concerned with the two phases of (i) identifying all
May’s speech acts, with a particular focus on the three types of constatives, expressives, and regulatives, as well as (ii) describing the validity claims enacted by the illocutionary forces of such speech acts and demonstrating the different types of discourse thematizing these validity claims throughout the speech. The second stage is explanatory; it has focused on the potential interdiscursive meanings emerging from the interfaces holding between the three types of discourse, viz. theoretical, aesthetic, and practical.

**A Validity-Theoretic Interdiscursive Analysis of Theresa May’s 2019 Resignation Speech**

The present section applies Habermas’s validity-theoretic approach to the interdiscursive analysis of Theresa May’s 2019 resignation speech. May opens her speech with an expressive speech act of self-praise:

*Extract 1:*

_Ever since I first stepped through the door behind me as Prime Minister, I have striven to make the United Kingdom a country that works not just for a privileged few, but for everyone.*

As observed in Extract one, May gives full expression to a moment of self-praise, which is linguistically marked by her use of the first-person singular pronoun “I” that contextually refers to May as the Prime Minister of the UK. In this official capacity, she has initiated the commendable act of striving “to make the United Kingdom a country that works … for everyone.” At this initial point of the whole speech, the current speech act of May’s self-praise renders her the centre of an aesthetic discourse that commits her to a validity claim of truthfulness, accentuating her expressive attitude towards the UK as working “not just for a privileged few,” but for all. However, such an expressive act of self-praise lacks any validity conditions that prove May’s claim to truthfulness; and these conditions are conspicuously absent from her following speech acts, which pragmatically stand as no reasons for her subjective claim; thus, May’s speech at this point evinces no discursive redemption for her validity claim to truthfulness.

Following May’s above argumentatively unredeemed aesthetic discourse is a different kind of discourse; that is, a theoretical discourse, which is thematized by her use of two consecutive constative speech acts in Extract two:

*Extract 2:*

*Back in 2016, we gave the British people a choice. Against all predictions, the British voted to leave the European Union.*

From the above extract, the first constative speech act is initiated with another official first-person pronoun, but this time it is the plural “we” as referring to both May and the rest of her ministerial cabinet. Thus, May has moved from the self-referential “I” dominating the aesthetic discourse in Extract one to the collective institutional “we” initiating the constative speech act’s propositional content of giving the British people the choice of whether to leave the European Union; the same speech act has been followed by another constative speech act about the British voting “to leave the European Union.” Both constative speech acts, then, commit May to the validity claim of two sequential propositions of truth: (i) The British government giving the British people the chance to choose in 2016 and (ii) the British making a choice in favour of leaving the
EU. Thus, the current theoretical discourse features May’s objectivating attitude towards a political, objective world wherein the British people and the EU take centre stage.

In Extract three, leaving the theoretical discourse on the British people and the EU, May has shifted to two different discourse types, one is aesthetic and the other practical:

Extract 3:
*I feel as certain today as I did three years ago that in a democracy, if you give people a choice you have a duty to implement what they decide.*

The first aesthetic type of discourse is thematized by an expressive speech act of self-confidence that begins with the explicitly subjective expression “I feel ….” What matters in May’s use of this expressive utterance is its illocutionary force concerning May’s politically assertive attitude; this attitude has already prepared the audience for the following regulative speech act: “… in a democracy, if you give people a choice you have a duty to implement what they decide.” Indeed, the current regulative speech act has been subtly embedded into a broader hypothetical frame of conditional if, where the expression “have a duty” semantically amounts to a deontic commitment to the normative rightness of implementing what the people have voted for or chosen. The generic second-person pronoun “you” in the second utterance is meant to denote any person in charge, officially held responsible for the moral act of fulfilling the democratic right of the people to choose what they think is politically appropriate for them and their country. But, contextually, that “you” purports to signify May and the Conservative Party she presides over. Perhaps, this practical type of discourse features May’s interpersonal attitude towards both her Conservative Party and her political persona as a political leader of the same party.

Thus, it can be said that the latter practical discourse type is thematized by a regulative speech act that assumes the pragmatic role of a reason for May’s former aesthetic discourse type of self-confidence: a leader who trusts her political vision. Eventually, May’s emerging aesthetic-practical interdiscourse is argumentatively connected as speech acts that stand in a claim-reason relationship.

Moving to Extract four, one encounters a whole nexus of different discourses thematized by three main speech acts uttered by May:

Extract 4:
*I negotiated the terms of our exit and a new relationship with our closest neighbours that protects jobs, our security and our union. I have done everything I can to convince MPs to back that deal. Sadly, I have not been able to do so. I tried three times. I believe it was right to persevere, even when the odds against success seemed high.*

The extract above opens with a constative speech act, where May commits herself (as Prime Minister) to the truth claim of negotiating the terms of Britain’s exit from the EU with MPs; such a claim has been justified by a compelling premise: “that protects jobs, our security and our union.” The premise has argumentatively validated a theoretical discourse type that presents May’s objectivating attitude towards an external world where Brexit, to May and her party, stands as a
solution to grave domestic problems in the UK. The second speech act is explicitly expressive in that the utterance is prefaced with the attitudinal adverb “Sadly,” which accentuates May’s truthfulness to the propositional content of her feelings of disappointment over the failure to convince the MPs of backing the Brexit deal; this speech act can be said to thematize an aesthetic discourse that reflects May’s expressive attitude towards an internal (subjective) world where May acknowledges that she has been at odds with her political opponents over the Brexit deal. Interesting about May’s expressive speech act and attitude is that they both emerge as a consequence of her constative speech act and objectivating attitude. Hence an argumentative link between the two speech acts, with May’s former claim of truth justifying her latter claim of truthfulness. Such a link can be argued to establish an interdiscursive meaning derived from the theoretical-aesthetic interdiscourse standing at this point in May’s speech.

The last speech act closing Extract four is implicitly regulative on the grounds that it is embedded in May’s expressive speech act, which begins with the personal formula “I believe …”; but such a regulative speech act is linguistically marked with the embedded expression “it was right to persevere …,” where an explicit realization of May’s claim to normative rightness is thematically stressed. At this point, May draws mainly on a practical discourse that justifies her validity claim to what seems to her morally correct, even in the face of unlikely success on her part. This practical type of discourse features May’s performative attitude towards an intersubjective world where May antagonizes her political opponents in a more or less morally normative context – what serves the UK’s interests best. Here, one may observe how May’s current practical discourse justifies her previous aesthetic discourse that has been thematized by May using the expressive speech act of grief over her failure to convince the MPs of backing the Brexit deal. The present argumentative link between the two types of discourse (aesthetic and practical) obtains as a result of May’s validity claims to truthfulness and rightness, respectively, with the latter offering a normative context for the former; and thereby morally justifying it.

The next extract (Extract five) is predicated on two different speech acts that thematize two different discourse types:

Extract 5:
But it is now clear to me that it is in the best interest of the country for a new Prime Minister to lead that effort. So I am today announcing that I will resign as leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party on Friday, 7 June, so that a successor can be chosen.

The first is the regulative speech act at the beginning of the extract: “But it is now clear to me that it is in the best interest of the country … effort.” It is through her use of this speech act that May conforms to a validity claim of rightness, which is underlain by the normative context of what ought to be in the best interest of the country (the UK); this validity claim consists in May’s recommendation that a new Prime Minister should lead her efforts to fulfill the Brexit deal. Thus, with May’s current regulative speech act, this Brexit deal is enacted by a practical discourse whereby May’s performative attitude towards an intersubjective world, which combines May and her audience, is thematically focused.
Crucially, May’s preceding regulative speech act stands pragmatically as a reason for the following expressive speech act, with May committing herself to a validity claim of truthfulness; that is, she intends to “resign as leader … chosen.” This is where an aesthetic type of discourse follows the earlier practical discourse on the necessity of the UK having new leadership. Indeed, it can be said that while the former practical discourse relates to a socio-political world that involves the normative context about what serves the UK best (that is, May’s resignation and the choice of a successor), the latter aesthetic discourse appertains to the subjective world of May intending to resign. Thus, again, the argumentative link between the two types of speech act (regulative and expressive) and their rational basis of validity claims have created an interdiscursive meaning enabled by a practical-aesthetic interdiscourse.

In Extract six, there emerges a whole pattern of interdiscourse with a recurrent shift from the theoretical to the practical types of discourse:

Extract 6:
I have agreed with the Party Chairman and with the Chairman of the 1922 Committee that the process for electing a new leader should begin in the following week. I have kept Her Majesty the Queen fully informed of my intentions, and I will continue to serve as her Prime Minister until the process has concluded.

Extract six opens with a constative speech act whereby May informs the audience about her agreement with “the Party Chairman and with the Chairman of the 1922 Committee” over the timing of electing a new leader. With this communicative act, May commits herself to a validity claim of truth about the propositional content of her agreement. Yet, significantly, embedded in such a constative speech act is another regulative speech act: “… the process for electing a new leader should begin in the following week.” Using the deontic-modality marker “should” renders May conformative to a validity claim of normative rightness, ought validity, or what is being officially right in the given context; and contextually, such a validity claim to rightness is predicated on the preceding validity claim of her objective truth. Interestingly at this meeting point, theoretical and practical discourse types are rationally interfaced; that is, May’s validity claim to truth is justified by the what-should-be-done normative context as a continuation of the previous normative background of what ought to be in the political interest of the UK. This should shed light on the discursive continuity in May’s resignation speech, which appears here reinforced by the theoretical-practical interdiscourse thematized by consecutive speech acts, constative and regulative, and their corresponding validity claims.

Continuing with Extract six, May proceeds with another interdiscursive pattern where the two theoretical and expressive types of discourse are interfaced. First, May utters a constative speech act whereby she notifies the audience about keeping Her Majesty the Queen fully informed of the former’s intentions; thus, May commits herself to the truth of the proposition of this notification, and simultaneously thematizes a theoretical discourse on this important event, that is, the communicative channel held between her and the Queen. Second, following the previous constative speech act is May’s expressive speech act whereby she voices her intention to “continue to serve as her Prime Minister until the process has concluded.” Of course, this expressive speech act commits May to a validity claim of subjective truthfulness, with an aesthetic type of discourse on her intention.
Indeed, whereas there seems to be no manifestly argumentative link between the two speech acts, constative and expressive, the former constative speech act can be said to rationally reinforce the former expressive speech act: May’s validity claim to the truth about her contact with the Queen does contribute to the sincerity of her validity claim to the truthfulness about her intention to continue to serve as Prime Minister till the process is completed; in other words, among the validity conditions for May’s claim to truthfulness is the fact that she has already been in touch with the Queen. Thus, at this point, a theoretical-expressive interdiscourse may emerge on some rational grounds.

Towards the end of May’s speech, a whole argumentative pattern of interdiscursive links appear. This spans over a series of speech acts in Extract seven:

Extract 7:

But the unique privilege of this office is to use this platform to give a voice to the voiceless, to fight the burning injustices that still scar our society.

That is why I put proper funding for mental health at the heart of our N.H.S. long-term plan. It is why I am ending the postcode lottery for survivors of domestic abuse. It is why the Race Disparity Audit and gender pay reporting are shining a light on inequality, so it has nowhere to hide. And it is why I set up the independent public inquiry into the tragedy at Grenfell Tower …

This is the most extensive speech extract analyzed so far; it is initiated with an expressive speech act that commits May to an evaluation of the office of Prime Minister in the UK, as a “platform to give a voice to the voiceless, to fight the burning injustices that still scar our society.” This kind of expressive speech thematizes an aesthetic discourse whereby May sets up her subjective world (her political vision) of the responsibilities and duties lying with her position as Prime Minister; and, crucially, it is through such an expressive act that she manifests her validity claim to truthfulness in the expression of these official responsibilities and duties.

May’s expressive speech act, and thus aesthetic discourse, offers a rationale for the four consecutive constative speech acts that immediately follow: (a) “I put proper funding for … plan,” (b) “I am ending … abuse,” (c) “the Race Disparity Audit and gender … hide,” and (d) “I set up the independent public inquiry into the tragedy at Grenfell Tower.” This creates a claim-reason aspect of argumentation that has been made linguistically explicit through the phrasal unit “That/It is why” repeated in Extract seven.

Interestingly, here, May prefaces all four constative speech acts with this phrasal unit of argumentation (“That/It is why”) as an indicator of the pragmatic role of these acts; specifically, consequences justified by May’s validity claim to the truthfulness of her expressive speech act and the aesthetic discourse on what the office of Prime Minister in the UK should ideally be. Notably, all four consequences are introduced as four propositional contents of the constative speech acts that thematize nearly the same theoretical discourse: the outcome of May’s previous aesthetic discourse at the outset of Extract seven. Thus, the main aesthetic-theoretical interdiscourse emerges as a form of argumentation underlain by the truthfulness-truth validity claim co-thematized in the expressive-constative speech act structure in the extract.
Conclusion: Findings and Implications

Now, it can be said that Habermas’s validity-theoretic approach to interdiscursive analysis has methodologically operated efficiently towards demarcating the boundaries of three types of discourse in Theresa May’s 2019 resignation speech, namely, theoretical, aesthetic, and practical; and each type of discourse has been thematized by one typical speech act produced by May towards fulfilling certain communicative functions. The whole point can be captured at three levels of discourse types.

First, at the level of theoretical discourse, constative speech acts served the function of May representing certain political events, namely, (1) the British people being given a choice in 2016, (2) The British voting to leave the EU, (3) May negotiating the terms of Britain’s exit from the EU with MPs, (4) May informing the audience about her agreement with the Party Chairman over the time of electing a new leader, (5) May notifying the audience about keeping the Queen fully informed of the former’s intentions, etc. Second, at the level of aesthetic discourse, expressive speech acts served the function of May expressing her intentions, viz. (1) May praising herself for striving to make the UK a country that works for everyone, (2) May expressing her self-confidence as the then Prime Minister of the UK, (3) May grieving over her failure to convince the MPs of backing the Brexit deal, (4) May expressing her intention to resign as Leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party on 7 June, and (5) May evaluating the office of Prime Minister in the UK as a platform to give a voice to the voiceless. Third, at the level of practical discourse, regulative speech acts served the function of May interacting with the audience in several ways: (1) holding the government in a democracy responsible for implementing people’s decision, (2) May being right to persevere in the face of the MPs rejecting the Brexit deal, (3) the appointment of a new Prime Minister as normatively serving the best interest of the UK, and (4) the necessity of beginning the process for electing a new leader in the following week (as May uttering this regulative speech act).

Such a corresponding relation between the classification of speech acts and the types of discourse has been established on the rational basis of argumentation, with three validity claims in operation: (i) objective truth as thematized in constative speech acts and represented in theoretical discourse, (ii) subjective truthfulness thematized in expressive speech acts and expressed in aesthetic discourse, and (iii) normative rightness thematized in regulative speech acts and interpersonally established in practical discourse. Thus, towards proving the hypothesis that Habermas’s validity-theoretic approach can yield a more ontologically rich model of interdiscursive analysis, May’s interdiscursive meanings have been traced through the different types of discourse on the communicative action of announcing her resignation as the UK Prime Minister and Leader of Conservative Party. By highlighting the argumentative links rationally relating the speech acts in May’s speech and the discourses intersecting accordingly, May has been demonstrated to employ the three validity claims of truth, truthfulness, and rightness in specific forms of argumentation. Thus, it can be argued, as exhibited in Table 2, that in May’s speech, interdiscursive meanings are inseparable from the argumentative process of claim validation as instantiated in the interrelated speech acts and their respective interdiscourses.
The current study has addressed the main research question raised in the introduction (and the sub-questions related to it) in a way that yielded the following main finding arising from the theoretic-validity interdiscursive analysis conducted earlier above: In May’s 2019 resignation speech, there are four speech-act-bound interdiscursive relations: (a) practical-aesthetic interdiscourse, (b) practical-theoretical interdiscourse, (c) theoretical-aesthetic interdiscourse, and (d) aesthetic-theoretical interdiscourse. The preceding finding has had several significant implications in the interdiscursive analysis of May’s speech. First, all four interdiscursive relations have come into textual being only on account of the existence of argumentative links whereby one discourse justifies another; thus, for example, as shown in the analysis, in May’s speech, three raised validity claims (raised in expressive speech acts) to aspects of the truthfulness of her intentions have been justified by three regulative speech acts with relevant normative contexts, whereby a reasoning process for May’s intentions obtained.

The second implication pertains to the dominant interdiscursive pattern appearing in May’s speech, that is, the practical-aesthetic interdiscourse as employed three times in the whole speech. This interdiscursive pattern emerged from the rational basis whereupon May has recurrently used regulative speech acts as pragmatic reasons for her expressive speech acts. Perhaps this may be ascribed to the fact that generally regulative speech acts provide normative backgrounds and contexts against which the subjective intentions of speakers can be justified with societal ought-to-be norms at play. The third implication consists in the interdiscursive relation holding between the practical discourse thematized by May’s regulative speech act of what is being officially right, on the one hand, and the theoretical discourse thematized by her constative speech act with the

<table>
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<th>Thematizing speech acts</th>
<th>Interdiscursive meaning of claim validation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical-aesthetic</td>
<td>Regulative-expressive</td>
<td>The normative context of what is politically in the best interest of the UK justifies May’s intentions about her (i) self-confidence as Prime minister, (ii) grief over the failure to convince the MPs of backing the Brexit deal, and (iii) decision to resign as leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical-theoretical</td>
<td>Regulative-constative</td>
<td>The normative background of what is officially right justifies May’s propositional content of informing the audience about her agreement with the Party Chairman and with the Chairman of the 1922 Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical-aesthetic</td>
<td>Constative-expressive</td>
<td>May’s expression of her intention to continue in office till the end of election process is rationally reinforced by the propositional-content truth of May notifying the audience about keeping the Queen fully informed of May’s intentions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic-theoretical</td>
<td>Expressive-constative</td>
<td>May’s expression of evaluating the office of Prime Minister in the UK justifies the truth of four aspects of propositional content: (i) proper funding for the N.H.S long-term plan, (ii) the post code lottery for survivors of domestic abuse, (iii) Race Disparity Audit and gender pay reporting, and (iv) the independent public inquiry into the tragedy at Grenfell Tower.</td>
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propositional content of May informing the audience about her agreement with the Party Chairman over the time of electing a new leader, on the other hand. Notably, with the former regulative speech act embedded in the latter constative speech act, the practical type of discourse has been textually situated in the broader theoretical type of discourse, mainly for argumentatively supporting this kind of theoretical discourse.

The fourth, and last, implication deriving from the main finding of interdiscursive patterns in May’s speech relates to the third and fourth cases of interdiscursivity, namely, theoretical-aesthetic and aesthetic-theoretical types of interdiscourse. Both cases of interdiscursivity indicate what may be called a *dialectical interdiscursive meaning*, which is argumentatively enabled, mainly by each of the two interdiscourses rationalizing the other. This may be explained against the observation that *virtually all the interdiscursive patterns heavily figuring in May’s speech have been pragma-argumentatively motivated*. As shown in the interdiscursive analysis above, May has imparted the pragmatic role of *reason* to both constative and expressive speech acts in relation to each other; this aspect has strongly featured throughout the validity-theoretic analysis conducted on the speech.

One final point remains: prospects for further research on employing Habermas’s validity-theoretic approach towards interdiscursive analysis. Indeed, applying the same approach to other different texts and genres may well prove interesting and revealing, particularly insofar as the potential for finding other or similar patterns of interdiscursivity is concerned. Perhaps, due to genre-specific variations, the approach might operate differently, and thereby bringing out new patterns of interdiscursive meanings.

**Acknowledgements**

This project was supported by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University under the research project No. 2020/02/16348.

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**References**


Attitudes of EFL Teachers toward the Competency Based Language Teaching: The Case of South Algerian Secondary Schools in Adrar

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Abstract
After more than seventeen years of implementation (2003) in the Algerian educational system, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers react unexpectedly to the Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT). They show resistance and resilience to change via variable attitudes towards CBLT. The paper reports the results of a field investigation carried out in eight secondary schools in Adrar, cultural and administrative capital of the southwest of Algeria. It assesses south Algerian EFL teachers’ attitudes towards CBLT through a questionnaire administered to twenty educators. The most striking answers are the teachers’ negative attitudes and diverging opinions toward its “top-down” implementation. The findings highlight a major issue to the Ministry of Education, the syllabus designers and the teachers at the micro-level, for they impact negatively on the spread and success of CBLT. The paper invites for debates about curricula and pedagogy in Algeria.

Keywords: Adrar, Algeria, secondary schools, Competency-Based Language Teaching, English as a Foreign Language

Cite as: Bouhania, B. (2020). Attitudes of EFL Teachers toward the Competency Based Language Teaching. The Case of South Algerian Secondary Schools in Adrar. Arab World English Journal, 11(3) 585-598.
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.38
Introduction
The Competency-Based Approach (CBA) was introduced for the first time in American schools in the 1960s. The theory was based on cognitive, socio-educational, and socio-constructivist principles to enable learners produce correct spoken and written language through meaningful sentences. Other objectives were teaching the learners the so-called ‘know-how-to-do’, ‘know-how-to-act’, and ‘know-how-to-be’ standards; in a few words, how to behave competently in front of any tasks, situations, and contexts. Those meta-linguistic activities were supposed to train the learners to be skilled people able to confront and deal with the real world.

In September 2003, the Algerian Ministry of Education adopts CBA for the teaching of Mathematics, Physics, and Arabic. On page 4, the Program of English as a Second Foreign Language: First Year Middle School Teachers’ Guide (2003) defines the new approach in the following terms: “...a know how to act process which interacts and mobilizes a set of capacities, skills and an amount of knowledge that will be used effectively in various problem-situations or in circumstances that have never occurred before.” (as cited in Benadla, 2013, p:146)

Nowadays, local and national academies of education see that CBA is the most suitable teaching method for preparing the learners to meet and understand a foreign culture, or an unfamiliar person. Hence, Rezig (2011) links motivation to social context when she admits that: “some students who develop a negative attitude to the foreign language culture have learning differences because of the striking cultural differences between the Algerian and the English societies.” (p:1330)

Within CBA, the learners develop their own cognitive and socio-constructive skills by knowing more about the various and different cultures and civilizations of the world, mainly the European. Its ultimate aim is improving the skills and knowledge acquired by the learners not only at school but also in everyday life. Thus, CBA is not a learning-teaching strategy based on the learners’ mnemonic abilities; instead, it reinforces their intellectual capacities (Richards & Rogers, 2001).

The current paper reports on the results of a field research which ultimate aim is to direct scholarly attention to EFL teachers’ experience after implementing CBLT into the Algerian educational institutions and, most particularly, to foreign language teaching programs. The main questions are: (1) How do south Algerian EFL teachers behave towards the new pedagogy? (2) What are the main hindrances to such an implementation? And (3) Is CBLT successful in Algeria? The findings provide first-hand explanations and accounts of south Algerian EFL teachers’ practices in teaching English within the new approach.

Literature Review
Implementing CBA/CBLT to Algerian schools
The governmental decision regarding the application of CBA and CBLT to the whole Algerian educational system sought the promotion of new methods of teaching the sciences, Mathematics and Physics, and foreign languages, i.e., English and French. From September 2003 onwards, CBLT was introduced into Algerian middle and secondary schools through a “top-down” decision,
that is to say, from the macro-level (Ministry of Education) to the meso- (academies of education) and micro-level (the teachers and school directors). The approach focussed on the learner rather than on the teacher, i.e., it was learner-oriented. Yet, one of its main drawbacks was the teachers’ and learners’ entry and exit profiles, which were not taken into consideration while importing it from the US (Bouhadiba, 2006). The teachers, for instance, did not receive any training with the new techniques of language teaching. The fact that they were not prepared to use the novel method caused undesirable results at the pedagogical level. More than that, the educators opposed strong defiance towards the modern techniques and resorted to carrying on with the traditional methods of language teaching based on the blackboard and the textbook. Additionally, under CBA and CBLT, the pupils have become learners looking for grades rather than knowledge.

The implementation of CBA and CBLT induced changes in attitudes, behaviors, and roles of both teachers and learners. On the other hand, the pupils got demoralized because the new methods necessitated their full involvement in the teaching-learning process (Bouhania, 2019). Hence, their interest in language learning was either instrumental, i.e., getting diplomas to fetch for jobs, or vocational, learning English or French for chatting and exchanging ideas with foreigners, or for traveling and tourism (Bouhadiba, 2006; Sarnou, Koç, Houcine & Bouhadiba, 2012). Within CBLT, the English language lost its communicative nature, and the learners got concerned with classroom activities, only (Benadla, 2013).

Seventeen years after its introduction to Algerian educational agencies, CBLT is still debatable, particularly between the Ministry of Education, local academies of national education, school administrations, education inspectors, teachers, and finally, the pupils and their parents. The next lines focus on the main actors of CBLT in Algeria, the teachers, with particular considerations to their attitudes towards the various “top-down” processes within the CBA/CBLT paradigm.

CBLT Teachers and Learners
The teachers and the learners are the main characters of CBA/CBLT. The teachers execute their new duties as part of the latest teaching strategies, while the learners have to play other parts and perform different learning strategies. The roles of the teachers change from evaluating and monitoring to autonomous instruction. Their tasks consist in helping the learners be responsible, participate to the learning process, and share in knowledge building through discovery activities and learning schemes. Therefore, the teachers, have become the guides, the counselors, and the facilitators. They take part into debates with students to facilitate their passage from passive consumers to active producers of knowledge (Bouhadiba, 2015).

One of the main goals of CBA is teaching the learners how to put into practice their acquired knowledge in realistic circumstances. More than being creative, CBA learners must have critical thinking and the capacity to deal with concrete and real-life issues in real-world circumstances. The learners challenge themselves and cooperate with their classmates. They also take part in classroom activities by proposing elaborations.
EFL in Algeria

In Algeria, various academic papers dealt with the English language teaching and learning issues at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Some tackled the subject of motivation in class and what were the main demotivating factors that hindered the process. (Soulimane-Benhabib, 2015). The conclusions were twofold; first, the teacher’s personality, and the learners’ negative attitudes towards both the foreign language and the community where it is used were hindering rather than encouraging the learning process. And second, the teaching materials, such as the course book and the blackboard, were judged quite irrelevant.

Other researchers were concerned with the reading skill (Chelli, 2013; Torki, 2013). Their concern was about the reasons that foster or inhibit fluency in that productive skill. Another concern was the learning material and the role it played in the teaching-learning process from the perspectives of both secondary school and university teachers and learners (Torki, 2013; Ladaci, 2017). According to Torki (2013), the teachers complain about the learners’ low level at the reading and writing levels; on the other hand, schoolchildren, as well as university students (Ladaci, 2017) criticize the teaching materials that they deem unsuitable for the learning process. Ladaci (2017) considers the use of technology in the classroom as a must rather than an option. For her, the use of ICT in the 21st century means not relying on traditional or instructional methods of language teaching. Kondos (2018), on her part, affirms that the use of the “new technology” such as computers, laptops, digital workbooks and digital boards differ substantially from the “old technology” such as blackboards, whiteboards and textbooks. As an example, the computer in class enables learners to “acquire an inquiring, critical and creative mind to capitalize on the opportunities driven by the growth of information, knowledge and technology” (p:220). She further declares that technology has become part of the foreign language teachers’ skill, particularly for those teaching EFL.

For Boudersa (2013), the reading and writing skills are part and parcel of the literacy paradigm; yet, they are not determinant aspects for the boosting of the learners’ levels of literacy. She explained that: “The reason behind this is that this tendency which concentrates on reading and writing reflects a limited view of literacy as a dynamic concept that encompasses several social and cultural aspects in reading and writing practices” (p:284).

According to Hamadouche (2013) there is a clear impact of the English language and its culture on Algerian EFL learners. This effect is noticeable in the attitudes of the learners vis-à-vis both the language and its native users. Hamadouche (2013) emphasises the fact that the young Algerian EFL learners make errors simply because they do not know the English sociolinguistic conventions for language use (Paige, Jorstad, Paulson, Klein & Colby, 1999), and also because they are far from the right sociocultural context. In other words, EFL learners in Algerian schools do not put into practice the language they learn. Hence, there is no way they can know how to perform it in real-life situations.

To verify whether the implementation of CBLT in Algeria was successful or not, the present study analyses results obtained out of a field-research carried out at some secondary schools in the administrative department of Adrar. The EFL
teachers involved in the research belong to either the new system, i.e., CBLT, or to the old system of language teaching.

**Methodology**

The current research elicited data from twenty south Algerian EFL teachers chosen at random from eight different secondary schools. The questionnaires used were anonymous so as to reduce social desirability on the part of the respondents (Paulhus, 1984). And to avoid any misunderstandings on the part of the school administrators, the questions asked were of a Yes/No type, i.e., closed answers.

**Research Setting**

The eight secondary schools split into two categories, those located in Adrar-centre (n=6) and those situated in Reggane (n=2), at about one hundred and fifteen kilometers south of Adrar-centre. Among the twenty teachers who take part in the study, there are twelve females and eight males. They teach either literary or scientific streams. They are aged 32 to 34 years old. Most teachers graduated from universities with BA or MA diplomas; some others have higher education school certificates. Their minimum teaching experience is five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Mean of age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>32.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adrar (Tuat)</td>
<td>El-Maghili</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balkin II</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Khaled Ibn El Walid</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tililane</td>
<td>06</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abi Hamid El-Ghazali</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hakkoumi Laid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reggane (Middle-Tuat)</td>
<td>Regganee Nouveau</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ibn Rochd</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Data Analysis**

The next lines report the results of thirteen questions answered by twenty teachers:

1. **Did you receive any training in CBLT?**
   - Yes: 55%  
   - No: 45%

Two tendencies emerge: the teachers are either trained in CBLT methods and techniques or not. This divergence reflects different approaches towards EFL teaching. Besides, the teachers’ split stand points mean that two different methods of EFL lecturing are in use at the same time, the traditional and the new one. Consequently, the pupils experience two diverse processes of EFL learning-teaching.

![Figure 1. Percentage of teachers trained in CBA in the Wilaya of Adrar](image)

2. **Do you think that the texts are suitable to the learners’ level?**
   - Yes: 40%, No: 60%

60% (i.e., 12) of the whole informants, judge the texts provided by the copybooks not suitable to the learners’ level. However, eight teachers (40%) admit the reverse. As a consequence, the teachers confront a dilemma, which is the unsuitability of the texts to the literary or scientific educational streams. This situation neither facilitates the teaching process nor does it conform to the learners’ ambitions and aspirations.

![Figure 2. Percentage of teachers who give pupils homework](image)

3. **Do you give the learners any homework to do?**
   - Yes: 90%, No: 10%

The answers are not ambiguous. The majority agrees to give some assignments to the learners, while two teachers prefer not. Hence, the teachers assign homework to their learners respecting, as such, the old methods of foreign language teaching-learning.

4. **Are the copybook’s instructions clear?**
   - Yes: 45%  
   - No: 55%

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Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 11. Number 3 September 2020

Attitudes of EFL Teachers toward the Competency Based Language Teaching

Bouhania
As far as this question is concerned, the opinions of those who agree and those who disagree are nearly equal. More than half of the informants think that the instructions are not easily understood by the learners. The other half believes that the copybook instructions are clear enough for the pupils. These results demonstrate that the south Algerian secondary school EFL teachers do not agree on the contents and form of the coursebook.

5. Do the tasks and levels of difficulty help learners be independent?  
   Yes: 25%  
   No: 75%  
   Once again, the teachers answer emphatically. The majority think that tasks and levels of difficulty constitute hindrances to the learners’ independence within CBLT. The teachers, then, are aware that the learners need their help to understand the foreign language.

6. Do you think that the listening/reading activities motivate pupils?  
   Yes: 55%  
   No: 45%  
   To this question, the answers diverge. Most informants are in favor of listening and reading activities. Yet, it is also noticeable that the other half of the teachers do not deem listening and reading interesting to the pupils. In other words, the secondary school teachers do not make use of the same techniques to transmit English to their learners, and, by the same token, two of the most fundamental skills of foreign language learning are not utilized.

7. Is time devoted to each unit adequate?  
   Yes: 30%  
   No: 70%  
   Answers to question number seven are clear-cut. The majority agree that time devoted to each pedagogical unit is not adequate to reach the objectives fixed by the syllabus designers. Only six (30%) teachers think the opposite, and believe that time imparted to each lesson is appropriate to accomplish the aims of the programs. Once again, the teachers do not totally agree on the principles of CBLT. This disagreement may be because some teachers were formed in CBLT and use the new methods and tools, while others were not trained in CBLT and still use the old ways and techniques of EFL teaching.
8. Do the learners have time to practice at home?  Yes: 35%  No: 65%
The EFL practitioners agree that the learners do not have enough time to practice at home. Their main argument is that secondary school pupils have too much coursework to do for other matters such as mathematics, science, history and geography, and philosophy. Consequently, they cannot perform all the activities requested by the teachers at the same time.

9. Does time allow for periodic review and remedial work?  Yes: 10%  No: 90%
The answers are unequivocal; most teachers assert that time is not enough to allow any periodic reviews, tests, or remedial works. That is, most teachers do not do any reviewing of the lectures before testing their pupils for the reason that they lack time. This fact shows that the teachers are under pressure because of the lecturers’ time load, which is burdensome to both teachers and learners.

10. Does time devoted to pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar help to develop the learners’ progress?  Yes: 40%  No: 60%
Twelve teachers declare without any doubt that time allocated to teaching pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar to EFL classes is not adequate. As a result, the learners’ development and progress are at risk. Conversely, eight (or 40%) teachers affirm that the time allocated to those activities is quite sufficient to enhance the learners’ development in learning English. In general, the results prove that the EFL informants do not follow the same pedagogical methods, and do not
profit from the duration of the lectures. They also do not evaluate positively their output or their pupils’ intake.

11. Do you use any audio-visual aids to prepare the lessons? Yes: 60% No: 40%

A significant number of teachers admit using audio-visual aids, such as videotape recorders, documentaries, and films, to prepare the lessons. Yet, it is essential to note that eight (i.e.:40%) teachers avoid using any technological tools and still rely on traditional ways to prepare their lessons, such as the copybooks. Consequently, the teachers do not come to the lectures with the same updated information and, accordingly, do not transmit their knowledge with the same methods and techniques.

12. Do you use ICT techniques? Yes: 50% No: 50%

The answers are equal in percentages. Half of the teachers use ICT, while the other half asserts the contrary. In other words, the teachers try to update their knowledge and information through the new means of technology such as slideshows, televisions, video, and the Internet. The results of this question verify those obtained in the previous one. They prove that the teachers are objective in their answers.

13. Did you have any training in the use of ICT? Yes: 40% No: 60%

The percentages are quite revealing; most teachers did not have any training in ICT. In a few words, these teachers cannot pretend to use modern audio-visual methods such as videoconferences, distance teaching-learning, and online teaching.

Figure 6. Teachers’ use of visual aids

Figure 7. Teachers’ training in ICT use
Discussion

A rather ambiguous picture emerges out of the findings: there are two trends on the part of south Algerian EFL teachers, those in favour of change and those against it. The present section discusses the results obtained from the questionnaires filled in by the twenty secondary school educators regarding the implementation of CBLT. In other words, the Discussion section splits into two sub-parts; the first tackles the answers highlighting teachers’ resistance to change, while the second deals with the teachers’ resilience. Bouhadiba (2015) explains this reality when he says:

“Two diverging tendencies emerged right from the beginning (2003) among teachers, pupils, decision makers, the syndicates and parents alike. These were represented by those who accepted the changes in the educational system and pedagogic methodologies and those who were clearly resistant to change” (p:14)

Resistance to Change

Out of thirteen questions asked in the questionnaire, there are eight negative responses which represents 61.5% of the whole. These are questions number 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 13. Questions number two and four pose problems related to the EFL copybooks. These last, according to the teachers, do not facilitate the reading and comprehension process for the learners. The texts, supposedly preparing the learner to know-how-to-do, know-how-to act and know-how-to-be are neither adequate with the learner’s levels, nor are they clear in matter of instructions. More than that, the texts do not reflect the learners’ socio-cultural environment. These last assertions confirm both Rezig’s (2011) and Boumediene & Hamzaoui-Elachachi’s (2017) conclusions. For Rezig (2011), the social context plays a significant role in motivating and de-motivating the learning of foreign languages; for Boumediene and Hamzaoui-Elachachi (2017) text comprehension has become an obstruction to EFL students within Algerian secondary schools.

Question number five is a striking criticism to the implementation of CBLT in Algeria and to its expected outcomes. To the question: ‘Do the tasks and level of difficulty help learners be independent?’, the majority says ‘No’ (75%). These answers illustrate the reverse image; that is, instead of having a learner who: “…is able to interact in real situations by using transversal competencies on a wider scale.” (Bouhadiba, 2003, p:179) the learners are still unable to face real-life situations whether inside or outside the class.

Questions number 7, 8, 9 and 10 concern the factor ‘time’ within CBLT in the Algerian educational system. The most prominent answers are that time is not respected (70% in Q7), not procedural (65% in Q8), not practical (90% in Q9), and finally not helpful (60% in Q10). These responses are not contrary to the principles of CBLT, for CBLT is not time-based. Rather, it is grounded on the evolution of the learners’ achievement of know-how and abilities to realise assignments (Bouhadiba, 2006:173-174). The teachers complain about the CBLT principles, since they base their teaching on the former Algerian time-based educational system.

The last question receives a clear-cut answer, which is that the teachers were not trained to use any ICT technologies. Ladaci (2017) confirms this state of affairs when she attests:
“unfortunately, this technology [ICT] appears to be inefficiently used in many developing countries and Algeria is no exception” (p:161)

**Resilience and Change**

Resiliency on the part of the twenty south Algerian EFL teachers who took part in the research is apparent in the results obtained from questions number 1, 3, 6 and 11. An example is question number one; the teachers give nearly equal answers. 45% of them admit not receiving any training in CBA and CBLT while the remaining 55% say the contrary. This result illustrates the paradoxical reality found at secondary schools in the south of Algeria. The teaching staff uses two separate methods of EFL teaching, the traditional one, based on the Communicative Competence Approach, and the new one based on CBA/CBLT in the same schools and at the same time. This means that, at the micro level, the teachers do not conform to the instructions of local school authorities, the academies of education, the directors, and the inspectors of education. The teachers do not attend and participate to the seminars organised by the academies; they are satisfied with the ministerial instructions that disseminate the new methods of teaching, their objectives and didactic foci. In a few words, some teachers still prefer the old methods to the new ones.

Question number three illustrates another impediment to the CBLT principles within the Algerian educational system: to succeed in making the learners active participants to the learning process. The south Algerian EFL teachers who participated to the study declare that they give the learners homework, which is a habit inherited from former method of foreign language teaching under the communicative competence approach. CBLT, on the other hand, encourages the learners to develop “tasks to discover new situations” (Bouhadiba, 2006, p:178). In other words, the teachers should not burden the learners with homework, but push them towards using their meta-cognitive abilities to face and solve problem situations.

Concerning motivation through reading and listening activities, the teachers have nearly equal answers: 55% of ‘yes’ and 45% of ‘no’. This result, like that of question number one, shows that the teachers do not agree on the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of their learners. Extrinsic motivation leads the learner to seek for external rewards, while the intrinsic motivation leads to gain personal satisfaction from the activity itself (Schmidt, Borale & Kassabgy, 1996 as cited in Albodakh and Cinkara, 2017). Hence, the twenty south Algerian EFL teachers do not have sharp decisions as far as motivation is achieved through the passive skills, reading and listening.

The use of audio-visual aids is another example of south Algerian EFL teachers’ resilience. The findings determine that 40% of the respondents admit not using any visual aids while 55% do. It is a well-known fact that dispensing lectures through visual aids elevates the motivation and proficiency (Ladaci 2017) of foreign language learners and CBLT is founded on that principle. However, the last question reveals the gap that characterises south Algerian EFL educators regarding one of the main means of EFL education: technology in the classroom. Brinton (2001) admits that: “media material may lend authenticity to the classroom situation, reinforcing for the students the direct relation between the language classroom and the outside world” (p:461 as cited in Ladaci, 2017, p:163).
Conclusion
The scores obtained out of the analyses of the teachers’ questionnaires make it clear that the reality of EFL teaching in Algeria is far from that pictured by CBLT. Most teachers have negative attitudes towards the teaching procedures, the coursebook, and most certainly towards CBLT itself. Many south Algerian EFL teachers do not agree with the new method, neither do they agree on its actual implementation.

Not receiving any training in CBA handicaps, hinders, and diminishes the teachers’ output and that of the learners. No training in the use of ICT means also no progress in FL teaching-learning.

Moreover, the teachers see that CBLT and its methods are not helpful for the learners. The secondary school teachers affirm that the new approach does not allow the learners to do their homework in due time, nor does it enable them to practice more at home. After all the interpretations mentioned above for both teachers and learners within the CBLT paradigm, it becomes clear that a re-evaluation of the whole system and syllabus is necessary.

Notes:

i Messerhi (2014) declares that Algerian EFL secondary school textbooks do not provide enough opportunities to discuss culture-related topics. Subsequently, she says: “students have few, and in some cases, have no opportunities to learn about culture-related activities especially discussions on cultural differences and similarities concerning social habits, values, use of idioms and slang, non-verbal communication, and the importance of appropriate choices for conversations in English.” (p:167)

ii For Richards and Rodgers (2001), CBA bases its principles on: “what the learners are expected to do rather than on what they are expected to learn about.” (p: 15)

iii Dornyei (2001) asserts that: “A de-motivated learner is someone who was once motivated but has lost his/her commitment for some reason” (p:142)

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